INTO SOVIET NATURE: TOURISM, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, & THE FORMATION OF SOVIET AND RUSSIAN NATIONAL PARKS, 1950s-1990s

A Dissertation
submitted to the Faculty
of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in
History

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Washington DC
April 22, 2016
INTO SOVIET NATURE: TOURISM, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, & THE FORMATION OF SOVIET AND RUSSIAN NATIONAL PARKS, 1950s-1990s

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ABSTRACT

From the 1950s to the 1980s, affordable tourism for the masses became one of the hallmarks of the “Soviet good life.” However, through the course of these decades, Soviet environmentalists increasingly viewed mass outdoor tourism as a serious threat to nature. They tried to address this problem in two ways. First, they sought to educate tourists on environmental protection and promoted tourist-led environmental protection initiatives. The promotion of national parks was the second means by which environmentalists addressed tourism’s environmental impact.

Soviet environmentalists believed that national parks, in addition to tourism more environmentally sustainable, would help reorient regional economies towards tourism and away from environmentally destructive industries as well as bring international prestige to Soviet environmental protection efforts. From the 1960s through the 1980s, scientific and architectural institutes, civic organizations, professors, and private citizens envisioned, designed, and promoted national parks throughout the USSR. By the late 1980s, national parks had become rallying points for a widely expanded and more protest-oriented environmental community. Increasing environmental concern throughout the USSR dramatically increased the expectations of park founders and supporters. In many cases, they argued that national parks could serve as vehicles for sweeping regional economic and cultural transformation. The Soviet
Union’s rapid decline and the economic chaos that followed its collapse made such transformative visions for national parks untenable. Few Russians wanted to travel domestically during the 1990s, and the state was unable to provide national parks with the finances to perform their most basic functions. By the late 1990s, Russian national parks served as a painful reminder of the failure of the USSR and then the Russian Federation to protect its scenic treasures as well as the dependence of Russian environmentalists on the international environmental community.
Acknowledgements

In the process of researching and writing this dissertation, I accumulated a debt of gratitude to many people and organizations that I can never possibly repay. This project would have never been possible without several generous grants. I initially used a PIEPHO grant to conduct a scouting trip in the summer of 2010. After the cancellation of the Fulbright-Hays DDRA for the 2011-2012 cycle, the Andrew Mellon Foundation heroically stepped in to establish a one-year alternative— the Mellon-IIE Dissertation Research Fellowship—that I am grateful to have received. This grant allowed me to research in Russia for all of 2012. A Fulbright-Hays DDRA Fellowship allowed me to stay for a second year of dissertation research in 2013. During the spring of 2015, the Georgetown Environmental Initiative provided me funding to focus exclusively on my writing for a semester.

Two of my former professors—one from college and one from my MA program—deserve special thanks. My undergraduate thesis adviser at Davidson College, Sally McMillen, was not only a remarkable teacher in the classroom, but she showed an interest in my work that allowed me to grow more than she could have possibly realized at the time. Dr. McMillen was also first person who actively encouraged me to continue studying history at graduate school. She remains a close friend to this day and in some ways, it seems fitting to me that I am defending this dissertation during her last semester of teaching. As an M.A. student of the environmental history of the American West at the University of Montana, I was fortunate to have Dan Flores as a mentor. Dan not only made me a much better writer, but he provided an example to me of the joy of the life of the mind, which will always remain with me.

I have John McNeill to thank for the opportunity to study Russian environmental history at Georgetown. Without knowing a word of Russian, I was undoubtedly an unusual candidate for the program when I applied to study Russian environmental history in the spring of 2006. Nonetheless, John agreed to meet at the American Society of Environmental History
ASEH) in Saint Paul. Despite his many other obligations and meetings, we ended up meeting for over an hour and a half. I knew that I would do my Ph.D. at Georgetown after this meeting. I turned down offers with funding and moved to Russia to learn the language. Through my time at Georgetown, I have been even more impressed with John’s communication and the time that he dedicates to people than with his many impressive books and professional accolades and honors. This model will stay with me throughout my professional life.

I owe special thanks to Catherine Evtuhov for helping me to conceive this dissertation. Catherine proposed the idea of a dissertation on outdoor recreation in the Soviet Union in the fall of 2009. Since the death of Richard Stites, she has been a de facto second advisor for me and has always shown interest in and encouragement for the project. Whether they took place in her office, over a beer in Saint Petersburg, or on a hike in the Sayan Mountains, our conversations about my dissertation have been invaluable. Her advice to “follow my interests” is an invaluable lesson that will stay with me through my professional life. Although he is no longer with us, Richard Stites’s focus on seeing history through the eyes of everyday people as opposed to cultural and political elites is critically important to how I approach history. I am grateful to him personally and to the immeasurable impact that this perspective had on the field. Even though the dissertation’s subject is far outside his areas of specialization, David Goldfrank always showed himself willing to read chapters and provide valuable feedback and invaluable moral support. Since coming to Georgetown in 2011, Michael David-Fox has made himself accessible. His influence makes Georgetown a vibrant environment for Soviet history. My dissertation has undoubtedly benefited from this environment. The final member of my committee—Douglas Weiner—has provided valuable feedback on this dissertation for which I am grateful. This dissertation builds off much of his pioneering work. I am also grateful to have someone to talk to about many of the passionately dedicated Russian environmentalists of the late 20th century.
Before starting my coursework at Georgetown, I lived in Russia for two years to learn the Russian language during which time Anatoly Michikin hired me to work as a backpacking guide in the Altai Mountains. Through this experience, I learned about the world of Russian outdoor recreation through which I have met many of my closest friends in Russia. Had it not been for these experiences, I would have never arrived at the present topic. I give special thanks to Mariia Alfianova, Alexander Andreev, Ekaterina Artanomova, Timothy Michikin, Aleksey Kazakov, Vasilii Nikiforenko, and Natalia Shelankova for their companionship both in the mountains and on rivers, and during the times that we warmly reminisced about these experiences in both Saint Petersburg and Moscow. I am also deeply grateful to Konstantin Langburd who hired me to work as a guide on fishing and backpacking trips with Russian tourists on Kamchatka during the summer of 2014. Even as the relationship between our countries was deteriorating, I had fantastic interactions with the tourists on these trips. With tourists and other guides, I enjoyed wide ranging conversations on everything from Ukraine to various aspects of Russian and Soviet culture. My summer on Kamchatka fully reaffirmed my belief that nothing brings people together better than spectacular landscapes and evening campfires.

At Georgetown University, in addition from having had the benefit of classes with many exceptional historians, I have enjoyed intellectual companionship from colleagues in Russian history and in other fields. John Corcoran and Dan Scarborough provided invaluable perspective that came from a few years more experience in the program. I began Georgetown with an excellent, if somewhat boisterous, cohort. Since living in a house during our first year together, Patrick Dixon and Chris England have become close friends whose insights have been very important to me. Several Georgetown graduate students have provided valuable comments on dissertation chapters in different workshops. These include Clark
Alejandrinno Meredith Denning, Andrey Goronostaev, Toshiro Higuchi, Abbie Holkamp, Faisal Husain, Isabelle Kaplan, Thom Lloyd, Erina Megowan, Robynne Mellor, Jackson Perry, Graham Pitts, Hillar Schwertner, and Yubin Shen. I am grateful to their valuable feedback.

Meetings with scholars of Russia, former Soviet states, and Eastern Europe have invigorated me during the process of researching and writing my dissertation. I had the rare opportunity to present parts of my dissertation on the Solovki Islands and in the Barguzin Zapovednik (the first in Russia) next to Lake Baikal thanks to David Moon’s organization of and leadership in setting up a series of remarkable conferences generously funded by the Leverhulme Trust. I give to thanks to Alexandra Besakova, Nicholas Breyfogle, Kate Brown Andy Bruno, Ekaterina Kalemeneva, Elena Kochetkova, Julia Lajus, and Mark Sokolsky for giving feedback on my work at these conferences as well as our Russian guides and the many people who worked behind the scenes to make these conferences possible. While I cannot possibly mention all of the other graduate students from other universities that have influenced me in various ways during the course of my research, I want to give special thanks to Kristy Ironside, Daniel Pratt, and Bathsheba Demuth. I am grateful for Bathsheba’s insightful feedback on two of these chapters. I have enjoyed more conversations than I can count about Russian history, Slavic literature, and academic life with Kristy and Daniel.

Archivists from many archives showed incredible generosity towards me. I want to give special thanks to Vera Nikoforevna at the Samara Brach of the State Archive of Technical Information and Irina Tarakonova at the Academy of Sciences Archive who took great interest in my project. I will never forget their helpfulness and warmth.

One of the joys of being a historian of the late 20th century is that there are many people still living whom one can talk to and many people have amazing personal archives. For their conversations, I am grateful for the time and insight of several veterans of tourism, environmental protection, and the national park movement in Russia. These include Adolph
Bratsev, Andrei Bratsev Oleg Cherviakov, Julius Dobrushin, Iurii Erofeev, Alexander Koko-vkin, Iurii Machkin, Vitali Menshikov, Iurii Roshchevskii, Boris Samoilov, Radomir Sevast’enov, and Natalia Zabelina. Natalia has warmly invited me into her home on several occasions and every time I leave with a better understanding of the Soviet Union’s national park movement. I am thankful to all of these and more people for both their time and their efforts to protect Russian nature.

Finally, I would like to thank my family. My brother, sister, and father might not fully understand my fascination with Russia, but they have been respectful of my unusual life decision at 28 to leave a stable job and go to Russia to learn the language and immerse myself in Russian culture. I have thoroughly enjoyed telling my nieces and nephew about this huge and beautiful and distant country. Undoubtedly the most rewarding part of this journey has been the fact that it led me back to the first person who taught me some Russian—Tatiana Busu. While I started this journey on my own, I finish this journey knowing that we will embark on future journeys together.

My mother did not live long enough to see this chapter of my life. Although I do not know if she would have understood why her son wanted to go to Russia, her memory has been a constant source of strength to me throughout this journey. I dedicate this dissertation to her.
Preface

Wild places captivate me. When I was an American historian, this passion took me to the American West. Before pursuing my graduate studies at Georgetown, it seemed to me that from all the literature (albeit quite limited at the time) that I had read in Russian history that the entire country was undulating steppe or dense taiga forest. Obviously, a country that encompassed one-sixth of the world’s landmass had far greater natural variety!

Since going to Russia for the first time in 2006, I have been dedicated not only to immersing myself in Russian language and culture and then, of course, to researching my dissertation, but also to experiencing Russia’s natural variety and specifically becoming involved in the culture of tourism. This has led me on tourist trips in Karelia, the Circumpolar Urals, the Sayan Mountains, the Altai Mountains, the Barguzin Valley, around Lake Baikal, and different places on the Kamchatka Peninsula. I have worked as the only foreigner with Russian adventure travel companies as a guide for Russian groups in both the Altai Mountains and on the Kamchatka Peninsula and through these experiences, I have seen firsthand what many of the people in this story have said: that Russia has a spectacular variety of spell-binding landscapes. Research from over 20 archives, meetings with veterans of tourism and the Soviet national park movement, and extensive time spent in nearly 20 libraries have provided me with the information base for this dissertation, a project which also reflects my desire, in the words of Henry David Thoreau, to “suck the marrow out of life” during my time in Russia and explore well beyond the written word.
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“Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life.”

--John Muir

Figure 1 Skiiers in Kamchatka, circa 1970. From Gleb Travin Club of Tourists, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatski

Figure 2 Backpackers in Kamchatka, circa 1970. From Gleb Travin Club of Tourists, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsk
Introduction: Into Soviet Nature

During the second half of the twentieth century, the Soviet Union experienced two related phenomena—the growing expectations of its citizens of rising living standards and an increasing concern for environmental protection—common to developed industrial societies throughout the world.\(^1\) Soviet propaganda presented the state’s ability to meet these needs through the prism of Cold War competition. While Soviet citizens might not have had as many technological amenities as the citizens of capitalist nations, it was asserted that they did have universal health care, one hundred percent employment, and an impressive education system. As working hours decreased and salaries increased from the late 1950s to the early 1980s, Communist Party leaders, tourism’s proponents, and a wide array of publications emphasized that “all” Soviet citizens also had ample leisure time and opportunities to travel to remote corners of the world’s “most beautiful” and geographically diverse country.

Beginning in the early 1960s, Soviet propaganda emphasized that ecological health was another advantage of life in the Soviet Union. This message intensified over the following two decades. While capitalism’s very premises had led the Western world into an ecological crisis, socialism, it was maintained, provided the basis for developing a harmonious relationship to the natural world. With environmental concern becoming increasingly widespread throughout Soviet society and tourism quickly becoming one of the favorite pastimes of Soviet citizens, environmentalists, such as the GULAG survivor, geographer and popular writer David Armand, argued that tourism was “the strongest

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means of engendering love for nature among children and adults.”² Armand and other environmentalists maintained that cultivating this “love” for nature in Soviet citizens was essential to improving society’s relationship to nature, which would prevent a similar ecological crisis to the one that had engulfed the capitalist world.

The USSR’s tourism explosion created a dilemma for environmentalists. Mass tourism would help a large number of Soviet citizens better understand, and in turn love, the nature of the Motherland. However, by the mid-1960s, tourism’s adverse environmental impact was becoming increasingly visible. Tourists frequently littered forest parks, cut down lots of trees, and caused forest fires that left once-beautiful landscapes charred. Such places included nature reserves (zapovedniki), which many scientists had long maintained should be “inviolable.”

Into Soviet Nature is about the efforts of a broad cross-section of Soviet society—geographers, biologists, landscape planners, government officials, private citizens, the press, and other interested parties—to protect the environment for and from tourists. For the diverse Soviet environmental protection community, the problem was two-fold. Cultivating among Soviet citizens a cultured and responsible relationship towards nature grounded in knowledge of and love for it was the first means by which environmentalists sought to address the problem. From the late 1950s through the 1980s, environmentalists and tourism proponents sought to make tourists “fighters for nature” through developing nature excursions and nature protection courses as well as promoting environmental protection initiatives among tourist groups. The second part of the problem concerned the territorial organization of tourism. As Soviet environmentalists developed closer contacts with environmentalists from the United States and Western Europe beginning in the mid-1950s, they became intrigued with the idea of developing a

² David L. Armand, “Priroda i turist,” Turist 7 (July 1965), 21.
system of Soviet national parks, which they believed would become model institutions for educating ecologically mindful citizens while making the protection of landscapes profitable to the state. Their proponents envisioned national parks that would utilize “scenic resources” to reorient regional economies towards tourism and in so doing save the nation’s most beautiful landscapes from resource extraction and industrial development. Parks, their supporters believed, would resonate not only with Soviet citizens, but also with a government more interested in economic development than in scientific research, which had long been the justification for establishing nature reserves (zapovedniki). While the zapovedniki remained akin to hallowed ground, many environmentalists viewed national parks as a more “modern” form of nature protection during the Soviet Union’s final three decades.

The first part of Into Soviet Nature (chapters 1 and 2) shows how environmentalists, especially geographers, attempted to infuse the “culture of tourism” with an environmental protection ethos grounded in a love for native nature. As the number of sporting tourists grew in the 1950s, geographers became concerned that tourists’ prioritizing of sporting accomplishments had degraded the “culture of tourism,” which they believed needed to have a “socially useful” character. To address the problem, the All-Union Geographical Society tried to link tourism with kraevedenie (local history studies), which emphasized education about one’s native region and environmental protection. By the mid-1960s, the Council of Tourism, an array of civic organizations, and several publications were emphasizing environmental protection as one of the central directions of the “tourism movement.” While tourist clubs sponsored radio and television shows on the protection of nature and cooperated with the All-Russian Society for the Protection of Nature in carrying out seminars on nature protection, the Central
Council of Tourism under the Central Trade Union Council sponsored various environmental protection initiatives. By turning tourists into “friends” and “defenders” of nature, environmentalists believed that tourists could help resolve bigger environmental problems than those caused by tourism.

Concerns about tourism’s impact forced environmentalists to conceive plans for the best territorial organization to deal with the USSR’s tourism explosion. Ultimately, they decided that national parks were the optimal means to do this. Part II (chapters 3-5) tells the story of the Soviet national park movement. Chapter 3 will illustrate the beginnings of the Western influences on Soviet environmental protection efforts during the Khrushchev Era. Under the politics of “peaceful coexistence,” the Commission of Nature Protection began taking part in international environmental organizations, such as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), where the establishment of national parks was one of the most important environmental protection priorities. At the same time, Soviet zapovedniki were suffering due to higher tourist traffic and their legal status was increasingly precarious. By the early 1960s, the Commission began calling on scientific institutes and civic organizations to conceive proposals for national parks that would display the most scenic corners of their home regions and alleviate tourist pressure from the zapovedniki.

With tourism rapidly expanding and becoming an increasingly profitable part of the Soviet economy, a broad section of Soviet society—environmentalists, economists, landscape architects, and others—argued that the establishment of national parks would make environmental protection economically expedient. Environmentalists believed that aligning environmental protection with economic development would increase its appeal among government officials and throughout Soviet society. This chapter will focus primarily on the discussions of environmentalists in the Commission on
Nature Protection (Later the Central Laboratory for the Protection of Nature), the All-Russian Society for the Protection of Nature, and the Main Administration of Hunting and Zapovedniki. It will also zoom in on individual cases of tourism in the zapovedniki and the attempts of different groups to establish the USSR’s first national parks.

Chapter 4 will look at the evolution of ideas regarding the organization of national parks from the late 1960s until the signing of the “model regulation” on national parks by the Soviet Council of Ministers on April 27, 1981. While these ideas germinated and took shape primarily within the Institute of Geography, the Main Administration of Hunting and Zapovedniki, and the Central Laboratory of Nature Protection, developing a unified idea about the goals and functions of a national park proved challenging. This chapter will look at Lahemaa National Park (Estonia SSR), Gauja National Park (Latvia SSR), Sevan National Park (Armenia SSR), and the hopes that national parks inspired for both regional economic growth and the cultivation of a strong ecological consciousness among Soviet tourists. The broader discussion of parks in specialized journals and the central press demonstrated both this optimism and the widely divergent notions of the central goals, functions, and organization of national parks.

Chapter 5 will assess the early organizational challenges faced by national parks. Despite these challenges, parks nonetheless became sources of hope for environmental protection and economic transformation. They often became rallying points for environmental protest, especially during perestroika in the late 1980s. Embracing the era’s spirit of broad-based reform, national park supporters increasingly championed the transformative potential of national parks. This chapter will both look at the broader conversation regarding parks and zoom in on specific case studies that demonstrate the struggles faced by existing parks and the increasingly grandiose visions for future parks.
The third part of this dissertation (chapters 6-9) looks at the movements for the establishment of national parks on the shore of Baikal, on the Samara Bend—a peninsular formation across from Kuibyshev on the Volga, the Circumpolar Urals in the Komi Republic, and in the Karelian taiga. Using arguments that tourism could be much more profitable than resource extraction, proponents of these parks hoped that the formation of the respective parks would either lead to the closure of existing resource-extraction/industrial enterprises, or the prevention of the development of new environmentally destructive uses of their proposed territory. The broad cross-section of Soviet society that spoke out for the establishment of national parks illustrates environmental protection’s evolution into an increasingly mainstream concern from the 1960s to the mid-1980s to which the state gave increasing rhetorical, if not adequate financial, support.

The final part of this dissertation (chapter 10) will take a broader look at the growing and profound disillusionment of national park administrators and proponents, as well the larger Russian environmental-protection community, during the 1990s. In many cases, national parks suffered from the decade’s “crisis of authority,” which led to conflicts between the government of the Russian Federation and local and regional administrators. Regional administrations frequently viewed national parks as an imposed layer of control from Moscow during a period when they expected loosened reins from the federal government. With the federal government lacking both the means and interest to develop parks, the arguments for tourism’s potential to reap enormous economic benefits was thoroughly undermined. With this strong local opposition and lack of support from Moscow, environmentalists appealed to the international environmental community to save Russia’s national parks.
"Into Soviet Nature" fits primarily within three historiographies: the history of tourism in the USSR, the rapidly growing field of Soviet environmental history, and the global history of national parks. Because national parks were a completely new way of conceiving space in the Soviet Union, "Into Soviet Nature" will also contribute to the “spatial turn” in Russian and Soviet history. Historians who have made recent contributions in this area include Mark Bassin, Nick Baron, Nicholas Breyfogle, Kate Brown, Andy Bruno, Sarah Cameron, Ian Campbell, Johanna Conterio, Christopher Ely, Catherine Evtuhov, Victoria Kivelson, Maya Peterson, and Karl Schlöegel.  

While Russian and Soviet historians have often suggested that the center usually forced the “periphery” to acquiesce passively to its dictates, "Into Soviet Nature" demonstrates how scientists and civic organizations used a much more intimate knowledge of place in different regions to develop alternative visions for economic development to those devised by central planners. While not always successful, their visions demonstrated a strong sense of regional consciousness and initiative within the USSR to which

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historians of the Soviet Union have paid little attention. Yet plans for national parks and a national park system also took place in central architectural institutes and in the Moscow-based Scientific-Research Institute for the Protection of Nature. Consequently, after the breakup of the Soviet Union, regional administrators frequently saw parks as impositions from Moscow during a time when they expected greater administrative autonomy. Thus, the history of Soviet and then Russian national parks illustrates the complex web of power relationships between the center and periphery, which changed markedly over time.

In recent years, several Soviet historians, such as Diane Koenker and Anne Gorsuch have provided valuable contributions to the history of Soviet tourism.4 Koenker’s Club Red: Vacation Travel and the Soviet Dream (2013) gives a broad overview of the development of Soviet travel and vacations from the 1920s until the Soviet Union’s collapse.5 Koenker’s book is unable to address many important aspects of Soviet tourism. She pays limited attention to the importance of tourism in inspiring love for Soviet nature, which, according to many of tourism’s propagandists, was among its most important functions. Moreover, Koenker focuses largely on cultural tourism and vacation to spa resorts and proportionately little attention to outdoor recreation (referred to as turizm in the USSR), which became widely popular in the USSR’s final four decades.

Anne Gorsuch’s All This is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin (2011) is a more focused study of domestic and international tourism from Joseph Stalin’s death in 1953 through to the early 1960s.6 Her focus is almost exclusively on

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6 Anne Gorsuch, All This is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
“cultural tourism.” While an important part of Gorsuch’s study falls within this growing literature on the transnational connections between Soviet citizens and the wider world in the post-Stalin years, her transnational actors are tourists, whereas mine are scientists.7 The tourists of Into Soviet Nature do not travel outside of the Soviet Union, which was true for the vast majority of Soviet tourists. Gorsuch pays no attention to the importance of instilling patriotism through a love of native nature. The crucial connections between environmental protection and tourism are completely absent from both of these books. The numerous Russian works on the development of the Soviet tourism system, which are rich in data but wanting in interpretation, also do not address this aspect of the culture of Soviet tourism.8

Soviet environmentalists and local historians (kraevedy) looked at all forms of tourism when they spoke about infusing tourism with an environmental educational component. However, they frequently pointed to turizm (outdoor recreation) as the best way for tourists to develop a love of nature in the USSR. Thus, Into Soviet Nature will begin by following the growth in turizm’s popularity in the postwar years and the efforts of environmentalists to shape its ideological content. However, these efforts expanded well beyond turizm and into the diverse Soviet tourism system, which included spas, tourist bases, hunting and fishing lodges, and many other establishments. Ultimately, their founders proposed national parks as the institution best suited for instilling varieties of tourism centered on an ethos of environmental protection.

7 For more on travel between the USSR and the socialist bloc in the two decades after World War II, see: Patry Babiracki and Kenyon Zimmer eds., Cold War Crossings: International Travel Across the Soviet Bloc, 1940s-1960s (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014).
Our knowledge and understanding of environmental protection efforts in the Soviet Union remains in its early stages. A few articles in recent years have highlighted different aspects and episodes of environmental protection in the USSR. The Russian environmentalist and author Felix Shtilmark as well as the Ukrainian historian V.I. Boreiko have written thick, information-rich tomes on different aspects of nature protection in Russia, Ukraine, and the Soviet Union. Only four English-language books focus exclusively on Soviet environmental protection. Douglas Weiner’s landmark *Models of Nature* (1988) shows the development of ecological ideas among scientists in the late imperial era and the first decade of the USSR’s existence and the success of Soviet scientists in establishing a system of nature reserves (zapovedniki) for scientific study in the USSR’s first decade. Brian Bonhomme’s *Forests, Peasants, and Revolutionaries* (2005) argues that zapovedniki were on the periphery of the state’s efforts to conserve forests and that the peasants’ non-compliance with state forest conservation provides a more representative perspective on popular attitudes towards conservation in

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the 1920s. Meanwhile, Steven Brain’s *A Song of the Forest* (2011) shares Weiner’s and Bonhomme’s view that early conservation efforts in the USSR had prerevolutionary roots. The crux of his work looks at the Stalin period where he makes a provocative case that through his forest conservation policies Stalin was in his own way an “environmentalist.” Focusing largely on student environmental activism, Weiner’s deeply researched *A Little Corner of Freedom* (1998) provides a sweeping picture of different environmental protection efforts in the late Soviet Union. However, Weiner makes almost no mention of national parks.

Because of national parks’ importance in conservation around the world for almost one-and-a-half centuries, the history of individual national parks and the development of national park systems in individual countries are well trodden ground in environmental history. Recently, historians have made efforts to understand national parks through a more global perspective. When viewed in relation to the great hopes

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that Soviet environmentalists placed on national parks and the fact that the Soviet national park history cannot be understood apart from the global dimensions of national park history, the complete absence of Russian/Soviet national parks from this historiography is striking.

The history of Soviet national parks raises much larger issues of the changes in Soviet conservation practices during the USSR’s final decades. Perhaps more than any other single idea, national parks demonstrated the increasing emphasis on reconciling environmental protection with economic development during the late Soviet period. This important aspect of late Soviet environmental protection remains largely untold. Moreover, the Soviet national park movement demonstrates the efforts of environmentalists to shift away from an elitist scientific agenda focused on “inviolable” nature reserves and to make environmental protection more appealing to the broader Soviet public. Because of the Brezhnev regime’s recognition of environmental protection’s importance and its encouragement of citizens to lead in these efforts, national parks often formed out of the collaboration of a broad cross-section of Soviet society including universities, civic organizations, institutes, and private citizens. These parties genuinely believed that Soviet citizens could push the state to take meaningful environmental protection measures.

The state addressed what was clearly a push for change from below, or perhaps one could say the “middle.” The movement for Soviet national parks thus demonstrates the increasing ability for non-state actors to conceive of visions for meaningful reform within Soviet society during the era of “stagnation” in the 1970s under Brezhnev. While calling their efforts the beginnings of civil society in the USSR would be an exaggeration, the initiative various groups exercised in pushing for national parks certainly helped lay the ground for the explosion in environmental protest during perestroika.
The above-mentioned aspects of the Soviet national park movement are perhaps indistinguishable from the efforts to establish national parks in other countries. However, there are surprising and unique aspects to the Soviet story. Unlike the histories of national parks in many countries, the formation of Soviet national parks never involved the removal of indigenous peoples from the land. To many readers, perhaps the most unexpected aspect of the Soviet story will be the fact that Marxist-Leninist ideology had, at most, a marginal role in influencing the conceptions of Soviet national parks. Had they been conceived under Stalin, national parks would undoubtedly have been more aligned with a Marxist-Leninist worldview. But Soviet national parks were nonetheless often highly ideological in their conception. In addition to transforming regional economies, national parks, their supporters frequently asserted, could transform the consciousness of Soviet citizens by cultivating a love for nature in the USSR and instilling in them the conviction that it was their responsibility to protect it. In some cases, the transformative visions of national parks were nothing short of utopian.

If the Soviet national park story stands out through the sweeping visions of economic, social, and cultural transformation of park proponents, it is even more notable for how far short parks fell of their founders' visions. While national parks in different parts of the world have been proposed, established, and quickly forgotten and neglected, in very few countries have park supporters labored so long and hard with so little result, and, in turn, become more disillusioned than in the USSR. When the national park idea arrived to the USSR, national parks were the most identifiable nature protection establishment internationally and the Soviet scientific (including environmental protection) intelligentsia was increasingly concerned about its international image. Accordingly, hopes of what national parks could mean for the USSR were high from the
movement's inception. However, from the first years of the Soviet national park movement, there were strongly conflicting ideas about both the form and function of national parks within the Soviet Union.

Without official legal status at the Union-level, different groups and institutes created plans for parks grounded in widely varied principles with respect to both the development of recreation and environmental protection. Their ideas gestated and developed in increasingly disparate directions for nearly two decades as the halting gears of Soviet bureaucracy were slow to produce legislation that gave national parks official status. Ambitions of park founders for the potential of national parks only seemed to grow with each frustrating year. Once national parks finally did gain legal status in 1981 through the remarkably poorly conceived “standard regulation” on national parks, the question of what ministry would be responsible for them remained unresolved. The failure to resolve this issue in the years that followed prevented a unified vision for their function in Russian society from ever fully taking root. With conceptions of national parks often seeming to contradict the “standard regulation,” acceptable land uses within the territory of national parks became almost hopelessly contentious. Nonetheless, until the fall of the Soviet Union, with environmental concern growing in the USSR, it seemed that the grandiosity of park plans expanded almost in direct proportion to the increasing dysfunction of individual national parks.

As the economy cratered and the USSR collapsed, environmental protection seemed as an unaffordable luxury. With national parks still having no clear steward and the state unable to invest in the development of them, the Russian Federation's stated commitment to develop and expand its park system seemed little more than an exercise in varnishing its image as an environmentally responsible country before the world community in an era of unprecedented interstate collaboration in environmental
protection. While the government continued to designate new parks (Russia had 28 by 1995), most Russians remained unaware of their existence. Perhaps at no time and in any place has a state’s environmental community been so thoroughly dispirited by the failure of national parks to realize the visions of their progenitors.

The history of Soviet national parks will provide an important perspective on the role of national parks in “environmental diplomacy” during and after the Cold War. In the second half of the 20th century, which some historians have referred to as the Age of Ecology, the existence of parks became associated with a nation’s “level of civilization” among the international environmental protection community. The IUCN called for their establishment throughout the world with almost proselytizing fervor. Always concerned about the perception of their foreign colleagues, Soviet environmentalists viewed the USSR’s failure to develop national parks as one of the most conspicuous examples of the state’s disinterest in nature conservation. By the Soviet Union’s waning years, environmentalists were characterizing Soviet national parks as an embarrassment before the international community.

Following the end of the Cold War, the international community championed environmental protection as one of the best means of moving beyond the bipolar world. In the face of the state’s incapacity to deal with environmental problems, the Russian environmental community became dependent on the West for moral and material support. Russian environmentalists increasingly framed environmental problems as not

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18 Ibid.
just local or national, but global concerns. At the same time, national parks met stiff resistance from local populations who saw them as a means for Moscow to legitimate central control during an era in which the regions expected greater autonomy. National parks demonstrated the enormous complexity of reconciling national, regional, and local interests during an era of political transformation when the state increasingly allowed priorities of the international environmental community inform a domestic agenda, even as the state was too weak to honor its international commitments and assumed responsibilities.

Perhaps more than any single institution, national parks provided a painful reminder to Russian environmentalists of the state's neglect of "globally significant" natural heritage. Russian environmentalists pointed to this failure as they lambasted the Russian Federation for being an "uncivilized" and "backward" state. The idea for Soviet national parks had developed out of the desire of Soviet environmentalists to make environmental protection in the USSR profitable and more widely appealing to Soviet citizens, better understood and in turn supported by government officials, and respected by the international community. By the 1990s, the average Russian citizen had no interest in national parks, government officials largely neglected them, and Russian environmentalists desperately appealed to the West, even as they understood that international support would not compensate for the state's neglect.

Today, a trip to many of the national parks in the Russian Federation illustrates the state’s continued neglect toward developing domestic tourism and failure to realize its stated environmental protection goals. Most Russian citizens are much more interested in traveling to other countries than in visiting the most spectacular landscapes within the Russian Federation. Into Soviet Nature will tell the story of the development of the ambitious dreams of the Soviet environmental community for transforming the
relationship between nature and society through national parks and the shattering of this dream with the collapse of the USSR and the economic turmoil that ensued afterwards. The story starts with the tourism boom that began in the years following the Great Patriotic War.
Chapter 1: Exploring the Vast Motherland: Soviet Outdoor Recreation (Turizm) after the Great Patriotic War

Throughout his childhood in the years leading up to the October Revolution, Iurii Promptov, a popular author of tourism literature, read every night by kerosene lamp about travels on horseback, foot, and boat to distant lands beyond the borders of the Russian Empire. These books gave him a good sense of the geography of other countries. But with few published works about travels in the Russian Empire, the Empire’s spectacular mountains, deserts, and canyons, no less beautiful than other parts of the world, were, according to Promptov, little more than “words in geography textbooks.”¹ For much of the 19th century, Russian elites believed that their nature was inferior to that of Europe and therefore preferred traveling there.² As artists and writers did much to celebrate the Volga, Crimea, and the Caucasus in the late 19th century, Russian elites started traveling more domestically.³ However, the vast majority of the tsar’s subjects, most of whom were uneducated peasants, could not afford to travel and the relatively poor infrastructure rendered much of the tremendously varied areas of the Russian Empire inaccessible abstractions. Thanks to the October Revolution and the Soviet government, Promptov asserted, all Soviet citizens could see the stunning natural beauty and incredible varieties of landscapes in their country from the Volga to the towering peaks of Central Asia. He wrote: “With my eyes I saw what I had previously only heard, that we have primeval forests, clear lakes, magnificent mountains, and blue seas; moreover, they are ours--native, accessible and can be seen in real life.”⁴

¹ Iurii Promptov, V gorakh i dolinakh: zapiski turista peshekhoda (Moscow: Fizkul’tura i sport, 1954), 5. Promptov undoubtedly overstates this for ideological reasons. However, because of poor transportation and the Russian Empire’s enormous territory, Russian elites travelled more in Europe than in the Russian Empire. Moreover, most of the remote regions were completely inaccessible so it was much more difficult for Russian writers of the 19th century to point to the geographical variety of the empire as an aspect of national greatness.
² Christopher Ely, This Meager Nature: Landscape and National Identity in Imperial Russia (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009).
³ Louise McReynolds, Russia at Play: Leisure Activities at the End of the Tsarist Era (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).
⁴ Promptov, 6.
When Promptov penned these words in 1954, Soviet tourism was experiencing a second wind. The German invasion of the USSR in 1941 had destroyed much of the limited network of tourist bases and alpine camps. In the first years after the war, few Soviet citizens had the time, energy, or resources to think about extensive travel as famine ravaged the countryside, workers rebuilt destroyed factories, and many citizens lacked basic necessities.\(^5\) Material conditions began to improve in the late 1940s and early 1950s.\(^6\) While revolutionary fervor and socialism’s promise for a better life inspired loyalty and heroic feats of labor during the 1930s, Soviet citizens now felt deserving of the benefits that the revolution promised and their sacrifices merited.\(^7\) Accessible tourism became one such expected improvement in Soviet life. With the state realizing that the ideological contest of the Cold War hinged as much on procuring material amenities and leisure opportunities as military superiority, the state responded to citizen demand and expanded tourism infrastructure for a growing population with increased resources and more time to travel widely. When Promptov wrote *In the Mountains and Valleys*, tourism was becoming accessible to a broad swathe of the Soviet population, which was traveling to the USSR’s most scenic landscapes in increasing numbers every year. The USSR’s wide variety of landscapes were quickly becoming a “cultural asset” for the state.\(^8\) At the same time, tourism allowed Soviet citizens to travel to places beyond the influence of the state. Paradoxically, it was becoming integrally associated with the notion of the “good life” under socialism.\(^9\)

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\(^6\) Ibid.


\(^9\) Diane Koenker, *Club Red: Vacation Travel and the Soviet Dream* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013). Julianne Furst argues that throughout the 1950s Soviet citizens increasingly sought such spaces, which also included dachas, picnics in the countryside, and interest-oriented clubs.
Travel throughout the USSR could instill in Soviet citizens a patriotic love for native landscapes, a pride in the nation’s history, and a reprieve from increasingly congested cities. However, Soviet geographers, many of whom took part in a more ideologically laden version of tourism in the 1930s, feared what tourism undirected by a sense of purpose would mean for Soviet society. Marx had argued that the appropriate organization of leisure time was critical for the full development of the human personality.\(^\text{10}\) But under socialism, the individual could not be an end in and of him/herself. Rather, the state and society would transform the individual’s character into one selflessly dedicated to the betterment of his fellow citizen and the continuing construction of socialism. By the latter part of the decade, multiple institutes and universities throughout the USSR were studying the question of how to best use leisure time in the development of the “Soviet person.”\(^\text{11}\) Simultaneously, geographers began expressing concern that tourists were motivated primarily by individual achievement, which motivated these geographers to align tourism with \textit{kraevedenie} (local history study) in an attempt to improve the “culture of tourism” by emphasizing its socially useful aspects—identifying the locations of natural resources, educating the public about the USSR’s nature, and undertaking projects for environmental protection.\(^\text{12}\)

This chapter covers the development of tourism from the late 1940s until 1962 when a ban on sporting tourism threatened the Soviet tourism system that had developed over the


\(^\text{11}\) V.N. Pimenova, \textit{Swobodnoe vremia v sotsialisticheskom obschestve} (Moscow: Izdatel’svo Nauka, 1974), 6. Among the institutes studying this question were the Institute of Philosophy AN SSSR, Scientific-Research Institute of Labor, Academy of Social Sciences under the Communist Party, in Novosibirsk, Institute of Economics and Organization of Industrial Production AN USSR, the Siberian Metallurgical Institute; in Krasnoiarsk by the Higher Party School in Krasnoiarsk, and various scientific collectives in Leningrad, Kiev, Sverdlovsk, Tblisi, Erevan, and Ufa.

\(^\text{12}\) \textit{Kraevedenie} is not a term that translates easily into English. While the best translation is “local history studies.” It is as focused as much on the study of natural history as human history. There was often a strong environmental protection aspect of it. \textit{Kraevedenie} was strongly influenced by the German Heimat tradition. For more on the Heimat Tradition, see: Thomas Lekan, \textit{Imagining the Nation in Nature: Landscape Preservation and German Identity, 1885-1945} (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2004).
previous fifteen years. From the late-Stalin era onwards, the state demonstrated greater responsiveness to citizen demand while attempting to elevate living standards as a means of further legitimating its authority. The breakneck pace of industrialization during the 1930s made issues, such as the development of domestic tourism, a minor concern and Soviet citizens were more reluctant to make demands for reforms that would bring qualitative changes to society in a political climate in which dissent was often met with brutal repression. Things changed following World War II. As scholars of Soviet tourism have duly noted, the state prioritized the expansion of the Soviet tourism system and demonstrated its understanding that improving the lives of Soviet citizens was an important aspect of Cold War competition. Nonetheless, they have glossed over the complex dialogue between the state and society, which included geographers, concerned citizens, tourism professionals, and others, out of which the system took shape. The development of Soviet tourism during these years grew out of a multiplicity of factors that included the influence of the international scientific community, the desire for the Soviet state to “sell” the socialist way of life, public sentiment, and the power of the press. This chapter will look at the complex interplay of factors that influenced the development of Soviet tourism from the late 1940s until the early 1960s and how different groups sought to instill the tourism movement with a socially-useful orientation.

Tourism and the Making of the Soviet “Good Life” in the Postwar Period

In the months following the end of the Great Patriotic War, the USSR faced a wide array of problems. The dramatic loss of men had created a demographic crisis. Industrial en-

14 Koenker. Also see Anne Gorsuch, All This is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad After Stalin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
enterprises and infrastructure lay in ruin. Chronic illnesses afflicted large swathes of the population. Finally, an agricultural crisis brought on famine in which between one and 1.5 million Soviet citizens would die. The state was already realizing that repression and appeals to patriotism alone could not placate a population that had and continued to suffer so much. As Vera Dunham has argued, Soviet leaders sought to improve the quality of life of the “middle class” to maintain their loyalty.

Many of the calls for improvements to the quality of life of Soviet citizens came under the rubric of ‘kul’turnost’ (“having culture”) in the postwar years. The state prioritized the appropriate use of leisure time as one of the most important arenas for creating the cultured “Soviet person.” “We want to make all of our workers and peasants cultured and educated, and we will do this with time,” Pravda quoted Stalin as saying in late 1945 in describing the highest goal of a “cultural revolution.” According to the anonymous writer of the article, achieving this required well-equipped and clean libraries, clubs, theaters, museums, stadiums, parks, and other cultural centers with educated staff. However, in the months following the war, trade unions, which were responsible for these institutions, had failed to properly equip them while staffing them with “unenlightened” workers. Such institutions, the author argued, were failing to carry out their central responsibilities of the promotion physical fitness, tourism, and “artistic independence.”

17 Ibid., 8.
19 Ibid.
20 Grigori Usiskin, Ocherky istorii rossiiskogo turizma (Moscow: 2000).
21 Ibid.
Trade union organizations did build several tourist bases and territorial tourism bureaus in the three years that followed. However, popular tourist camps in Crimea, the Caucasus and on Lake Seliger in the Kalinin Oblast remained largely in disrepair. Moreover, tourists had difficulty finding guidebooks and equipment. The Central Trade Union Council’s Tourism-Excursion Administration (TEA) held a conference to address these and other issues in 1948. Turizm (outdoor recreation), many participants asserted, was the best form of leisure for promoting the physical and moral perfection that the “cultural revolution” promised. Whereas sanatoria and houses of relaxation, some argued, encouraged laziness, turizm promoted vigor and full engagement with one’s surroundings. Yet the TEA, by its own admission, had failed to treat tourism as a mass movement and created the false impression that Crimea and the Caucasus were the only areas worth visiting. In the words of an engineer from Gidroproekt serving on the TEA, Soviet citizens were “afraid of the Urals, afraid of Altai, and afraid to learn about the opportunities in their own region.”

Reflecting the growing sense among Soviet middle class citizens that they were entitled to an improved quality of life, articles in Pravda and Literaturnaia gazeta during the next two years encouraged tourists to demand changes in the tourism system. In late spring of 1950, P. Vershigora, a member of the TEA, wrote an opinion piece in Literaturnaia gazeta in which he accused the Trade Union Council and the Committee of Physical Culture and Sport of “complete indifference” to tourism. In the two months following the publication of

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22 Ibid., 148.
23 Sanatoria became popular during the interwar years and continued to attract numerous tourists in the decades following World War II. Diane Koenker’s Club Red provides the best account of the sanatoria tourism. For more on the development of Sochi in the interwar years, see: Johanna Centerior, “Inventing the Subtropics: An Environmental History of Sochi, 1929-1936” Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Winter 2015), 91-120.
24 GARF, f. 9520, opis’ 2, delo, 69, l and 12.
25 Ibid.
27 P. Vershigora, Samyi massovyi i samyi zabroshchennyi vid sporta” Literaturnaia gazeta, May 20, 1950, 2.
Vershigora’s critical article, tourists from across the Soviet Union sent letters to the editorial board of Literaturnaia gazeta, which published excerpts from them along with the journal’s suggestions for improving tourism. Tourists asked where they could find equipment and where they should spend their vacations. One reader emphasized that in the years prior to the war tourism had allowed him to “know” his country, and yet this was no longer the case for most Soviet citizens.28

Tourists most frequently expressed concern about the complete lack of relevant literature that provided practical advice and celebrated the most scenic Soviet landscapes. Raisa Rubel’, a professor of geology at Sverdlovsk Pedagogical Institute who would later write tourist guidebooks, sent a letter directly to both Stalin and the editorial board. She wrote:

The Urals attract many tourists from different parts of the Soviet Union, and people come to us for consultation. They would like to receive thorough answers and helpful advice on how to travel better. It would be advisable to raise the question about establishing a collection of lively essays dedicated to travel descriptions.29

In another letter, after asserting that a true “patriot” must know their country, the writer, A. Gortsenevskii, wrote:

We still use the terms “Russian Switzerland,” “Russian Riviera,” and so forth. However, by the banks of Baikal, the Lena, and the Enisei there are views to which all the beauty in Europe cannot compare. While writers have described Europe to us, they have not properly done this with their own country.30

The editorial board supported these criticisms in concluding the article: “The stubborn silence of the leaders of the Trade Union Council and the All-Union Committee for the Affairs of Physical Culture and Sport on the publication of tourism literature is incomprehensible. This silence seems to be evidence of their lack of attention to the fate of mass tourism.”31

28 Letters to the Editor, “Vosstonovit v pravakh massovyi turizm” Literaturnaia gazeta, July 22, 1950, 2
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
Like letters to the editor of any newspaper in any society, the editorial board likely selected these letters for a specific political purpose, which was developing a narrative of a state ready to respond to the demands of its citizens. However, I do not doubt the authenticity of the letters. Scholars, such as Julianne Furst, have convincingly demonstrated that the press frequently took a more critical tone in Stalin’s final years than it had during the 1930s. Moreover, the authors were real people and not some creation of the editorial board. Raisa Rubel’, for example, will appear later in our story as the author of the first comprehensive guidebook for the Urals. In the unlikely chance that these letters were a scripted charade, the state clearly realized that it needed to convey an image an image of responsiveness and concern for the desires of its citizens, as Dunham has noted, to bolster its legitimacy before Soviet citizens, especially the more educated public.

Less than two months after the publication of the article, the Trade Union Council passed a resolution, “On the improvement of the work of trade union organizations in the development of tourism.” In a letter to Literaturnaia gazeta less than one month after the Central Trade Union council passed this resolution, the Council’s chair, I. Goroshkin, stated that the TEA had considered the newspaper’s criticisms. The resolution called on trade union organizations and the councils of sporting societies to take measures to attract guides who could lead both day trips and treks to more distant regions and stated that every physical culture collective should have a tourism section. While the Trade Union Council also committed to invest more than 450,000 rubles into a fund for tourism equipment and the development of a program for educating instructors, it called on Profizdat (Trade Union Publishing House) to include a plan for the publication of tourism brochures in 1951. The Council also

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32 Furst, 22.
34 Ibid.
requested the Committee on Physical Culture and Sport under the USSR Council of Ministers to develop rules and norms for separate types of tourism.

In the late 1930s, an article in the tourist journal On Land and on Sea (Na sushe i na more) had made similar complaints about the state of tourism following the Central Committee’s decision to liquidate the Society of Proletarian Tourists (OPT) in 1936 and form the Tourism Excursion Administration under the Central Trade Union Council. However in the repressive political climate of the late 1930s, no sector of society was immune from the Stalinist culture of suspicion. With tourists being told to root out spies in their midst, it is hardly surprising that representatives of the Central Trade Union Council strongly upbraided Pokrovskii, who penned the article that criticized the Central Trade Union Council for failing to manage tourism effectively.

Indeed, things had changed significantly. The continuing allusions to the importance of a high quality of life among high-ranking Soviet officials and increasing liberalization under Khrushchev empowered Soviet citizens to voice limited criticism and call for some reforms. In the first half of the 1950s, the leading central newspapers, Pravda, Izvestiia, and Literaturnaia gazeta, published hundreds of articles on tourism, many of which continued to press the Trade Union Council and the Committee of Physical Culture and Sport to promote and develop tourism more fully. The Trade Union Council responded to these criticisms by

35 “Postanovlenie: Tsentral’nogo ispolnitel’nogo komiteta Sovuza SSSR, O likvidatsii vsesoouznogo obshchestva proletarskogo turizma i ekskursii” Na sushe i na more 5 (May 1936), 4. The stated reason for the liquidation of the OPT was that tourism was part of the Physical Culture Movement. However, the more likely reason was that in an increasingly repressive political environment the Communist Party wanted to put the tourism movement under more direct control of the state, which led to the creation of the Tourism Excursion Administration.

36 O. Grinfeld, “My ne soglasny” Na sushe i na more 12 (December 1936), 14. In this letter, after rejecting all of Pokrovskii’s criticisms, O. Grinfeld’d writes: “There remains one question. Why would the journal On Land and on Sea, an organ of the Central Trade Union Council and the Central Committee of Komsomol, use its pages for dragging condemned views and opening a discussion of articles that are a sortie against the directing organs of the tourism movement?”

37 Boris Egorov and Ian Polushchik, “V storone to turistogo shliakha” Literaturnaia gazeta, September 18, 1951, 2. Egorov and Polushchik write: “The tourist army waits for attention. They need books about the motherland, guidebooks, instructional movies. They need equipment, methodological material, and, finally equipment!” Also see: Anonymous, “Otpusk Sovetskogo Truzhenika” Literaturnaia gazeta, May 27, 1952, 1. No Author,
increasing its investment in tourism infrastructure every year. The number of tourists served by the TEA nearly quintupled from just over 1.2 million to 5.6 million over the course of the decade. The state’s investment increased from 600,000 rubles per year in 1952 to 3.4 million in 1960.\(^{38}\) While there were only 71 tourist bases in 1952, there were 220 by the decade’s end.\(^{39}\) Soviet citizens established clubs on their own initiative throughout the USSR.\(^{40}\) In 1950, the Moscow Club of Tourists had been the only tourist club in the USSR. By 1960, there were more than 50 tourist clubs throughout the Soviet Union. These clubs catered primarily to those taking part in outdoor recreation.

The USSR’s most experienced tourists were ordinarily enthusiasts who attended events at tourist clubs. During the 1950s, these clubs became hubs for tourists to receive instruction and guidance that would help them set off into the backcountry where they could rely on themselves, avoid the much maligned poor service of tourism establishments, and escape small communal apartments and a suffocating political culture.\(^{41}\) While Soviet citizens continued to relax in spas, visit historical sites, and even spend time at the poorly run and equipped tourist camps, the person with the backpack and tent who set off on multi-day, sometimes multi-week, trips in awe-inspiring, remote landscapes became the archetypal Soviet tourist of the 1950s.

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\[\text{38 GARP, f. 9520, op. 1, d. 2524, 1.}
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\[\text{39 Ibid.}
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\[\text{40 GARP: Fond 9520, opis’ 1, delo 57: 13.}
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\[\text{41 GARP: fond 9520, opis’ 1, delo 90, 2. GARP: Fond 9520, opis’ 1, delo 447, 25.}
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Sporting Tourism

Sporting tourism allowed tourists to ascend a ranking system based on a tourist’s skills and participation in long expeditions. While improving the person through encouraging him or her to overcome physical and psychological obstacles, sporting tourism focused largely on providing opportunities to learn more about native nature through direct experience. Originally introduced on March 17, 1939, the badge (znachok), Turist SSSR was the first step in the system’s evolution. The Central Trade Union Council established new norms for the badge in a 1949 resolution, which also introduced sporting ranks for tourism, culminating in the “Master of Sport.” Receiving the Turist SSSR badge required the participant to complete one trip of the first category (for example a hike of 180 km). Tourists had to know how to make some basic equipment, determine the time based on the sun’s position, set up camp, build a campfire in any condition, prepare food, and properly identify edible mushrooms and berries.

The requirements for becoming a Master of Sport changed periodically and eventually tourists could earn this distinction for skiing, backpacking, and all forms of water tourism. However, when the Committee of Physical Culture and Sport introduced the rank, tourists were required to take part in three different kinds of tourism (skiing, hiking, water) on twelve long expeditions. The requirements did not differ for men and women. To become a Master of Sport, tourists had to travel to four different geographic regions and traverse more than 3,000 kilometers. The tourist reports (otchety) demonstrate that most of the citizens who

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42 Znachky are small pens that were widely collected in the USSR. While some could be bought, others, like Turist SSSR, had to be earned. For the requirements for receiving it, see: "Znachek turista: Programma, trebovanii, i norm" Na sushki i na more 4 (April 1939), 28.
44 Azarkh., 29.
attained this rank were from the middle class. As sociological studies indicated, male members of the intelligentsia, especially engineers, participated in turizm far more than other social groups.\textsuperscript{45} While the wartime years had witnessed the normalization of different practices and fashion accouterments to signify distinctions in rank between officers, now middle class Soviet citizens increasingly looked to, among other things, material items and sporting qualifications to assert their status within Soviet society.\textsuperscript{46} Sporting accomplishment in turizm was a means of attaining an individualistic marker of achievement for a generation that was less motivated by the utopian dreams espoused by the revolution.\textsuperscript{47}

Tourism’s demands on its participants’ ingenuity, self-reliance, and resourcefulness appealed to the individualistic spirit of the last Stalin generation. Although the selection of guidebooks and published narrative accounts of tourist treks increased every year, these books were still scarce and tourists usually had to research outside of the existing tourism literature. Tourists would frequent libraries with other members of their group not only to determine routes, but also to educate themselves on the geography, flora, fauna, weather, geology, and natural hazards of the region. In their search for useful information, tourists wrote to members of other tourist sections and clubs, village councils, the Institute of Geography, and directors of nature reserves (zapovedniki).\textsuperscript{48}

During the early years of its development in the postwar period, tourists living in Moscow had considerably more opportunities not only to meet other tourists, but more resources to plan expeditions, which sometimes made tourists from other regions envious.

\textsuperscript{46} Dunham, “The Big Deal,” 14.
\textsuperscript{47} Furst, 5. Furst talks about the “last Stalin generation” as being considerably more individualistic than previous generations.
Moscow tourists had access to the Moscow Club of Tourists’ library, which had many detailed reports from previous expeditions. They could also go to the Lenin Library and had opportunities to receive consultations from tourist experts known throughout the USSR, such as Aleksandr Kemmerikh and A. Azarkh, and listen to lectures from well-known geographers, such as David Armand, who was a survivor of the GULAG and would in 1964 write the most important book popularizing environmental protection in the USSR.\footnote{Aleksandr Kemmerikh, Puteshestvie tseloi zhizni (Moscow: Moskovskie uchebniki i Kartolitografiia, 2004), 93-98. \url{http://www.tlib.ru/doc.aspx?id=28918&page=6}} Groups from the Moscow Club of Tourists frequently went directly to the Institutes of Geography and Geology, or other institutes within the Academy of Sciences to ask questions about the regions to which they intended to travel.\footnote{http://www.tlib.ru/doc.aspx?id=37166&page=1}

These consultations were also important in attracting the scientific community’s attention to the organization of tourism, which I will discuss extensively in later chapters. Once a group determined its route, its members would appear before the Route Commission of the TEA for a “defense.” Having successfully “defended,” the group would then begin the process of acquiring the needed tools and equipment. Before the 1970s, they frequently had to construct much of this equipment themselves. These details were recounted, often meticulously, in the trip report (otchet), a practice that began in the 1930s, but had become more standardized by the 1950s.\footnote{For an article on expectations for ochery during the 1930s, see: O. Archangel’skaia, “Turistskii otchet” Na sushi i na more 9 (September 1939), 14.}

The TEA used tourist reports to determine if a tourist would be rewarded a higher rank or the category of Master of Sport. These reports were impressive not only for their detailed accounts of expeditions, but also for the extensive research required on the natural and human histories of the area. The best reports integrated this research into a travel diary that
gave descriptions of the group’s daily routine and details of the flora, fauna, and geology observed on the expedition. Many reports celebrated the state’s industrial progress. Significantly fewer mentioned Marxist-Leninist principles. Almost every report provided an overview of the region's valuable natural resources and, to varying degrees, exalted native nature. Reports included photographs and detailed hand-drawn maps intended for future groups to use. Critics sometimes argued that long reports, some the “equivalent of dissertations,” demanded too much time to read and would sit idly in tourism clubs.⁵² Some probably did. But their greatest value was perhaps the educational significance for the tourists writing them. Reflecting this emphasis, G.A. Zelenko wrote in 1958 in the almanac Tourist Trails: “If you know your Motherland only through books and photographs then it is unknown to you. To love your motherland is to know it not as a far off guest but as a steward and as a close friend—this is a beautiful thing. Tourism gives us this.”⁵³

Trip reports were either stored in tourist sections of enterprises or sent to clubs. Tourist clubs operated with some support from the Central Trade Union Organization and often united different tourist sections. In addition to providing support for long distance trips, tourist clubs led “trips of the weekend day” (pokhod vykhodnogo dnia) outside of the city, star-gazing walks, photo exhibitions, lectures, provided rental equipment, held workshops in which valuable tourism skills were taught, hosted video showings of tourist trips, and also published promotional newsletters and informational pamphlets.⁵⁴ Famous writers, such as the nature writer Konstantin Paustovskii, frequently gave readings to the Moscow Club of

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⁵² GARF: Fond 9520, opis’ 2, delo 8: 97, 144, and 147. At the fourth plenum of the central section of mass tourism and the first organizational plenum of the Route-Qualifying Commission, several participants stated that tourists frequently complained about the time spent writing these and compared them to dissertations.
⁵⁴ Boris Zhutovskii and Dmitri Petrov, “Turistskimi Tropami” Molodaia gvardia 7 (July 1958), 210. The weekend was only one day in the USSR until 1961.
Tourists. Film directors and artists were often honored guests. For nearly two decades, the geographer and famous tourist, Aleksandr Kemmerikh, spent three evenings a week at the club. Clubs and tourism sections would frequently collaborate in holding rallies that would attract tourists from different parts of the country. At these rallies, they would hold competitions on tourism techniques and the best tourism song, show one another photographs from different treks, and exchange badges commemorating specific expeditions or locations. Such events strengthened personal and organizational connections between regions, exposed Soviet citizens to firsthand information about distant corners of the country, and helped them conceive of their nation’s vast geographical space as more cohesive.

Celebrating the Native Landscape

Regional and central publishing houses increased their publication of tourism literature through the course of the 1950s. While these books paid the requisite lip service to Marxist-Leninist ideology, they more thoroughly emphasized patriotism borne out of a sense of wonder and gratitude for the Motherland’s natural landscapes. “Love for the socialist Motherland will be one hundred times stronger if we know this beautiful country,” began a 1955 guidebook to Karelia. Similarly, a book entitled Tourist Trails in the Tambov Region, began with the following statement: “Genuine love for one's country comes through knowledge. This knowledge arises largely from travel and hiking. Then every little thing, even the lonely old willow by the river or the oriole whistling in the woods--adds to this love.”

55 Kemmerikh., 96.  
56 Ibid., 97.  
57 Ibid., 96.  
58 V. Karelin “Slet druzhby” Turistskie trophy (Moscow: Fizkul’tura i sport, 1958), 1.  
59 I.M. Mullo, Po rodnomu kraiu (Petrozavodsk, Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo karelo-finskoj SSR, 1955), 3.  
Although books published by regional publishing houses emphasized patriotism through love for one’s locality, most works from central presses emphasized the vast expanses of the Soviet Union and the opportunities that this offered to all Soviet citizens to make distant travels and become familiar with a spectacular variety of landscapes.61 “Being Soviet,” at least for Promptov and a growing number of people, was about having such opportunities. During the 1950s, Profizdat (Trade Union Publishing House), Fizkul’tura i Sport (Physical Culture and Sport Publishing House), and Molodaia gvardia (Young Guard) began publishing travel narratives and guidebooks that waxed romantically about the native landscape and the tourism experience while providing tourists with information to make travel easier.62 Frequently stating that tourism and reconnecting with nature was necessary for an increasingly urbanized population, these works described travel as a grand adventure for a population whose lives were becoming more stable, orderly, predictable, and perhaps even boring.63

The Soviet tourism explosion, in this sense, differed little from “back to nature” movements throughout the world, which occurred during times of rapid urbanization.64 It was such urbanization in the United States that created the cultural climate for the establishment of national parks and that prompted John Muir, an icon of American environmental protection, to say: “Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find

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61 For other examples on regional tourism books promoting love for the locality see: E. Pereshenkov, Krai semi sokrovishch (Vladivostok: Primorskoie knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1959) and A.S. Ivanova et al., Izuchai svoi krai (Magadan: Magadanskoie knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1959).

62 Viktor Vitkovich, Puteshestvie po sovetskoi uzbekistana (Moscow Molodaia Gvardia, 1951).


out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity.” With Soviet society urbanizing at a faster rate than any civilization in history, few societies have seen the dramatic increase in numbers of tourists leaving the cities as the USSR did in the postwar years. In the decades to follow, Soviet writers would say things that in translation one could even confuse with the expressed sentiments of John Muir. Tourism provided opportunities for Soviet romantics to reconnect, albeit temporarily, with the natural world and envision themselves as pioneers, as a modern-day “Magellan” or “Columbus,” who could chart relatively unexplored terrain.65

Tourism guidebooks served to promote tourism, instruct tourists, and exalt the native landscape. First published in the early 1950s, the Profizdat books focused exclusively on sporting tourism. The books in this series gave accounts of tourists planning their trips through late nights scouring the collections of the Lenin Library, consultations with experienced tourists at tourist clubs, acquiring equipment, allocating responsibilities within the group, the precise planning of relatively unknown routes that tourists would travel, and the romantic exaltation of the beautiful landscapes.66 The Altai Mountains were extolled for their deep canyons, taiga thickets, and the majestic peak Belukha—the highest point in Siberia. One writer, Alexander Kocheev called Altai superior to Italy and Switzerland.67 Books about the Urals, Sayan, Pamir, Baikal, the Caucasus, and Kamchatka all emphasized the unique attributes of the respective regions while repeatedly asserting that the Soviet Union had the most diverse

and beautiful nature in the world. As was the case in most of the published tourism literature, the introduction of a wide-ranging travel account published Giografizdat (Geographical Publishing House), *Among the Mountains of Crimea, the Caucasus and Central Asia* (1954), emphasized this fact in a clear effort to legitimize the absence of freedom to travel internationally. The book’s author, Dmitrii Scherbatov, stated: “Our Motherland stretches from the Arctic to the Pamir, from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean and there is not another country in the world that is more beautiful or more expansive.”\(^6^8\)

In 1959, *Fizkul’tura i Sport* publishing house began publishing a series of tourism books from around the Soviet Union. The popular series of *Fizkul’tura i Sport*’s series, “Po Rodnym Prostoram,” published 61 books on all types of tourism throughout the Soviet Union from 1959 to 1989.\(^6^9\) The books’ introductions implied that the USSR’s vast space—12,000 kilometers from East to West—was all its citizens needed to sate their wanderlust.

A human life is short to get to know all the corners of the Soviet Union, to listen to the whisper of hot sands in the dunes of Central Asia, to enjoy the spectacular northern lights, to swim in the scenic forest lakes of Central Russia, to walk with a caravan of caribou on taiga trails, to shoot along a turbulent mountain river on a raft, to climb mountain peaks, to climb down into underground caves.\(^7^0\)

Each foreword followed the above statement with the following: “Getting to know the most interesting places of our Motherland is accessible to everyone. For this, one simply needs to put a backpack on ones shoulders, leave home.....and the world, full of charm and unforgettable impressions, will take you into its embraces.”\(^7^1\) While tourism might have provided the

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\(^6^8\) Dmitrii Shcherbakov, *Po goram Kryma, Kavkaza, i Sremsnei Azii* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo geograficheskoi literatury, 1954), 200.


\(^7^0\) Grigori Andreevich Zelenko, *Gde iskat’ zhemchuzhinu Altaiia* (Moscow: Fizkul’tura i sport, 1959), 3.

\(^7^1\) Ibid.
best means to expose Soviet citizens to the country’s varied landscapes, the state also sought other means of emphasizing the variety and beauty of Soviet nature. In 1959, for instance, the Soviet postal service began regularly issuing stamps celebrating some of the USSR’s most majestic landscapes. Beautiful landscapes were quickly becoming “cultural assets,” as US landscapes were at the end of the 19th century at the time the first national parks were established.\(^\text{72}\) In 1959, the Soviet postal service issued a series of stamps featuring some of the USSR’s most scenic landscapes.

The USSR’s majestic landscapes and the vast opportunities they presented for tourism were not lost on the political elite who used them to assert their nation’s greatness. When interviewed by the Italian newspaper, *Il Tempo*, in 1958, Khrushchev boasted of the Soviet Union’s natural beauty. After the interviewer asked why only 3,000 Soviet tourists visited Italy each year, Khrushchev replied: “You have to keep in mind that there are places in the Soviet Union as beautiful as those in Italy.” After asking the interviewer if he had been to Crimea or the Caucasus and learning that the interviewer had only been to Moscow, Khrushchev continued:

You see, we are reproached for tourists going few places, but you yourself have only been to Moscow! Do you know that people who have been in Italy and in Crimea or Sochi say that we have as beautiful places as you…I myself have never been, but they say that the Altai Mountains have the sort of beauty that entrances. And take Kyrgyz SSR, Uzbek SSR, and Kazakh SSR, and other Central Asian Republics and cities. I have been to Frunze, Alma-Ata, Tashkent, and Stalinabad. These are regions with indescribable beauty. See how many opportunities a Soviet person has to spend his free time.\(^\text{73}\)

\(^{72}\) Runte, 2.

He continued: “Or take the Black Sea Coast, the Republic of Georgia, the areas of Batumi, Gogra, Sukhumi, and others. These are charming places, well landscaped and with exceptional nature. I have not been to Italy but it seems that these places can compete with the nature of Italy with respect to their beauty. And I have said nothing about the Far East. And our North? It also has many charms. A human lifetime is not enough to become familiar with all of the beauty of the Soviet Union.”

There was certainly nothing new in the connection between love of native nature and patriotism. The establishment of US National Parks at the turn of the 19th century exemplified this fact. However, no other nation could claim the cultural, geographical, and geological variety of the USSR. While the that empire preceded it was its rough equivalent in size, the vast majority of the population—poor, illiterate peasants—hardly had the means to venture to the far corners of the empire. Moreover, it was only in the second half of the 20th century when the USSR had reached a point in its technological and infrastructural development that traveling throughout the country was possible. Although trusted Soviet citizens travelled to the West in highly organized and controlled trips, the vast majority of the population could only travel within the USSR’s borders. If one aspect of Cold War competition was going to be a contest of notions of the “good life,” the Soviet state had a strong interest in assuring its citizens that their nation was the most beautiful and most interesting in which to travel. Although the USSR might have been many years from producing the sort of amenities that could make domestic life as comfortable for the average Soviet citizen as it was for many Americans, beautiful nature was a subjective evaluation for which it could claim superiority without having to show comparable levels of production. Because of the USSR’s enormous size and geographical diversity, Soviet propagandists could make a very strong argument that theirs was the most beautiful and interesting nature.

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74 Ibid.
Redefining Tourism’s Purpose

Since the 1930s, tourism's proponents had asserted that the development of a strong character was one of tourism’s most important functions. But fortitude, resilience, resourcefulness, courage, and even patriotism meant much less if not oriented to socially useful purposes. During the 1930s, tourists had collaborated with scientific institutes which would assign tourists with specific tasks deemed essential for socialist construction. Tourism had been an important “coming of age” activity for many, such as Iurii Efremov--a famous naturalist and founder of the Moscow Geographical Museum. Efremov and others of his generation were concerned that by focusing on individual accomplishment sporting tourism had degraded the overall “culture of tourism.” Writing in 1958 in the journal Tourist trails (Turistskie tropy), he asserted:

Does the country need people receiving tourism badges and ranks to encourage ambition? Isn’t it more important for us to see the true multi-sided cultural growth of tourists? A tourism rank holder shouldn’t just be an athlete. He must be an example of the progressive culture of tourism and possess a high level of knowledge of the places he has visited, and show a breadth of local history interests, a love for nature, and the desire to protect and conserve it.

75 Bors Zhutovskii and Dmitri Petrov, “Turistskimi Tropami” Molodaia Gvardiia 7 (July 1958). The authors say about tourists: “In their circles there are no hooligans, no hipsters, nor other rotten types.”
76 Igor Orlov and Elena Yurchikova, Massovy turizm v stalinskoi povsevdovnosti (Moscow: 2010), 19. In 1931, for instance, there was an All-Union Research trip with the slogan “Raw Materials for Machines in the Five-Year Plan
77 Iurii Efremov, “K uchenym sovetskogo soiuza: k voprose kul’tura turizm” Turistskie tropy (Moscow: Fizkul’tura i sport, 1958), 14.
For Efremov, this was no minor matter, for, as he later said: “The struggle for culture tourism is an indelible part of our struggle for socialist culture in general.”

Because sporting tourism did not exist during the 1930s, it was natural for Efremov to view the tourism of the 1950s as a self-serving exercise that did not serve the greater good of society and the country. Efremov’s first experience with tourism came in 1934, when working for a summer at the Engel Tourism Station in the Caucasus. The experience convinced him that one could, as he said, not “know one’s country from behind a desk” and that direct interaction with nature was essential to “understand the greatness of the country.” After this experience, Efremov lost interest in his classes at Moscow Timiriazev Agricultural Institute and spent most of his time reading on the nature and history of the Krasnaia Poliana region where he had worked. He returned to the Tourist Station for the summer of 1936, worked as the lead instructor, and emphasized natural history in his work with tourists. After that summer, Efremov did not return to the Agricultural Institute and instead worked for the Spa (Kurort) Design Institute where he planned for the development of tourism in Ritsa—a mountain lake in the North Caucasus.

After enrolling in Department of Geography at Moscow State University and then graduating, Efremov taught soldiers geography during the war. Following the war, he moved to Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands where he led geographical expeditions. Efremov returned to the Department of Geography and established the Geography Museum where he emphasized the need for tourism to take on a socially useful role. He believed that realigning the growing tourism movement with kraevedenie would be the best way to achieve this goal. At the Third All-Union Geographical Congress in 1959, he said: “The problem of

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78 Ibid.
80 Ibid., 14.
the connection of *kraevedenie* with tourism includes the opposite effect—help of *kraevedy* to tourism and of tourists to *kraevedy.*”

Largely inspired by the German tradition *landeskunde,* *kraevedenie* came to Russia in the late nineteenth-century. The subject emphasized the study of local history and geography through direct experience—mainly hikes and expeditions—in the area of study, but it was actually as much an experiential approach to education as a specific field. Its proponents argued that direct experience allowed students to see “geographic reality,” and connections between fields, develop keen observation skills and inquisitiveness, and assert independence. Its supporters, which included the renowned geologist Alexander Fersman, believed that it was an important tool for local communities to take active part in socialist construction.

Following the establishment of the Central Bureau of Kraevedenie in 1922, *kraevedenie* organizations grew significantly until 1929 when the state began to repress *kraevedenie* for its “bourgeois passéism.” In the academic purge from 1929 to 1931, the state arrested thousands of *kraevedy* for “revolutionary activities” and took control of the activities of all local history organizations, including the Central Bureau of Kraevedenie. *Kraevedenie* became largely a tool for state propaganda. The Central Bureau of *Kraevedenie* (TsBK), however, continued to operate until 1937 when the state abolished it altogether. Some local history museums would continue to operate over the next two decades, but *kraevedenie* was much diminished throughout the USSR.

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The attack on *kraevedenie* continued through the early 1950s. In 1954, the RSFSR Council of Ministers passed a decree that closed 33 local history museums due to “shortcomings in their activities.”\(^84\) Articles in the central press lamented the languishing of *kraevedenie* with one *Literaturnaia gazeta* article calling *kraevedenie* a “half-forgotten word.”\(^85\) To be sure, the articles probably overstated the case. The most famous Soviet explorer of the twentieth century, the geologist Sergei Vladimirovich Obruchev, who “discovered” the 1000-kilometer long, 3000-meter high Cherskii Ridge in the Sakha Republic and the Magadan Oblast in the Far East, wrote a two volume, 1500-page *Guide for the Kraeved and Traveler* in 1949.\(^86\) However, despite the efforts of Obruchev, Efremov, and others, *kraevedenie* had suffered from the repeated attacks by the state. While sporting tourists were doing some work similar to *kraevedy* in their reports, they did not share this information with the scientific community. Obruchev, Efremov, and others wanted to make interaction with the scientific community and service to the state central to the definition of a good *kraev* and tourist.

The political liberalization of the mid to late-1950s allowed for *kraevedenie*’s resurgence. At the 20th Congress of the Communist Party, known for Khrushchev’s “Secret Speech” that began the process of de-Stalinization, the Party put more emphasis on the formation of voluntary societies and called on citizens to help find useful minerals and other natural resources. Moreover, as Victoria Donovan has argued, the Khrushchev government was in need of new sources of legitimation and looked more to local traditions to achieve this.\(^87\)

\(^84\) Ibid., “How Well Do You Know Your Krai,” 473.
This gave a push for the revival of *kraevedenie* traditions and ignited the hopes for the establishment of a Local History Society. While the Geographical Society, founded in 1845, had long been one of Russia’s and the USSR’s most important organizations in bringing science to the layperson, it more explicitly made tourism and *kraevedenie* its means of doing this in 1956 when it formed the Commission on *Kraevedenie* and Tourism. Chaired by Obruchev, the Commission viewed itself as the missing link between science and tourism. The Commission would provide a center to propagandize tourism’s importance in expanding the geographical knowledge of the USSR, to help tourists determine concrete scientific tasks, and to organize lectures promoting the movement. It considered the *kraev* a “scout” (*razvedchik*) for scientific institutes and took the position that no tourist expedition should go out without performing local history (*kraevedenie*) work.

Tourists from all over the country wrote to the Commission inquiring about the best places to travel. While some tourists sought advice about how to travel outside of the USSR, the Commission encouraged tourists to explore the Soviet Union’s most beautiful areas. “We would advise you to direct attention to traveling in our Soviet country. You can take part in a number of fantastic hikes in the Krasnoiarsk Region. In the Eastern and Western Sayan, by the tributaries of the Enisei, in Zabaikal, on Sakhalin, and on Kamchatka, there are..."
many unexplored places that lack any description,” the commission wrote to one tourist from Krasnoiarsk in an attempt to dissuade him from seeking permission to take a trip outside of the USSR. In their home country, the Commission asserted, Soviet tourists could find the most beautiful places in the world while providing knowledge that would serve the state.

The Commission gave itself much credit for the expanded interest in tourism. From 1960 to 1963, different educational journals and magazines published more than 250 articles on school kraevedenie. These articles focused on the work of schoolchildren in studying their home region, establishing museums, protecting the environment, and, perhaps most importantly, discovering raw materials. The call for tourists and kraevedy to help produce knowledge of little-studied regions and search for raw materials was strengthened with the introduction of the seven-year plan in 1959. That year, the Geographical Society organized the Second All-Union Expedition of Pioneers and Schoolchildren in which 436 divisions with 10,000 school-aged children looked for mineral deposits and collected folklore from to Central Asia. While these findings were perhaps not that significant when compared to the scale of mineral exploitation taking place in the USSR, they attempted to instill the belief in Soviet citizens, especially young ones, that they were taking active part in socialist construction. While the Geographical Society had been essential in reviving this tradition, different organizations throughout the USSR were leading these expeditions by the 1960s.

Soviet citizens in the Urals, Siberia, and the Far East joined in such expeditions with particular enthusiasm. With perhaps more intensive industrial development than any other

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92 ARGO 1-1959 (43): 68.
93 Ibid.
94 ARGO 1-1964, 24, 112. These articles were published in Primary School (Nachal'naia shkola), General Education School for Adults (Obshcheobrazovatel'naia shkola vrosslykh) School and Production (Shkola i proizvodstvo), Teaching History in School (Prepodavanie istorii v shkole), Geography in School (Geografiia v shkole), Chemistry in School (Khimiia v shkole), and Literature in School (Literatura v shkole).
95 Correspondent, “Kraevedy-doborvoltsy semiletki” Literaturnaia gazeta, February 14, 1959, 2.
region in the USSR during the late 1950s and early 1960s, the areas around Baikal—the Irkutsk Oblast and Buriatia Republic—required a large supply of rocks and minerals for the construction of dams and new factories. In 1958, Pioneer and Komsomol divisions, students, and tourists from the Baikal region began coordinating with scientific institutes in carrying out geological expeditions in the region. While the Irkutsk Geological Administration helped coordinate these multi-day expeditions, the press presented them as the “initiative of the public.”

In 1958, 20,000 citizens participated. Individuals and groups sent hundreds of reports on the findings of useful minerals to the Irkutsk Geological Administration. While groups had sent in 145 reports on the discoveries of useful minerals to the Geological Administration in the previous 20 years, they sent 200 reports during a period of less than seven months in 1958.

Local newspapers printed over 200 articles about the expedition. In April 1959 of the following year, over 500 scientists, teachers, geologists, kraevedy, and foresters, some of whom came from Moscow, Khabarovsk, Chita, Irkutsk and Ulan-Ude, gathered in Irkutsk for a rally to begin the year’s geological expedition. The number of participants in the 1959 expedition doubled to 40,000 and expedition participants sent over 450 new findings to the geological administration.

By 1960, Izvestii referred to the “geological expedition” in the region of Baikal as a “people’s tradition.” During 1960, more than 120,000 took part in geological expeditions across the USSR. These expeditions were also becoming popular on Kamchatka and Primorie, and in the Urals, where the magazine Ural’skii Sledopyt (Ural Stalker) organized them.

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98 I. Polushin, “Na razvedku nedr” Izvestii, April 12, 1959, 6.
99 Ibid.
No magazine embraced the values and mission of *kraevedenie* as thoroughly and explicitly as *Ural Stalker*. *Ural Stalker* was published for one year in 1935 before its discontinuation. Revived in 1958, the magazine, like the Geographical Society, sought to reorient tourism to socially useful goals and facilitate dialogue between the public and the scientific community—mainly geographers, geologists, and biologists—through carrying out tourist expeditions in service to the state. From the first year of its publication, the magazine had over 30,000 subscribers. By the early 1980s, this had increased to 255,000.\(^{103}\) Describing the journal and the movement in a 1959 *Literaturnaiia gazeta* article, Larisa Isarova wrote: “This (the pathfinder movement) is about engendering patriotism, which has never been an abstract love for an abstract Motherland. A person must know and love her as he loves his home, a river, his region, and its construction projects.”\(^{104}\)

Most of the time, the journal used the terms *kraevedenie, turizm,* and *sledopytstvo* (pathfinding) synonymously. Tourists had had become known in the 1950s for long-distance travel in remote regions. *Kraevedy,* conversely, had traditionally focused on acquiring knowledge of the home region through travel and then sharing it with the public. “*Sledopyty*” generally focused on discovering new resources and filling in “blank spots” on the map.\(^{105}\) But a tourist, the journal argued, was an “idle traveler” without useful tasks.\(^{106}\) At the same time the work of *kraevedy* and pathfinders, the journals editors constantly emphasized, would be most effective if they backpacked long distances in their own or in other regions. Through

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\(^{106}\) Ibid.
travel in the Urals and throughout the Soviet Union, readers could develop the “proper” relationship to nature, which was not merely contemplative,” but also a “thoughtful” one that went beyond romanticism.107 “Striving to put its unlimited treasures to service to the people, to protect its beauty, the desire to study the history of the Motherland and to enrich it through great actions” was the essence of a “thoughtful” relationship to nature.108 The journal suggested and at times asserted directly that this sort of thoughtfulness could set the young pathfinder/kraeved/tourist on the path to becoming an “authentic person.”109

The journal’s first years reflected the optimism of an era in which the younger generation genuinely believed their efforts would help to propel the USSR to the vanguard of human progress.110 References to the heroic tradition of revolution, scientific advances, technological progress, space exploration and the construction of socialism in the USSR infused the exhortations to pathfinders. Moreover, the journal’s editors clearly sought to instill in pathfinders the belief that their work served not just the Soviet state and citizens, but all of humanity.111 In the June 1962 issue, the editorial board wrote:

There are always new mysteries of nature to be opened and opportunities to bring their riches to the service of the human race--really isn’t that the meaning of life? Have you thought about what use your trek could bring to people, the country, to the construction of communism? The Urals is an area of unlimited opportunity. The entire world knows about these riches here. Its history is great. There are many great things for people today that will make tomorrow beautiful.... but do you know how much next to you is unopened, undiscovered, and unconquered? Who if not the Pathfinders (sledopyty) should be the first on the front of creating the future, of opening new mysteries of nature and its riches. This is a great path to you, pathfinder! The paths of the future are full of discoveries for the betterment of the human race!112

107 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
112 Editorial Board, Ural’skii sledopyt, 6 (June 1962), 1.
The resourceful and socially-minded tourist/pathfinders’ discoveries in this world might help the USSR in the discovery and settlement of new worlds. In 1967, as the USSR was competing with the United States to be the first to land a man on the moon, two readers, V. Mironov and Iu. Nikishin, wrote to the editorial board: “In tourism the main thing is understanding nature, history, the mastery of one’s region of the earth. The drive to new places motivates tourists to head off to the Pamir, Tian Shan, and Chukotka. It is possible that there will be a time, not too long from now, when they will take part in the travel to the moon and different planets.”

Articles about travel in different parts of the USSR and space exploration could pique the imagination. However, the exhortations of famous writers, prominent scientists, Masters of Sport in tourism, the journal’s editorial board, and others to pathfinders to help scientific institutes focused primarily on the importance traveling in the Urals. Far from top-down commands, these exhortations were presented as part of an ongoing dialogue with an idealistic young population whose role was presented as equally important as that of scientists. While there was likely a good deal of selectivity in the letters that the editors chose to publish, I find no reason to doubt that many readers infused by the era’s enthusiasm sought to make their tourist treks a great service to the state. In a rather typical letter selected by the editorial board, a student from Kamensk-Uralskii wrote: “We have gone on tourist treks many times every year, but they do not fully satisfy us. We walk through the forest, sit around the campfire, sing songs, and play soccer...It turns out to be little more than a walk. How can we make our trek interesting and useful?”

While the state defined the “Soviet person” during the Stalinist Era as one working selflessly for the construction of socialism in the distant future, Ural’skii sledopyt reflected

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114 Ibid.
the new ethos. The Soviet person of the late 1950s and early 1960s did not need to delay all gratification for tomorrow. Rather, he or she could seek personal fulfillment, enjoyment, and a higher standard of life while carrying out the work that would make the Soviet tomorrow even brighter.

A 1962 letter from the editors, “The Reliable Dream,” most clearly illustrated this mindset. The editors reminded readers that at the XXI Party Congress Khrushchev emphasized the importance of young tourists and kraevedy to help in finding the natural resources necessary to meet the state’s ambitious goals for economic growth. Khrushchev said: “Young people must discover the new mineral riches to construct factories, sovkhozy, and new cities. But the riches in the bowels of the earth lay not below Moscow or Leningrad, but rather in the taiga, the mountains, and the desert.” The editors added: “You want to scout out deposits of useful raw materials, to lay down the paths of new roads through the taiga, the mountains, and the desert, to build factories and new cities? And this you can consider your most reliable dream.” The individual should follow his or her romantic sensibilities. But while one could find inspiration in the majesty of the USSR’s awe-inspiring landscapes, the most romantic appeal in travel was the thrill of discovery that would fuel social progress.

Because the journal’s editors believed that close connections between science and the public were important to the state’s progress, they actively sought to establish links among the Central Committee of Komsomol, the State Geological Committee, schools, and different branches of the Academy of Sciences, whose leaders frequently addressed pathfinders directly in articles. Ural Stalker was thus instrumental in helping to make tourism a nexus of interaction between scientific organizations, civic organizations, and private citizens; such

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115 The Stakhanovite movement is the best example of the ideology that emphasized herculean labor feats and sacrificing the present for the bright socialist future. See: Lewis Siegelbaum, Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935-1941 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
117 Ibid., 2.
connections would prove important in the movements for the establishment of several national parks. Beginning in 1961, professional geologists helped promote and lead geological expeditions sponsored by the journal when over 24 groups of 2,500 pathfinders conducted multi-day searches. The following year there were 2,000 divisions and in 1963 there were 3,500 divisions and nearly 70,000 students. Pathfinders shared these findings at rallies in local history museums created by different pathfinder groups. These museums featured their discoveries of minerals, educational stands on the nature and history of the region, and information on their efforts to protect the environment.\footnote{Anonymous, “Dela turistkie” \textit{Uralskii sledopyt} 11 (November 1962), 36.}

\textit{Tourism and Environmental Protection}

The rising standard of living in the Soviet Union largely explains the growing popularity of tourism and the increased concern for environmental issues during the 1950s. A society focused on, as Stalin said in the 1930s, advancing 100 years in the course of ten in order to survive, was less likely to focus on the development of mass tourism or environmental protection than a society whose leaders promised its citizens, as Khrushchev did, that they would soon live better than people in the United States. Until Stalin’s death, Soviet environmental concern had been limited to a small group of scientists.\footnote{See: Douglas Weiner, \textit{Models of Nature} (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000). Douglas Weiner, \textit{A Little Corner of Freedom: Soviet Environmental Protection from Stalin to Gorbachev} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).} The Communist Party tolerated these scientists not because party officials had particular concern for environmental issues, but rather because these scientists stood at the margins of society and posed little threat to official ideology.\footnote{\textit{A Little Corner of Freedom}, 9.} The liberalization and opening up of Soviet society combined with economic growth under Khrushchev changed the state and society’s relationship to environmental concerns. While Khrushchev thought that environmentalists were “oddballs” (\textit{chudaki}),
he allowed Soviet scientists, including environmental leaders, the opportunity to participate actively in international scientific and nature protection organizations. With environmental protection becoming a mark of national prestige among scientists throughout the world, Soviet scientists sought to propagandize its message and could do this within generally understood and accepted limits. Moreover, while Stalinist science had to conform to official ideological positions, scientists could pursue research less encumbered by the same constraints under Khrushchev. With more people living in urban environments, many in Soviet society viewed natural beauty increasingly as a spiritual necessity that was necessary for becoming a “cultured” person (kul’turnost’). In this context, a cleaner environment was one of the markers of a high quality of life, which Soviet leaders promised and citizens came to expect.

The formation of the Commission for Nature Protection under the Academy of Sciences was perhaps the single most important event in making environmental issues a mainstream concern in Soviet society. Originally formed in the Academy of Sciences as the Commission on Zapovedniki in 1952, the Commission changed its name in 1955 to reflect its expanded agenda. Within less than a year, the Commission became a member in the International Union of Protection of Nature (IUPN), which was eventually renamed the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The Commission called for wide propaganda on environmental issues throughout the 1950s.

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121 Ibid. Weiner writes: “ Doubtless Nikita Khrushchev’s depiction of naturalists as oddballs (chudaki) reflected the general views of regime leaders about these field biologists at those very rare times when they noticed their existence.”


124 RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 15: 198.
Environmental protection had become a priority at the highest levels of the Academy of Sciences. In a letter to *Pravda*, the president of the Academy of Sciences, N.S. Nesmeianov, wrote: “The propaganda of nature protection must be carried out in all directions—through lectures disseminating political and scientific knowledge, the mass press, newspapers, scientific, science-fiction, and literary publications, movies, and radio.”\(^{125}\) In newspaper articles, the Commission appealed to their love of the USSR’s vast uninhabited spaces, interminable rivers, centuries old forests, and varied landscapes, and called on Soviet citizens to “love and protect” Soviet nature.\(^{126}\) The new Soviet person, Commission members and writers asserted, would love native nature and be a fighter for it.\(^{127}\) Writing in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, the famous writer Leonid Leonov said that nature protection was one of the marks of a “true Soviet patriot.”\(^ {128}\) Citizens from all over the USSR wrote about specific environmental problems to *Literaturnaia gazeta*, which occasionally published their letters about poaching, pollution, and unlawful timber cutting.\(^ {129}\)

While capitalism had an inherently predatory relationship to nature that was foreign to Soviet citizens, the USSR, these articles noted, nonetheless experienced environmental damage in the process of developing its industry and through the acts of selfish citizens. Vigilance on the part of citizens could mitigate environmental damage.\(^ {130}\) Only socialism, many articles argued, allowed citizens to attain a full, selfless, civic-mindedness that would allow the state to realize collective interests, such as a clean environment.\(^ {131}\) The “genuine socialist use of natural resources,” argued Vasilii Nikolaevich Skalon, the writer of a popular book on

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\(^{125}\) A.S. Nesi


\(^{130}\) Ibid.

\(^{131}\) Ibid.
tourism in Siberia and game warden, would allow for a clean environment. By the end of the decade, Union Republics had begun passing nature protection laws and in the resolutions of the XXI Congress the Party called for the “multisided” and “rational” use of natural resources for, among other reasons, satisfying the recreational needs of Soviet citizens. The Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR passed the “Law on the Protection of Nature RSFSR” on October 27, 1960.

The Commission on Nature Protection acknowledged tourism’s potential negative environmental impact and the importance in promoting a strong environmental protection ob-schestvennost’ from the first year of its existence. In a 1954 report of the Commission, David A. Armand wrote:

The work with tourists is an important area of work. There is almost a complete absence of guidebooks and tourist maps propagandizing the amazing and beautiful places that promote an interest in nature.

With tourists causing more environmental damage, commission members also recognized the importance of both kraevedenie and tourism in nature protection efforts. Moreover, because prominent geographers, such as Armand and director of the Institute of Geography, Innokentii Gerasimov, had been encouraging tourism as a means of promoting an interest in nature and the protection of it, it is hardly surprising that the Geographical Society’s Commission on Kraevedenie and Tourism made this an explicit goal. At the first plenum of the Commission of Kraevedenie and Tourism in 1958, the geomorphologist, I.M. Raspopov stated:

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134 RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 15: 68.
Hundreds of thousands of people spend their time on tourist treks every year. Generally, these people feel strongly for native nature, but it is necessary that tourists not just contemplate and enjoy nature, but that tourists become an active army in the defense of nature, capable of offering great help to the fight against poaching and the predatory relationship to nature. It is common for some of these tourists to have a criminal relationship to the natural riches of our country.\(^\text{136}\)

At the Third Conference of the Geographical Society, Efremov echoed this sentiment. He stated: “Many of the tourists, who love and visit a certain region, become kraevedy. They are not inferior to the locals in the fullness and depth of knowledge of the region, and sometimes their knowledge surpasses them. Tourists must and frequently do become propagandists for the idea of the protection and enrichment of nature and the respect for the monuments (pamiatniki) of culture.”\(^\text{137}\)

Scholars have established that the myth of “pristine nature” in western environmental thought led environmentalists to view industrial development and environmental protection as diametrically opposed.\(^\text{138}\) The Commission on Kraevedenie and Tourism and Soviet kraevedy more broadly saw no contradictions between the two. Kraevedy, as well as geographers, spoke of “transforming” and “protecting” nature without any suggestion that the two were incompatible. Harnessing raw materials was necessary to develop the industry that was responsible for future development. Therefore, preservation demanded a purely anthropocentric justification. The inherent “rights” of nature had little place in the Soviet formulation.\(^\text{139}\) Geographers called on kraevedy to osvoit’ (to master or develop) nature. Osvoit’ could also

\(^{136}\) ARGO 1-1959 (43): 54.


include protection. Helping scientific institutes harness natural resources and protect nature from wanton destruction were in equal measure ways of “loving” native nature.\textsuperscript{140}

While geographers and others were stating the importance of tourists and \textit{kraevedy} in carrying out environmental protection efforts, these efforts were relatively limited until the late 1960s. However, they had become widespread in the Urals. In one tourism/\textit{kraevecheskii} handbook, \textit{To You, the Tourist of the Urals (1961)}, the author stated: “Nature protection is the law of the tourist.”\textsuperscript{141} \textit{Ural Stalker} would make environmental protection central to its message from the first years of its publication. The journal regularly published articles to educate readers on the nature and natural history of the Urals, such as “From the Book of Nature” and “Do You Know the Urals?”, as well as a section called “Defend Nature,” which exhorted tourists to take part in specific nature protection projects. This section included reports on tourist initiatives for widespread tree plantings (“green oceans”), cleaning up trash in riparian areas, and recommending areas for state protection.\textsuperscript{142} In 1960, it led an extended campaign for environmental protection that it named “By the Sixtieth Meridian.”\textsuperscript{143} Both adult and young readers wrote to the magazine and reported on the nature protection efforts of their school and local history museums.

Nature protection, the journal frequently emphasized, was a citizen obligation and an important step in the self-actualization of the socialist person. Citing the 1960 RSFSR law “On the Protection of Nature,” Maya Zhuravskaiia, a teacher of the 6th grade, recommended that every school establish divisions of green patrols, which would take the leadership in

\textsuperscript{141} M.A. Akselrod et. al. \textit{Tebe turist Urala} (Sverdlovsk: Sverdlovskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1961), 37.
\textsuperscript{143} Unnamed Author, “Okhrana prirody” \textit{Ural’skii sledopyt} 3 (March 1963), 29. In 1960 the journal organized an expedition called “By the Sixtieth Meridian” with the slogan was “For the Lenin Relationship to Nature” in which young tourists were encouraged to undertake specific nature protection tasks on expeditions.
monitoring gardens, parks, squares, ponds, lakes, and rivers. Articles reminded readers not to take part in “uncultured” behavior on tourist trips—mainly littering and writing on cliffs—that could harm nature. The journal frequently featured zapovedniki in the Orenburg Oblast, Bashkiria, and the Permskaia Oblast. Pathfinders, the journal argued, should take responsibility for the protection of these reserves and monuments. “We again repeat to the Komsomol youth, all of whom are friends of nature, to stand up for the forest, water resources, and all of the people's property. Our reserves are for the public!” The good pathfinder who sought to protect and develop natural resources for the collective good was juxtaposed to people who focused on “personal needs”—poachers, heads of collective farms, or heads of leskhozes. These people, the journal argued, were the worst abusers of nature as they showed the instincts of “property holders” who wanted “to take from nature but give nothing back.” This was exactly the opposite to what the Commission of Kraevedenie and Tourism, the Commission of Nature Protection under the Academy of Sciences, and Ural Stalker thought that a good tourist should be.

145 R. Rubel’, “Granitnye palatki” Ural’skii sledopyt 2 (February 1961), 32. Rubel’ writes: “It is beautiful here! The only thing that spoils the beautiful monument of nature are the numerous inscriptions made by uncultured people. Not realizing that the pamiatniki nature must be carefully protected and preserved, they inscribe their name on the rocks believing it will give them some honor. Do not do this if you love nature! And keep your friends from doing it!”
147 R. Rubel’ “Luchshe berech’ i raskhodovat’ narodnye bogatstva” Ural’skii sledopyt 1 (January 1961), 42. She wrote: “Take a look around yourself attentively! What needs your protection? What groves and oak forests, rivers, lakes, gardens and parks, geological monument in your area should be protected? Create green patrols. Explain to people how important it is to protect nature—our national wealth. It is necessary that the trackers entered the Society for the Conservation of Nature pouring in fresh energy, a thirst of action that they are the vanguard of a national campaign for the protection of natural riches. In this way they will have a great help, too, seven-year period.”
Council of Tourism

The “spiritual needs” of Soviet citizens, such as good recreation opportunities, were growing in tandem with increases in the standard of living. In 1958, the Seven-Year-Plan redoubled the state’s focus on increasing the standard of living of the Soviet citizen. In many ways, the state seemed to be delivering on this promise. While the average worker’s salary increased from 100 to 160 rubles a month from 1956 to 1961, millions of Soviet citizens moved out of communal housing into private apartments in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In 1959, the state reduced the six-day work week to five days and Khrushchev predicted a time when Soviet citizens would work only four hours a day.

Soviet institutes began carrying out wide-ranging analyses to learn about leisure time preferences of Soviet citizens. A large portion of Soviet society expected improved tourism opportunities and facilities.

With increased liberalization, the proliferation of voluntarism and civic, quasi-independent organizations, and increasing expectations for a high standard of living, citizens felt increasingly empowered not only to make demands of the state when their expectations were not met, but also felt more capable of mobilizing to call for change and create it themselves. From May 24-28, 1958, the First Russian Congress of Tourists took place in Moscow with tourists from more than 50 regions (krais), autonomous republics, and oblasts participating. The conference accepted a resolution that stated:

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149 See: I Rozhdestvenskii and I. Karasaev, “Vecher v delakom sele” Pravda, January 15, 1958, 3. A Pravda article made the following observation: “As the living standard increases the satisfaction of material and spiritual needs of a person does as well. This relates to food, shoes, clothes, and different products of consumption, houses, education, medicinal services, sports, providing opportunities for people to relax, to develop in the person all the best capabilities.”

150 Stephen E. Harris, Communism on Tomorrow Street: Mass Housing and Everyday Life After Stalin (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

151 V.I. Bologna, Vnerabochee vremia i uroven ’zhizni trudiaschikhsia (Novosibirsk: Siberian Branch AN USSR, 1964), 41.

152 Zuzanov, 34-49.
“Dear friends! We will do everything possible so that tourism in the RSFSR becomes a mass movement, that participation in weekend hikes and tourist travel around the country becomes the natural love of the broad masses, and that by 1965, our tourist ranks will grow to 25 million people.”

Central newspapers implored the Party to expand tourism facilities, create greater administrative unity to the tourism system, and to help make tourism a mass movement.

The public outcry likely pushed the Soviet government to stronger action in developing the USSR’s tourism system. However, as noted earlier, disentangling the extent to which central newspapers served as mouthpieces for articulating an already established agenda versus agents in shaping the state's priorities presents a “chicken and egg” problem that is nearly impossible to resolve definitively. In any case, the Central Trade Union Council increased investment in tourism three-fold from 1958 to 1962. Moreover, it nearly doubled the number of people working as tourism professionals while serving almost three times the number of people during this period. The infrastructure, however, could not keep up with the increasing demand. However, larger anxieties about tourism’s growth loomed.

Sporting tourism had always been a risky activity. Yet, the Central Trade Union Council became increasingly concerned about its dangers after a spate of accidents between

153 Usiskin, 163.
154 N. Kosarev, N. Rogovskii, M. Zlatsen and D. Sharevskaia, “Razvivat’ Massovoi Turizm” Pravda (August 7, 1958), 2. Correspondent, “Turistkoe Leto” Pravda, June 3, 1959. See: Boris Zhutovskii and Dmitri Petrov, “Turistskimi Tropami” Molodaia Gvardiia 7 (June 1958), 211. In a 1958 letter to Molodaia gvardiia, Boris Zhutovskii and Dmitri Petrov wrote: “It is very strange that tourism does not have a caring or zealous steward. There is not a united center for the whole country. The All-Union Committee with its local organs and the Central Trade Union Council with its sporting societies, Komsomol, and other organizations work on tourism. This leads to confusion, disorder, an uncontrollable situation.” Also see: Current Digest of the Russian Press, “Tourist Summer. No. 22 vol. 11, July 1, 1959. Originally in Pravda June 3. E. Kosarev, N. Rogavskii, M. Zlanets, and D. Sharevskaia, “Razvivat’ massovoi turizm” Pravda, August 7, 1958. They wrote: “The Soviet people’s craving for travel is tremendous. It has far outdistanced the capacities of the Central Tourist and Excursion Administration’s facilities.”
155 GARF, fond 9520, opis’ 1, delo 2524, 1.
156 Ibid.
1959 and 1961. In February 1959, a group of students of the Ural Pedagogical Academy disappeared and died in the Circumpolar Urals in an event that has been known as the Diatlov Incident ever since. In 1960, one member of a group from the Moscow Club of Tourists died at the Khamar Daban Ridge to the South of Lake Baikal. Covering this incident, an article in Izvestiia said:

The tragic death of Victor Niunkin forces one to think not only about how to make sure that there are not places of nasty indifference on tourists paths, on the paths of courageous people, but places indifferent to the fate of a comrade, a person on any life path.

In early 1961, a group from the Moscow Agricultural Institute died under an avalanche in the Kolskii Peninsula in the Murmansk Oblast. Following this tragedy, the Secretary of the Trade Union Council accepted a resolution that prohibited the Union of Sporting Societies from subsidizing treks of the second and third category of difficulty. However, not long afterwards, at the 22nd Party Congress Khrushchev called for an “all-people's state” in which voluntary organizations would carry out state functions and lead to full participatory democracy. Tourist sections and clubs had been among the voluntary organizations that had blossomed in the years prior to the conference. Their main allure was the training and expertise they shared with tourists for long-distance treks, which had become so important for many in a more individualistic generation as a means not only of seeing the nation's natural beauty, but also for finding a space far removed from the influence of the state.

While tourist clubs led weekend hikes, stargazing walks, and other activities, after the ban, many tourists who frequented meetings of their tourist sections or events at the local

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157 For an account on the rescue efforts see Kemmerikh, 94-95. Donnie Eichar, Dead Mountain: The Untold True Story of the Dyatlov Pass Incident (Chronicle Books, 2014). This incident was also the subject of a Hollywood movie—Devil’s Pass.
159 Usiskin, 171.
160 Victoria Donovan, How Well Do You Know Your Krai?”, 467.
tourism club ceased going altogether. The clubs, which had been important in helping educate tourists and elevate the “culture of tourism,” could no longer fulfill this function. With organized tourism severely compromised, tourists without proper preparation continued to set off on long distance trips illegally. Three months after the passing of the resolution, a Conference of Tourists in Leningrad unequivocally stated the harmfulness of the decree of March 17, 1961. For the next several months, tourists from across the USSR wrote to the Central Committee of the Communist Party calling for a reversal of the resolution.161 “Unregulated (dikii) tourism” was resulting in “amoral phenomena,” according to many.162 Izvestia reported that the “cultural level” of tourists, which Efremov had stated was so important, dropped throughout 1961 and 1962. As the numbers of people leaving Moscow for the weekends increased dramatically, some blamed the environmental destruction that they caused on the fact that clubs were not instructing them. Tourists were becoming genuine “enemies” of nature, in the words of some.163 As the skill level and preparedness of tourists worsened, the number of accidents also increased.164 It was clear that the clubs and the better organization of tourism were indispensable to making sure tourists learned proper safety precautions and behaviors that did not negatively impact the common recreation resources of their fellow citizens.

Prior to the ban on sporting tourism, people taking part in tourist trips could see more of the USSR than Promptov ever thought possible in his childhood. But Iurii Efremov and others had argued that the growth of sporting tourism had damaged the “culture” of the tourism movement. The ban on sporting tourism, however, proved ex-

161 Usiskin, 171.
162 Ibid., 172.
164 Ibid.
tremely harmful to tourism while moving against Khrushchev's goal of achieving "participatory democracy" through vibrant voluntary organizations. Not only did it anger those who had become accustomed to the right to see the wild places of their "Motherland," it was damaging to the "culture" of tourism for which Efremov expressed so much concern. With all this in mind, a group of tourists from the Moscow Club of Tourists -- P. Vorotnikov, M. Azarkh, and V. Miasoedov, lamented the "unjustified harm" that tourism had suffered and emphasized the need for its "rehabilitation" in an Izvestiia article published on May 1, 1962.  

They called for the improved training of instructors, expanded rescue services, significant material help for infrastructural development, and a strong emphasis on patrolling and nature protection projects among tourism groups.

The Central Trade Union Council answered their calls in less than two months when it passed a resolution "On the Further Development of Tourism," which transformed the tourism administrative structure throughout the country. The resolution dramatically increased investment while making socially useful functions, especially environmental protection, more central to the goals of tourism’s development. This would become even more important as tourism transformed into a mass movement.

By 1962, the numbers of tourists travelling throughout the USSR had expanded dramatically because of the state's prioritization of the improvement of Soviet citizens' quality of life as an aspect of Cold War competition. While this began with what Vera Dunham has called the "Big Deal" in the late years of Stalin's rule, expectations for a high quality of life continued to increase with the dramatic economic growth in the decade that followed. A despoiled environment from industry and tourists threatened the

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165 Ibid.
quality of the Soviet tourist experience. Tourism’s dramatic growth made its negative environmental impact abundantly clear during the 1960s. The attempts of the Trade Union Council and different civic organizations to deal with the problem of tourism’s environmental impact as the number of tourists traveling throughout the USSR skyrocketed during the 1960s and 1970s is the subject of the next chapter.
Chapter 2: Tourists to “Fighters for Nature”: The Emergence of Mass Tourism and Redefining Tourism’s Ideological Content

Soviet citizens experienced dramatic changes in their everyday lives during the 1960s. Under Khrushchev’s mass housing campaign, tens of millions of citizens moved out of cramped kommunalki (communal apartments) and into private apartments.1 By the end of the decade, most Soviet families had a television that could bring state propaganda directly into their living rooms, even as citizens were growing more skeptical of official ideology.2 Soviet citizens worked fewer hours and had more vacation days. Following Khrushchev’s endorsement of social movements that would help propel the USSR to full participatory democracy at the 22nd Party Congress in 1961, clubs oriented around different interests, funded by trade unions, proliferated throughout the USSR and became the center of social life for many citizens. While such clubs and other civic organizations were still laden with the performative rituals that sought to affirm a Soviet citizen’s commitment to official ideology, Soviet citizens were increasingly inclined to seek meaning through individual goals and interests, and within smaller, interest-based social groups as they started to rely more on informal networks.3

The development of “mass tourism,” which attested to the Communist Party’s focus on creating a “better life” for its citizens, was a significant change for both the Soviet economy and everyday life during the 1960s. The number of tourists traveling throughout the USSR increased 10-fold. Tourism proponents promoted once remote

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corners, such as Kamchatka, Baikal, Central Asia, and the Far East, as accessible tourist destinations. For many Soviet citizens, a love of native nature was quickly becoming (if it had not always been) a more important basis for patriotism than Marxist-Leninist ideology. Nonetheless, the sheer number of tourists made the “culture of tourism” and tourism’s ideological orientation an even greater concern of the state, civic organizations, and private citizens than it had been in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

By traveling more widely and frequently, tourists saw the damage to nature wrought by industrial development near and far from home. At the same time, environmentalists sometimes described these “lovers of nature” as its “enemies” because of the significant environmental damage left in their wake. To address this concern, student groups, the Central Council of Tourism, various civic organizations, journals such as *The Ural Stalker*, and prominent environmentalists harnessed the growing environmental concern within Soviet society and emphasized environmental protection as one of the most important aspects of the “culture of tourism.” Environmentalists implored tourists not only to demonstrate a “careful relationship to nature” during their treks, but also to lead environmental initiatives that addressed much larger problems than the ones they had created.

This chapter explores the scope of the USSR’s tourism explosion from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s. It will show how tourism’s dramatic growth spurred myriad efforts across state and civic organizations to reshape and redefine its culture. The many interested parties sometimes acted in concert with one another, but tourism’s cultural evolution—at least this aspect of it—lacked a unified center. Rather, as was more common in different facets of late Soviet society than is ordinarily acknowledged, cultural evolution within the tourism movement during these years grew out of complex interactions between the state, scientists, civic organizations, and the press. While these
actors operated within a restrictive sociopolitical and economic framework, they asserted themselves in ways that indicated a growing confidence that Soviet society (broadly conceived) could influence state priorities and policies.

Reforming the Tourism System

The outcry of Soviet tourism enthusiasts after the ban on sporting tourism quickly pushed the Central Trade Union Council to make major reforms to the Soviet tourism system. The Central Trade Union Council passed the resolution “On the Further Development of Tourism” on July 20, 1962. The resolution eliminated the long criticized Tourism Excursion Administration and in its place created the Central Council of Tourism, which would receive significantly higher investment than its predecessor.¹ The state sent these funds to tourism councils of union republics. Union republics would then send money to the representative councils at the regional level (in the case of the RSFSR region (krai), republic, or oblast) where they were used to finance new tourist clubs, new trails, tourist camps and bases, equipment, and the education of instructors and tourism professionals. The resolution also called for the improvement of tourism work among pioneers and schoolchildren and the expansion and strengthening of mass-cultural work in order to raise the “low culture” of tourism bases. The Council called for extensive tourism propaganda through the press, film, radio, television programs, lectures, photo expeditions on tourism themes, and the widespread dissemination of promotional posters and brochures.²

¹ GARF: fond 9520, opus’ 1, delo 447, 18.
² Ibid.
Steady economic growth throughout the 1960s and tourism’s profitability allowed the Trade Union Council to carry out the dramatic expansion of the USSR’s tourism system. From 1962 to 1965, the investment in tourism increased from six to thirteen million rubles a year. Profits grew from three to seven million rubles a year. Tourism’s profitability, in turn, became an important focus at meetings of the Central Council. This was further encouraged by the 1965 economic reforms (known as the Kosygin Reforms), which gave managers more independence and encouraged them to make their enterprises more profitable. The Central Council and the press began describing tourism as a highly “profitable” industry. The funding of the Central Council of Tourism increased nearly 30 percent a year beginning in 1965. By 1970, it had reached 60 million rubles per year. While only 6,000 full time tourism professionals worked in the USSR in 1962, by 1970 there were 21,000. The number of tourism bases increased from 2,400 to 5,000. In 1962, Soviet citizens could rent tourism equipment from fewer than 1,000 locations. There were 12,000 such points by 1970. Profits accrued from tourism in trade union establishments increased to 45 million rubles a year by 1970.

During the 1950s, many of the adult Soviet citizens who had taken part in tourist trips at pioneer camps in their childhood might not have been able to plug into communities—tourist clubs or tourist sections in their enterprises—where they could meet

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3 GARF, fond 9520, opis’ 1, delo 2524, 1. Information about how these profits were calculated was not provided in the archival record.

4 For an example of this see: GARF: fond 9520, opis’ 2, delo 8: 31.


7 GARF, fond 9520, opis’ 1, delo 2524, 1.

8 VV. Dvornichenko, Turizma v sisteme mezhduarodnikh kul’turnikh sviazi SSSR (Moscow: Nauka, 1978), 54.

9 GARF: fond 9520, opis’ 1, delo 1927, 1.

10 GARF, fond 9520, opis’ 1, delo 2524, 1.
kindred spirits interested in travel. However, by the mid-1960s, most enterprises had tourism sections supported by the Central Trade Union Council and by the end of the decade most large cities had multiple tourist clubs. A typical small town likely had one or more, and even some villages and collective farms had clubs. Throughout the USSR, the number of tourism sections in enterprises increased from under 55,000 to 105,000 from 1962 to 1970. The number of clubs increased from 100 to over 1,000. The chair of the Central Council of Tourism, Aleksei Abukov, frequently referred to clubs as the most important place for “cultivating the proper culture of tourism.” Clubs, he argued, could unite the efforts of the tourism public (obschestvennost’) and improve the work of new and existing tourism sections in enterprises and educational establishments. Clubs held instructional workshops, film and photography contests, poetry readings, and often had their own columns in local newspapers as well as shows on local radio or television stations.

Moscow tourists still had by far the most resources to plan trips. In fact, tourist groups from outside of Moscow sometimes even complained that they needed to contact the Moscow Club of Tourists for information to plan trips in their home region. However, unlike the 1950s when there were few up-to-date published travel accounts and guidebooks of different regions in the USSR, Soviet tourists benefited from a growing body of tourism literature through the course of the 1960s.

12 GARF, fond 9520, opis’ 1, delo 1927, 1.
13 GARF, fond 9520, opis’ 1, delo 447, 15.
14 Ibid., 14.
15 GARF, fond, delo 1265, opis’ 1, delo 1265, 44.
16 GARF: fond 9520, opis’ 2, delo 8, 136. The Irkutsk club of tourists complained that they frequently had to contact the Moscow Club of Tourists for advice about travel in the territory around Lake Baikal. Also see: fond 5551, opis’ 15, delo 14, 74. One letter to the editorial board from a tourist in Alma-Ata, said: “I, for example, want to go on a trip to the Archangelsk Oblast, to Karelia, but where can I find this material. If I lived in Moscow, I would go to a tour club and grab a report (otchet) and would go on that route, but I live in Alma-Ata and here the water section works in the first year in the agricultural institute and the water section of “Kazgostroiproject”—there are only two sections, which exist in Alma Ata.”
Culture and Sport) publishing house did not publish any new books in its series “Po rodnym prostoram” from 1963 to 1965. In the next five years, it published seventeen books, which included travel accounts of the Fanskii Mountains in Kyrgyz SSR, Tuva, the Sayans, the Volga, the Caucasus, the Kodar and Chara to the north and east of Baikal, the Polar and Circumpolar Urals, and the rivers and lakes of Karelia, Belarusia, the Moscow Oblast, and Ukraine. While the magazines Physical Culture and Sport, Little Flame (Ogonek), Young Guard (Molodaia gvardia), and Urals Stalker continued to cover tourism extensively throughout the decade, the annual tourist almanac, The Winds of Wanderlust, was published for the first of 23 times in 1965.

After more than fifteen years of calls for the revival of a monthly tourism magazine, the Central Trade Union Council began publishing the monthly magazine Turist in 1965. In its first year of publication, the magazine had 100,000 subscribers. It had nearly 200,000 subscribers by the end of the decade. It is likely that all libraries of tourist clubs subscribed to Turist. Focusing almost exclusively on turizm (outdoor recreation), the journal contained full-page color photographs (rare for Soviet magazines at the time), detailed descriptions of the most scenic parts of almost all republics, advice on tourism techniques, updates on new tourism literature, descriptions of new tourism equipment, tourist songs, and it sponsored various competitions to promote tourism.

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18 "Iz istorii zhurnal Turist 6 (2008), 2.

19 GARF, fond 5551, opis’ 15, delo 9, 1.
The magazine was oriented not to “narrow methodological questions,” but rather viewed itself as “an expansive publication designed to solve a “great task”—engendering love for the Motherland.” Speaking at a reader’s conference several years after the publication of the journal’s first issue, a member of the editorial board stated: “Our magazine must solve a two-fold problem: on the one hand it must help those that have not been to the beautiful areas of our country to help them somehow see them, as if they had been there. We must also interest readers with material in order to inspire them to go exactly to the places that we write about.”

Television was also inspiring people to see distant corners of the “Motherland.” Beginning in 1960, the popular travel program “Club of Film Travelers" (Klub Kinooputeshestvenikov) took hundreds of thousands of viewers every week to distant places—the Pamir Mountains, Kamchatka’s Valley of the Geysers, Baikal, and others, which were not long before considered inaccessible by most Soviet citizens. Like Turist, the show frequently spoke of the importance of propagandizing geographical knowledge and engendering a love for the Motherland. In 1965, the Central Council of Tourism awarded it a “certificate of honor” for attracting large numbers of Soviet citizens to tourism. Two years later, Soviet citizens could dream about escaping their cramped apartments in increasingly crowded and polluted cities as they watched the program in color for the first time.

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20 GARF: fond 5551, opis’ 15, delo 14, 3.
21 Ibid., 4.
22 GARF, fond 441, opis’, delo 603, 26. 5.
23 Ibid., 7. In a letter to the program, the Central Council of Tourism and Excursions wrote: “The television club of film travel is carrying out great work in disseminating current knowledge in the fields of geography and local history and propaganda of tourist treks and travel. During the time of its activity the club has shown more than 300 different domestic and foreign films and organized the appearance of scientists, geographers, travelers, tourists, writers, and workers in film. Meetings of the television club of film travel has promoted a large swathe of the population to tourism.”
24 In 1967 the USSR became only the fourth country on the Eurasian landmass to switch to color television.
As more Soviet citizens were living in cities, many, including Brezhnev, understood and referred to nature as a “spiritual necessity.” In 1967, at a meeting of the Central Committee dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the Great October Revolution, the General Secretary said:

The rapid growth of science and technology has made the problem of the relationship between humans and nature especially important. Even the first socialists considered that an important trait of the society of the future was the closeness of humans with nature. From that time, a century has passed. Having constructed a new society, we brought into life much of what our predecessors of scientific socialism could only dream. However, nature has not lost its enormous value for us as the first source of material benefits and as an inexhaustible source of health, joy, love of life, and spiritual richness of every person.

This fundamental human need, especially for people living in the dramatically growing cities, is critically important to understanding the Soviet tourism explosion. Its significance is no less than the state’s increased investment and improvements in tourism’s organizational structure and infrastructure, strengthened connections between the Central Council and transportation ministries, reduced working hours, and increased vacation time.

Tourism’s growth in the decade of the 1960s was staggering. The number of tourists served officially in Council of Tourism establishments—tourist bases, fishing

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25 D.L Armand, _Nam i vnukam_ (Moscow: Mys’l, 1964), 21. Armand wrote: “The material value of nature is not limited to its role in the life of humankind. Equally important is it for the spiritual life of the people to their culture even in this age of the age of big cities and flourishing art culture created in isolation from nature is imperfect should not think that this view is relic of the past or a manifestation of sentimentality.”

26 RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 172, 8.

lodges, bases of recreation, and tourist camps—grew from 8 million in 1962 to 38 mil-
lion in 1970.\textsuperscript{28} Tourists taking part in organized excursions during these years in-
creased from three to 29 million. While long vacations and treks were increasingly ac-
cessible, millions of Soviet citizens also left for green zones on city outskirts every week-
end for a temporary reprieve from urban life. Perhaps with some exaggeration, one ar-
ticle in \textit{Turist} estimated (likely exaggerated) that up to four million Muscovites were go-
ing to such areas to picnic, hike, fish, and enjoy other outdoor activities every week-
end.\textsuperscript{29} By 1970, trade union establishments served over 37 million tourists each year.\textsuperscript{30} The number of tourists traveling independently likely exceeded this number. Tourism’s propagandists continued to appeal to a sense of “romantic geography” and the exploratory impulse of individual tourists.\textsuperscript{31} But more frequently, they beckoned Soviet tourists to venture out on the USSR’s “thick set of tourist routes” that would allow them to see the world’s most varied and beautiful landscapes and to take part in a broad “cultural movement” with unique and increasingly identifiable traditions.\textsuperscript{32}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{28} GARF, fond 9520, opis’ 1, delo 2524, 1.
\item \textsuperscript{29} A. Grun, “Po kodesku serdta” \textit{Turist} (July 1971), 12. The estimate made by the Central Section of VOOP only five years before was 2 million. See: GARF, fond A-404, opis’ 1, delo 908, 176.
\item \textsuperscript{30} GARF, fond 9520, opis’ 1, delo 2524, 1.
\item \textsuperscript{31} GARF, fond 441, delo 603, opis’ 26, 9. In an interview with the famous Soviet traveler Ernest Krenkel on the one-hundredth anniversary program in 1965, Krenkel said: “Some consider that in our era there are no more blank spots on the geographic map, that there is nothing more to discover. These people are deeply mistaken! There are so many far corners of our motherland that await their curious discoverers—their Magellan and Co-
lumbus!” GARF, fond 441, opis’ 26, delo 742, 163. On the May 5, 1967 program of “The Far Road Calls,” the narrator states: “The true tourist is not enticed by comforts and services, but are rather drawn, to untrammelled paths, untouched corners of the taiga, the coast, the blessings here are so many that tourists are presented with unlimited opportunities.”
\end{itemize}
The Culture of Tourism

Tourism developed in multifarious directions throughout the 1960s. The All-Union Geographical Society, pioneer organizations and Komsomol (Youth Communist League), and Ural Stalker continued to promote and support kraevedenie and encourage young “pathfinders” to help in the construction of socialism through discovering valuable raw materials. By the end of the decade, tens of millions of schoolchildren took part in expeditions such as “My Motherland—USSR” and “All-Union Trek to the Places of Revolutionary and Military Glory,” in which they designated historical monuments (pamiatniki), discovered new raw materials, and sometimes took part in environmental protection efforts.33

After the Central Trade Union Council reintroduced it into the system of sporting classifications in 1964, sporting tourism could officially receive support from clubs and the Council of Tourism.34 By reorganizing and increasing funds for the route qualifying commissions and emergency services, the Central Council of Tourism also sought to make sporting tourism safer and avoid similar tragedies to those that had temporarily derailed the tourism movement in 1961. For citizens who preferred traveling more comfortably, the Trade Union Council built hotels throughout the country. With the growing variety of forms of tourism, the Central Council of Tourism divided its work into different sections, which included hiking, water tourism, skiing, mountain tourism, spelunking, automobile tourism, sailing, and orienteering. Some argued that the “tourism movement” had grown too large for one bureaucracy to manage, but the Central

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33 GARF, fond 9520, opis’ 1, delo 1171, 51. See: Editorial Board, “Tvoe otkrytye rodiny” Turist 8 (August 1968), 1. In 1968, Turist described this trek as: “The romanticism of distant wanderings organically combined with deep ideological content.”

34 GARF, fond 9520, opis’ 2, delo 8, 31.
Trade Union Council does not seem to have ever considered dividing the Council of Tourism into different organizations.\(^{35}\)

The Central Council of Tourism did acknowledge many of the criticisms that were leveled by Efremov and others about the “low culture” of tourism. At the 1962 conference, participants called for creating a tourism culture in which tourists would demonstrate “morally impeccable behavior.”\(^{36}\) The conference resolution emphasized instilling a “careful relationship to nature” and the importance of carrying out “socially useful work,” which included environmental protection initiatives, during the time of travel.\(^{37}\) While geographers had called for the same things in the 1950s, the Council of Tourism had greater reach to shape tourism according to this vision. However, regardless of these initial efforts to promote ecological consciousness among tourists by the Central Council of Tourism, tourists caused significantly more environmental damage as their numbers skyrocketed throughout the 1960s. This became a cause of increasing concern as the decade wore on. Many environmentalists viewed tourism’s adverse environmental impact as perhaps the most important problem to address regarding the “culture” of tourism.\(^{38}\)

**The Environmental Impact of Tourism**

Tourists had become so infamous for causing environmental harm that environmentally destructive tourists had their own pejorative name! Made famous by the film “Three Plus Two” and based on the author Sergei Mikhailkov’s story *Dikari* (Savages),

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\(^{35}\) For an example of such a request see: S. Parfenov, “Zabludilis’ v terminakh” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, July 5, 1967, 11.

\(^{36}\) Ibid.

\(^{37}\) GARF: fond 9520, opis’ 1, delo 447, 22.

\(^{38}\) For examples of how tourism became more like *kraevedenie* work, see: V. Lebedev, “Eto ochen’ ser’ezno” *Turist* 11 (November 1966), 10. This article is about the organization of geological expeditions.
the image of the “uncultured” tourist who travelled without support from trade unions became widespread in the 1960s. *Dikari* became the common expression for unorganized tourists whose low level of culture resulted in environmental damage.\(^{39}\) Such harm became evident on Lake Seliger as tourists arrived in greater numbers in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Without any specific posted regulations, minimal instruction, few designated campsites, and poorly maintained trails, unregulated tourists (*dikary*) often left litter along the shoreline, fished in protected spawning areas, and cut down healthy trees in order to construct temporary bivouacs.\(^{40}\) Writing in *Literaturnaia gazeta* about these problems, M. Smotriaev wrote in an article entitled “Seliger in Danger.” He wrote: “Here is a typical picture for Seliger. A tourist group sets up camp. They immediately distribute axes, chop down young trees for a campfire, tear off kindling from living birch trees, cut down spruce boughs for bedding and tents. After they leave their camp, the tourists go further along singing their songs. Where they camped there remain smoldering embers, broken bottles, tin cans, paper wrapping, and disfigured trees. Mutilated pines and young birch dry out on the shoreline of Seliger.”\(^{41}\)

Journalists reported similar stories throughout the USSR with increasing frequency throughout the 1960s. The magazine *Turist* reported on the almost perpetual litter along the Black Sea Coast in Crimea for which the directors of tourist bases refused to take responsibility.\(^{42}\) In the summer of 1967, *Pravda* reported on a 12,000-hectare fire started by tourists at the Sand Bay Tourist Base on Lake Baikal.\(^{43}\) The writers con-

\(^{39}\) F. Golikov, “Slovo imejut” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, August 9, 1966, 2. Unnamed Author, Puteshestveniki Sovietskoi Sove- 
\(^{40}\) Zhemchuzhina russkoi prirode” *Pravda*, May 20, 1962, 6. 
\(^{42}\) D.L. Armand, “Priroda i turist” *Turist* 7 (July 1965), 21. 
cluded that the base provided limited instruction for tourists and described an “uncontrollable” situation on the base, which they characterized as “dikaia” (wild). Referring to the tour base’s “crimes against nature,” *Vostochno-Sibirskaja pravda* was even more damming in its criticism.

Samara newspapers reported on places in the Zhiguli Mountains on the scenic Samara Bend on the Volga where the birds had disappeared after tourists cut down all the trees and dug up all the shrubs. Both Moscow and Kamchatka newspapers as well as popular magazines discussed the ongoing problems in Kamchatka’s Valley of the Geysers where bears were becoming increasingly habituated to human presence and tourists frequently broke off pieces of geyserite (a form of silica found near geysers) for “souvenirs.” Similarly, tourists broke off all of the stalactites and stalagmites in some of the caves of Abkhazia in the Caucasus. The most talked about problem in the Caucasus, however, was in the Caucasus *Zapovednik* where Iurii Efremov stated (perhaps with some exaggeration) before the presidium of the All-Russian Society of Nature that tourists were scaring away all the animals. Tourist camps frequently left areas completely denuded and trash strewn across fields. One group of rock climbers from Saint Petersburg wrote to the Geographical Society about other climbers cutting down large stands of valuable forest near the cliffs on Falcon Lake, about 150 kilometers from Saint Petersburg. Climbers were also disfiguring the cliffs by carving their names in

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44 GARF: fond 9520 delo 1272 opis’ 1, 104.
45 V. Novgorodov, Shelepokta Zla,” *Vostochno-Sibirskaja pravda*, July 31, 1968, 4. The author writes: “It is difficult to explain the reasons for the indifference and the unfriendliness to nature that forced us to use these harsh words in the articles title.” Also see: Vladas Maltsiavichius et. al, “Kto za eto otvetit?” *Vostochno-sibirskaja pravda*, August 15, 1968, 4. Says that the shoreline near Sand Bay will be completely denuded in 5 to 10 years.
48 GARF, fond 404, opis’ 1, delo 795, 13.
Such “memorial inscriptions,” as many called them, on trees and rock faces were a perpetual annoyance noted by Armand, *Ural Stalker*, and other publications.

Tourists making such inscriptions became a common caricature of the “uncultured” tourist.\(^{51}\)

The most visible problems were in areas just outside of cities where tourists frequently spent weekends. One of the most populous Siberian cities, Krasnoiarsk began to experience such problems in the late 1960s. Writing in *Izvestiia*, the correspondent V. Petrov stated that Siberians had become accustomed to seeing nature as inexhaustible. A glance at the banks of the Krasnoiarsk Sea, he argued, would dispel anyone of such a notion. “If you go to the bank of the young Krasnoiarsk Sea on Monday, which rivals the beauty of the famous Swiss lakes, then before your eyes will appear banks cluttered with paper and tin cans, mangled young shoots of regrowth, and the white trunks of trees mercilessly cut.”\(^{52}\)

After rhetorically asking the reader if there will be anything for “your son” in 15 years, Petrov asserts: “We must be patriots of nature. It has long been known that the most genuine, mature patriotism starts with a careful relationship to the very part of the Motherland where you live, that you answer for today. That starts most of all with taking care of the place where you set up camp.”\(^{53}\)

\(^{50}\) ARGS, 1-1966, 49, 22.

\(^{51}\) David Armand, *Nam i vnukam* (Moscow: Mysl’, 1964), 22.


\(^{53}\) Ibid., 6.
The “uncultured” and destructive behavior of the droves of Moscow tourists leaving the city for the weekend received the most attention. In 1964, tourists cut an estimated 400,000 cubic meters of forest in the protected green belt surrounding the city. In the summer of 1965 alone, the forest inspection service caught 1,500 tourists making illegal cuts in the forests. Following weekends, empty tin cans laid strewn across the banks of the city’s reservoirs. As “hooliganism” in the cities became a much-discussed problem, some journalists rhetorically asked if those tourists who despoiled nature were any better than those causing problems in city streets. With nearly four million spending time in the forests on the outskirts of the city by the end of the decade, managing this problem often seemed insurmountable.

Many influential Soviet environmentalists—David Armand, Iurii Efremov, Gregorii Galazii, Innotekii Gerasimov, Oleg Volkov, Vadim Blagosklonov, Vadim Tikhomirov, and Vladimir Geptner, among others—drew attention to tourism’s negative environmental impact in the Academy of Sciences, civic organizations, and in numerous publications. When compared to the construction of hydroelectric installations that inundated thousands of square kilometers of standing forest, widespread erosion, the use of dangerous pesticides that were already illegal in many other countries, and widespread air and water pollution, the environmental impact of tourism might seem minor.

54 V. Chizhova and E. Smirnova, Slovo ob otdykhe” Chelovek i priroda (Moscow: Znanie, 1976), 10.
56 Iu. Efremov, “Krasa rodnogo kraia” Pravda, July 1, 1966, 4. Chizhikova, 14. According to some estimates, towards the end of the decade there were 25 metal cans, 33 pieces of paper, and 162 broken or whole glass bottles/cans for every one hundred meters. In late spring and early summer of 1966, tourists cut over three thousand trees. Akchurin et. al, 4.
57 R. Achurin noted the frequency with which hooliganism in city streets was spoken of and then wrote: “But is it not the same for hooligans who exhibit a criminal attitude towards nature, destroying its wealth-national wealth. While hooliganism during the Brezhnev era has not been tackled by historians, historians have addressed the phenomenon in the Khrushchev era. See: Brian LaPierre, Hooligans in Khrushchev’s Russia: Defining, Policing, and Producing Deviance (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012).
What made tourism’s environmental impact one of the day’s most prominent environmental concerns?

Unless one was pointing out the incorrect behavior of a high placed official, as Vladimir Geptner, a zoology professor, staunch supporter of *zapovedniki*, and VOOP inspector, did in 1964, chastising tourists for harming nature was safe.\(^58\) On the other hand, criticizing the Party, the Council of Ministers, or the assumptions behind the political-economic system as Western environmental philosophers were doing, was impossible in the Soviet context. Taking on large industrial projects was also a much riskier proposition. Tourism was one of the areas in which Soviet environmentalists could work around the margins in attempts to eliminate imperfections of a system whose fundamental assumptions were sacrosanct. Secondly, tourism was the means by which most Soviet citizens, according to Armand, Efremov, and others, first developed a love for nature. In a 1966 article in *Turist*, Armand wrote:

> People generally say that the strongest means of engendering love to nature among children and adults is tourism. It is true—tourism opens one’s eyes to the abundance of natural landscapes of any taste. Having taken a tourist trek it is impossible not to love nature.”\(^59\)

Because tourists were inclined to “love nature,” educating them how to treat it was an important step in the broader task of making Soviet citizens environmental stewards, which Brezhnev emphasized was “a vital part of our Communist cause.”\(^60\) Moreover, leaders in environmental protection repeatedly emphasized that the public (*obschestvennost*) was an essential aspect of environmental protection. Because it was becoming

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\(^58\) Douglas Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 340-344. In 1964, Vladimir Geptner accidentally came upon the head of the VOOP, Bochkarev, using nets to fish in the Oka River. Known as the Bodriaev Affair, this incident highlighted the extent to which the VOOP had been taken over by government bureaucrats who were little concerned with environmental protection.


\(^60\) GARF, fond 9520, delo 1272, opis’ 1, 158. On his report “50 years of the Great Victory of Socialism” Brezhnev appealed to all Soviet citizens to act as caring stewards for the Communist forest, rivers, plant and animal life, and even air. Referring to nature protection as “part of our vital Communist cause,” he exhorted Soviet citizens to “beautify the land for present and future generations of Communist people.”
highly organized with well-developed infrastructure, strong government support, and had vibrant civic organizations dedicated to it, tourism provided fertile ground for environmental leaders to promote broad environmental concern among the public.

The idea of turning tourists into defenders of nature came, in large part, from the example and, at least in part, the direct suggestions of the Nature Protection Brigade (Druzhina) in the Department of Biology and Soil Sciences at Moscow State University. The Nature Protection Brigade was formed in 1960. Vadim Tikhomirov and Konstantin Blagoskronov, who together coauthored the first textbook of environmental protection in the USSR, served as its advisors.61 The brigade held summer camps on nature protection, aired radio and television programs, conducted field lessons in zoology and botany, and worked as “inspectors of nature protection.” “Green Patrols,” which became popular in pioneer organizations after the publication of the novel Green Patrol (Zelenyi patrul) and a film of the same name, were the model for the brigades.62 Working as “inspectors,” members of the Druzhina monitored forests and apprehended citizens who violated fishing and hunting regulations.63 The druzhina frequently brought in speakers like David Armand, who had already called for tourists to carry out monitoring work in To Us and Our Grandchildren, which was the most popular work on environmental protection at the time in the USSR. Accordingly, as Doug Weiner has shown, its leaders socialized druzhina members into the older social identity of “nauchnaia obshchestvennost,” which when combined with youthful idealism manifested in strong environmental activism.64

The Druzhina turned its attention to the impact of tourism in the Moscow region in 1967. While the All-Union Society for the Protection of Nature had already held a

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61 K.N. Blagoskronov and V.N. Tikhomirov, Okhrana prirody (Moscow, 1967).
62 Iurii Dmitrev, Zelenyi patrul’ (Moscow: Detgiz, 1957).
63 Douglas Weiner, A Little Corner of Freedom, 316.
64 Ibid., 314. See: Turist 5 (May 1965), 22.
conference on recreation in Moscow's green zones, the Druzhina's conference, held in February 1967, produced a far more wide-ranging set of recommendations for improving nature protection work among tourists. At the conclusion of the conference, the Druzhina produced a resolution that called for the complete revamping of efforts to promote nature protection among tourists in order to remedy the environmental “scourge of an international scale” that unorganized tourism had become. Much of the responsibility, the resolution argued, lay with the Central Council of Tourism, which was failing to “orient tourists in the relationship to the elementary rules of nature protection.” The resolution criticized existing nature protection laws in the RSFSR and Union Republics for not mentioning tourism, requested that the Geographical Society, the All-Russian Society for the Protection of Nature, and the All-Russian Society for the Protection of Cultural Monuments (pamiatniki) interact more with tourism groups. Instructors, the resolution asserted, must undertake the “important and urgent” task of preserving the territories used for the purposes of tourism. Moreover, it called for the Ministry of Enlightenment and the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences to train teachers to understand that it was “a necessary means of inculcating Soviet patriotism.” The resolution called on publishing houses and the State Committee on Television and Radio to promote tourism and emphasize its importance in nature protection efforts in consultation with geographers and biologists. Finally, the Druzhina called for the Moscow City and Oblast Party Committees to carry out conferences to discuss issues regarding the most intensive places of recreation, to work on propaganda of nature protection, and to

65 GARF, fond 404, opis’ 1, delo 740, 72.
67 ARGO, 36.
68 Ibid., 37.
69 Ibid.
prepare “Tourist Commandments” (*Zapovedi Turista*) for mass publication. The dru-
zhina sent the resolution to all the governmental ministries and the civic organizations
mentioned within it.⁷⁰

That same year, the All-Russian Society of Nature Protection (VOOP) passed
several mutual resolutions with the Central Council of Tourism.⁷¹ At the 1969 meeting
of the Council two years later, the representative of the VOOP, V.E. Golovanov, raised
many of the concerns that the *Druzhina* had voiced two years before. After emphasizing
the importance that Lenin and Marx ascribed to nature protection and then referring to
Brezhnev’s statement that Soviet citizens must take responsibility for environmental
protection, he stated: “In considering measures to further develop tourism and excurs-
sions in our country, we believe that we cannot separate it from the protection of na-
ture.”⁷² He then noted the joint resolutions of the VOOP and the Central Council of
Tourism, but expressed concern that managers of both the regional sections of the
VOOP and council of tourism were not “vigorously engaged in the protection of na-
ture.”⁷³ He concluded his talk by asserting: “The army of millions of Soviet tourists
must be brought to the task of protecting nature.”⁷⁴

While *Turist* already had been publishing some articles on nature protection, the
number of such articles increased in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In one article,
Grigori Galazii, the head of the Baikal liminological station who first pro-

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⁷⁰ Ibid., 39.
⁷¹ The All Russian Society for the Protection of Nature with the Central Committee on tourism and excursions accepted several measures to allow tourist organizations to take leadership in nature protection: “On the participation of tourists in nature protection activities,” “On the participation of tourist organizations in the protection of green plantings in suburban zones,” and “On the Measures for providing for anti-fire measures on tourist bases and routes,” Shortly after this, different tourist bases began distributing propaganda for nature protection in conjunction with the VOOP.
⁷² GARF, fond 9520, delo 1272, opis’ 1, 157.
⁷³ Ibid., 158.
⁷⁴ Ibid., 160.
posed the creation of a national park on Lake Baikal, repeated what was becoming a familiar refrain in calling on tourists to help protect natural riches not as passive observers “but as active fighters of those gifts that have been given to the people.” The magazine’s strongest call to orient tourism towards the nature protection cause came in a letter written by Vladimir Geptner who caught the head of the increasingly corrupt VOOP, Mikhail Mikhailovich Bochkarev, illegally fishing in the Oka River several years before. Noting many of the anthropogenic changes in popular areas among tourists, he asserted that the “fate of tourism” depended on the cultured behavior of tourists. “Now it is obvious that the most important component of the culture of tourism must be the protection of nature.”

By actively facilitating connections among tourist groups, governmental ministries, and other civic organizations to carry out efforts to propagandize nature protection, the Central Council of Tourism responded to these calls, which would continue throughout the 1970s. Following the USSR Council of Ministers’ passage of the law “On the Strengthening of the Protection of Nature and the Improvement of the Use of Natural Resources in the Country” in early 1973, which specifically called for more teaching of environmental studies (prirodovedenie), the Central Council of Tourism and its regional branches passed numerous resolutions promoting nature protection and environmental education. It called for joint work of the VOOP, Komsomol, the Ministry of Forestry, school groups, the Fish Inspection Service, and local history (kraevecheskii) organizations throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s.

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76 Ibid.
Both the Central Council of Tourism and regional councils began organizing nature protection courses for tourism instructors. In one such course published in 1973, L.N. Lukanenkova wrote: “Serious educational preparation of workers in the tourist industry and the nearly four million carrying out organizational and educational work among tourists may lead to a substantial restructuring of their views on the environment.”

In Lukanenkova’s course and other similar courses, students learned how to carry out discussions on nature protection, set up propaganda corners in tourist clubs or sections, carry out “nature holidays,” such as “day of the forest,” and lead radio programs and film showings. She proposed several themes for lectures on nature protection. The propaganda work extended well outside of the classroom. Beginning in 1973, tourists clubs and sections throughout the RSFSR took part in the photo competition “Protection of Nature is an Affair of All the People,” sponsored by the VOOP. Moreover, the VOOP and tourist clubs were starting to work together on joint projects for educating the broader public. Tourist bases throughout the USSR worked with regional forestry bureaus to produce propagandistic leaflets and posters on nature protection with such titles as “To tourists

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79 Ibid. Individual lectures included “the protection of reserve areas,” “the fight with poachers,” “kraevecheskii preparation of the tourist,” “socially-useful work in the time of treks and travel,” “the battle with fires and harmful agents to the forest,” “the help of tourists in protecting forests and rivers,” and others
80 Aristov, PA et. al, Sbornik informatsionnykh materialov 10 (Moscow: Turist, 1973), 6.
about the forest,” “Tourists—friends of nature,” and “Protect your native nature.”  
While the records of these regional efforts is fragmented, the efforts were considerable, if variable, throughout the USSR.  

Tourist clubs had regular showings of nature protection videos and in conjunction with the VOOP carried out “people’s universities” entitled “Tourists and Nature.” Clubs frequently had “nature protection corners” and usually had a formalized “Nature Protection Code of the Tourist” (Kodeks turista). The “codex” of the Samara Club of Tourists stated:

A respectful and careful relationship to nature is one of the main rules of tourist behavior. Never forget that when traveling you are the guest of your trusted friend—nature. Therefore, do not do anything that you would not do while a guest in someone’s home.

The code then makes the predictable recommendations and reminders—do not litter, be careful in putting out fires, and to take good care of the soil (referred to as “our nurse-maid”) by setting up tents on level areas.

The importance of outdoor excursions as a means of engendering a love for Soviet nature increased considerably during the 1970s. On October 1, 1974, the Central Council of Tourism passed a resolution that called on tourism bases to develop concrete steps for the development of these excursions. The resolution also called for soliciting help from representatives of the Society for the Protection of Nature, the Geographical

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81 Ibid.
82 Ibid., 4. Also see: GARF, fond 9520, delo 1724, opis’ 1, 63. The reliability of reports on the projects carried out by different regional councils of tourism is suspect. In the Vladimir Oblast, for example, the oblast Council of Tourism claimed that tourism organizations in conjunction with the VOOP carried out over 5 thousand lectures on the protection of nature and over 9600 consultations in 1971. This seems exaggerated but the efforts were likely nonetheless significant.
84 ASLNP, delo 54.
85 Ibid.
Society, scientific workers in the zapovedniki, the nature division in kraevedcheskii museums, professors of natural sciences at nearby universities, and natural history enthusiasts. Tourist bases frequently required meetings with people from such organizations before allowing guides to lead these excursions. A “valuable part of communist education,” such excursions sought to “develop knowledge about the natural environment, contribute to the formation of the materialist, Marxist-Leninist ideology, strengthen atheistic beliefs, and engender a high aesthetic sense, respect for nature, and love for country.” The number of different nature excursions throughout the USSR increased from 572 to 2121 during the course of the 1970s. Throughout the USSR, some of the more popular excursions were “Baikal—the Jewel of Siberia,” “In the Valley of Geyser,” “Volga-the deep road of Russia,” “Ice Caves of Kyrgyzia,” and “Krasnoiarsk Pillars.”

![Image](image.png)

Figure 9 From the film "Green Patrol" 1961

Instilling a love for nature through education was a means of mobilizing the “army” of tourists to become, as Galazii and Romashkov had said, “active fighters” for the environment. As kraevedenie had been an attempt to devolve authority from the state to the masses through the promotion of local knowledge, assigning environmental protection tasks to tourist

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87 P.A. Aristov et. al, Sbornik informatsionnykh materialov 14 (Moscow: Turist, 1973), 19. R.A. Diakova, Vospitanie berezhnogo otnosheniia k prirode v ekskursiakh: metod rekomendatsii (Moscow, 1976), 3. Diakova writes: “Among the different forms of cultivating love and a careful relationship to nature among the wide mass of the population one of the most effective are excursions and, most important of all, nature excursions.”
88 Central Trade Union Council Publishing House, Tsentral’nyi sovet po turizmu i ekskursiiam: Organizatsiya i soderzhanie raboty prirodoovedcheskoi sektii v ekskursionnom usherezhdennii (Moscow: Turist, 1979), 3. The Krasnodar Krai alone had 138 such expeditions in different parts of the Caucasus. Tourists staying at the Cherdansk Tour Base in the Sverdlovsk Oblast in the Urals ordinarily took part in seven nature excursions during a 12-day stay.
89 Aristov, 20.
groups similarly marked the persistence of the 22nd Congress’s emphasis on promoting participatory democracy. Moreover, it could help the state carry out environmental protection tasks on the cheap. Beginning in 1969, regional tourism councils sponsored nature protection projects on which they reported to the Central Council of Tourism. While tourists carried out numerous nature protection projects throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the archival record of these projects is intact from the early to mid-1970s. The aforementioned “green patrols” provided the models for many of these projects.

Beginning in the late 1950s, green patrols formed in pioneer camps, children’s homes, Komsomol divisions, and Houses of Pioneers. With members wearing green armbands, the patrols would identify violators of fishing and hunting regulations, report cases of illegal forest cuts, carry out tree and shrub plantings, take care of flower-beds, set up bird feeders in the winter, and circulate propaganda for nature protection. In 1964, the VOOP passed a resolution in conjunction with the Central Council of the All-Union Organization of Pioneers in the name of Lenin that laid out the responsibilities and obligations for green patrols. It was around this time that the Nature Protection Brigade at Moscow State University started carrying out forest inspection work on the model of green patrols.

By the early 1970s, many young adults who had worked in “green patrols” in their childhood and youth had become active tourists. Thus, the transition to emphasizing this sort of work in tourist organizations was logical and natural. Like the Green Patrols, tourist clubs and bases made specific recommendations for nature protection to higher authorities while taking measures to “improve” local environments. Many tourist clubs and bases participated in a yearly “Day of the Forest” in which they carried

91 I. Lebedeva, Zelenii Patrol--Pamiatka iunomu chitateliu (Kalinin: Kalininskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1963), 5.
out mass tree plantings, cleaned zones of mass recreation, and occasionally took part in river cleanups. In conjunction with the VOOP, tourist clubs regularly planted decorative trees, shrubs, and flowers, and prepared artificial nests for birds.92

Tourist groups also worked on questions of protected territories. For instance, in 1970, the Tallinn Tourist Club in Estonia recommended an area for a forest park 23 kilometers from the Estonian capital and helped organize this park with the Estonian Ministry of Forestry and workers of the Tallinn Botanical Garden.93 Tourists of the Perm Oblast regularly worked with the Oblast Council of Tourism on the preservation of relict plants. In 1971, the Stavropol Regional Council on Tourism and Excursions sponsored a joint project with the Caucasus Zapovednik on educating the public on the nature of the zapovednik.94 Four years later, the Stavropol’ Council of Tourism and Excursions spent nearly 200,000 rubles on the revival of natural, architectural, and historical monuments (pamiatniki), which was nearly 1,400 times the yearly salary of the average worker.95

During the early 1970s, tourist groups began working as forest and hunting inspectors and would frequently publicize their efforts in local newspapers or on local radio or television.96 In addition to detaining poachers, articles called on tourists to report on illegal forest cuts and forest fires. In some cases, they even helped the regional branches of the Ministry of Forestry with fighting fires.97

92 GARF, opis’ 1, fond 9520, delo 1724, 73-74. The numbers reported by the Vladimir Oblast appear exaggerated. In 1971, the Vladimir Oblast Council of Tourism claimed that tourist groups planted 753,000 decorative trees and shrubs, 7 million flowers, and prepared 51,700 artificial nests for birds.
93 Ibid., 3.
94 Ibid., 2.
95 GARF, fond 9520, opis’ 1, delo 2209, 205.
96 GARF, fond 9520, opis’ 1 delo 1724, 61.
97 GARF, fond 9520, opis’ 1, delo 2209, 207.
groups in the Moscow Oblast began carrying out a project called "Small Rivers—Normal Water Levels and Purity" (Malye reki—polnovodnost’ i chistota). Writing in Turist, N. Sherbakova stated:

Tourists can contribute by exploring small rivers and by establishing the exact locations of water mills and other hydraulic structures. They can help local authorities in the fight against poachers and to better control industrial and municipal wastewater.98

The following year, the Central Council of Tourism and Excursions and the Ministry of Fisheries Inspection passed a resolution “On Participation of Tourism-Excursion Organizations in Projects on the Protection of the Fish Resources of the Country.”99 The resolution called on workers of fish inspection stations to work with tourism instructors in determining times when tourist groups could visit specific bodies of water. Fish inspectors would read lectures on fish protection to instructors of water tourism. These instructors, in turn, read lectures in tourism clubs and sections. The resolution called for the Council of Tourism and tourist clubs to help produce visual propaganda on the protection of fisheries. Independent tourists cleared creeks of debris, established nature-protection zones along the banks of the rivers, and detained poachers. The Central Council of Tourism required regional councils of tourism to submit yearly reports on projects taken under this initiative in January of every year. What tourists could actually achieve on these projects was modest. However, their coordinated efforts both displayed and strengthened the view that Soviet citizens had important responsibilities as environmental stewards.


99 Aristov, 47.
**Operation CH**

Since the late 1950s, the efforts in the Urals to make tourists “defenders” and “friends” of nature had been perhaps stronger then anywhere else in the USSR. These efforts reached their height in the late 1960s and early 1970s when *The Ural Stalker* co-ordinated efforts to address the myriad environmental problems on the Chusovaia River. Frequently referred to as a “miracle of nature” and a “water bridge” between Europe and Asia, the Chusovaia flows from the eastern slope of the Central Urals and bisects them before flowing into the Kama River. Writing in the first decade of the 20th century, Dmitrii Mamin-Sibiriak wrote: “The Chusovaia River will likely be in the not-to-distant future one of the beloved places of Russian tourists, scientists, and artists.”

From the 1930s to the 1960s, as tourists were coming to the Chusovaia in increasing numbers, the Pervoural’sk-Revdinskii Industrial Hub in the Chusovaia watershed became one of the Urals’ fastest growing industrial regions. Factories poured thousands of tons of unfiltered industrial effluents directly into the river. In 1957, the geographer Evgeny Iastrebov described dead zones on the river where no fish lived. The following winter, Nikolai Ageev penned a poem published in *Literaturnaia gazeta* in which he implored the Presidium of the Communist Party to address the river’s myriad ecological problems. Local newspapers, *Ural Stalker, Literaturnaia gazeta*, and even

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101 *Operatsiia CH*, 10. Also see: F.P. Oparin, *Reka Chusovaia* (Sverdlovsk, 1936), XIII. Oparin writes: “The study of the Chusovaia—its history, economics, natural riches and resources, the culture of its peoples who have settled its banks—it is a noble and rewarding task for every kraeved and tourist.”
102 Riabinin, 18.
the satirical television journal, *Fitil* ("the wick"), continued to bring attention to the environmen-
tal degradation of the watershed throughout the 1960s as writers, such as Raisa Rubel’, promoted it as a destination for tourists.\(^{105}\)

The *Ural Stalker*’s campaign to save the Chusovaia began in earnest during the spring of 1969. In the May 1969 issue of *Ural Stalker*, the editorial board published an article entitled "River in Danger" (*Reka v opasnosti*).\(^{106}\) Describing the Chusovaia, the editorial board wrote:

> Her once clear water has dimmed, filled now with dirty and toxic ef-
fluentes. The fish and everything living in it is dying; logs line the bot-
tom of the river, and the banks are littered with bark. The forest in the
protected zones scream under the ax and the once scenic banks are
now denuded. The Chusovaia is our pride; its stone cliffs crumble; it
is not uncommon here (from criminal carelessness) that forest fires
devastate hundreds of hectares of the forests near its banks."\(^{107}\)

The journal called on its readers to save this “Mecca of Tourism” and “river of tourist
dreams.”\(^{108}\) A veteran of the Great Patriotic War whose writings engendered love for the na-
ture and domestic animals among Soviet citizens, Boris Riabinin lamented the “barbaric” re-
lationship to nature that had characterized the previous decades of industrial development on
the Chusovaia. He and the editorial board of *Ural Stalker* announced the initiative *Operation
CH*.\(^{109}\)

Calling civic organization to monitor “every kilometer,” the journal issued a memo to
all participants of the “operation.” The memo (*pamiatka*) asked participants to make mor-
phological descriptions of the perceived changes in the riverbed and called on participants to

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\(^{107}\) Ibid.


\(^{109}\) Some of Riabinin’s more famous works were: Boris Riabinin, *Zolotoi don* (Sverdlovsk, 1941). Boris
Riabinin, *Rasskazy o vernoj druge* (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardia, 1957); B. Riabinin, *Na pamiati moego pokole-
nia* (Sverdlovsk: Sverdlovskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1957); B. Riabinin, *O liubvi k zhivomu* (Moscow: Pro-
determine the location of point source pollution. It also asked readers to note places that were extensively littered and whenever possible to identify the guilty parties. It called on participants to record observations about the logging practices, to report areas where forest cuts exceeded the quota, and to note how much and where timber lost in transport lay on the bottom of the river. Finally, the memo asked participants to observe tourist groups and to identify ways in which they were harming the environment of the Chusovaia. Soviet citizens responded to the call.

Over the course of the next three years, the journal published articles in eighteen different issues and central newspapers, especially Literaturnia gazeta, brought the Chusovaia’s problems even wider attention. Ural Stalker reported on the work of different divisions and printed many suggestions of the individual participants. The “operation,” which had begun with exhortations and assigned tasks from the journal, quickly turned into an evolving dialogue between the journal, individuals, and civic organizations. Retirees, children, and people who were following the operation from as far away as Kiev wrote to the editorial board. The Geographical Society, the Sverdlovsk Council of Kraevedenie, path-finder divisions in schools, houses of pioneers, the Society of Young Geographers (Globus), the Sverdlovsk Children’s Tourism Station, and Komsomol organizations created regular observation posts and organized multi-day rafting and observation trips down the Chusovaia. Similar to Green Patrols throughout the USSR, the divisions taking part in Operation CH frequently reported on poaching activities. One group reported catching a group of poachers that had caught 2,400 kilograms of fish on the Vishera River, a tributary of the Chusovaia.

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Participants described places in which four meters of sunken timber lined the river’s bottom, cliffs that were defaced by inscriptions of tourists and pulverized by quarrying, and significant pollution from iron, copper, zinc, sulfuric acid, oil, and sulfur. In numerous letters, readers recommended the creation of a recreation area or national park, which would allow the region to fulfill tourism’s potential.

As the campaign progressed, articles used the “operation” to make a broader critique on society’s relationship to nature. The magazine protected itself by never attacking the Party or government, but rather attacked the enterprise managers and the carelessness of private citizens. Moreover, it predictably grounded its goals ideologically through invocations of Engels and Lenin. In August 1970, V. Mikhailuk, quoting Engels, wrote: “The highest measure of human dignity is his relationship to silent mother nature.” The journal named its 1971 campaign “For a Leninist Relationship to Nature.” While some participants likely still found such language inspiring, others probably saw it as an empty performative ritual necessary to avert unwanted attention from the government of the RSFSR and perhaps even gain their sympathy for the project. They realized that citizen efforts alone could not save the Chusovaia.

The campaign seemed to have succeeded in its efforts. While the many articles on the operation had already prompted the Pervoural’sk City Council to draft a five-year plan for the construction of new filtration equipment in late 1969, the RSFSR Council of Ministers passed a decree that called for a comprehensive plan to address the river’s myriad environmental problems in early 1971. Known in common parlance as “The Big Chusovaia,” the plan banned the construction of new enterprises in the upper section of the river and called for the

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116 “Reke Chusovoi Gosudarstvennaiia Zabota” Ural’skii sledopyt 2 (February 1971), 56.
modernization of filtration equipment to reduce industrial effluents. It also called for strict control of domestic sewage, close monitoring of the technology for cutting timber, and lifting the thousands of tons of timber that had sunk to the bottom of the river and caused mass eutrophication.\textsuperscript{120} It called for spending nearly half a billion rubles over the course of the decade for cleaning up the river.\textsuperscript{121}

The “operation” was indeed directing Soviet tourists to the higher purposes that Efremov and others had insisted were critically important for the tourism movement. In an interview with the journal, the director of the Bureau of Irrigation and Water Resources thanked the journal and the participating individuals and organizations for “helping the ministries do their work.”\textsuperscript{122} As was typical in the discourse in Soviet environmental problems, \textit{Ural Stalker} portrayed the public (\textit{obshchestvennost‘}) as helping to eradicate environmental problems by challenging irresponsible managers and citizens who acted against the Leninist dictate to protect the environment. By so doing, the journal sought to work around the margins and help push Soviet society closer to the perfection of its founders’ revolutionary and infallible vision. Indeed, the participants of Operation CH were carrying out the sort of voluntarism that Khrushchev had said was essential to achieving Communism at the 22\textsuperscript{nd} Party Congress.

For these efforts, the Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources awarded \textit{Ural Stalker}, the Pervoural’sk City Division of the Society of Nature Protection, the Club “Searcher” of School 14 in the \textit{Sverdlovsk Oblast}, the club of young geographers “\textit{Globus}”, and individual members of the editorial board a “certificate of honor.”\textsuperscript{123} The RSFSR Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources encouraged the journal to continue the operation.

\textsuperscript{120} “Reke Chusovoi Gosudarstvennaia Zabota” \textit{Ural’skii sledopyt} 2 (February 1971), 57
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{123} “Obsuzhdenie operatsii “CH” na kolegii ministerstva” \textit{Ural’skii sledopyt} 3 (March 1971), 47.
Many readers of the journal expressed regret that they lived too far away to help. Gera Stepanov, a young reader from a village located on the bank of the Tavda River on the eastern slope of the Central Urals, wrote in June 1972:

I also wanted to take part in Operation CH. However, it is a pity that I live far from the Chusovaia—it is difficult for me to get there. But if there was an Operation T in which I could take care of our river Tavda (it also has suffered much), then my comrades and I would have participated enthusiastically.\(^\text{124}\)

The responses of Stepanov and others prompted the journal to expand “Operation Chusovaia” to “Operatsiia Chistota” (Operation Cleanliness), which it hoped would encourage residents throughout the Urals and eventually the entire Soviet Union to take care of watersheds near their home.\(^\text{125}\) Without explanation, Operation CH disappeared from the journals pages by 1973. The reasons for this will require archival research in Ekaterinburg.

Reflecting several years after the end of Operation CH in his book by the same name, Boris Riabinin recounted the history of the operation in detail. He asserted that neither before the revolution nor in Soviet times had a river “been taken under such vigilant control.”\(^\text{126}\) Riabinin also touched on a systemic analysis of Soviet environmental problems that was common by arguing that the obsession of enterprise managers with exceeding plans created a “psychological barrier” that impeded them from considering the protection of the environment.\(^\text{127}\) The resulting damage, he wrote, “is not just to nature, but to neighborly relationships.”\(^\text{128}\) Asserting that Operation CH could prove a critical moment of psychological change throughout all of Soviet society, he wrote:

It is without exaggeration that nature can put a check on civil consciousness. In this sense, Operation CH is very revealing. The operation identified not only individuals, but also entire enterprises that were


\(^{125}\) Ibid. For an earlier article that Riabinin wrote about tourism, see: B. Riabinin, “Arakul’” Na sushi i na more 9 (September 1936), 19-21.

\(^{126}\) Riabanin, 79.

\(^{127}\) Ibid., 69.

\(^{128}\) Ibid., 63.
indifferent to the fate of nature. Even the most hardened are beginning to understand that it is not safe to harm nature.\textsuperscript{129}

Cleaning up the Chusovaia and protecting it would give it a “second birth” that would bring a great deluge of tourists.\textsuperscript{130} “Knowing that ‘we have to go to the Chusovaia,’ working people will come from near and far. They will set off by boat and take part in hiking trips.”\textsuperscript{131} He continued: “We must save what remains! The life of the Chusovaia was intended to be a Mecca of Tourism, to become one of the most popular tourist routes.”\textsuperscript{132}

Operation CH demonstrated the extent to which nature protection had become an important in developing the “proper culture” of tourism. Through the efforts of citizens, tourists believed that they could help improve the lives of their local community as part of the larger task of socialist construction. The project, and more specifically Riabinin’s retrospective views mentioned above, also reflected the growing opinion that the development of tourism opportunities was itself a strong rationale for protecting scenic territories from industrial exploitation and the extraction of natural resources. This growing sentiment had already coalesced several years before into the Soviet Union’s national park movement. While the establishment of national parks had become one of the most important environmental conversations by the time Riabinin wrote Operation CH, its roots go back to the 1950s when the Commission on Nature Protection began participating in conferences of the International Union of the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The adoption of the national park idea by scientists from the Commission, their propagation of the national park idea, and its quick spread throughout the Soviet environmental protection and scientific community is the subject of the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 96. 
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 120. 
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 118. 
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 120.
Part II: The Soviet National Park Movement

This section will follow the Soviet national park movement from its origins in the 1950s to the establishment of the first Soviet national parks in the 1970s and then the passage of the “model regulation” for national parks in 1981. It will then narrow the focus to national parks in the RSFSR and the challenges they faced during the 1980s.

“A beautiful landscape is a matter of importance to the state.”
--K.G. Paustovskii

For the 1962 World’s Fair, also known as Century 21 Exposition, the host city of Seattle erected the Space Needle—a nearly 200-meter monument resembling something out of the cartoon, “The Jetsons,” which would debut on ABC that fall. The Soviet Union had sent the first satellite (sputnik) into orbit in 1958 and the first man into space the year before. But as the most prominent landmark of a skyline behind which Mount Rainier towered in the distance, this curious structure signaled the United States’ determination to lead the world in this new age of exploration. As thousands poured into Seattle every day in late June and early July, delegates from 63 countries gathered at the First World Conference on National Parks to discuss cooperation between nations in protecting scenic landscapes on the last “frontiers” of a vulnerable planet.

The published proceedings of the conference included photographs of lions lazing on the African Serengeti, sublime peaks in the Swiss Alps, picturesque Finnish Lakes, the lush Costa Rican Rainforest, Mount Fuji, and many other iconic landscapes from different parts of the world. The introduction read: “From the Arctic to the Antarctic from East to West, men are combatting the forces of materialism and expediency in an effort, not to make a different world, but to keep this world good.”

US Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall asserted that space exploration had revealed the fragility and smallness of the earth while highlighting the importance of finding common cause to protect it. In their urban environments, humans

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lived apart from the “natural” world, which caused a pervasive “spiritual Sickens” that only scenic, wild places could heal. Without immediate action, Udall asserted that the next generation would not be able to enjoy these wonders. The scenic treasures of nature—the “earth’s temples”—were “the heritage of mankind,” and an “indispensable part of modern civilization.”

The program’s introduction and Udall’s address most likely evoked mixed feelings among members of the Soviet Academy of Science’s Commission on Nature Protection when they received their copy of the proceedings. National parks had become the most internationally recognized instrument for nature protection. They provided a means for nations to display their scenic wonders. While Soviet scientists wanted the USSR’s system of protected territories to become a model (obrazets) for the world, the USSR had no national parks and the international scientific community poorly understood its system of nature reserves—zapovedniki. Accordingly, no Soviet delegates participated in the conference. Nonetheless, the Commission and other interested groups had recently been casting a critical eye toward environmental protection in the Soviet Union as the country’s scientists expanded their participation in international environmental organizations. Seeking international respect for Soviet environmental protection, the Commission issued a call for the establishment of a system of national parks that resonated deeply throughout the USSR.

This chapter will cover the first decade of the Soviet Union’s national park movement from the initial adoption of the idea by Soviet scientists to its broad acceptance as the best means of addressing the USSR’s tourism explosion. Khrushchev’s policy of “peaceful coexistence” with the capitalist world allowed unprecedented cultural, touristic, and scientific exchanges with the West and enabled the state to redirect resources once used for armaments

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3 Ibid., 3.
4 Ibid., 2.
into areas--consumer goods, cultural institutions, recreational facilities--that significantly improved Soviet citizens' quality of life. Having closely observed the tourism boom, Soviet geographers, biologists, game wardens and other interested parties argued that zapovedniki should allow tourists in nature reserves to broaden their appeal and relevance with both government officials and the public. As concern grew about tourism’s potentially harmful environmental impact upon these reserves, the Commission began pushing for a system of national parks that could educate tourists on environmentally sound practices while instilling them with strong ecological values. With the passage of economic reforms in the mid-1960s to incentivize profit accumulation in individual enterprises, proponents also argued that parks would be profitable and thus reconcile economic pragmatism and environmental protection. The rationale took root, spread, and by the late 1960s a cross-section of government agencies, scientific institutions and non-governmental organizations were expressing enthusiastic support for the establishment of national parks to generate this profit and bring cherished international prestige to Soviet environmental protection.

**Early Calls**

The first calls for the establishment of a system of Russian and Soviet national parks began in the first decade of the twentieth century and continued until the 1930s. The most well known of these was a Sovnarkom decree from September 1921, “On the protection of monuments of nature, gardens, and parks.” Soviet environmentalists remained interested

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5 Doug Weiner, *Models of Nature: Ecology, Conservation, and Cultural Revolution in Soviet Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), 12. The first mention of a national park system in Russia likely came in an address from the botanist, Ivan Parfen’evich Borodin, at the Twelfth Congress of Russian Naturalists and Physicians Calling the protection of nature “a moral duty,” Borodin argued for the creation of large national parks that would be “temples” to nature and to the nation. Natal’ia Zabelina, *Natsional’nyi park* (Moscow: Mysl’, 1987), 34. Lenin called for the establishment of nature reserves and national parks without distinguishing between the two. F.F. Shillinger, “Zaklucheniia po proektu uchrezhdeniia natsional’nogo parka (zapovednika) v avtomnoi oblasti Komi,” *Okhrana prirody* 3 (March 1930), 66. In this article, Shillinger talks about the prospects of a zapovednik or national park in the Circumpolar Urals without differentiating between the two.
in American national parks throughout the decade and in the summer of 1928 Danill Nikolaevich Kashkarov, an animal ecologist who strongly influenced ecological thinking in the early Soviet Union, took a tour of several US national parks, about which he wrote in the journal *Scientific Word* (*Nauchnoe slovo*) the following year.⁶ In the article, he provides the history of the establishment of Yellowstone, Yosemite, and the National Park Service and writes with unmistakable admiration for both the grandiosity of the nature within several parks and the way in which national parks encouraged a love of native nature among American citizens.⁷

Despite Kashkarov’s admiration for US national parks and some writers’ portrayal of them and *zapovedniki* as almost one and the same in the late 1920s, by the early 1930s the model of inviolable reserves (henceforth *zapovedniki*) for scientific study had won out over American-style national parks for tourism.⁸ In the 1920s and the first years of the 1930s, these “models of nature” (*etalony*) proliferated throughout the Soviet Union. Although articles in the tourism journal, *On Land and on Sea (Na sushe i na more)*, brought attention to the great tourism opportunities that Soviet tourists could find in the *zapovedniki*, with the exception of the Krasnoiarsk Pillars (Stol’by) and the Caucasus *Zapovednik*, *zapovedniki* did not encourage visitation by tourists.⁹ During the 1930s, the number of tourists was small enough that tourism caused little concern among the supporters of the *zapovedniki*.

Soviet environmentalists largely worked independently from foreign colleagues who were strengthening international collaboration in environmental protection during the 1930s. At several conferences, such as the 1933 London Conference on African

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⁷ D.N. Kashkarov, “‘Natsional’nye parki S-A Soedinennikh shtatov” *Nauchnoe slovo* 6 (June 1929), 72-97.
⁸ A. Smirnov, “Kavkazskii Zapovednik” *Vsemirnyi turist* 9 (September 1928), 266.
Wildlife, scientists from many countries emphasized the importance of establishing national parks throughout the world. Environmental protection was far from everyone’s minds for most of World War II. However, in the war’s final months, American conservationist Gifford Pinchot wrote a letter to Franklin Delano Roosevelt in which he encouraged the president to push for a conference on international cooperation in the conservation of natural resources after the war’s conclusion. Roosevelt died before the war’s end and conservation was not a high international priority in the war’s immediate aftermath as Japan, Europe, and the USSR rebuilt their economies and the USSR and the United States carved out rival spheres of influence in Europe. By the end of the decade, however, economic expansion led to improved living conditions in Europe and the United States, which made leisure and a clean environment an issue of increasing interest.

With limited resources but with much enthusiasm for finding ways to cooperate that would help heal a continent ravaged by war, in late 1948, eighteen governments, seven international organizations, and 107 nature conservation organizations signed the constitutive act for the formation of the International Union of the Protection of Nature (IUPN) under the auspices of UNESCO in Fontainebleau France. The escalating tensions with the USSR made the participation of Soviet environmentalists almost unthinkable. Moreover, the Soviet environmental protection community fell under siege as Stalin announced that same year a plan for the “transformation of nature.” As the IUPN called

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11 First World Conference on National Parks, 6.
the formation national parks to preserve the earth’s awe-inspiring scenic landscapes and other international environmental protection projects, Stalin’s propagandists called for turning north-flowing rivers to the south, the creation of new species, the transformation of regional climates, and the construction of industrial projects that would inspire awe by dramatically transforming landscapes. With the infamous Trofim Lysenko often repeating the famous statement by the agriculturalist Ivan Michurin, “We cannot wait for kindnesses from nature; our task is to wrest them from her,” government agents scrutinized and maligned zapovedniki workers as politically unreliable anti-Michurinists. While geographers worked assiduously to mitigate the environmental destruction of some of the plan's most ambitious projects, environmentalists made strong calls for saving the zapovedniki. Nonetheless, the USSR Supreme Soviet passed a decree eliminating 88 of 126 zapovedniki on August 29, 1951. The extant reserves covered barely more than ten percent of the system’s former territory. Soviet environmentalists were faced not only with the destruction of previously protected landscapes, but with professional irrelevance within a state that increasingly viewed nature through the monolithic paradigm of resource exploitation.

**Inviolability Compromised, New Directions**

Douglas Weiner, Vladimir Boreiko, and Feliks Shil'mark have portrayed the liquidation of the zapovedniki as an unmitigated catastrophe for nature protection in the

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15 *A Little Corner of Freedom*, 119 and 133.


17 *A Little Corner of Freedom*, 129.
Soviet Union. For these authors, the liquidation marked the height of Stalinist hostility to nature. Weiner, who has referred to the system of zapovedniki as an “archipelago of freedom,” took the argument a step further by arguing that this event marked the height of the Stalinist government’s intrusions into every “corner” of Soviet life.  

Zapovedniki, as he correctly argues, were central to the scientists “sense of identity and mission.” While Weiner does tell the story of the extensive efforts made by scientists to reestablish the system, he perhaps understates the opportunity that this experience offered for the scientific community to reconsider some of their fundamental assumptions about protected territories. This and not the immediate tragedy for the scientific community was the most lasting impact of the liquidation of 1951 and the struggles to reestablish the system in the years that followed.

Shortly after the liquidation, the Commission on Zapovedniki formed under the Academy of Sciences. The Commission sought to reestablish the liquidated zapovedniki and establish itself as the center of scientific-research work for the reserve system. The newly formed Main Zapovednik Administration under the Council of Ministers, however, insisted on the exploitation of natural resources in the zapovedniki. At a 1954 meeting of members of the Commission on the Zapovedniki, the Moscow Society of Naturalists (MOIP), Moscow Geographical Society (MGO), and the All-Union Society for Nature Protection (VOOP), participants discussed how the economic use of the zapovedniki was

18 For a different interpretation of this event see: Stephen Brain, “Noviy vzgliad na unichtozhenie zapovednikov v SSSR v 1950-e g.” Istoriko-biologicheskie issledovanie, Vol 4., No. 1 (2012), 58-72. Brain argues that the liquidation of the zapovedniki was done so that the territories could be put under the Ministry of Forestry. He argues that one of the primary reasons for this was so that the watersheds could be better protected through professional management. Protecting watersheds through forest conservation is part of what he has referred to as “Stalinist environmentalism.”
19 *A Little Corner of Freedom*, 117-126.
20 Ibid., 130.
21 Ibid., 208.
leading to their degradation. Geologists were exploring for oil in Kamchatka’s Kronotskii Zapovednik. Loggers were harvesting timber in former and existing reserves. Hunters slaughtered maral (wapiti) deer in Atlaiskii Zapovednik with impunity. Smoke was constantly seen above the burning forests of Lapland Zapovednik. Many of the participants expressed dismay at the violation of the principle of “inviolability.” While the system’s defenders would never relinquish their passionate belief that the zapovedniki should be primarily a place for scientific research, many realized that emphasizing economic uses that had a minimal impact on the environment was a necessity.

Tourism became central to this emphasis on the broader possible uses of the zapovedniki. The “Statute on State Reserves” (1951) had already assigned state zapovedniki the tasks of carrying out excursions for working people, students, and tourists. At the Third All-Union Geographical Congress (1954), one report argued that allowing tourism in the zapovedniki would “promote ideas of nature protection and geographical knowledge of our Motherland.” David Armand, with whom we are now well acquainted, strongly supported this view. Towards the end of 1954, Armand wrote to the Commission as it was expanding its mandate and in the process of renaming itself the Commission on the Protection of Nature. He encouraged the printing of guidebooks and tourist maps of the zapovedniki with the “proper” propagandistic message. Tourist travel in the zapovedniki, he argued, would help engender “aesthetic and moral feelings that would instill patriotic love for the beautiful nature

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22 Ibid., 224
23 Ibid., 232.
24 RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo. 6. A proposal on the establishment of the Committee of Nature Protection and Zapovedniki was put forth to the Council of Ministers in a letter from June 11, 1954. A.N. Nesmenianov stated that the foundational task of the committee will be organizing nature-protection projects through state organs of the USSR. He also mentioned that the project would coordinate the activity of ministries, bureaucracies, and different institutions on the questions of nature protection, organizing a rational set of zapovedniki and pamiatniki (monuments) of nature in the USSR.
25 RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 166, 71.
26 RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 16, 5.
of the Motherland” as had been done in the nature reserves (national parks) of other countries.27

Others, including Vasili Nikolaevich Skalon, a famous author and game warden in Siberia who would later develop plans for a national park that encompassed all of Lake Baikal’s shoreline, were making similar proposals. After pointing to the importance of national parks for tourism in other countries and the potential profits that tourism in zapovedniki could bring to the USSR, Skalon asserted that the “state’s dignity is at stake.” “Is it really decent for the Soviet people,” he continued, “stewards of the world’s best natural landscapes, to forget about fundamental nature protection of one’s own country, the development of the zapovedniki? We must make the zapovedniki the pride of the people as much as the beauty of the Kremlin Cathedrals and the jewels of the Hermitage.”28 While Skalon’s letter seemed to make little distinction between Soviet zapovedniki and national parks in other countries, increased interaction between Soviet environmentalists and the international environmental community would clarify the differences between the two in the years that followed.

Changing Political Winds and an Expanding Network

While many Soviet historians have recently argued that some of the dramatic changes between the Stalin and Khrushchev eras have been overstated, with respect to the ability of scientists to develop professional contacts in the West, the Khrushchev Era marked a sharp break from the previous two decades.29 At an industrial conference in the summer of 1955, Nikita Khrushchev stated: “The fundamental principle of Soviet foreign policy is the possibility of and the necessity for the peaceful coexistence of different social systems. Normal

27 RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 15, 69.
28 Ibid.
relations and businesslike cooperation between all countries is possible only with this principle as a guide."\(^{30}\) While the central press frequently discussed the importance of “cultural cooperation” and “friendship among peoples,” Soviet cultural leaders frequently expressed insecurity that the capitalist and socialist worlds were not engaging on equal terms.\(^{31}\) Khrushchev and the Party elite nonetheless took the position that the USSR would benefit from this cultural, economic, and scientific cooperation and believed that in a matter of years socialist accomplishments would outshine those of the capitalist world, thereby shifting the terms of this international engagement.\(^{32}\)

The Academy of Sciences, unsurprisingly, was the nexus of the USSR’s international scientific connections. At the end of 1955, the Academy’s president A. Nesmeyanov wrote in *Izvestiia*:

> We feel that friendly mutual understanding and active scientific ties, the exchange of the experience and results of scientific work among scientists of various countries, can and must develop independently of the social systems of these countries and independently of the political convictions and philosophic and religious views of scientists.\(^{33}\)

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In the second half of the 1950s alone, thousands of Soviet scientists travelled to the West for conferences and hosted their counterparts from the capitalist world. The Commission on Nature Protection made international cooperation a priority from the moment of its creation. In the summer of 1955, the Commission invited Roger Heim, President of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), to the Soviet Union as part of a French delegation of academics. The following year, a few months after the Commission on Nature Protection joined the IUCN, the agency's scientific secretary, Lev Konstantinovich Shaposhnikov, represented the Soviet Union at the IUCN’s Fifth General Assembly in Edinburgh, Scotland. There, the delegates called for a series of regional meetings on national parks and equivalent reserves and information exchanges between reserve workers from different countries.

Shaposhnikov’s internal report on the conference turned a critical eye to the state of nature protection in the USSR. It stated:

The work of the Commission, the trip of its delegates to the Assembly, the studying of materials about nature protection outside the Soviet Union, allows us to approach critically the state of affairs in the USSR. Our country needs serious improvement in the area of nature protection.

Shaposhnikov called for regional conferences on zapovedniki between 1958 and 1961. At the end of the report, he wrote: “Taking into consideration that the reserve regime of the USSR must be a model (obrazets) for other countries, the Commission is preparing a proposal for

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35 RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 38, 1. Several months later the Commission gained inclusion in the IUCN. Edward Mack Nicholson, founder of the World Wildlife Fund, stated: “The establishment in March of 1955 in the Academy of Sciences USSR a special Commission for the coordination of the tasks of nature protection in Russia on a scientific foundation is an important historical event on a world scale.”
36 RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 51, 6. Participants were said to take particular interest in the efforts of the workers of the *Pechoro-Ilychskii Zapovednik* in training elk.
37 RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 38, 38.
the organization of a rational set of zapovedniki in our country.”38 In 1957, the Commission of Nature Protection passed a resolution, which called for the reestablishment and the expansion of the nature reserve system.39

The report also called for expanding the Commission’s contacts with environmental organizations in other countries and amassing literature on environmental protection from across the world.40 By the end of the decade, the Commission had established exchanges of publications of conservation literature with environmental organizations from 20 different countries, amassed over 1,000 books related to environmental protection, and was sending its bulletin, “Nature Protection and the Reserves of the Soviet Union,” to 80 addresses in 30 countries.41 Shaposhnikov was clearly self-conscious, if not embarrassed by the state of environmental protection in the USSR. He wrote: “Whereas in other countries a great amount of literature on nature protection is published (for example in New York and Washington there are around 10 journals and in London 5), in the USSR there is only one bulletin of the Commission of Nature Protection of the AN USSR Okhrana prirody i zapovednoe delo v SSSR.42 As they increasingly viewed Soviet environmental protection as lagging behind the West, Soviet environmentalists would stress learning from their Western colleagues.

The extensive network of contacts between Soviet and foreign scientists was growing through formal and informal channels. In recent years, several environmental historians have looked to official Soviet state agreements with the United States and other Western nations

38 Ibid.
39 RGAE, Fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 91, 4.
40 RGAE, Fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 52, 5.
41 RGAE, Fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 38, 39. The Commission regularly received issues of National Parks Magazine (USA) Sveriges Nature (Sweden, Ciencia (Mexico), Wissen und Leben (GDR), Mens en Natur (Netherlands), Nature in Wales (England), The Conservation of Nature (Japan) Pro Natura (Italy) Svensk Jakt (Sweden) Fur Unsere Freiebende Giezelt (West Germany), Viltrevy (Sweden), Naturschutzparke (West Germany), and Natur en Landschap (Netherlands).
42 RGAE, Fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 51, 9. Of the foreign literature, Shaposhnikov wrote that the literature regarding American national parks was the most interesting. In turn, he began working on a Russian language brochure on national parks in the USA.
during the 1970s in assessing the transmission of environmental protection ideas and globally accepted norms to the USSR. They seem unaware of the extensive participation of the Commission on Nature Protection in the IUCN in the 1950s and 1960s and do not acknowledge that Soviet environmentalists had any contact with foreigners during these decades. While this is consistent with Soviet history’s long fixation on state actors above all others, it obscures much about the nature of environmental protection in the USSR and the Soviet system more broadly. As the above statement by Shaposhnikov demonstrates, foreign examples borne out of increased exchanges with international environmental organizations were critically important in the self-evaluation of Soviet environmentalists. Their critical self-evaluation would influence the ways they sought to change (and succeeded in) environmental protection practices and policies in the USSR. Perhaps above all else, this strengthening international environmental community looked at protected territories as an important measurement of the state of environmental protection in different countries.

Protecting “pristine” territories in a “natural” state continued to receive greater attention in the IUCN, the UN, and UNESCO. The UN’s Scientific Technical Council adopted a resolution that referred to national parks as important to “the welfare of mankind” and recommended that the UNESCO and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) compile a list of national parks and equivalent reserves.44 Established at the IUCN’s Seventh General Assembly in Athens (1958), the Commission on National Parks called for international coop-

43 For an article that assesses Soviet participation in international exchange almost exclusively through official state agreements, see: Stephen Brain, “The appeal of appearing green: Soviet-American ideological competition and Cold War environmental diplomacy” Cold War History (2014), 1-19. Also see: Josephson et. al., An Environmental History of Russia, 182.
44 RGAE, Fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 149, 41-42.
eration in scientific research in national parks and the publication of a book, *The Last Refuge*, which would feature national parks throughout the world.\(^{45}\) The IUCN asked Shaposhnikov to make a list of Russian reserves for the book. Putting this list together likely created a sense of urgency for the Committee of Environmental Protection to reestablish the *zapovedniki* as well as expand its conception of protected territories. The Committee had succeeded in reestablishing many of the liquidated *zapovedniki*, despite the efforts of high-level officials to transform some of them into hunting reserves.\(^{46}\) While only 40 *zapovedniki* and 1.46 million hectares of reserve territory remained in 1955, within four years there were 82 reserves covering 5.3 million hectares.\(^{47}\)

*Zapovedniki* were of course not national parks. National parks had much greater resonance with the international environmental community. As evidenced in the support within international organizations such as UNESCO, for the creation of national parks in Africa, there was a growing sense in the international environmental community that “civilized” countries had national parks. In his 1960 report “The Conservation of Wildlife and Natural Habitats in East and Central Africa,” UNESCO director Julian Huxley suggested that the establishment of African national parks would be a significant step in Africa’s “civilizing process.” Nonetheless, Huxley suggested that the “civilized world” could not trust Africa to protect their unique fauna, the preservation of which was of great interest to the “civilized” world.\(^{48}\)

\(^{45}\) Ibid., The Commission on National Parks also sought to lead the implementation of ecological and scientific programs, the compilation of a list of experts who would offer consultation or technical help to national parks or reserves in any country, and the organization of visits of scientists, technical and administrative workers between national parks of different countries.

\(^{46}\) *A Little Corner of Freedom*, 295.

\(^{47}\) RGAE, Fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 82, 15. Increase in the territory of the *zapovedniki*: 1955: 40 (1.466 thousand hectares 1957: 61 (2739 hectares); 1958: 69 (3.163 thousand hectares; 1959: 82 (5.305 hectares)

The Commission hardly wanted the international environmental community to compare the USSR to Africa or other “uncivilized” parts of the world that lacked national parks. With Cold War competition at a fevered pitch, Soviet citizens increasingly viewed their country through the prism of relative levels of “modernity” in comparison to the West, whether through the space race, home appliances, or trends in fashion that trickled into the USSR from the West to the consternation of government officials.\(^4\) For the international environmental community, national parks were the most widespread and “modern” form of nature protection. As was true with many areas during the Khrushchev era, the USSR was increasingly borrowing models for environmental protection from the West with the hope of surpassing it. America’s original incentive for establishing national parks, as the historian Alfred Runte has argued, lay “in the discovery that scenery was a cultural asset.” The idea for a system of Soviet national parks was borne out of the fact that national parks had become not only the accepted means of making landscapes a “cultural asset” for a nation’s citizens, but for “showcasing” native nature and demonstrating a nation’s ability to protect it to the outside world.\(^5\)

Despite a growing sense among Soviet environmentalists that environmental protection in the USSR was behind the United States and Western Europe, ideological considerations made the Commission of Nature Protection reluctant to accept the term “national park.”


Accordingly, the Commission called for the establishment of “people’s parks” and asked the Academy of Medical Sciences, different branches of the Academy of Sciences in Union Republics, and to Regional Economic Councils (sovmarkhozy) to develop a set of recommendations for these parks. The Commission presented its conclusions to Gosplan at a plenary meeting in January 1960 as part of its general recommendations for the development of the economy. In its proposals, the Commission wrote:

Landscapes are being disfigured or destroyed in a large number of well-known spas and places of mass tourism. In the USSR many natural landscapes are still not organized for tourism, but they could become places of mass recreation and tourism for working people. Fifty-million people visit US National Parks every year and a government program has the stated goal of increasing this number to 80 million people a year. The demand of our people for such protected and well-designed natural landscapes (“parks”) is steadily growing. The number of people taking part in tourism attests to this fact.

The report called for the designation of nature parks that would coordinate the construction of tourism infrastructure and regulate land use in forests around cities and in the USSR’s most scenic and remote corners. In August 1960, shortly after a large Soviet delegation visited the VI General Assembly of the IUCN, much of which took place at Tatra National Park on the border of Czechoslovakia and Poland, Shaposhnikov called on several government agencies on the Union and Republic levels to begin drawing up proposals for national parks in the USSR. Even as Cold War tensions were reaching unprecedented levels in the two years

51 While the resolution intended the parks to be the equivalent of national parks in other countries, the term “national” caused anxieties within an ideological system that promoted the eventual dissipation of national identities and the fall of the nation state.
52 RGAE, Fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 81, 37.
53 RGAE, Fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 79, 52-54. The Commission called for a regulatory regime that would ban or strict limitation of timber harvesting, the revival of destroyed portions of forest, the protection of soils from erosion, cleaning water pollution, the organization of system of roads and tourist trails and strict regulations for hunting and fishing.
54 Coming from Moscow, Kiev, Vladivostok, Irkutsk, Tatru, Erevan, Vilnius, Leningrad, Minsk, and Sverdlovsk, the Soviet delegation included Shaposhnikov and Dementiev, both of whom had written about national parks already, and many, such as Formozov, zoologist Nikolai Fedorovich Reimers, Boris Pavlovich Kolesnikov, director of the Institute of Biology of the Ural Branch of the Academy of Sciences, and the zoologist Andrei Grigorevich Bannikov, who would be some of the most vocal supporters for national parks in the two decades to follow.
that followed, the Commission on Nature Protection acknowledged and promoted the West’s most cherished environmental protection institution and what Wallace Stegner and others have called America’s “best idea.”

**Khrushchev’s Challenge**

Shaposhnikov’s call for national parks proved even wiser when the zapovedniki came under attack again later that year. The Council of Ministers passed a resolution that called for GOSPLAN, the USSR Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Finances, the Academy of Sciences, and the Council of Ministers in Union republics to submit a report to the USSR Council of Ministers within a month on “eliminating excess” zapovedniki on December 31, 1960. At a plenary meeting of the Central Committee less than three weeks later, Khrushchev explained the decision in the sort of rambling tirade that Party members knew well by that time. After disparaging preservationists as oddballs (*chudaki*), the First Secretary used a particular film that showed a squirrel eating an acorn in the *Altai Zapovednik* to prove the inanity of scientific study in nature reserves. Above all else, Khrushchev resented that zapovedniki were locking up valuable natural resources:

> What is this thing called a zapovednik? It is the nation’s wealth, which we must preserve. But in our country it frequently happens that zapovedniki are organized in places that do not represent anything of serious value. We must impose order on this business. Zapovedniki should be located where it is essential to preserve valuable corners of nature and to conduct authentically scientific observations. Certainly, our country has these kinds of zapovedniki already. But a significant proportion of the zapovedniki currently in existence represent a contrived operation.

He concluded by stating: “It is necessary, of course, to protect nature and care for it. But not by organizing zapovedniki everywhere with large staffs.”

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55 *A Little Corner of Freedom*, 297.
56 Ibid., 296.
57 Ibid., 297.
With Khrushchev and the Party self-appointed arbiters on what constituted “scientifically-relevant” research, the Commission emphasized the reserves’ appeal beyond the scientific community and their importance in the USSR’s international prestige. In a letter to the Council of Ministers in the days following the plenary session, the Commission wrote:

Zapovedniki of the RSFSR are used by a wide number of people, and from them Caucasus, Teberdinskii, Voronezhskii, Central-Black Earth, Astrakhan have achieved international fame. They attract the attention of domestic and international scientists. In 1959 alone, over 252,000 tourists and excursionists, including 3,000 foreigners, visited the zapovedniki. Two thousand students from 25-30 universities visit them. The development of the zapovedniki in the USSR has enormous international significance: the Soviet Union is a member of the International Union of the Conservation of Nature and carries the corresponding international obligations for protecting natural monuments, territory, characterizing concrete landscape units for the protection of rare and disappearing types of plants and animals in the country.\(^{58}\)

While the Commission would continue to defend the zapovedniki as Khrushchev eliminated 32 of them, its members understood that national parks offered a potentially more viable and flexible form of protection, which would resonate more widely among Soviet society and the international community, and perhaps more deeply among government officials.\(^{59}\)

On the day after Khrushchev’s tirade (January 18, 1961), the Commission passed a resolution that stated: “The economic use of natural resources must mix with the foundational elements of the zapovedniki as has been done in ‘people’s’ (national) parks in other countries. It is worth using the experience of other countries and to establish in our country a more diverse system of reserves.”\(^{60}\) The resolution also proposed transforming some zapovedniki that exceeded 100,000 hectares into national parks. Less than two weeks later, the Commission specifically called for turning the Altai, Zhigulevsk, Teberdinskaia, Stolbi, and Marii Zapovedniki into national (people’s) parks under the management of the All Union Central

\(^{58}\) RGAE, Fond 544, opis’ 1, delo, 79.
\(^{59}\) Weiner, 302. The total territory of zapovedniki decreased from 6,360,000 to 4,046,700 hectares.
\(^{60}\) RGAE, Fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 91, 11.
Council of Trade Unions. While the administrations of the individual zapovedniki and several interested scientific institutes rejected this proposal, they did acknowledge that tourism needed to take on an enlarged role in the activities of these zapovedniki.

Tourism and Zapovedniki in the 1960s

The growing consensus that the promotion and procurement of tourism was among the principal functions of the zapovedniki put environmentalists in an increasingly awkward position. Many of the same individuals, organizations, and institutes that promoted tourism in the zapovedniki publicly challenged the belief that the Soviet Union’s natural resources were inexhaustible. Meanwhile, Khrushchev and other officials ranted against bourgeois Malthusian views regarding the “inexhaustibility” of resources. Tourism proponents simultaneously implied and sometimes even explicitly stated that the Soviet Union’s nature provided “an inexhaustible source of enjoyment for the working man.” By the decade’s end, however, many questioned whether the reserves could survive the hordes of tourists. They realized that tourists could exhaust recreational resources.

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61 Ibid., 30.
62 RGAE, Fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 99, 39. For example, the administration of the Altaiskii Zapovednik wrote to the Commission of Nature Protection: “The existing Altaiskii Zapovednik not only does not obstruct the fulfillment of these tasks, but is a necessary element of its resolution. The transformation of the Altaiskii Zapovednik into a national park can be carried out fastest and most effectively if the zapovednik takes on this task. If we start from the liquidation of the zapovednik, the destruction of the established base, the change of the collective, the resolution of this task will only be complicated. The Regional Administration of Tourism, which plans to reduce to the organization on the base of the central zapovednik a tour base for elderly tourists, is an example of the primitive understanding of the question.”
63 RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 172, 2. In a letter to the XII Party Congress of 1961, the Committee of Environmental Protection wrote: “In materials, published by our press, in many speeches we frequently hear about the inexhaustibility of our resources. Unfortunately, this has not been the case for a long time.” See: Viktor Abramovich Kovda, Velikie stoiki kommunista (Moskva: Pravda, 1951), 3. He writes: “The Malthusian claim that agricultural output cannot be increased is being propounded in our day as well in order to deceive the peoples of the world and make them slaves of American imperialism....The false doctrine of Malthusianism as well as the pessimistic assertions, subscribed to by scientists in Western Europe and America, that soil fertility inevitably diminishes and that productivity of the land is restricted, have always been alien to Russian progressive science and have been categorically rejected by it.”
64 RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 15, 112.
Throughout the USSR during the 1960s, tourism in the zapovedniki was gaining stronger ministerial and departmental support. In 1962, the RSFSR Council of Ministers encouraged the popularization of tourism and kraevedenie work in zapovedniki by “all available means,” which included lectures, print, and visual propaganda.\(^6^5\) Many laws of nature protection passed in Union Republics gave a stronger mandate for the development of tourism in the zapovedniki by emphasizing their “practical use” in terms of scientific research and cultural enlightenment. Over the course of the decade, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Main Administration of Hunting and Zapovedniki affirmed tourism’s importance several times.\(^6^6\) The Krasnoiarsk Pillars, Kivach Zapovednik in Karelia, the Pechoro-Illichski Zapovednik in Komi, the Barguzin Zapovednik near Baikal and many others produced guidebooks and pamphlets that invited Soviet tourists to revel in their natural wonders, but sometimes failed to inform them fully of the specific regulations for traveling in the zapovednik.\(^6^7\) Central newspapers frequently published articles featuring tourism in many of the USSR’s most scenic zapovedniki.\(^6^8\) With the number of tourists travelling throughout the USSR increasing nearly tenfold during the decade, these promotional efforts contributed to the more than threefold increase of tourism in the zapovednik in less than a decade. The Commission had asserted

\(^6^5\) RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 166, 71.
\(^6^6\) Ibid., 66. Also see: Unnamed Author, Zapovedniki SSSR (Moscow: Main Administration of Hunting and Zapovedniki, 1964), 6. In 1967, the Ministry of Agriculture passed a resolution that once again state that tourism was one of the central tasks of the zapovedniki. Publications by the Main Administration of Hunting and Zapovedniki at the Union and Republican levels and by workers of individual zapovedniki unapologetically promoted tourism. The RSFSR’s Main Administration of Hunting and Zapovedniki published in 1964 a directory of the USSR’s zapovedniki with an introduction that said: “The development of roads and excursion routes could dramatically increase traffic to zapovedniki and give additional revenue to the national economy.”\(^6^6\)


that the 250,000 tourist visits in 1959 would not be sustainable for the long term. Less than 10 years later, 800,000 tourists were visiting the zapovedniki annually.69

The Caucasus and Terbedinski Zapovedniki and Kamchatka’s Kronotskii Zapovednik, which featured the world-famous Valley of the Geysers, arguably suffered more than any other reserves as a consequence of increased tourism. Because of the widespread popularity of mountain climbing and tourism throughout the Caucasus, tourists travelled to the Caucasus and Teberdinskii Zapovedniki in large numbers in comparison to other zapovedniki as early as the 1930s.70 The Moscow House of Scientists (Dom Uchenikh) had even set up the Teberdinskii Tour Base in the Dombai Valley in 1929.71 Until the 1960s, however, the majority of the tourists came independently. Fearing that they could lose an important research base, scientific organizations agreed that the zapovednik could cater to tourists in their efforts to prevent its transformation into a national park. This gave the Stavropol Regional Council of Tourism unusual advantage in negotiating the development of tourist facilities. Beginning in 1961, the Council sought to build hotels and tourist bases in Teberdinskii Zapovednik so that it would become, as an Izvestiia article reported, “genuine tourist zapovednik.”72

As the constructions progressed and brought more tourists into the zapovednik, the VOOP grew alarmed. The Scientific-Technical Council of the Central Section of the VOOP, in turn, passed a resolution in the spring of 1964 that called for making it impermissible to transform zapovedniki into places of long-term stay and to construct hotels in their territory. “All development must be carried out,” the resolution asserted, “in a way that assures the

69 RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 166, 80.
71 ARAN, fond 434, opis’ 1, delo 2, 6.
72 Correspondent, “Vremia letnikh otpuskov” Izvestiia, April 24, 1961, 6.
preservation of the landscape." This action prompted no response from the Council of Ministers and the VOOP’s Scientific-Technical Council again expressed concern over the situation the following spring. At the Council’s meeting on April 12, 1965, Iurii Efremov asserted:

Now, I would like to talk about protecting nature from tourists. Tourists can be a frightening thing. Tourist groups are carrying out destructive rituals. They loudly sing their tourist songs as they bang on drums, which drive away the animals. We need to approach tourist organizations and take measures to end this noise in the zapovednik.74

The resolution passed at the end of the session petitioned the Central Trade Union Council to carry out specific projects that would “elevate the culture of tourism” and ban the “disturbing screams.” It also called for the local history (krajevcheskii) museums to take a more active part in using the zapovedniki for educational tourism, which the Central Trade Union Council had failed to organize.

The zapovednik, however, faced more serious problems than the banging of drums and tourists singing loudly. Over the course of 1967, the Scientific-Technical Council of the Terbedinski Zapovednik characterized the situation perhaps with some exaggeration as one that threatened the stability of the zapovednik’s ecosystem. Because they were not receiving proper information about restrictions from the tourist bases in the Arkhiz Valley, campers frequently ventured into protected zones to gather firewood. With the hotel in the Dombai Valley and a tour base in Arkhyz expanding and the Trade Union Council planning to build a new sanitarium as well as sporting fields, some members of the VOOP began calling for the

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73 GARF: Fond 404, opis’ 1, delo 795, 13.
74 Ibid., 14
75 Ibid., 17.
removal of all tourism infrastructure.” 76 Referring to these plans at a meeting of the presidium of the VOOP in the spring of 1967, A.A. Malishev stated: “How can an environmental zapovednik allow such violations.” 77 It seemed that the Terbedinskii Zapovednik could not, in the eyes of many environmentalists, simultaneously be a “genuine tourist” zapovednik and maintain the “purity” expected of a zapovednik.

An even sharper conflict emerged in Kamchatka’s famed Valley of the Geysers between the Kamchatka branch of the Central Council of Tourism and the Kronotskii Zapovednik. At the time of its establishment in 1934, much of Kronotskii Zapovednik’s one million hectares remained unmapped. In the spring of 1941, Tatiana Ustinova, a 28-year old geologist who had recently arrived to work in the zapovednik after working in Komi’s Pechoro-Ilychskii Zapovednik, led a geological expedition by dogsled up the Shumna River Valley and stumbled upon the fourth known geyser field in the world and the only one on the Eurasian landmass. In 1949, two popular films, “Valley of the Geysers” and “In the Country of Fire Breathing Mountains,” brought attention to the area and during the 1950s, books, films, and central newspapers helped popularize the largest geyser field in the world. 78 While geologists and volcanologists carried out extensive research in this location, tourists began to journey to the Valley of the Geysers in the 1950s. 79

By the time of the reserve's liquidation in 1961, over 1,000 tourists travelled through it annually. Without its former protected status, the ecology of the zapovednik suffered from the onslaught of both scientists and tourists. In late 1961, a geological expedition nearly cut down the entire larch forest around Kronotskii Lake. The following year, a topographical expedition of the Bogachevskii Geological Expedition carried out a systematic hunt that killed

76 GARF, fond 358, opis’ 3, delo 4729, 44.
77 Ibid., 48.
79 Ibid.
64 brown bears, damaged several geysers, and harvested large numbers of salmon for nothing more than their eggs. Tourists regularly broke off pieces of geyserite for souvenirs, trampled rare geothermal vegetation, left trash heaps at temporary campsites, and had dug fire pits that scarred areas with fragile vegetation.

Following the Second All-Union Conference of Volcanologists in 1963, several participants wrote an open letter proposing the formation of a national park in place of the former Kronotskii Zapovedniki. Asserting that the Valley was superior to Yellowstone, they said that the state and the public should protect it. A national park, they argued, would regulate tourism and protect the environment better than the Oblast Council of Tourism, which that same year developed a new All-Union Route (no. 264) leading directly to the Valley. Three years later in 1966, the Council established the tour base “Valley of the Geysers” in Zhupanovo, located a few days’ hike from the zapovednik. That same year, the Soviet postal service introduced a stamp celebrating the iconic valley.

The zapovednik faced a considerably more challenging situation with tourists than when it closed. When the RSFSR reestablished the Kronotskii Zapovednik on January 17, 1967, nearly 2,000 tourists were visiting the Valley of the Geysers every year. The zapovednik’s ban on “wild” tourists (those without permission from the Council of Tourism) did not stem the tide as the regional and central press

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80 RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 165, 100.
celebrated the area’s beauty.\textsuperscript{82} The Siberian Branch of the Academy of Sciences argued that the Valley of the Geysers should be the centerpiece of the tourism industry of the Kamchatka Peninsula, which it calculated was ten times more valuable than the peninsula's gold.\textsuperscript{83} However, while much of the public and the scientific community were celebrating the region’s tourism value, the press and television shows began asserting that tourism in the Valley of the Geysers was not sustainable. In early 1967, the popular tourist show “The Far Roads Call” lamented the “mutilation” of rare geological formations within the valley.\textsuperscript{84} Writing in the visitation book of the Kronotskii Zapovednik in 1967, Tatiana Ustimova, who had discovered the valley 26 years earlier, stated:

I think that under the pressure of increasing tourist appetites some kind, even if halfhearted, decisions must be made. In any case, thousands of people walking through the valley is unacceptable! The area’s uniqueness and vulnerability require appropriate protection.\textsuperscript{85}

Vladimir Gепtner, who frequently wrote about tourism’s environmental impact, and the well known Kamchatka journalist and musician Valerii Kravchenko raised deep concern about the damage wrought by the “low culture” of tourism.\textsuperscript{86} As tourists trampled fragile geothermal


\textsuperscript{83} B. Konovalov and A. Pushkar.

\textsuperscript{84} GARF, fond 441, opis’ 26, dell 740, 73. During the show, the narrator says: “However, the Glaciers of Kamchatka do not have an equal with respect to beauty and variety. Unfortunately, exactly here the barbaric relationship to nature of a few tourists is visible. Nature worked for years to make this wonderful incredibly beautiful geyser cone. But now it is seriously mutilated; someone has chipped large pieces of geyserite away for souvenirs and now there are ulcers on the cone.”

\textsuperscript{85} Selivanova, I., “Ispitanie Dolinoi Geyserov” \textit{Dalny Vostok}, 10 (October 1987), 126-135.

vegetation and left trash heaps in their wake, bears had habituated to the Valley’s human visitors leading to incidents such as the 1973 shooting of a sow after she had tried repeatedly to enter campers’ tents.\(^\text{87}\)

Workers of the Kronotskii Zapovednik had arrived to the opinion that the Council of Tourism had not demonstrated the appropriate responsibility in “training” tourists to be responsible guests of the zapovednik. The truth, however, is likely more complex. The Valley of the Geysers tour base received more funds by attracting tourists. However, before every tourism season, workers of the tour base (one of whom Vitalii Men’shikov, an oceanographer, would become central to the movement to establish national parks on Kamchatka during the 1980s), would clean up trash, improve trails, and make the territory for the zapovednik more suitable for tourism.\(^\text{88}\) Regardless of the actual damage tourists did or did not cause, their presence led to conflicts with zapovednik workers who had long believed that the public should not have access to the zapovednik. By 1973, more than 3,500 tourists visited the Kronotskii Zapovednik.\(^\text{89}\)

The press continued to take the side of the zapovednik. In a Kamchatskaia pravda article from February 3, 1974, one journalist wrote: “Tourism as an active form of nature use should be banned in zapovedniki. And in the places zapovedniki cannot be saved as models of nature, they should be reorganized into national parks.”\(^\text{90}\) After unsuccessful attempts between the Trade Union Council and the Kronotskii Zapovednik to negotiate a compromise, the reserve banned tourism until a time when the Valley of the Geysers tour base had

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89 V. Sabinov, “Zapovednik i turism” Kamchatskaia pravda, February 3, 1974, 2.
90 Ibid.
equipped the areas of the zapovednik to better mitigate the environmental impact of tourists.\textsuperscript{91} With the Council of Tourism lacking the funds to equip the zapovednik in a way that would satisfy workers of the zapovednik, the Valley of the Geysers would remain closed for the next 15 years.

**National Parks**

As concern over tourism in the zapovedniki was growing, many institutions involved in nature protection continued to discuss the formation of a system of national parks that could accommodate recreation and tourism and help revive the health of the population through direct contact with nature.\textsuperscript{92} The issue received much attention at all-Union Conferences for the Protection of Nature in Dushanbe (1961), Novosibirsk (1961), Kishinev (1963), and Minsk (1965).\textsuperscript{93} Kazakh SSR and Turkmen SSR gave legal status to nature parks with the passage of a Law on the Protection of Nature in 1962 and 1963, respectively.\textsuperscript{94} At the same time, Larisa Boguslovskaia of the Central Laboratory of Environmental Protection established the definition for nature/national parks in a 1963 report of the Central Laboratory of Nature Protection. “Nature parks,” the report read, “give the opportunity to fully satisfy the

\textsuperscript{92} These institutions included the All-Union Society for Environmental Protection (VOOP), the Central Laboratory of Nature Protection (formerly the Commission on Nature Protection) and the Main Administration of Zapovedniki and Hunting, and the Institute of Geography
\textsuperscript{94} Natsional’nyi Park: Problema Sozdaniia (Moscow: Znanie, 1979), 4.
demands of tourists during an extended period and preserve the natural landscape and attractions of the park for future generations.”95 “Nature parks,” she wrote, “must truly become places of mass recreation of working people.”96

By definition, nature parks could be All-Union, Republic, or local. They needed to be located in little developed areas with diverse landscapes and attractions. While the natural resources of the park could be exploited under a highly regulated regime, tourism would provide the primary economic activity. Mindful of the “recreational capacity” (emkost’), park managers would closely regulate tourism. While parks should conform to natural geographical, geological or biological boundaries, the inclusion of villages, settlements, kolkhoz, sovkhoz, large roads and industrial centers was undesirable. Without domestic models to follow, Boguslovskaya emphasized the importance of learning more about similar parks in the United States, Canada, Japan, England, and other countries.97

The Central Laboratory sent out applications for the establishment of national parks to different organizations—Oblast Executive Committees, Council of Ministers of Union Republics, universities, Commissions on Environmental Protection of Union Republics, and other government and civic organizations. Over the course of 1963, the Commission, now reorganized as the Central Laboratory of Environmental Protection under the USSR Ministry of Agriculture, received over 100 proposals for individual parks in different parts of the country.98 By 1965, the Central Laboratory had received over 200 proposals from almost every geographic region in the Soviet Union.99

Without Soviet precedents, an official international definition of the term, or knowledge of which governmental agencies would design and manage national parks, the

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95 RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 135, 48.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid., 49.
98 RGAE, Fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 115, 9
99 RGAE, Fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 131, 74
philosophical basis for Soviet parks was not uniform. Nonetheless, they shared critical features. Soviet parks would have well-developed recreational infrastructure to accommodate a large number of tourists while preserving the natural environment within the park’s territory. The parks would seek to engender not only a love for Soviet landscapes but also an environmental sensibility that would encourage tourists to become “defenders of nature.” Clearly influenced by the Kosygin economic reforms of 1965, which encouraged enterprise managers to increase profits, park proponents argued that national parks would generate significant revenue for the state.\textsuperscript{100} Finally, the proponents of each park emphasized the international significance of their respective projects and the prestige it would bring to the USSR.\textsuperscript{101} I will now turn to the proposals for Russian Forest National Park on the shore of Lake Seliger, a national park in a largely uncut portion of forest in the Northwest part of Moscow.

\textit{Russian Forest National Park}

Throughout Russian history, perhaps no Russian landscape has been considered more formative in the development of national character than the forest.\textsuperscript{102} The 19th century histo-

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\textsuperscript{101} A book by the Main Administration of Hunting and \textit{Zapovedniki} under Ministry of Agriculture, \textit{Zapovedniki Kazakhstana}, called for a park outside of Alma-Ala, which the authors stated “There is no doubt, the national park will acquire quickly all-union significance and share the world recognition of the American National Park Yellowstone.” No Author, \textit{Zapovedniki Kazakhstana} (Alma-Ala: Kazakhskoe gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo, 1963), 129.

\textsuperscript{102} For more on the forest as the “quintessential” Russian landscape in the 19th century see: Christopher Ely, \textit{This Meager Nature: Landscape and National Identity in Imperial Russia} (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Press, 2009) and Jane T. Costlow, \textit{Heart-Pine Russia: Walking and Writing in 19th Century Russia} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).
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rian V.O. Kliuchevskii argued that life in forested conditions made the Russian eternally “unsociable, introspective, and lost in his own mind.” In his novel *The Russian Forest* (1954), Leonid Leonov wrote: “The forest greeted the Russian at his birth and attended to him in all stages of his life.” Given its extent and deep cultural significance, it is hardly surprising that the first serious efforts to establish a Soviet national park focused on a forest.

Foresters from the Institute of the Forest began discussing where they could create a national park near Moscow in 1956. The park would not only preserve but “improve the species composition” of a well-preserved tract of Russian forest, provide recreational opportunities, promote ideas about nature protection, and display the innovations of Soviet forestry. After surveying the forests in sixteen oblasts, krais, and republics west of the Urals during the late 1950s, the Institute of the Forest decided to push for the establishment of the national park on the northern bank of the Oka River.

In 1960, the Main Forestry Administration (*Glavleskhoz*) under the RSFSR Council of Ministers commissioned its research department to develop the general plan for the organization of Russian Forest National Park. The designers conceived of a park that blurred the lines between the natural and the artificial as well as the authentic and the ideal. The park would be a highly managed yet “representative,” landscape that through species introduction and landscape architecture would demonstrate an “ideally managed” forest. The park’s largest section would be representative of a “typical” Russian forest, including open fields, outstanding trails, dense mushroom and berry growth, birch groves, oaks, lakes, and pine stands.

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104 Ibid.
105 GARF, Fond 441 opis’ 26, delo 742, 265. V.G. Nestorov, A.I. Popov, A.F. Mukin, and P.V. Vasiliev were some of the other foresters involved. Leonid Leonov, *Russkii les* (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardia, 1954).
106 GARF, fond 404, opis’ 1, delo 680, 7.
The second part of the park, referred to as a “museum under and open sky,” would include species of trees and shrubbery imported from different regions of the Soviet Union, while the third and final part would be a territory where people could plant trees to commemorate weddings, the birth of a child, or a graduation. Reflecting the founders’ emphasis on the park’s international significance, this section would also include a small part where foreign delegations could plant trees from their home countries. At any one time, these three sections of the park would be able to accommodate up to 50,000 people in a single day. There would be day care centers, pioneer camps, tent camps, hotels, motels, tourist bases, houses of relaxation, and summer dachas.

The Moscow Administration of Forest Economy and the Protection of the Forest reviewed and approved the foresters’ general plan for the new park on August 16, 1962. The Institute of the Forest subsequently approached the All-Russian Society for the Protection of Nature (VOOP) and appealed to it for help with the project in early 1963. The participants discussed the park at a meeting of the VOOP’s Scientific-Technical Council on June 11 of that year. The Scientific-Technical council placed special importance on the understanding of the “typical” species of the Russian forest. Without specifying exactly what constituted the “typical” Russian forest, they argued that the park site needed to undergo significant landscaping to ensure that it contained the appropriate mix of spruce, pine, birch, poplar and other species of trees. Maintaining the proper balance, they argued, required close monitoring and, if necessary, thinning of the elk population in the park’s territory. While foresters would carry out selective and experimental cuts for preserving the health of the forest, the Council

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107 Ibid.  
108 Ibid., 16.  
109 Ibid., 15.  
110 Ibid., 3.
called for the designation of natural monuments (*pamiatniki*) for specific groves. The Council agreed that the park should open on the 50-year anniversary of the October Revolution.111

After the subject of the park disappeared from the central press from 1965 to 1967, a mechanic from Moscow inquired about the silence on the issue to *Pravda’s* editorial board in early 1967. He wrote: “A few years ago in print there was a story about the establishment of a national park in the Moscow area. I ask that the newspaper address whether the park will be established and when?”112 By that point, Glavleskhoz had outlined nine tourist trails, which would cover 150 kilometers, and 158 kilometers of new road around the territory of the park. With its opening now planned along with another park in Crimea on Vladimir Lenin’s 100th birthday on April 22, 1970, the park would cost 2.5 million rubles. The designers predicted that revenues from tourism and selective cuts within the territory of the park would recover the costs of development within five years, after which it would be profitable.113 Most importantly, the park would instill love for the native landscape.

Ten days after the *Pravda* article, the primetime program, “The far road calls,” featured the proposed park. The program ended with picturesque images of the Russian Forest on the screen as the narrator recited the following poem:

A new day has dawned for the Russian Forest
The pride of Russia lies therein
It is celebrated in song
Its power is inexorable
It reaches towards the blue skies
Now enlightened,
I whisper the revelation
All that is in you is good
Thank you, Russian forest!114

111 GARF, fond 404, opis’ 1, delo 680, 19.
113 GARF, fond 404, opis’ 1, delo 680, 3.
114 GARF, fond 441, opis’ 26, delo 742, 272.
The Department of Forestry ruled against the creation of the park later that year and in its place they created an experimental forestry station. Yet despite its failure, the proposal for Russian Forest National Park brought the idea of national parks in the USSR to a broader public. In the years that followed, national parks’ appeal would resonate far beyond the small scientific community that was actively promoting it in the early 1960s.

*The Forest in the Megapolis*

A national park in the territory of Elk Island might have been the first national park ever proposed in Russia and perhaps the only one proposed prior to the fall of the Russian Empire. The territory is located in the northwest corner of Moscow and might be one of the largest intact patches of forest in any major metropolis. In 1909, a Professor of Moscow University G.A. Kozhevnikov, who had developed contacts with conservationists in other countries and would become one of the main proponents for the establishment of zapovedniki in the 1920s, proposed making Elk Island the Russian Empire’s first national park.115 During the Russian Civil War (1918-1921), the young government of Russian Council People’s Commissars passed a decree in 1919 that placed a complete ban on cutting wood in this territory.116 S.V. Diakov proposed making Elk Island a national park in the model of US national parks in 1924. The idea was mentioned again by V.M. Zhitkov in 1934 in the journal *Stroitel’stvo Moskvy* and then by the renowned conservationist Aleksandr Formozov in 1947.117

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115 Ibid. Also see: *Models of Nature*, 28.
116 Ibid.
When Aleksandr Formozov, a biogeographer and staunch supporter of kraevedenie and the zapovedniki, and Vladimir Geptner raised the issue again in the late 1950s, environmental protection was becoming a broad and increasingly publicized concern. Moreover, providing recreation opportunities for Muscovites was receiving significant attention from the government and the central press. However, while high-level government officials, Communist Party leaders, and planning institutes were starting to give more attention to the importance of the forest, their vision included “improvements” to Moscow’s forest territory, including Elk Island. On August 18, 1960, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR passed a decree in which it called for the intensive development of recreational zones.

Commonly referred to as “Big Moscow,” the proposal, which had been developed by General Plan of Moscow, envisioned creating recreational zones in Moscow and its outskirts with dance halls, movie theaters, parking lots, hotels, reservoirs with yacht clubs, and even a canal for sporting competitions in the northern part of the city. Moreover, Khrushchev’s mass housing campaign was calling for the construction of 20.5 million square meters of new living space. The proponents of this vision were not indifferent to Moscow’s nature. However, in its vision to enrich and improve nature, the General Plan of Moscow called for the cutting down of significant stands of forest.

Environmentalists had become deeply concerned about the infrastructural development that the institute had proposed. One month after the publication of the plan in both Izvestiia and Pravda, the head of the Academy of Sciences, A.N. Nesmeianov, wrote a letter to the Moscow Communist Party Committee emphasizing the importance of preserving the

118 B.L. Samoilov and G.B Morozova.
119 RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 81, 1.
120 V., Tobilevich, “Rasti, Siai, nasha moskva!” Izvestiia, August 18, 1960, 4.
city’s surrounding forest belt. The following spring, Lev Shaposhnikov, who had served as secretary of the Commission for the Protection of Nature for five years and regularly represented the USSR at conferences of the IUCN, wrote a letter to the Moscow Communist Party. He expressed alarm at the disappearance of many animals and birds—swans, northern geese, sable and northern deer—in and around parts of Moscow, the increasing problem of pollution and the importance of trees in mitigating it, and outmoded forestry practices that were causing a significant reduction in the forest cover of the city and the surrounding area. The “rational use of the nature complex” and the formation of “the optimal landscape for man” in Moscow, Shaposhnikov argued, would serve as a “model of world significance.” The state should establish nature parks, he argued, to achieve this.

As the previous chapter has shown, tourism’s environmental impact on the forests around major urban centers was raising the alarm of environmentalists throughout the USSR. From December 1-3, 1964, the VOOP held a conference on “Landscaping Zones of Mass Recreation and Protecting their Nature” in which several participants suggested that national parks could provide a solution to the problem of preserving areas in and near cities from development and protecting them from tourists. Employing models developed in the United

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123 For articles on the preservation of green spaces in the territory of Moscow, see: B. Tobilevich, “Rasti, Siiai, nasha moskva!” Izvestii, August 18, 1960, 4. “Zelenoe ozerel’e Moskvy” Izvestii. Also see: RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 80, 35. The Commission on Nature Protection began talking about preserving Moscow’s green spaces in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In a letter (September 8, 1960) to from A.S. Nesmianov, the president of the Academy of Sciences, to the Secretary of the Moscow City Committee of the Communist Party, Nesmianov wrote: “The natural resources of the surroundings of Moscow have to a significant degree lost their primordial, useful qualities and do not provide for the growing demands of the capital’s population. Many water bodies are polluted and their fish production is extremely low. The valuable forest masses have been replaced by shrubs and forests of little value. The number of useful wild animals is not large. Significant parts of the territory are littered by the refuse of industrial enterprises. It is obvious that providing for the landscaping of the forest park, defensive belt of Moscow is not possible without protecting and improving the resources of the Moscow region. In the opposite case it will not work out to significantly improve the sanitary-hygiene conditions of Moscow and establish in the belt the desirable conditions for recreation of the population.”
124 RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 81, 4.
125 Ibid., 11.
126 GARF, fond 404, opis’ 1, delo 740, 5.
States, one participant stated, would “not be a sin.”\textsuperscript{127} By the time of the conference, the General Plan of Moscow had discussed subsequent plans for the territory of Elk Island, which called for draining its wetlands and cutting down significant stands of forests.\textsuperscript{128} In response, its defenders began making plans for the establishment of a national park for Elk Island.

Two years later, at a conference on national parks from May 29-31, 1967, several interested organizations passed a resolution calling for the VOOP to lead the establishment of a national park in honor of the 50\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the “Great October Revolution.”\textsuperscript{129} While the national park remained a dream on 50\textsuperscript{th} anniversary, the idea of its formation had become a priority for Moscow environmentalists, who would push for its establishment in the years that followed. Later chapters will look at the establishment and the first years of Elk Island National Park.

\textit{The “Pearl” of Russian Nature: Lake Seliger}

Few areas in Russia experienced more adverse environmental consequences from tourism than Lake Seliger. Located roughly halfway between Leningrad and Moscow, Lake Seliger, often referred to as the “Central Russian Baikal,” lies on a north-south axis and covers 260 square kilometers. The lake is surrounded by dense coniferous and evergreen forests and the narrow, elongated lake has deep gulsfs, long turquoise stretches, over 160 islands with steep rock outcroppings and golden sandy beaches, an abundance of berries and mushrooms, excellent fishing and abundant mammalian life.\textsuperscript{130}

Two years before the outbreak of World War II, the Central Institute of Spa Research (\textit{Kurortologia}) and the Ministry of Health USSR took an expedition to Seliger to study the

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 72.
\textsuperscript{128} TSAGM, fond 779, opis’ 1, delo 112, 1.
\textsuperscript{129} ARGO, fond 1-1967, opis’ 1, delo 47, 42.
idea of developing the lake and its environs into a spa (kurort) of All-Union significance.131 The institute shelved the project during the war and the Seliger Tourist Base fell into disrepair. However, because of its proximity to Kalinin, Leningrad, and Moscow, Seliger quickly became one of the RSFSR’s most popular tourist destinations in the years following the war. Responding to tourist demand, the Executive Committee of the Kalinin Oblast Council of Ministers made an agreement with the Central Trade Union Council for the revitalization of the Seliger Tourist Base in 1951. As the tourist facilities improved and the central press promoted tourism on Seliger, the number of tourists increased dramatically in the 1950s.132

Tourists coming to Seliger could see the harm that many industries were causing to its water quality and surrounding landscape. They complained about the stench of toxic air coming from a leather factory, which dumped unprocessed wastewater directly into the lake. By 1960, those who had come to Seliger for many years noted that the fishing had become worse. Newspaper articles reported on tourists who complained about forests pockmarked by clear cuts.133 Tourists, unsurprisingly, also caused significant environmental damage. Without any specific posted regulations, few designated campsites, and poorly maintained trails, unregulated tourists (dikari) often left litter on the shoreline and cut down healthy trees to construct temporary bivouacs. Many tourists fished in protected spawning areas. Seliger was, as one aforementioned Literaturnaia gazeta article asserted, “in danger.”134

The Kalinin Oblast Council of Ministers asked the VOOP to carry out a study of the environmental problems on Lake Seliger and to make proposals for their mitigation in 1960.

131 See: R.A. Lurieia and M.S. Margulis, “Kurort Seliger” Pravda July 23, 1937. At the time of the article’s printing, a kurort was the primary form of tourism establishment. Also see: G. Korolev and A. Frantsev. “Zhemchuzhinoi Russkoi Prirodi” Pravda, May 20, 1962, 6.
After its representatives spent several weeks on Seliger that summer, the VOOP called for ending clear-cuts, organizing the Upper Volga and Seliger Lakes into a center for water tourism, reviving fish resources, eliminating pollution from neighboring enterprises, and designating Seliger a state temporary reserve (zakaznik). The proposal gained increasing support in the press throughout the following year with Seliger’s potential being compared to resorts such as Sochi and Kislogorsk. In response to the public outcry in 1962, the RSFSR Council of Ministers passed a decree on September 27, 1962 “On the development of a zone of recreation and tourism in the region of Lake Seliger.” Even though a national park was not an official protected territory, the decree nonetheless called for the creation of a national park that banned hunting and commercial fishing in its territory. The national park would require modernization of the filtration equipment of factories within the park’s boundaries. The plan also called for designating individual sites as monuments (pamiatniki). Later VOOP resolutions emphasized the great “economic value” of such a park. The proposed park would require 22.3 million rubles of investment and would be comparable in size to the biggest national parks in the United States. By 1980, Lengiprogor planned for the park to accommodate as many as 75,000 people simultaneously.

In the course of the next two decades, articles in the central press discussed the proposed national park for Seliger as much as any other park. A primetime television program about the broader concerns of tourism’s impact in the area around the lake featured the project for a national park on Seliger. Several institutes—Lengiprogor, Soiuzgiproleskhoz, and others—dedicated significant resources to drafting plans for the future park. However, a

135 Shevchenko, 4.
137 GARF, fond A-404, opis’ 1, delo 734, 40.
138 GARF fond 259, opis’ 45, delo 6709, 7.
139 GARF, fond A-404, opis’ 1, delo 734, 14 and 20.
constellation of local forces opposing the park, especially the concerns of a local hunting society, ultimately led the government of the RSFSR and then the Russian Federation to abandon the idea in the early 1990s. Nonetheless, few proposed parks had been more important in disseminating the national park idea to the Russian and Soviet public than the one proposed for Seliger.

*The National Park Conference of 1967 and the Conference on Improving the System of Reserves*

By the last few years of the decade, the efforts of the Central Laboratory of the Protection of Nature and the individual efforts of environmentalists to establish parks were coalescing into a national park movement supported by various ministries, scientific institutes, prominent writers, and civic organizations. The attention that Seliger received from different governmental agencies, the VOOP, and the central press made Kalinin a logical place to host the first conference in the Soviet Union dedicated to the establishment of national parks. From May 29-31, 1967, the VOOP, the RSFSR Ministry of Culture, and the All-Russian Society for the Protection of Pamiatniki of History and Culture organized a conference “[o]n the establishment in the RSFSR of a set of people’s parks and protected landscapes.” The participants passed a resolution that called for oblast, regional, and republic branches of the VOOP to take an active part in designating protected landscapes and zones of tourism. The commission called for the establishment of a propaganda division on the subject that would develop proposals for disseminating information on protected territories by September 1, 1967. As previously mentioned, it also encouraged the Moscow division of the VOOP to

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142 AVGO, 1-1967, 29.
promote the idea of the establishment of the USSR’s first national park in the Moscow region. 143

The conference together with numerous publications of the previous years did much to spread the national park idea throughout the RSFSR. Less than two weeks after the conference, Literaturnaia gazeta dedicated a full-page spread to national parks in the USSR. It featured the well-known environmental writers Leonid Leonov and Oleg Volkov. Leonov had written perhaps the most important fictional work promoting environmental protection in the previous two decades and was no doubt flattered by the prospect of the first Soviet national park borrowing the name of his novel—The Russian Forest (Russkii les). Calling national parks a potential “heaven” for tourists, Leonov called their establishment a “great patriotic and moral problem.” 144

Oleg Volkov, who had survived three stints in the GULAG and then become a geologist, a prolific writer, and one of the most tireless promoters of nature protection, echoed Udall’s sentiments at the World Congress on National Parks five years before. He asserted:

From century to century, humanity has been giving itself more and more to industrial concerns. We erect more factories, cover the earth with a set of water pipes and cables, and dig deeper, lay down asphalt more widely. We pile up more stories on apartment buildings. And we retreat from the clear sky and stars, the smell of dewy meadows, rustling reeds in the quiet backwaters with the intoxicating chorus of birds in a spring grove. 145

In modern conditions, Volkov wrote, people “inevitably” felt the pull back to nature where they could spend time around a campfire, breathe fresh air, and lose themselves on winding trails where they would see no signs of the industrial civilization that they sought to escape. Spa resorts were no longer sufficient, especially for Soviet citizens who needed to experience

142 Ibid., 30.
144 Ibid.
“pristine” (pervozdannyi) nature. “We can certainly learn from the experience and practice of the national parks of Europe and America,” he stated, “by making the necessary adjustments to the goals of national parks in capitalistic nations.”

In addition to establishing parks around densely populated cities, Volkov asserted that designating territories in Crimea, the Southern Urals, Altai, near Baikal, Seliger, the Caucasus, the Valdai Hills, and other areas of “untouched” nature was an urgent task for the state.

Problems of tourism in the zapovedniki and the prospects of establishing a system of national parks also received wide coverage in the Main Administration of Zapovedniki and Hunting’s publication, Okhota i okhotnich’e khoziastvo. Many of the authors of these articles were leading voices at a conference held by the USSR Ministry of Agriculture in February 1968, “On Measures to Improve the Operation and Management of State Zapovedniki.”

This conference marked the turning point in the view of tourism in the zapovedniki and represented the most emphatic call for the establishment of national parks yet. Most participants agreed that promoting tourism in the zapovedniki had been at best a misguided idea with some arguing its impact was nearing catastrophic proportions. Iurii Efremov, a longtime proponent of aligning the goals of tourism with the protection of nature, asserted that tourists might destroy many of the “most poetic corners” of the Soviet Union in the zapovedniki within ten to fifteen years. Many participants called for the restoration of the inviolability of the zapovedniki.

Oleg Gusev, a former scientific associate of the Barguzin Zapovednik

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146 Ibid.
147 Ibid.
148 N. Puzanov, “Nam nuzhny natsional’nye parki” Okhota i okhotnich’e khoziastvo 2 (February 1968), 12-14.
149 RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 166, 80.
150 Ibid., 136.
151 RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 165, 99.
whose popular books on tourism around Baikal had done much to promote tourism in zapovedniki, likely had a change of heart due to several destructive fires caused by tourists in his beloved Barguzin Zapovednik during the previous years. He stated: “We must with an iron will get rid of the irresponsible and undefined phrases about how zapovedniki are obligated to promote tourist excursions and the organization of tourism of working people.”\textsuperscript{152}

Conference participants unanimously agreed that national parks provided the answer to this dilemma. Aleksandr Formozov, who had called for the establishment of a national park in Moscow in 1948 and then again ten years later, stated: “Tourism, of course, can be a great evil, which must be dealt with in a different place. It must be dealt with in special national parks that are put under protection and close observation!”\textsuperscript{153} Efremov reiterated this sentiment: “We must clarify where mass tourism will be allowed. We must carry out the project for a system of monuments and national parks.”\textsuperscript{154} Boris Pavolovich Kolesnikov, Boris Vladimirovich Kester, Oleg Gusev, Iurii Efremov, and others talked at length about national parks. Kolesnikov, a geobotanist, former assistant chair of the Far East Division of the Academy of Sciences, and president of Ural State University in Sverdlovsk, talked about the efforts being made to establish a national park in one of the highest points in the Northern Urals--Konzhakovskii Kamen, which had become a place of “pilgrimage” for tourists.\textsuperscript{155} Iurii Kravchuk spoke of the discussions in Moldova to form a national park. Pointing to the profits that other countries were bringing in from their national parks, Efremov asserted that they would provide the best means to utilize the profit-making potential of the USSR’s scenic

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\item \textsuperscript{152} RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 166, 79.
\item \textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 92.
\item \textsuperscript{154} RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 165, 141.
\item \textsuperscript{155} RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 166, 33.
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resources and exhorted Soviet economists to research tourism’s economic value more extensively.¹⁵⁶

But how could the Soviet Union call its parks “national” (natsional’nye)? While “national” in the international parlance meant “state” park, the term “natsional’nyi park” in the Russian language suggested some tie with the many nationalities that lived within the territory of the Soviet Union. Moreover, the identification of a park as a “national park” seemed, to Soviet ears, to suggest nationalism, which the internationalism of Communist ideology was supposed to overcome. Ironically, however, the internationalist orientation of the Western-led IUCN had made national parks the most common nature protection institution throughout the global environmental protection community.

Some participants sought alternatives such as narodnye (people's) or prirodnye (nature) parks. But most participants, especially Oleg Gusev and Iurii Efremov, spoke strongly for the use of the term national (natsional’nyi) park, despite the confusion that its use might initially create. Efremov stated: “Nature park’ simply sounds undefined, it ignores the continuation of economic activity, does not take into account the specifics of scientific or historical value of the monuments of nature of the parks.”¹⁵⁷ On the last day of the conference, Gusev presented the longest and most impassioned argument for the use of the term national park. This statement demonstrated the extent to which the Soviet Union had become part of

¹⁵⁶RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 165, 140. Remarking on the fact that most economists still did not understand tourism’s value, Iurii Efremov stated: “If the economist is not able to name the value of an uncut forest or an uncaught fish, then can he really be asked about the value of landscape or of zones of recreation? Tourism is becoming a major branch of the economy. It is capable of bringing significant profits and in many countries it brings many millions in revenue. Scenic nature protected objects is the foundational capital of this branch of the economy. The branch of economic sciences of the AN USSR must immediately dedicate research to the studying the value of landscape, to the theory of social rent, it must not for the sale of land, but for a commensurate value. It is necessary to research the economy of tourism--this will do much to save nature.”

¹⁵⁷RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 165, 148.
the Western-dominated international environmental discourse during the previous decade.

Gusev stated:

Many have come out against borrowing the word “National Park” on the basis that it can be replaced by the words narodnyi (people's) park. National park is an international term, open to a completely definitive understanding, which has long been widely recognized. Fighting against the expression National Park and wishing to be consistent, we would need to declare war on those words like nation, nationhood, and so forth. In place of the question of your natsional'nost, it is impossible to ask the question of our narodnost’ because the word narodnost’ has long had a completely different meaning. 158

After a brief pause, he concluded: “Therefore, the name narodniy (people's) park cannot replace the words national park. A large number of foreign terms and words have come into Russian life and become an organic part of the Russian language. These words—Natsionalnyi Park—coming from the Latin word natio—must become part of the Russian language.”159

Semantic debates about national parks and differences of opinion about the appropriate organization of parks would continue. However, Soviet environmentalists had almost unanimously come to the conclusion that national parks would reconcile tourism and nature protection, bring profits to the state, and earn the USSR more respect throughout the international environmental community. The project would require the initiative of scientific institutes and a voluntarism of Soviet citizens. The Institute of Geography had begun developing the “scientific” principles for their organization and articulating the rationale for their establishment more thoroughly, as organizations throughout the USSR were simultaneously conceiving parks to celebrate the nature of their respective regions or republics. The next chapter will focus on the Institute of Geography's efforts to establish the scientific principles for national parks and the establishment of the first Soviet parks in the Baltics, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. It will also look at the protracted philosophical debates on parks that took

158 RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, del 166, 76.
159 Ibid.
place throughout the environmental protection community, which stalled the adoption of an all-Union law on national parks that would allow the RSFSR to establish its own. During the decade that followed, national parks became simultaneously sources of great hope for the transformation of the human-nature relationship and at the same time a source of great frustration at the government's passivity in acting on its own rhetoric, which had begun to reflect the scientific community's concern for the environment.
Chapter 4: Transformative Visions during the Stagnation Era

Soviet historians have yet to come to grips with the Brezhnev era. Gorbachev’s use of the term “stagnation” to characterize the era led many historians to portray Soviet society under Brezhnev as heading down the slope of decline that was leading, almost inevitably, to the “dustbin of history.”¹ Yet by the late 1960s, Leonid Brezhnev, who had become First Secretary after Khrushchev’s ouster in 1964, had declared the attainment of “developed socialism” precisely because the Soviet system had become more stable, affluent, and predictable.² However, much of the buoyant optimism of the Khrushchev Era had faded. The government continued to funnel massive amounts of capital into “projects of the century,” such as the Baikal Amur Railway (BAM), which served more to assert the state’s herculean power to overcome nature than a logical analysis of its potential economic benefits.³ Productivity was decreasing and economic growth was slowing. Smoke-belching factories continued to produce an excess of shoddy goods while innovating little, yet with each passing year, Soviet citizens had more leisure time and resources to travel widely, to spend time with friends, and to participate in clubs where official ideology was increasingly irrelevant.⁴ While censorship laws imposed strict and understood limits on the extent to which Soviet citizens could criticize the government or the Communist Party, Soviet scientists, professors, artists, and

¹ S. Frederick Starr criticized Gorbachev for creating this misconception of soviet society in the 1970s, which he believed to be a vibrant period. See: S. Frederick Starr, “Soviet Union: A Civil Society,” Foreign Policy, no. 70 (Spring 1988), 26-41. For examples of portrayals of the stagnation era through this lens of decline, see: Martin Malia, The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917-1991 (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 351-401.
³ Christopher Ward, Brezhnev’s Folly (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009). For an article that expresses the ideological significance of BAM, see: “BAM—doroga, po kotoroi prikhodit budushchee,” Nash sovremenik 11 (November 1974), 135-138. The article is an interview with young people who came from different parts of the Soviet Union to construct BAM.
⁴ Alexei Yurchak, Everything was Forever Until it was no More: The Last Soviet Generation (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).
intellectuals were able to carve out “unofficial spaces” where they sometimes conceived new ideas for restructuring aspects of Soviet society and the economy.\(^5\) Within accepted limits, the state encouraged this.

On the surface, the general degradation of the Soviet environment seems to fit the traditional narrative of a stagnant society slowly moving down the slope of inevitable decline.\(^6\) Satellite images were showing the beginning of the Aral Sea’s contraction.\(^7\) Constructed in 1965 on the southern shore of Baikal, the Baikalsk Cellulose-Paper Combine, continued to send wastewater into the lake as the state seemed to ignore the warnings of concerned scientists and the protestations of writers. Abandoned mining operations created lifeless, lunar landscapes on more than 5.5 million hectares of the USSR’s territory by the mid-1970s.\(^8\) The construction of the BAM led to massive deforestation in many areas. The construction of massive hydroelectric installations in Siberia was rapidly inundating cultivable land, displacing inhabitants of villages, and leaving no time for clearing of mass tracts of forests that reservoirs of unprecedented scale would submerge. All the while Soviet planners were devising hubristic schemes to reverse the Ob and the Enisei to bring more water to Central Asia, but without a strong sense of the potential ecological consequences. From the Volga to the Amur, the pollution of Soviet rivers had become a serious health concern.

\(^5\) For an example of this, see: Mathew Jesse Jackson, The Experimental Group: Ilya Kabakov, Moscow Conceptualism, Soviet Avant-Gardes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). Yurchack, 128-131. Yurchack writes about the phenomenon of “vne” (out of) groups, which viewed themselves as outside of the Soviet system.

\(^6\) See Boris Komarov, The Destruction of Nature in the Soviet Union (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1980). Komarov was the pen name for Zed Wolfson. The book was not published in the USSR until 1989.


\(^8\) Josephson et. al, 186.
Despite growing and increasingly visible environmental problems, the 1970s was perhaps the most dynamic and transformative decade for Soviet environmentalism. This was the era when images of Earth from space alerted all of humanity to its smallness and of the fragility of its common home. The Soviet Union was part of the expanded efforts of the international community to address global environmental problems. Brezhnev not only stressed the importance of engaging in international cooperation to address environmental problems, but also passed a spate of environmental laws while encouraging Soviet citizens to help lead environmental protection efforts. While the failure of most enterprises to comply with environmental law could lead one to conclude that these efforts were mere window dressing, environmental issues had resonated broadly within Soviet society. Taking their cues from the official rhetoric, citizens, scientists, and the press mobilized around environmental issues and often conceived transformational visions that tried to reconcile environmental protection with economic development. Direct criticisms of the Communist Party, the government, or the foundational philosophical premises of the socialist system were dangerous and institutes understood that there were clear limits to what they could propose. Nonetheless, institutes and Soviet citizens enjoyed opportunities to devise plans for addressing environmental problems, which the press increasingly openly acknowledged.

National parks did not rank among the Soviet government’s foremost priorities in environmental protection during the 1970s. However, as versions of many western cultural forms proliferated in Soviet society, national parks generated imaginative visions for social and economic transformation and met broad-based support among the environmentally concerned public. Throughout the decade biologists, geographers, members of the All-Russian Society for the Protection of Nature (VOOP), and concerned citizens in different parts of the

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10 For the adoption of Western cultural forms, see: Sergei Zhuk, Rock and Roll in the Rocket City (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).
USSR argued for the establishment of national parks to protect the environment from tourism’s damaging environmental impact, to instill ecological values in tourists, and to bring revenue to the national coffers. National parks, their supporters argued, could help overcome the narrow departmental (vedomstvennost') approach to natural resources, which had wrought much destruction. They saw their efforts in the context of exalting Soviet nature and taking part in the shared goal of all of humanity to protect the Earth.

Estonia SSR, Latvia SSR, Georgia SSR, Kyrgyz SSR, and Armenia SSR began establishing national parks during the decade. However, by the order of the Communist Party, the RSFSR could not establish any until the passage of an all-Union law, which proved torturously slow due to terminological and philosophical debates about the organization of national parks. However, in the RSFSR, more so than any other republic in the USSR, environmentalists were conceiving parks that they believed would not only transform regional economies but also the consciousness of Soviet citizens.

This chapter will focus on the intellectual, social, and political developments that contributed to the popularity of national parks, the grandiose and transformative visions for several individual parks conceived during the 1970s, and the multiple factors that contributed to the difficulties in establishing a law that provided them All-Union recognition. This part of our story begins with a revolution in Soviet geography that had its origins in the late 1950s when the USSR had reached new heights in technological advancement.

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12 Unfortunately, the document in which the Communist Party forbade the RSFSR for forming “national” parks has not been unearthed. But every veteran of the park movement that I have talked to states explicitly that this was the official Party position.
Recreational Geography and the “Naturalization” of the Soviet Person

From the mid-19th century to the 1930s, geographers cut an image of intrepid explorers in the Russian and then Soviet popular imagination. In mapping previously unexplored areas of the Russian Empire and the USSR, they attained high respect in the scientific community. By mid-century, however, the average tourist could help fill in “blank spots” on the map in areas where only explorer-geographers previously ventured. Geographers continued to explore and produce detailed maps of remote regions, but this hardly compared to the romantic exploration of previously unseen mountains ranges and parts of the Arctic for which Soviet geographers became heroes during the 1930s. Space was the new frontier and its exploration depended not on geographers, but on cosmonauts, physicists, and rocketry experts who, along with chemists and cyberneticians, brought Soviet science world renown in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Space travel might have strengthened the perspective that humans occupied a small and fragile speck in the universe, but it was making earth sciences, especially geography, struggle to maintain relevance in the public eye. While the face of the earth had been mapped in detail, the day when geographers could turn their eye toward mapping other planets still seemed hopelessly far away.

New subfields, such as economic geography, became stronger in the 1950s, but the old guard of physical geographers—including the head of the Institute of Geography, Innokenti Gerasimov—were slow to embrace applied approaches. Physical and economic geographers were largely estranged. Physical geographers interacted closely with natural sci-

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entists but very little with social scientists while the opposite was true for the economic geographers. In the mid-1950s, a group of economic geographers led by Vladimir Anuchin began arguing that the inseparability of the economy from the physical environment made geography’s sub-disciplines artificial. Known as the “integrationists,” these economic geographers called for “unified geography,” which would bridge the gap between geography’s growing divisions. Gerasimov, A.A. Grigoriev, and other geographers of an older generation consistently rebuffed these calls for reform and Anuchin’s views became tantamount to heresy. Traditionalists largely excluded economic geographers from the Institute of Geography. Anuchin and many other geographers feared that the field risked obsolescence.

While specialized geographical journals followed the conflict in the early part of the decade, this debate remained largely out of the public view until Literaturnaia gazeta published articles by the integrationists and responses by traditionalists in the first half of 1965. Vladimir Anuchin, V.M. Gokhman, M.B. Gornung, V.P. Kovalevskii, and Iuri Saushkin—all roughly ten years Gerasimov’s junior, asserted that the development of “unified geography” with clearly stated principles and goals was necessary. Otherwise, they argued, geography might become a purely academic exercise relevant only in the classroom. While excoriating Gerasimov for the field’s stagnation in the “descriptive” stage, the integrationists argued that geographers needed to make greater use of mathematical models and conduct extensive studies on demographics and natural resources to help organizations like Gosplan determine the best distribution of productive strength for the USSR. These articles also argued that

17 V. Anuchin, Literaturnaia gazeta, February 18, 1965, 2.
Soviet geographers needed to study the economics of nature protection and the environmental protection practices of other countries.\(^\text{19}\) Perhaps more than the traditionalists realized, the difference between the old guard and the integrationists was mostly a matter of priorities and emphasis. Gerasimov, David Armand, Iurii Efremov, and many other Soviet geographers had already described a range of environmental problems afflicting Soviet society. Moreover, they argued that geographers should lead in the protection of nature, and had called for adopting nature protection ideas—especially national parks—from other countries.\(^\text{20}\) From 1957 to 1965, Gerasimov visited 18 different countries. He toured several US national parks on a trip in 1962. Upon returning, he stated that the idea could and should be adopted by the USSR and then adapted to Soviet conditions.\(^\text{21}\) Three years later, he made the strongest argument to that effect for the creation of a national park on Lake Baikal.\(^\text{22}\) However, planning agencies had not taken the environmental forewarnings of geographers into account and national parks still had no official status in Soviet law. As the economy expanded, environmental problems from pollution to deforestation seemed to worsen through the course of the late 1950s and 1960s. The integrationists’ criticisms therefore stuck. Gerasimov and Armand pushed back on the integrationist argument for the establishment of a “unified geography” in their responses in *Literaturnaia gazeta*. However, they acknowledged that planning organizations seemed not to account for the negative economic impact of environmental damage, about which geographers frequently forewarned.\(^\text{23}\)

\(^{19}\) V.M. Gokhman, M.B. Gornung, and V.P. Kovalevskii, “Mundira,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, May 20, 1965, 3-4


\(^{22}\) ARAN, fond 1850, opis’ 1, delo 24, 14.

Realizing that he needed to compromise, in the fall of 1966 Gerasimov wrote an article for *Voprosy geografii* in which he asserted that the dramatic scientific-technical advances of previous years demanded that geography expand well beyond its traditional orientation as a “descriptive science.” He called for the expansion of applied methods under the rubric of “constructive geography.” Constructive geography, he argued, would help change society’s “unreflective” and “consumptive” relationship with the natural world and develop a more “constructive” and “transformative” approach to it. Gerasimov outlined several principle directions for constructive geography. These included studying and making recommendations for the changing level of the Aral Sea, locating and developing oil deposits in Western Siberia, limiting the ecological damage of hydroelectric development, and protecting Lake Baikal. A national park on Baikal, he argued, would provide the nexus for the lake’s environmental protection and a needed recreational resource for Soviet citizens, especially for the increasing number of stressed, nature-deprived urbanites.

Gerasimov’s attention to recreation created an opening for Vladimir Sergeevich Preobrazhenskii. Born in 1918, Preobrazhenskii developed a love for tourism on a 25-kilometer overnight hike at a pioneer camp in the early 1930s. After graduating from Moscow State University with a geography degree in 1941, he wrote an article on how to navigate by

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24 I.P. Gerasimov, “Konstruktivnaya geografia; tselt, metody, rezultaty” *Izvestia vsesoiznogo geograficheskogo obschestva*, tom. 98, vyp. 5 (September-October 1966), 391-400.
25 Ibid., 391.
azimuth in the June 1941 issue of the tourist journal *Na sushe i na more* before it ceased publication following the Wehrmacht’s attack on the USSR later that month.\(^{28}\)

Preobrazhenskii served on the Ukrainian front in the Great Patriotic War and began working at the Institute of Geography in 1947 and Moscow State University (MSU) a few years later.\(^{29}\) While working in MSU’s Geographical Department, he served as the representative of the hiking section in the Department of Physical Education and carried out extensive research on the glaciers of the Kodar Mountains to the east of Lake Baikal throughout the 1950s and early 1960s.

During these years, Preobrazhenskii also spent significant time in sanatoria near Kislovodsk in the Stavropol Region of the Caucasus during which time he became concerned about tourism’s environmental impact. He had several meetings with the director of the Piatigorsk Spa Research (*Kurortologia*) Institute. Preobrazhenskii realized that no scientific discipline examined the best way for healthy people to spend their leisure time. Like many others, he believed that this was essential for the development of the “new Soviet person.”\(^{30}\)

In 1966, Preobrazhenskii, Gerasimov, and others in the Institute of Geography made rough sketches for zoning “territorial recreation systems” throughout the USSR on a “scientific” basis.\(^{31}\) Recreational geography was born.

In a May 1966 article in *Izvestiiia Akademii Nauk Seryia geograficheskaiia*, Preobrazhenskii and N.P. Shelemov described several organizational principles for recreation in the USSR. They argued that nature had always been and would always be a vital necessity to humans. National parks, which would harmoniously develop recreation and protect nature,

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\(^{28}\) V. Preobrazhenskii, “Dvizhenie po azimuthu” *Na sushe i na more* 6 (June 1941), 12.

\(^{29}\) Ibid., 10.


\(^{31}\) Preobrazhenskii, 77.
could satisfy this need. In early June 1967, Preobrazhenskii represented the Institute of Geography at the conference for the formation of national parks.

In 1968 he returned to the oblast to lead an expedition in the territory of Lake Seliger to help make recommendations for the organization of the proposed national park. Participants made observations on tourism’s environmental impact and carried out a sociological analysis of tourists— their income, social position, and aesthetic tastes. In 1969, the Institute of Geography passed a resolution calling for the organization of a complex methodological recreation-geographical expedition, which Preobrazhenskii would organize and lead. Assigned the task of the “formation of the theoretical basis of recreational geography,” over 60 specialists in physical and economic geography, climatology, and the geography of foreign countries participated in the expedition.

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The expedition began in the territory of Lake Seliger where several divisions continued the previous year’s analysis of recreation’s impact on the landscape, created maps for zoning recreational territories, and analyzed the region’s economic and geographical characteristics. The following year the expedition expanded to other European parts of the Soviet Union and dedicated particularly close attention to Crimea, the Caucasus, and the forests outside of Moscow.\textsuperscript{34} From 1969 to 1972, Preobrazhenskii led a team from the Institute that collaborated with doctors, sociologists, central and regional design institutes, the Administration of Forest Parks of the Moscow City Council, the Central Council of Tourism, the Crimea Pedagogical Institute, and the Nature Protection Brigades of Moscow State University’s Biology and Geography Departments.\textsuperscript{35}

In the forests just outside of Moscow, the nature protection brigade of MSU’s Department of Geography carried out studies of tourist behavior in which they separated “recreationists” (otdykhaishii) into four categories: fisherman and mushroom gatherers, picnickers, tourists who travel by trail, and stationary tourists who leave the city for two or three days and set up camp. While “true tourists,” they asserted, value solitude and quiet and demonstrate great respect and care for nature, stationary tourists often caused great damage, which Preobrazhenskii’s student, Natalia Kazanskaia, categorized in a five-stage model.\textsuperscript{36} At the first stage, the forest experienced minimal pressure from tourists and other recreationists and consisted of a healthy oak, maple, and a dense understory. By the fifth stage, trees were in poor condition and the undergrowth largely consisted of invasive species.\textsuperscript{37} By determining

\textsuperscript{34} ARAN, fond 200, opis’ 1, delo 31, 80.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 83.
\textsuperscript{37} N.S. Kazanskaia, “Izuchenie rekreatsionnoi digressii estestvennykh gruppirovok rastitel’nosti” Izvestiiia Akademii Nauk SSSR, Seria Geograficheskiaia, No. 1 (January-February 1972), 52-60. See also: V.P. Chizhova, Rekreationnie nagruzki v zonakh otdikha Moskva (Moscow: Lesnaia Promyschlennost, 1977), 33.
“recreational capacity” and “maximum recreational impact,” which would vary between landscapes, recreational geographers planned to work with landscape design institutes to “channelize” tourists and prevent these territories from ever reaching the “irreversible” fourth and fifth stages of degradation.38 The Institute proposed these principles as the basis for the organization of national parks.

With these principles in mind, Gerasimov, Preobrazhenskii, and others from the Institute of Geography had laid out a comprehensive justification for the establishment of national parks by early 1969. A particular paradox of modern life, they argued, necessitated the establishment of national parks and other recreational territories. While the “cultural level” of society progressively increased and created new needs, humanity’s biological nature left it poorly-equipped to cope with the urbanization, atomization, inertness, mechanization, and hyper-specialization of modern life. The authors argued that no less than one percent of the USSR’s territory (245,000 square kilometers) should be dedicated to recreational landscapes with a well-preserved wilderness appearance, which evoked a feeling of the “primitive life” of humanity’s ancestors.39 The view was spreading well beyond the scientific community. In an Izvestiia article on national parks two years later entitled “The Pull of Nature,” R. Armeev wrote: “The faster our cities grow, reaching into the forest and meadow, the thicker the system of roads and electrical lines, the more a person feels the necessity to go out into nature, into the pristine, magnificent, and beautiful.”40

In the ensuing years, Preobrazhenskii, Gerasimov, and several of the others in the Institute of Geography developed a vision for national parks about which they wrote extensively. Some of their ideas, such as using mathematical models to determine the best locations for parks, reflected a somewhat self-conscious, perhaps forced, attempt to assert the

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38 Cherkasova, 12.
young field’s scientific authority. While recreational geographers never applied such models, the emphasis on “scientific principles” imbued the national park project with the sort of authority that proponents believed was essential for making a compelling case for their establishment. Recreational geographers argued that parks should be located in the USSR’s most scenic territories, which had experienced little anthropogenic change. They provided the necessary ideological window-dressing, which they undoubtedly believed necessary to ameliorate the sensitivity to such borrowing from the West. In capitalist countries, especially the United States, they wrote, national parks were oriented to distracting tourists through the continuous absorption of information, which transformed the interaction with nature into “superficial entertainment” while stoking feelings of “national or racial exclusivity.” While Soviet national parks would be profit-making establishments, their humanistic and environmentally sound principles would distinguish them from parks in the capitalistic world.

Soviet national parks, the geographers insisted, would be oriented towards the “multifaceted and harmonious development of the personality” and helping citizens overcome the nervousness and fatigue caused by urban life while they developed the “ecological conscience” in Soviet citizens. Soviet national parks would take into account the “consumption” of natural attributes—landscapes, natural monuments, and animals—physical activity, gathering mushrooms and berries, hunting, fishing, and the consumption of historical and cultural values. They proposed the formation of four different kinds of parks—landscape parks for light hiking, parks for sporting tourism, hunting parks, and architectural-historical parks. The particular demands and needs of the population, which sociological analysis

41 VS Preobrazhenskii and Iu.A. Vedenin, Geographiia i otidikh (Moscow: Znanie, 1971), 32.
would ascertain, would determine the organization of individual parks. In consultation with recreational geographers, landscape architects would establish park zones based on the concepts of “recreational capacity” and “maximum recreation impact.” Forestry professionals would also embrace these principles in conceiving recreational space. Failure to apply these concepts correctly, they argued, resulted in environmental damage in the national parks of the United States. According to their vision, “transit parks” would form corridors to connect individual parks and form the nexus of a general system of territorial recreation systems (TRS). TRSs and national parks, they argued, would spur regional economic development through construction projects and strengthening the service sector.

Recreational geographers asserted that national parks could combine economic development and nature protection—by removing areas from potential industrial development, protecting territories from tourism’s impact, and engendering feelings of stewardship—while serving the vital human necessity of making Soviet citizens feel connected with the natural world. Both through the literature and direct consultations, the ideas and language of recreational geographers would influence the visions that different organizations developed for individual national parks. Recreational geographers would propagate these ideas with slight

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46 In addition to Kansakaia, Chizhova worked on this question throughout the 1970s.


49 I.P Gerasimov, V.S. Preobrazhenskii, AS Abramov, D.L. Armand, S.V. Zon, I.V. Komar, G.M Lappo, N.F. Leontev, Ya. G Mashbisch, Teoreticheskie osnovi rekreatsionnoi geographii (Moscow: Nauka, 1975), 33. In the introduction, the authors wrote: “The essential particularity of the territorial recreational system, distinguishing it from the large part of different geo-systems, is the central place of man in it (in this relationship one can consider how varied the ecosystem), the meaning of their description not only natural, economic, social, but also social-psychological, psychological, physiological characteristics and also esthetic and ethical. And although modern geographic science (geography of population, medicinal geography) study some of these characteristics, not one of them however analyzes them all.”

modifications and continue to articulate the fundamental necessity for an urbanized population to experience nature.\textsuperscript{51} In one 1981 publication, just before the passage of the all-Union law on national parks, Preobrazhenskii wrote: “The further the process of urbanization advances the more important it is for a person to return to the natural environment. Along with the growth of cities and their people, more and more people take off, as it is said, to nature.”\textsuperscript{52} By that time, over 60 percent of the Soviet Union’s population lived in urban areas, which made national parks, according to recreational geographers, a vital necessity.\textsuperscript{53} In this sense, Preobrazhenskii and other Soviet environmentalists were echoing the words of John Muir nearly one hundred years earlier when he stated that national parks fulfilled a fundamental human need to return home.

The attempts by recreational geographers to make the organization of recreation “scientific” and “rational” were ironic in ways that many probably did not realize. While geography’s status among other sciences declined as fewer “blank spots” on the map remained during the 1950s, tourists increasingly viewed themselves as amateur geographers and produced detailed maps of little explored regions. Throughout the 1970s, Preobrazhenskii continued to encourage tourists to develop better maps of distant regions to help recreational geographers produce a better inventory of the USSR’s tourism resources.\textsuperscript{54} Geographers’ efforts to make tourism rational by providing its territorial organization with a scientific foundation were part of a broader effort to expand geography’s applied approaches and in turn establish greater relevance before the scientific community, state planning agencies, and the broader public. Establishing this sort of scientific authority in enacting new plans was one of the hallmarks of “developed socialism.” But in proposing tourism be organized on “scientific” principles and

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 18.
\textsuperscript{54} M. Levchenko, Nauka i puteshestviia” \textit{Turist} 1 (January 1975), 26.
as an appendage to the larger Soviet economy, recreational geographers’ efforts had the potential to undermine the exploratory and romantic spirit that had been a great part of tourism’s appeal and which tourism promoters had thoroughly emphasized for the previous two decades.

The First National Parks

Because so many geographers in the Institute of Geography were among the most prominent names in Soviet environmental protection, the Institute’s ideas about national parks strongly influenced discussions on the establishment of national parks taking place within the Main Administration of Hunting and Zapovedniki and the Central Laboratory of Nature Protection. While the Laboratory had been discussing the economic and other questions related to the national parks for over 10 years, in 1970, Natalia Zabelina, a young geographer, completed her kanidatskaia dissertation on the organization and economics of national parks in the United States and Canada.55

Born in Moscow several years before the start of the Great Patriotic War, Natalia Zabelina had decided that she would dedicate her professional life to studying the natural world after spending time in forests of the Moscow region on school field trips during the early 1950s. At that time, majoring in geography was the logical choice for someone with a

55 RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 210, 199.
broad-ranging interest in nature and a general concern for environmental protection. After obtaining her undergraduate degree in geography at Moscow State University, Zabelina began working for the Central Laboratory of Nature Protection in 1962 and immediately gravitated to the study of protected territories. By the late-1960s, she had become one of the institute’s foremost experts on the subject.66 Through mail correspondence with the United States National Park Service and individual national parks, she obtained many folders worth of information that would serve as the materials for the most thorough examination of US national parks by a Soviet scholar at that time.

Aided by Zabelina’s research, the Laboratory conducted a study for the organization of national parks that was led by two of the most well travelled Soviet environmentalists of the day—Andrei Grigor’evich Bannikov and Lev Shaposhnikov. Shaposhnikov had regularly attended meetings of the IUCN. Bannikov, a biologist who traveled to almost every region of the USSR and to 25 foreign countries, would eventually serve as vice president of the IUCN from 1972 to 1978. In addition to Zabelina’s dissertation, the Laboratory consulted with international experts, and conducted extensive surveys of different civic organizations, branches of the Academy of Sciences, and different governmental ministries to carry out a study in 1970 on determining the organizational criteria for the organization of parks and a park system. Whether they were called “nature,” “people’s,” “regional,” or “state,” such parks would be dedicated in equal measure to the promotion of nature protection and providing tourism opportunities.67 Although the Laboratory did not propose a complete ban on extractive and traditional uses of the land, such uses could not compromise the aesthetic values

66 Interview with Natalia Zabelina, July 20, 2015.
67 RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 256, 39. V.D. Lebedev the assistant chair of Gosplan proposed the name “State Parks” (Gosudarstvennye parki), D.L. Armand proposed “People’s Parks” (Narodnye parki), the All-Union Institute of Hunting proposed the name “Reserve Parks” (Zapovednye Parki), the Tbilisi Institute of the Forest recommended the name “Regional Parks” (regional’nye parki).
of parks.\textsuperscript{58} While limited mining activities would require agreements for reclaiming the mined territory, forestry activity would be limited to sanitary cuts. Pointing to the example of US parks, where extensive road building and the failure to regulate the number of tourists had damaged nature, the Laboratory wanted infrastructure to cover no more than three percent of a park’s territory, but it would be left to individual parks to determine the number of visitors and the specific rules for park visitation.\textsuperscript{59} By comparison, the Institute of Geography had proposed at least ten percent of the park’s territory be dedicated to recreation. The Laboratory acknowledged that the parallel goals of nature protection and providing recreation opportunities posed a dilemma in determining the department responsible for national parks. This would prove to be one of the most vexing problems moving forward.

In this study as elsewhere, the Laboratory suggested that nature protection as well as providing for the well being of Soviet citizens was an inherently socialist aim. However, beyond this, the proposal did not specify specifically how these parks would be socialist in form or content. For ideological reasons, some respondents remained cautious about enthusiastically supporting the term national. The Commission of Nature Protection of the Estonian Academy of Sciences, for example, supported the term State Nature Parks and wrote: “Indeed, in the USSR the concept “National Park” does not make any sense.”\textsuperscript{60} Nonetheless, on July 1, 1971, less than two months following the Central Laboratory completed its report, the Council of Ministers of Estonia SSR established the first national park in the USSR—Lahemaa (Land of the Bays) National Park.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 17.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 41.
Lahemaa National Park

Located 60 kilometers to the east of Tallinn, Lahemaa National Park spans 725 square kilometers (it later expanded) and consists of wetlands, old growth forest, sandy seashores, and numerous limestone cliffs. Twelve rivers run through the territory of the park, which lynx, brown bears, moose, and wild boar inhabit. As a border zone with numerous barbed wire encirclements, guard towers, a training facility for tracking infiltrators and refugees, and areas of long-term agricultural use, much of Lahemaa’s territory hardly qualified as a “relatively unaltered” landscape, which was one of the criteria established for national parks at the IUCN meeting in New Delhi in 1969. Moreover, while Lahemaa’s diverse landscapes, wildlife, and views onto the Gulf of Finland undoubtedly possess a certain subtle beauty, they lacked the sort of awe-inspiring monumentalism or unique geological features that had become synonymous with national parks of other countries, especially the United States. How and why then did an altered area of considerably more modest charms than many places in the USSR become the location of the Soviet Union’s first national park?

Although the IUCN had established parameters for the sorts of territories that merited national park designation, neither the IUCN nor any other international body could impose these criteria on autonomous nation-states. The Soviet Union’s case was especially peculiar. Although proposed parks on Baikal and several other areas in Russia had gained significantly more attention in the press and among the scientific community and undoubtedly possessed more spectacular landscapes, the RSFSR could not have parks. While there was no law on

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61 “Robert W. Smurr, “Lahemaa: The Paradox of the Soviet Union’s First National Park” Nationalities Papers, Vol. 36, no. 3 (July 2008): 402. Paul Gorip ed., “Protected Areas Program” The International Journal for Protected Area Managers, vol. 14, no. 3. (2004), 6. See: Paul Gorip ed., Protected Areas Program (Newbury UK: IUCN, 2004), 8. The IUCN defined a national park as: “IUCN General Assembly in New Delhi in 1969 defined ‘national park’ as: “a relatively large area where one or several ecosystems are not materially altered by human exploitation and occupation.” The IUCN recommended that territories that did not meet this description not be designated as national parks. This was a curious definition because many European national parks at the time had populations regularly living with their territories and using the land for agriculture.
The small size of Baltic republics, particularly Estonia SSR, prevented them from harboring illusions of the inexhaustibility of natural resources. Accordingly, Baltic Republics were the most amenable to nature protection in the USSR. In 1958, Estonia SSR became the first of the union republics to pass a nature protection law. Pointing to the fact that Estonia fully reclaimed all its mines, had banned DDT, and did not allow foresters to take more than the prescribed cuts, a 1970 Literaturnaia gazeta article praised Estonia SSR as a model of highly-developed ecological consciousness. Estonia SSR’s size also made the organization of a national park a simpler task; Estonian scientists and government officials could go from the capital to the proposed park in forty-five minutes, which undoubtedly simplified the process of lobbying by park proponents.

The prerevolutionary Russian conservationist, Ivan Borodin, originally discussed the possibility of creating national parks in the Baltics prior to the October Revolution and Estonian scientists briefly discussed the idea again in the late 1920s. The Estonian Ministry of Forestry and Nature Protection revived the idea in 1968 and ordered exploratory work for the park. The project received strong support from head of the Estonia Council of Ministers—Edgar Tonurist, who had also established the Estonian Society for Nature Protection several years before. The Estonian Scientific-Research Institute of Forestry and Nature Protection, Tatra University, and several architectural-design institutions carried out preliminary design

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62 While there was no law that stated this, environmentalists knew this well. I have learned this through conversations with Boris Samoilov and Natalia Zabelina.
63 P. Bolin, “I avtomobil’ i sosny,” Literaturnaia gazeta, August 12, 1970, 13. The Estonian Council of Ministers banned DDT in 1967, which was five years before the US banned it.
64 Smurr, 402. Smurr argues that the park was an expression of “de facto nationalism” and consciously not socialist in form. While this might be the case, Smurr does not use any primary evidence to demonstrate that those who conceived the park (who are strikingly absent from this article) thought of it in these terms. However, the Estonian Commission of Nature Protection’s reluctance to use the word nationally when corresponding with the Central Laboratory of Nature Protection could be indirect evidence that the goals were, in fact, nationalist.
65 State Archives of Latvia fond, 270, opis’, 3, delo, 5109, 260.
work for the national park from 1968 to 1970. While it is possible that the Commission of Nature Protection in the Estonia Academy of Sciences did not know these organizations intended to use the word national, it is highly unlikely. It is more likely that the Commission expressed its objection to the word because it did not want to arouse concerns in the months before the Estonia SSR Council of Ministers established it. While Tonurist and others undoubtedly viewed the national park as something that could promote pride in the Estonia SSR, they likely saw its establishment as a means of boosting the legitimacy of the Estonian Communist Party and thereby reducing separatist feelings.

The Scientific-Technical Council of Lahemaa National park—a civic organization—was established to plan the park in early 1972. The Council consisted of specialists from the natural sciences, history, architecture, and experts in Estonian folk art. They planned five zones: a nature reserve zone, a zone of natural landscapes, a zone of diffuse recreation, a zone of intense recreation, and an agricultural zone. While the reserve zone was off-limits, tourists could visit the “zone of natural landscapes” with a guide. The park’s stated goals were the protection of forests, wetlands, and historical as well as cultural monuments, establishing a base for scientific research, educating visitors on the historical relationship between humans and nature, the environmental education of the youth, preserving the “natural” condition of the region, and providing vacation opportunities to workers. In developing plans for the park, Estonian scientists had toured US national parks to learn about the methods used by the United States to combine environmental protection with providing recreation opportunities. By that time, Estonia’s Baltic neighbor to the south was already developing plans for national parks of its own.

67 Smurr, 404.
68 RGANTD, fond R-216, opis’ 4-1, delo 140, 30. Also see: RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 289, 20. Zabelina concluded that different areas developing national parks, such as Komi SSR, needed to study the experience of Lahemaa.
**Gauja National Park**

The only river that originates and terminates in Latvia SSR, the Gauja River flows for 460 kilometers before emptying into the Gulf of Riga of the Baltic Sea. With sandstone banks formed over 300 million years ago in the Gauja Valley—a 93 kilometer stretch in which the national park is located, took its present form nearly 15,000 years ago when successive glacial melts left rich deposits of field stone, gravel, and clay in the riparian area and expanded the width of the valley. As tourists started traveling to the area in increasing numbers in the late-19th and early 20th centuries, the territory of the future national park was known as the “Latvian Switzerland.”

Latvian foresters realized that the landscape possessed aesthetic and “spiritual” value and in 1928 they proposed the establishment of a national park in the valley. Nothing came of this effort, but shortly after World War II, the Latvian Council of People’s Commissars began designating natural monuments (pamiatniki) in forests along the banks of the river. Although the Latvia SSR Council of Ministers designated more sites over the course of the next two decades, the valley’s ecology continued to worsen. Industrial development throughout the republic left its rivers, including Gauja, significantly more polluted. On some weekends, nearly 50,000 tourists visited the valley. Over the course of the year, the visitors totaled nearly one million. The hordes of tourists left no doubt that the valley’s aesthetic value exceeded its ruble worth in board feet, but the area lacked tourism infrastructure, even designated camping sites. Consequently, the mounds of trash left by tourists and the vegetation that they cut down caused concern among the environmentally conscious public that the area

69 http://www.latvians.com/index.php?en/CFBH/LivlandischeSchweiz/schulz-001-intro.wiki The Guaja River valley received this name from the photographer Carl Shulz who produced a photo collection by this name.

70 Ionas Berkhol’tsas, Natsional’nyi park Gauia (Moscow: Lesnaia promyshlennost’, 1982), 19.
would not retain its non-material—aesthetic and spiritual—values if protective measures were not taken.\footnote{State Archives of Latvia, fond 270, opis’ 3, delo 5488, 51.}

The park’s organization began with an order from the Latvia SSR Ministry of Forestry and Forestry Industry and the Latvian Scientific-Research Institute for Forestry Problems (LSTIFP) in 1968. Two years later, the Latvian Society for Nature Protection and the Latvian Society for the Protection of Historical Monuments petitioned the Council of Ministers to establish six national parks in the republic, including one in the Gauja River Valley.\footnote{Aldis Lauzis, “Istochnik otdikha, vдохновения, и знаний” \textit{Nauka i tekhnika} 6 (June 1971), 31.} The Ministry of Forestry and Forestry Industry completed the report that same year. It used published proceedings from the IUCN, quotes from Lenin, and publications of recreational geographers to buttress the argument for an expanded and “complex” approach towards environmental protection, which would include a diverse and flexible system of protected territories that combined ecological enlightenment with recreation opportunities.\footnote{State Archives of Latvia fond 270, opis’ 3, delo 5488, 2.}

The report utilized the terminology of recreational geographers. With the expected dramatic increases of tourists coming from the Baltics and other Union republics, Latvia SSR needed to make sure that recreation had a “scientific” foundation to avoid the future destruction of natural monuments.\footnote{Ibid., 5.} The park administration’s first task, the report argued, would be to revive damaged areas by limiting the flow of tourists while simultaneously “channelizing” tourists into designated campsites. Only once this had been accomplished, could the national park attempt to attract large numbers of tourists. Although the project’s authors wanted Gauja to bring profits to the state, they did not want to repeat the destructive, “commercial” approach to nature represented by US national parks, about which recreational geographers had been forewarned.\footnote{Ibid., 78.} Rather, recreational geographers stated that a Soviet national park

\footnotetext{71}{State Archives of Latvia, fond 270, opis’ 3, delo 5488, 51.}
\footnotetext{72}{Aldis Lauzis, “Istochnik otdikha, vдохновения, и знаний” \textit{Nauka i tekhnika} 6 (June 1971), 31.}
\footnotetext{73}{State Archives of Latvia fond 270, opis’ 3, delo 5488, 2.}
\footnotetext{74}{Ibid., 5.}
\footnotetext{75}{Ibid., 78.}
should be characterized by its orientation towards instilling tourists in Gauja with a higher “ecological consciousness.”

The proposed park had gained the support of influential citizens. In the spring of 1972, the Chair of the Plenum of the Latvian Society for Nature Protection, Peter Strautmanis, who was also former Secretary of the Latvian Communist Party, wrote an impassioned letter to the Chair of the Latvian Council of Ministers, Iu. Ia. Ruben. He argued that nature protection was the republic’s “socialist duty” and emphasized the republic’s international responsibility:

> The ever-growing tempo of industrialization and urbanization in countries throughout the world brings with it the rapid and deep changes to natural conditions. In the scientific literature of our country and other countries there is a great concern expressed that the biosphere is in danger and states must take immediate measures for nature protection.

He argued that national parks, which in the future should encompass 10 to 20 percent of Latvia SSR, could provide the needed opportunities for “landscape therapy” to revitalize the spiritual and physical strength of Soviet workers.

Within three months, the Latvia SSR Council of Ministers passed a decree that called for the establishment of a national park of 36,000 hectares. The Council of Ministers assigned the Ministry of Forestry and Forest Resources the task of coordinating between several government ministries and civic organizations to produce a report on the plan for developing the park by July 1, 1973. The Ministry of Forestry and Forest Materials completed its report in the summer of 1973, which called for the establishment of a park of 53,000 hectares—17,000 hectares larger than the previous proposal.

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76 Ibid., 79.
77 State Archives of Latvia, fond 270, opis’ 3, delo 5109, 260.
78 Ibid., 258.
79 Ibid., 257.
Gauja's plan borrowed from the ideas for national parks that had germinated in both the Institute of Geography and the Central Laboratory of Nature Protection. The park had several zones with varying degrees of use. While drawing profits from tourists would be important, the plan emphatically stated that economic activity could not jeopardize the aesthetic appeal and broader nature protection goals of the park. The public response to the park reflected the expanding hopes that national parks could transform the relationship of Soviet citizens to the natural world. Aldis Lauzis's Nauka i tekhnika article about the park (written prior to its official establishment), “The source of recreation, inspiration, and knowledge,” reflected this sentiment. He wrote:

For a moment, we can again feel closeness to nature, a closeness that we do not get enough of in industrial, mechanical, or intellectual labor of city life and urban existence. In the end, these “immaterial things” are no less important for us than material benefits, which man receives from their use and the care and which demand no less care. The most significant “immaterial” demand relates to the moral sphere. Humans receive in nature an array of impressions, brought by the sights, the sounds, the smells, the touches of wind, the sensation of the physical closeness to nature, of the knowledge of its living and un-living objects, imprints of events from the past—all of these form in us not only aesthetic, but also to a large degree social feelings, the feeling for socially-useful activity.

While borrowing from foreign experience, Gauja, he asserted, gave the hope that wide circles of public opinion could be galvanized around nature protection efforts. “Maybe, it is still

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81 No mining would be allowed. The park was divided into a strict reserve zone dedicated to scientific research where no economic activity would be permitted, a flexible reserve zone with guided excursions of a scientific character; a recreation-reserve zone with more extensive tourism in carefully-planned landscape to minimize recreational impact; a recreation zone of intensive use where tourism facilities, such as hotels, could be constructed; and a buffer zone where extractive industries could operate under the park administration’s supervision. Scientists of the Academy of Sciences of Latvia SSR carried out research on the Gauja River and developed recommendations for protecting it from pollution. Biologists continued to research the flora in the park. Historians, archeologists, and other specialists also helped develop plans for the park.
82 Aldis Lauzis, "Istochnik otdekha, vdokhnovleniya, i znanii" Nauka i tekhnika 6 (June 1971), 6.
83 Ibid.
early to speak about the awareness of oneself as part of the surrounding world,” an unnamed author wrote in *Sovetskaia molodezhi* two years later. “We need the perception of me without separating from what is outside oneself. Maybe, it is worth starting from something small—for example, 90,000 hectares of beautiful forest, fields, valleys, rivers, old cities—Gauja National Park.”

“Thinking locally,” or on the level of the republic as it were, had both union-wide and global implications. Through providing direct, but mediated and controlled encounters, in which guides would teach tourists the proper relationship to nature, Gauja National Park would change the republic’s moral climate. The project’s authors echoed environmentalist writers regarding the change of consciousness necessary to preserve natural treasures of the USSR. Like many other Soviet environmental protection projects, Gauja’s progenitors and promoters championed the park as part of an international project to protect the world’s biosphere. The park’s champions gave scarcely more than the formal nod to its role in inculcating and strengthening a Communist world-view. The cultivation of ecological consciousness was a task not limited to a specific political ideology. Moreover, the protection of the environment transcended political boundaries and united the Soviet person in common cause with all of humanity.

**Lithuania National Park**

While Lithuania SSR was the last of the Baltic republics to establish a national park, the Council of Ministers recognized threats to the scenic resources of the republic during the 1950s. One hundred kilometers north of Vilnius there is a densely forested re-

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region with over 120 linked lakes, hills that stand 200 meters above sea level, and architectural monuments. By the mid to late 1950s, tourists from Vilnius were flocking to the picturesque region and setting up “tent cities.” The Engels Tour Base, which was the only tour base in the area, lacked the infrastructure to accommodate the visitors and did not carry out any cultural-enlightenment projects to teach tourists proper behavior in nature. With the tourists causing significant environmental damage amid expanding timber cuts, the Lithuanian Council of Ministers established the Angelina Landscape Reserve and the Ažvinčiai Wood Botanical-Zoological Reserve in 1968 to mitigate the impact of tourism.86

Tourists went to the reserve in larger numbers with each passing year. In the spring of 1974, the Lithuania SSR Council of Ministers established Lithuania National Park to better regulate tourism and eliminate the timber harvest in the area. With a territory of 276,000 hectares, the park covered over four percent of the land in the Lithuania SSR. The park’s stated goals were mitigating the negative environmental impact from tourists, carrying out scientific research related to the region’s cultural and scientific values, the establishment of “models” of cultural landscape for forestry, agriculture, and fishing, and the promotion of ideas of nature protection and cultural values through educational tourism.87 The park designers divided it into permanent (zapovedniki) and temporary reserve (zakazniki) zones, zones of recreation, and an economic zone that allowed traditional land uses.

Given the reputation of Baltic republics for being progressive in environmental protection, it is hardly surprising that they became home to the first Soviet national parks. For the decade and a half that followed, supporters of other national parks would also refer to

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86 Iazan, 33.
87 State Archives of Lithuania, fond R-754, opis’ 1, delo 1137, 44-45.
their development and citizen support as an example that other parks could emulate. The establishment of parks in the Baltic fueled the motivation other Union republics to form parks of their own. Without a law at the Union level providing for the establishment of national parks, however, the RSFSR would have to wait.

**The Caucasus and Central Asia**

Nature protection laws passed by two Central Asian Republics in the early 1960s provided for the establishment of national parks. However, the first national park equivalent in Central Asia was Kyrgyz SSR's Ala Archa “People’s” Park,” which was established in 1976. Located on the northern slope of the Kyrgyz Ridge, the park is located 40 kilometers from Bishkek. The Kyrgyz SSR Council of Ministers established the park to revive areas damaged by tourism, to organize tourist traffic in the future, and to protect the Ala Archa River with its unique natural attractions and abundant plant and animal life. With elevations ranging from 1600 to 4800 meters, spectacular river valleys, and majestic peaks, the area has long been popular among mountain climbers and trekkers and at the time of its establishment there were over 120 designated trails in the territory of the park and the surrounding area.

The Uzbek SSR Council of Ministers established Uzbek “People’s Park” in 1978 for the purposes of protecting centuries old trees, the area’s animal population, and the organization of tourism. However, these parks hardly protected the vast majority of the popular

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88 *Natsional’nyi park: problem sozdaniia* (Moscow: Znanie, 1979), 4. Passed on June 16, 1962, the “Law on the Protection of Nature of Kazakhstan SSR” announced nature parks that were under state protection and regulated use. It asserted that the protection of areas and objects of nature could be done with the organization of nature parks, where along with the preservation of their natural riches was to create the conditions for the full recreation and revival of the health of the population. Turkmenistan passed a law on March 26, 1963 (Law on the Protection of Nature) that was roughly analogous.

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid., 24. The territory of the national park was 29,100 hectares, 70% of which was forest and 16% water lake. Over 40 percent was intended for recreation and 9 percent remained open for agriculture and forestry. It was intensive but monitored extensively in the interests of nature protection.

destinations for tourists. In 1978, an article in *Turist* asserted that the establishment of high mountain parks throughout Central Asia was necessary to mitigate tourism’s devastating impact upon the region.92

**Sevan National Park**

For years, Armenia’s Lake Sevan had received greater attention from the environmentally concerned public than any other region in the Caucasus. Sometimes referred to as the “Baikal of the Caucasus,” Lake Sevan suffered from Armenia SSR’s breakneck pace of industrial and agricultural development in the first decades of Soviet rule.93 During the first five-year-plan, Soviet engineers transformed Sevan’s main tributary, the Razanskii River, by building a series of dams to generate the power necessary to construct new industries and dramatically expand agriculture in the republic. With the Sevano-Raszdanskii Cascade providing 95 percent of Armenia's hydroelectricity, the republic built chemical, machine tool, and car factories.94 From the 1920s to the 1960s, the population of Armenia SSR nearly doubled and production grew 100-fold.95 Economic growth, however, came at the expense of an eighteen-meter drop in the lake and its areal contraction by 41 percent during this same period.96 The change in the hydrological regime disrupted Sevan’s ecological balance with algal blooms visible in many parts of the lake.97

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93 A. Bolokhnin and A. Kraminov, “Vse storony Sevana,” *Izvestiia*, July 20, 1966, 3. Established in Georgia SSR in 1973, Tblisi National Park was the first national park in the Caucasus region, but it received significantly less attention than Sevan.
95 “Spasenie Sevana,” July 1968.
97 A.A. Charogian.
The lake’s changing level and the resulting ecological consequences attracted the public’s attention to other ecological and aesthetic problems—mainly recreation’s increasing impact. Sevan had become a popular tourism destination during the 1950s and 1960s and suffered from problems typical to tourism-intensive regions throughout the USSR. The haphazard construction of recreation bases and boarding houses as well as increasing litter made for an unsightly shoreline. In 1966, an Izvestiia article suggested that economists had not properly investigated the economic losses caused by the degradation of Sevan’s scenic value. They called for a single steward to oversee the development of recreation on Sevan.  

While an explanation of who first conceived the idea for a national park on Sevan and when it was proposed will require work in Armenian archives and falls outside the scope of this dissertation, the idea was first aired in the press by a landscape architect, L. Rosenberg, in a 1967 Literaturnaia gazeta article. Concerned citizens sent hundreds of letters to the Armenian Council of Ministers calling for the protection of the lake throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1973, the Armenia SSR Council of Ministers passed a decree banning construction close to the water. With engineers developing plans to raise the lake’s level by carrying a portion of the Arpa River to Sevan through a 48-kilometer tunnel through the mountains, radio programs and newspaper articles celebrated the “transformation” of Sevan into a region of spas, tourist bases, and pioneer camps. As the central press highlighted both its natural beauty and

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98 A. Bolokhnin and A. Kraminov, 3.
102 Ibid.
its many sites of archeological interest, articles called for the transformation of Sevan into a recreational region that would serve all Soviet citizens.103

After more than ten years of discussion, the Armenia SSR Council of Ministers established Sevan National Park on March 14, 1978. The park’s stated goals were protecting the natural resources of the watershed as well as the natural and cultural landscapes, the organization of tourism, the promotion of nature protection, and the organization of scientific research on the biology and recreation resources of the lake. Describing the significance of the establishment of Sevan National Park, the director of the department of nature protection under Gosplan Armenia SSR, P.Kh. Petrosian, said: “In the near future Sevan will be reborn as a place of recreation for the laborers of our country.”104 As Petrosian was prematurely proclaiming Sevan’s “rebirth,” geographers, biologists, civic organizations, brigades of nature protection, game wardens, and many other concerned citizens were conceiving plans for national parks in the RSFSR.

**Planning the Park System and Promoting the Idea**

Although the RSFSR could not officially have national parks, local and regional governments were already taking initiative to establish their equivalents by the early 1970s. Between 1970 and 1972, the Moscow City Executive Committee, the Council of Ministers of the Komi Republic, and the Irkutsk Oblast Executive Committee passed resolutions establishing “nature” parks.105 Located in largely intact forest in the northwest part of Moscow, the

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105 GARF, fond A-259, opis’ 48, delo 6118, 25. Order no. 1443 from July 14, 1972 the Moscow City Executive Committee ordered the Main Architectural Planning Administration of the city of Moscow to develop the technical-economic foundations for the establishment of a nature Park “Losiny Ostrov.”
Circumpolar Urals, and the southwest coastline of Lake Baikal respectively, these parks were conceived to become eventually the functional equivalents of national parks.

Throughout the decade, newspapers, journals, and books described and promoted parks proposed in the Samara Bend on the Volga, the Altai Mountains, Lake Seliger, Tuva, Karelia, Kamchatka, the Caucasus Mountains near Sochi, the Ugra River, the Sayan Mountains, Mari SSR, and the Central and Southern Urals. Actively borrowing the concepts of recreational geographers and the Central Laboratory of Nature Protection, architectural institutes—Lengiprogor (Leningrad Institute of Urban Design) and later Soiuzgiproleskhoz (Union Institute of Landscape Design)—began working on some of these and other projects. Ukraine SSR was also working to establish a set of national parks and in 1972 it passed a law allowing for the establishment of “state-nature parks.” The Kiev Scientific-Research Institute of Urban Design had developed plans for eight parks by mid-decade, which included parks in the Carpathians, the Shatskii Lakes, and Crimea. Many of the most prominent and well-known voices in Soviet environmental protection—Oleg Volkov, Andrei Bannikov, Iurii

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Efremov, and many others—wrote frequently throughout the decade in articles and books to encourage the establishment of national parks. ¹⁰⁸

Few nature protection ideas resonated more deeply in the 1970s among environmentalists and garnered such widespread support throughout Soviet society. A journalist interviewing Andrei Bannikov, then the vice president of the IUCN, for a Literaturnaia gazeta article stated that he had “never met an opponent of the idea.”¹⁰⁹ An abundance of leisure and vacation time and the USSR’s tourism explosion, which accelerated significantly in the 1970s, was the first and most obvious reason for the popularity of the national park idea. The average Soviet worker labored 300 hours less per year in 1978 than he did in 1952.¹¹⁰ By 1979, the Central Trade Union Council was providing services to over 30 million tourists and 165 million excursionists a year while far more people were traveling throughout the USSR not using services of trade union organizations or the Council of Tourism.¹¹¹ Throughout the USSR, there were over 3,000 tourist clubs, whereas only 50 had existed less than twenty years earlier. With more Soviet citizens living in cities, many believed that tourism in “the bosom of nature” became more important than any other kind.

While recreational geographers had emphasized the need for people to experience the “primitive life of our ancestors,” psychologists began promoting “landscape therapy” as a means of helping with the increasing stress of urban existence.¹¹² Environmentalists frequently referred to national or “nature” parks as “the most progressive” recreation establishment within

¹¹¹ Ibid.
the Territorial Recreation Complexes (TRCs) conceived by the Institute of Geography.\(^{113}\)

With tourism’s environmental impact increasing, the concern for the preservation of places that could provide this amenity intensified.\(^{114}\)

As the Soviet government started paying significantly more attention to environmental protection in the first years of the decade, governmental decrees stated that protecting nature to ensure good recreational opportunities was one of the state’s foremost environmental protection priorities. Passed in September 1972, a nature protection decree of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR stated: “The resolution of these (nature protection) tasks in socialist society is inextricably connected with the health of the population and with providing Soviet people the necessary conditions for productive labor and recreation.”\(^{115}\) The decree called on several ministries and departments to prepare the transfer of forest territory into zones organized for recreation and tourism.\(^{116}\) The USSR Ministry of Forestry commissioned the landscape design institute, Soiuzgiproleskhoz, to carry out a comprehensive study for developing a system of national parks, which it would complete in 1976.\(^{117}\) The Soviet public, the document asserted, carried great responsibility for the fulfillment of these and other environmental protection tasks. While much of Soviet society was indeed becoming "disengaged" and "disconnected," environmentalists had in no previous era tried to galvanize the public so thoroughly towards environmental protection and Soviet citizens had never made such extensive calls for a clean environment.

\(^{113}\) N.A. Kashkiaev and L.N. Shil’nikova, Organizatsiiia i razmeshchenie prirodnykh parkov na territorii SSSR (Moscow: Gosstroii, 1974), 36.

\(^{114}\) R. Dormidontov, Borozhim nauzhen natsional’nyi park” Okhota i okhotnich’e khoziastvo 3 (March 1973), 22-23. He writes: “The necessity (to establish a system of national parks) was proved by forest fires last year, most of which were caused by unorganized and uncontrolled tourism. This necessity is easily illustrated by the littered forests of Prielbrus and even the Terskii Coast of the Kol’skii Peninsula.”

\(^{115}\) Postanovlenie verkhovnogo soveta: O marakh po dal’neishemu uluchsheniyu okhrany prirody i ratsional’nomu ispol’zovaniu prorodnykh resursov” Izvestiia, September 21, 1972, 1.

\(^{116}\) RGANTD, fond R-216, opis’ 4-1, delo 370, 13.

\(^{117}\) Ibid.
The appeal to the public to take an active part in environmental protection was another important reason for the popularity of the national park idea. On September 20, 1972, for instance, in the Council of Nationalities of the USSR Supreme Soviet, the chair of the Council’s Commission of Nature Protection, V.A. Karol stated:

We must note the role of our public in the work of improving nature protection. Writers and scientists, teachers and doctors, agronomists, and the many-million army of members of the Society of Nature Protection should actively help in the battle for preserving and increasing the riches of the Motherland.118

He could have added tourists. This emphasis meshed with the socialist tenet that all property was both state (gosudarstvennyi) and “all-people’s” (vсенародныи). The despoliation of Soviet land, it followed, was an affront to all of Soviet society. Because tourism was the way that many Soviet citizens came to love nature, many environmentalists argued that tourists should be at the front lines of the battle against the land’s despoilers. In turn, professors frequently rallied student groups of tourists in geographical departments and in nature protection brigades to help plan different national parks.

Under the leadership of Valeria Chizhova, students from the Geography Department of Moscow State University went to Kyrgyz SSR, the Central Urals, and other areas throughout the RSFSR to help plan parks while Iurii Roshchevskii led the nature protection brigades from Kuibyshev State University to help plan a park in the Samara Bend.119 Komsomol groups from Sverdlovsk helped in the planning of Central Urals National Park.120 One could argue that these efforts were evidence of a nascent civil society. They marked the sort of voluntarism that Khrushchev had called for in the 22nd Party Congress and that continued to expand under Brezhnev. However, connections between the institutes that were developing

118 “Berech’ i umnozhat bogatstva strany” Pravda, September 21, 1972, 3.
120 Dialog o prirode, 1978.
plans for national parks and civic organizations supporting the proposed parks were seemingly nonexistent. Moreover, exactly who was leading the efforts—architectural institutes, civic organizations, the Scientific-Research Institute for Nature Protection, the Institute of Geography, or the Main Administration of Zapovedniki and Hunting, the State Committee on Construction and Architecture, or the Ministry of Forestry—remained unclear. Out of the developing disparate visions for parks, future conflicts would emerge.

The third reason for the enthusiasm for national parks was tourism’s profitability and the increasing attention that economists were paying to the economics of environmental protection. As I have previously mentioned, economists and recreational geographers began talking about this publicly in the mid-1960s. By the 1970s, Soviet environmentalists often argued that this was the most important aspect of environmental protection. In an essay in the journal Smena, Valentin Ivanov, a famous writer of historical fiction, wrote about the potential profitability of national parks in the context of the urgent need for economists to account for the natural environment. He wrote:

Each generation inherits tangible assets—fixed assets of the state: the soil, forests, rivers, the sea, the subsoil. And even an average economist understands that the fate of the country depends on the ability of any generation to live by revenues from these assets, either they will be able through intellect to augment its natural inheritance, or it will be engaged in eating it up with the prospect of imminent ruin.


National parks would simultaneously make profits and preserve this inheritance for future generations. As associates of the Main Administration of Hunting and Zapovedniki travelled around the world to examine national parks of other countries, they paid close attention to and wrote about the revenues parks brought to the national coffers. After a visit to national parks in many African nations, A. Nasimovich noted in an article in *Okhota i okhotnich’e khoziastvo* that these parks produced 16 million pounds a year for the Kenyan economy and that investment in tourism produced a return six times greater than any other sector of the economy. Having attended the Second World Conference on National Parks in Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming in 1972, V.V. Kritinskii wrote in *Hunting and Hunting Economy* that national parks made a profit of five to six billion dollars a year in the United States. Their potential profitability made the proposal of national parks an important strategy for both preventing the development of industries that could harm the environment and forcing the closure of industries that were already doing so.

Finally, the increased contacts of Soviet geographers, biologists, professionals of the hunting and fishing industry, and other environmentalists with international colleagues played an important role. The previous chapter corrects the claims of Paul Josephson and the other authors of *An Environmental History of Russia* that these contacts formed in the 1970s. In his important, yet highly western-centric book, Joachim Radkau barely mentions the USSR until Chernobyl. Initially established between the Commission of the Nature Protection and the IUCN in the 1950s, connections between Soviet and Western environmen-

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125 A. Nasimovich, “Natsional’nye parki Afriki” *Okhoto i okhotnich’e khoziastvo* 6 (June 1971), 43.
126 V.V. Kritinskii, “Problemy zapovednogo dela” *Okhoto i okhotnich’e khoziastvo* 3 (March 1973), 2.
127 Josephson et. al., 192. It should be noted that in A Little Corner of Freedom, Weiner does write about the expanded international network of Soviet environmentalists in the 1950s.
talists, both formal and informal, expanded throughout the 1960s. Borne out of the social upheavals of the late-1960s, space travel, and perhaps most importantly the images of Earth from space, the emerging transnational ethos of the early 1970s that humanity was compelled to take care of its "common home" greatly influenced both the USSR's leaders and Soviet environmentalists. Translated in many languages, including Russian, books by Barry Commoner, Paul Erlich, Rachel Carson, and Jean Dorst shared the message that environmental problems were global in scope and required humanity to join together to resolve them.

The Soviet government undoubtedly realized that global environmental concern had become so strong and that not declaring a commitment to environmental protection would be a diplomatic faux pas. At the 24th Congress of the Communist Party in 1971, Brezhnev stated: “We are ready to participate in collective international projects for the protection of nature and the rational use of natural resources.” While Brezhnev's motives might have been no deeper than concern for the Soviet Union’s international image, this stated commitment strengthened the sense of Soviet environmentalists that they carried responsibility before the world, which an array of international environmental agreements would affirm. The USSR's signing onto UNESCO's “Man and the Biosphere” project in 1971 marked the first of many international agreements. The project provided for the designation of internationally recognized biosphere reserves, which sought to reconcile economic development with the preservation of biodiversity.

131 Ibid.
Although the USSR did not take part in the United Nations Conference of the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972 because the UN failed to invite East Germany, Soviet leaders continued to assert that environmental protection was an area that transcended geopolitics. At a UNESCO conference in November 1972, the USSR became one of 40 countries to sign on to the convention of World Heritage Sites. Cooperation in environmental protection would be important to improved relations between the Soviet Union and Western nations under the policy of détente throughout the decade. The USSR signed joint environmental protection agreements with Japan, Canada, Norway, West and East Germany, Sweden, and Finland. Signed on March 23, 1972, the “Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Environmental Protection” between the United States and the USSR was perhaps the most significant of these agreements. It involved exchanges in scientific knowledge, experience and expertise in environmental protection, the organization of joint conferences, and the joint implementation of projects in applied science. The renowned American environmentalist, Russell Train, and the head of the United States Park Service, Theodore Sudia, would each discuss environmental protection in the United States and their impressions of Soviet environmental protection in interviews with Literaturnaia gazeta during their visits to the USSR as part of the working group on protected territories. Over the course of the decade, the working group would bring Soviet specialists to visit many US national parks.

After not participating in the 1962 World Conference on National Parks in Seattle, several scientists represented the Soviet Union at the Second World Conference in 1972 at

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135 Ibid.
136 See: B. Borisov, “Pravo i okhrana prirody v SShA” Okhota i okhotnich’e khoziastvo 3 (March 1974), 40-42. In this article, Borisov writes about a three week trip to the United States in the fall of 1972 during which time he met with officials from the EPA and visited Washington, New York, Boston, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. and See: http://www2.epa.gov/aboutepa/us-and-ussr-sign-environmental-cooperation-treaty
Grand Teton National Park. The leader of the Soviet delegation, V.V. Kritinskii, stated that the USSR was forming a system of national parks “modeled after the US system.”

Writing in *Hunting and Hunting Industry* about the visit, he expressed the same sentiment that had made Soviet environmentalists a bit self-conscious when they first started attending IUCN Conferences; the world did not understand the Soviet system of nature reserves. In addition to periodically visiting US parks, Andrei Bannikov and Kritinskii visited five Canadian national parks in the early 1970s. Bannikov and many other associates of the Main Administration of Hunting and Zapovedniki visited African national parks on different trips throughout the decade. Such visits usually led to articles in the press.

Despite expressing admiration for some aspects of the American system, especially its profitability and its role in engendering patriotic feelings, the writers of these articles reiterated what recreational geographers had already argued about American national parks—that their commercial character was wreaking great destruction upon their environment. This was hardly surprising, for Garret Hardin, who was well known among Soviet environmentalists, had pointed to the US National Park system as a classic case of the “tragedy of the commons.”

Natalia Zabelina, who had written her dissertation on US National Parks, wrote:

138 V.V. Kritinskii, Director of USSR Zapovedniki presented a paper: “Protected Areas in the world’s industrially advanced regions: Importance, Progress, and Problems.”Sir Hugh Elliot ed. *Second World Conference on National Parks*. Morges, Switzerland, 1974. Held at Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks USA, Sept 18-27, 1972), 74. Kritinskii: “Finally, I would mention that in the USSR we are now organizing a system of national parks with aims similar to those of the United States, using the experience of the latter in providing services for millions of visitors. We do not, however, believe that these are in any way a substitute for our existing system of zapovedniki, the large areas of virgin nature in each of our geographical zones, established both for the investigation of the biological productivity of natural ecosystems and as a basis for recommendations on the restoration and rational use of the natural resources of that zones. Both kinds of protected resources are necessary.”


“The economically profitable development of the industry of recreation in the parks has become catastrophic for nature.”141 In addition to the litter, Zabelina noted that this economic rationale prompted national parks to try to eliminate the populations of “bad” animals, such as wolves and pumas in Yellowstone. The National Park Service’s poor management of wildlife was, as one article emphasized, reflected in their advertising bears as “harmless” animals, which had resulted in 63 bear attacks over a 40-year period.142 This fit into the narrative advanced by Soviet environmentalists that they needed stronger grounds to criticize aspects of environmental degradation in the Soviet Union. While socialist nations might have had ecological problems that needed to be addressed, the capitalist world was in the midst of an “ecological crisis,” as had been explicitly stated by many of the Western authors read by Soviet environmentalists.143 Under Soviet conditions, national parks, their supporters argued, would educate Soviet citizens on the correct habits towards nature.144

Yet, while Soviet environmentalists could criticize US and Canadian national parks, they undoubtedly realized that the national parks of these countries had curbed resource extraction and the construction of industrial installations that were much more harmful to the environment than tourism. In the areas of many proposed Soviet national parks, especially in the RSFSR, industrial and extractive activities were not only continuing unabated, but were in many cases intensifying.145 While the government had

141 N. Zabelina, V natsional’nykh parkakh SShA” Okhoto i okhotnich’e khoziastvo 3 (March 1972), 42.
143 For examples of such characterizations, see: S.N. Solomina, “Problemь ekologicheskie i sotsial’noe” Priroda 2 (February 1975), 121-123.
144 A. Bannikov and V. Krintskii, 1-2. “It must be remembered that the very idea of nature (national) parks is based on the contradiction between the protection of nature and tourism. This contradiction in the conditions of capitalism has taken a number of national parks to catastrophe. Allowing of this contradiction in our socialist country is fully possible, but in the condition of future planning the long-term use of the nature park on the basis of an ecological analysis of the resources of the park and with account of the general planning of the development of a recreational system of the oblast, republic of the country.”
145 In the area of the proposed Samara Bend National Park, mining activity was expanded throughout the 1970s. This was also true in the territory of the proposed national park in Komi ASSR. A cellulose and paper combine continued to operate on the southern shore of Baikal despite continuing protests.
expressed high-minded rhetoric on environmental protection and encouraged citizens to take active parts in these efforts, environmentalists frequently met frustration. Thus, the torturous and prolonged course towards the passage of a law on national parks increasingly frustrated environmentalists in the latter part of the decade. In early 1977, Oleg Volkov expressed this sentiment in Literaturnaia gazeta:

Life has brought us face to face with the need to improve the organization of our system of nature reserves and to establish natural and national parks. The problem of utilizing areas for recreation and excursions and tourism is acute. One would think that everyone knows about this; there has been a good deal of writing and talk about it. Paper and time is being wasted on opinions and arguments as to whether parks should be called national parks, people’s parks, or natural parks. As though that was the main problem! Let us move from words to deeds. Hasn’t there been enough deliberating and scribbling as to what sort of national parks exist in the world and where?  

In addition to the terminological disputes, disagreements among environmentalists about the organizational structure of national parks also prolonged the discussion. While all park supporters agreed that national parks should bring profit to the state and mitigate the environmental impact of tourism, strong differences had emerged over whether national parks should attract the masses to maximize profit or take the form of nature reserves that allowed strictly controlled traffic. In such cases, tourism would bring in revenue, but the primary focus would remain ecological education.

Within the Main Administration of Hunting and Zapovedniki, R. Dormidotnov, a game warden, represented the first group. In addition to attracting mass tourism, he argued that parks should accrue revenue through selling hunting and fishing permits and even opening ski slopes. Architectural and landscape design institutes were also operating on these

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assumptions about national parks, but did not take to the press to argue for their views. Ban-
nikov and Kritinskii, both of whom worked in the Central Laboratory of Nature Protection,
were the strongest voices among park supporters for the position that parks should be a
strictly regulated “museum of nature” with up to 95 percent of the territory off limits to hu-
mans.\textsuperscript{148} While they believed that national parks needed to be profitable, attempts to maxim-
ize revenues in park, they believed, should never compromise the nature protection values.
These views, which were also embraced by Feliks Shtilmark, Zabelina, and most in the Cen-
tral Laboratory, reflected a longstanding attachment to the ideal of “purity” that had been so
important in shaping the original conceptions of zapovedniki.

In an internal report for the Main Administration of Hunting and Zapovedniki, Banni-
kov and Kritinskii wrote:

\begin{quote}
No rubles can compare to the enormous enjoyment of those taking part in recreation, enjoying the majestic landscapes of the motherland, the surprising phenomena of nature, the picturesque groves, the giant trees, observing the deer and auroch are unafraid of people, the trusting swans, and the grandiose geysers or thousands of bird colonies.\textsuperscript{149}
\end{quote}

Accordingly, Bannikov and Kritinskii viewed hunting, skiing, and other “attractions” as anathema to the foundational purposes—ecological education—of national parks.\textsuperscript{150} While they clearly realized that tourism revenue could expand the rationale for protecting territories, many would never relinquish the idea that protected territory should remain as “pristine” as possible.

A second and closely related disagreement concerned the department or ministry that would be responsible for national parks. While proponents who viewed national parks pri-
marily as recreational establishments thought that the Council of Tourism in the Central

\textsuperscript{148} RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 2, delo 18, 187.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid. “Nature parks—these are not parks of culture and relaxation and not zones of mass recreation; here there cannot be a place of entertainment of an artificial character—attractions, sporting competitions, games and other forms of organization which are possible outside of the park.”
Trade Union Council should be responsible for them, supporters of the “museum of nature” approach believed that a new or existing department that concentrated on environmental protection, such as the Main Administration of Hunting and Zapovedniki, should manage national parks. However, the Main Administration was not the exclusive administrator of zapovedniki. Nearly 30 different ministries had zapovedniki under their jurisdiction. Moreover, Komsomol, the Ministry of Forestry, the Council of Tourism, and even the Main Administration of Hunting and Zapovedniki had each expressed at different times that they did not want the responsibility of managing national parks.

The final reason for the slow push towards national parks was the chasm between the Party and the Soviet government's environmental rhetoric and the realization of tangible achievements in the field of environmental protection during the decade. We can see this from the expressed concerns about Baikal, the Aral and Caspian Seas, and river pollution, and the poor enforcement of environmental protection law. One could see this as disingenuous on the part of Soviet high-ranking officials. The passage of numerous environmental laws and the environmental protection rhetoric of the Brezhnev government might also have reflected genuine sentiments that were compromised by the emotional and ideological attachments of high-ranked officials to iconic projects and a bureaucratic culture that had difficulty in adjusting to more qualitative demands, including environmental protection. I suspect the latter to be closer to the truth. In any case, for state actors, actual environmental protection was clearly not as important as the image they attempted to convey through environmental protection rhetoric.

Environmentalists were frustrated throughout the decade by the gap between promises and the realization of a strong program for environmental protection. Out of necessity, they

151 GARF, fond 7486, opis’ 52, delo 2455.
never directly criticized the Party or state directly, but rather blamed narrow “departmental-ism” for the USSR’s environmental problems. Moreover, despite significant increases in the recreational facilities within the USSR, the state always struggled to keep up with the pace of tourism’s growth. The opening of documents in the Communist Party archive might eventually help to explain the lag in both areas.

The tide seemed like it might be turning in the second half of the decade. At the XXV Congress of the Party in March 1976, Brezhnev reiterated his commitment to cooperation in environmental protection and called for a minimum of 11 billion rubles for nature protection in the tenth five-year plan (1976-1981). Because park supporters had always acknowledged that national parks would demand significant capital investment, this was a critical step towards their establishment. The following year, the Brezhnev Constitution issued citizens of the USSR with the legal obligation to “protect nature” for the first time while giving them the “right” to free time and establishments for quality “recreation” (otdykh). In December 1978, the USSR Council of Ministers passed a decree that called on the Academy of Sciences, the Ministry of Agriculture, the State Committee on Forestry, and other interested ministries of union republics to carry out a study for the establishment of national parks over the course of 1979. Russian environmentalists seemed on the cusp of realizing the hopes of nearly two decades of seemingly interminable discussion.

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153 K. Mitriushkin, “Okhrana prirody v SSSR” Okhota i okhotnich’e khoziaistvo 3 (March 1977), 3. “It seems that positive results would come from, for example, carrying out an all-European congress or intergovernmental meeting on questions about cooperating in the area of nature protection, the development of transportation and energy.”

154 See: http://constitution.garant.ru/history/ussr-rsf/1977/. Article 67 states: “A citizen of the USSR is obligated to protect nature and its riches.” Article 41, “This right is ensured by the establishment of a working week not exceeding 41 hours, for workers and other employees, a shorter working day in a number of trades and industries, and shorter hours for night work; by the provision of paid annual holidays, weekly days of rest, extension of the network of cultural, educational, and health-building institutions, and the development on a mass scale of sport, physical culture, and camping and tourism; by the provision of neighborhood recreational facilities, and of other opportunities for rational use of free time.

155 GARF, fond, 5496, opis’ 112, delo, 951, 23.
Towards the Model Regulation

In the summer of 1980 several interested governmental bureaucracies, scientific institutes, and civic organizations finally gathered in Vilnius to iron out the disagreements that had for years stalled the passage of a law for national parks on the Union level. Twenty-five specialists took part in the meeting. These included representatives from the Academy of Sciences, the Ministry of Agriculture USSR, the Central Trade Union Council, the State Committee on Hydro-Meteorological Service (Gosgidromet), the State Committee of Nature Protection of Union Republics, Gosplan of Union Republics, the Scientific-Technical Institute of Nature Protection, and administrators of national parks.156

Soviet national parks, participants agreed, would conform to international demands established by the IUCN while adapting to “socialist principles” and the conditions of Soviet society. National parks would have three foundational purposes: providing recreational opportunities, protecting nature, and scientific research. The participants set the goal that every Union Republic should have one to two national parks by 1990. While emphasizing that the legislation would use the term “model regulation” to provide national parks with flexibility in management practices, the participants were emphatic about the need to subordinate national parks to one administrative body in the future.157 However, the continued disagreement about which governmental body should be responsible for national parks prevented the participants from even including a recommendation on this matter in their draft of the “model regulation.”

The final version of the “model regulation” for “state, nature, national parks” that was signed into law by the Soviet Council of Ministers on March 27, 1981 demonstrated many

unresolved dilemmas about national parks remained. The term itself, “state, nature, national parks” reflected continued discomfort with adopting the simpler internationally accepted name—national park. While the regulation provided firm ideas for what a national park should be, it lacked clarity on the organizational specifics that would be necessary to realize this vision. Parks would be equally dedicated to nature protection and the development of recreation within their territory. The regulation prohibited the construction of buildings and industrial objects not connected with the function of the park. National park status precluded scouting work by extractive industries. It banned the gathering of wild plants and mushrooms, livestock grazing, hunting and commercial fishing, and other activities that could compromise the survival of plants and animals. In a nod towards the vision that Kritinskii, Bannikov, Zabelina, and others had long promoted, mass sporting (including skiing) and entertainment activities were banned. In order to mitigate tourism’s impact, recreational activity within the territory of parks would be limited to designated areas. These areas would have strict rules about where one could set up tents and start campfires. Parks would allow traditional forms of economic activity—handicrafts and folk crafts and the use of certain natural resources in small, designated areas.

Using the elements of the ideas established by recreational geographers and associates of the Main Administration of Hunting and Zapovedniki, the “model regulation” called for the division of parks into four zones. The first of these zones was the reserve territory. In this zone, all recreational or economic activity was prohibited. This zone functioned essentially as a zapovednik. The park administration could add or remove areas in need of revival after a significant tourism impact if necessary. The second zone was one of regulated recreational use in which tourists could walk by trails to various natural or cultural attractions. It would have small shelters, fire pits, storage points for gas for stoves, overlook points, and signs and maps directing tourists to areas of interest. While the administration of the park
would determine the recreational capacity of these areas, the park administration in coordination with the Central Council of Tourism and Excursions would organize tourist services in these areas. The third zone, a service area for visitors, would have campgrounds, hotels, motels, tourism bases, an excursion bureau, information centers, public catering establishments, and trade and cultural facilities. The final zone included communities already living in the territory of the park. There, economic activities that did “not contradict the tasks of the state nature national park” could continue. According to the document, collective farms forestry districts, and other enterprises, establishments, organizations, and citizens would be obligated to compensate the national park for activities that caused damage to the park’s territory.

The “model regulation” left many unanswered questions. Three issues, which would prove especially problematic in the subsequent history of the USSR’s and then the Russian Federation’s national parks, stand out above all others. First, despite the fact that national park proponents had stressed for years the importance of establishing a central governmental body for administrating the system of national parks, the “model regulation” created no such body. Consequently, agencies that had traditionally been responsible for the type of resource that fell within the park’s territory would administer the respective parks. With the Central Trade Union Council not wanting an active part in administering the system, “recreational resources” or “scenic resources,” as park supporters and environmentalists often called them, did not figure into this. Because most parks were located in areas with significant forest cover, the majority would be under of the forestry service, which traditionally had focused little on recreational development or environmental protection.

Secondly, the “model regulation” made no mention of how the state would finance national parks despite the fact that park proponents had long maintained that large capital investment was imperative for parks to accrue the profits necessary to become self-financing.

institutions. Finally, the document was ambiguous about the acceptable land use by populations living within park boundaries. It stated that populations could take part in uses of the territory “not contradicting the tasks of a state nature national park,” but many of these populations in territories of proposed parks were already taking part in hunting and fishing, and the gathering of berries, mushrooms, and other plants, which the regulation banned. Moreover, while park administrators were responsible for seeing that land use law as within the park were not violated, the administration had no legal authority to impose punishments for the violation of these territories. Thus, in addition to the clear potential to alienate the inhabitants within national parks (and many of the proposed parks had thousands of inhabitants), the document gave park administrators the illusion of power, but little ability to exercise it. Complicating the situation even further was the fact that within the territory of some proposed parks there were fully operating enterprises that employed thousands of people and caused environmental problems that were contradictory to a national park’s goals. The “model regulation” provided no recommended course of action when such enterprises existed in areas receiving national park designation.

The passage of the “model regulation” demonstrated the ability of Soviet scientists to influence government policy. With Brezhnev and high-ranking government officials publicly stating that environmental protection was one of the most important goals of socialism and emphasizing the importance of citizen activism for implementing it, environmentalists mobilized and called for dramatic changes in the relationship between both the state and society to the natural world. A large cross-section of Soviet society—tourists, nature protection brigades, the VOOP, geography clubs, and other organizations—enthusiastically joined the cause and exemplified the resonating echo of Khrushchev’s calls for expanded “voluntarism” at the 22nd Party Congress. The Soviet government, in turn, responded despite the fact that the idea itself was a foreign import that had originated in the United States. In and of itself,
this fact, not to mention the significant collaboration of Soviet environmentalists with foreign colleagues, attests to the fact that the “Iron Curtain” was much more porous than some historians suggest and that Soviet society could have significant influence on the policies adopted by the state.

However, the passage of a law that allowed for the establishment of national parks in every republic, hardly constituted the triumph of the Soviet national park movement. Financing and developing an organizational structure for the administration of national parks that would not alienate different interest groups and at the same time achieve the central goals enumerated in the “model regulation” would prove to be a vexing problem. This would make the functioning of individual parks difficult and in some cases it was next to impossible. These difficulties would intensify with the increasing political instability and the economic crisis of the late-1980s. The persistence of grandiose visions for national parks even as the government was incapable of supporting them is the subject of the next chapter.
Chapter 5: Disappointments and the Persistence of Grandiose Visions

From the passage of the “model regulation” on national parks until the collapse of the Soviet Union, the RSFSR established thirteen “state, national, nature” (henceforth called national for convenience) parks. These parks included territories on the shore-line of Baikal, in the taiga forest of Karelia and the Archangelsk Oblast, the Zhiguli Mountains of the Volga, the southern Urals, the Caucasus, and many other “treasures” of Russian nature. National park proponents had long believed that this legal status would not only provide the country’s most scenic corners with a legal shield against extractive industries, but also with the justification for the development of tourism infrastructure to attract and accommodate tourists while reaping profits from them. However, as the economy entered a tailspin in the late 1980s, the government lacked the means to invest in recreational facilities, which had seemed much more important during the Brezhnev Era when far more Soviet citizens were travelling. Moreover, the lack of a single governmental ministry dedicated to the administration of national parks, which supporters had long believed to be an essential prerequisite to their effective management, prevented the development of a consistent and coordinated environmental protection policy within their territory. More often than not, the “shield” provided by national park status was, at best, porous.

In a 1984 Ogonek article entitled “The Face of Russia,” R.V. Bobrov had written: “The best corners of our land, the genuine treasures of nature, protected in the forms of national parks, will become the unique face of Russia.”1 With most national parks under organs of the Ministry of Forestry, the very extractive uses that park designation

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planned to prevent usually continued and in some cases accelerated as extractive industries expanded their activities in anticipation of future restrictions. The “unique face of Russia” was increasingly scarred by the end of the decade.

Despite significant environmental degradation within the territories of national parks, Gorbachev made environmental protection a cornerstone of his reform plan, which included “On Radical Restructuring (Perestroika) of Nature Protection throughout the Country.” The passage of this law created a Soviet State Committee on Nature Protection (Goskompriroda), which environmentalists had believed for nearly two decades was essential for effective environmental protection. This measure and the general spirit of reform fueled the optimism of park proponents. Russian environmentalists had emphasized the importance of educating Soviet citizens to develop a strong “ecological conscience” for nearly three decades. Now, for the first time, Soviet citizens could speak forcefully, directly, and without fear against those who acted in violation of the ecological principles.

Historians have correctly pointed out that most large-scale environmental protests during perestroika centered around issues of pollution, hazardous waste, and other environmental health concerns. However, they have ignored how the press, the scientific community, and the expanding environmentalist community fought for the protection of national parks while proposing parks as a means to curb extractive industries and even to thwart the sort of large-scale industrial projects, which state propaganda had long celebrated as an affirmation of the herculean strength of the Soviet state. Moreover, national park supporters argued that economic and political liberalization and an increased openness to the outside world made parks a means of promoting regional economic, social, and cultural transformation.

\[^{2}\text{Josephson et. al, 272.}\]
The politics of perestroika and glasnost nurtured and gave voice to the increasingly transformational visions of park proponents even as established national parks existed in a state of neglect. While this problem varied by degree throughout the USSR’s republics, our focus will now turn exclusively to the national parks in the RSFSR. This chapter will illustrate the growing gap between the hopes and the realities of Russia’s national parks. It will also demonstrate how existing and proposed national parks became an important rallying point for the increasingly environmentally concerned public during perestroika.

**Questions of Organization**

As environmentalists throughout the RSFSR and USSR were pushing for the establishment of individual parks, the USSR State Committee on Forestry began a study “On the organization of the study and use of the foreign experience on the establishment of national parks” in 1982. Despite the study’s name, most of the individual reports focused on specific suggestions for the Soviet system. Throughout 1983 and 1984, individual national parks and numerous interested state ministries and institutes sent their findings to the State Committee on Forestry. Almost all of the individual reports agreed that the lack of a central administrative organ under for administering parks was the biggest obstacle to establishing a functional system. However, the opinions on what ministry should be responsible for parks varied widely.³ The USSR Ministry of Agriculture proposed that the Central Council of Tourism’s

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³ GARF, fond 262, opis’ 17, delo 2332, 19 and 28. About the slow development of Carpathian National Park, the Committee of Environmental Protection under the Ukrainian Council of Ministers wrote: “Unfortunately, to this time the park has not become a place of mass tourism and recreation due to the organizational discrepancies: for a long time, the staff list was being developed and confirmed, there was not a material base, and there was not a central organ in the country under which the protected territories were located. It is obvious that it is time to once again return to the question of establishing a united organ in the country for nature protection.” The Ministry of Hunting and Zapovedniki concluded: “It is absolutely necessary to establish in this organ a specialized division for managing the activity of nature national parks and also taking out of them in correspondence
responsibility for the management of tourism made it best equipped to administrate national parks. The Central Trade Union Council, to which the Council of Tourism was subordinate, did not agree and recommended that national parks be under a ministry that had legal authority for managing natural resources.

The lack of administrative cohesion pertaining to national parks created headaches throughout the mid to late 1980s. By 1985, thirty ministries and departments on the republic level were responsible for 144 zapovedniki and 13 national parks. The RSFSR had four national parks—Elk Island, Sochi, Samara Bend, and Maria Chorda. Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, it would establish nine more—Pribaikal’skii (1986), Zabaikal’skii (1986), Prielbrus (1986), Kurshskaia Kosa (1987), Valdai (1990), Shorsky (1989), Tunkinskii (1991), Taganai (1991), and Vodlozerskii (1991). Because national parks held significant stands of forests, with the exception of Elk Island, all national parks in the RSFSR were under the Ministry of Forestry, but they were usually answerable to republic level or regional forestry administrations. This diffuseness would create problems for parks and their supporters about which journalists would write extensively in the ensuing years.

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4 GARF, fond 262, opis’ 17, delo 2332, 14.
5 Ibid., 35. The report stated: “In our opinion, a single organ, carrying out the organization and use of nature national parks must be one of the state organs (Council of Ministers of Union Republics, Gosleskhoz USSR, or Minleskhoz USSR) in which the acting legal code assigns nature protection. In connection with this the Central Trade Union Council (VTsSPS) cannot support the proposal of Minleskhoz USSR to assign the Central Council of Tourism and Excursions of the Central Trade Union Council (VTsSPS) the organization and development of national parks.”
6 Ibid., 33.
representative of the Union of Journalists, G. Vzdornov—a Professor of Art History, Valentin Rasputin—a famous writer, defender of Russian, especially Siberian, nature, and member of the Presidential Council of the USSR, and S. Yamshchikov—a representative of the Association of Restoration wrote a letter published in Pravda that expressed frustration and embarrassment. They wrote:

In all civilized (my emphasis) countries national parks are managed by designated, competent departments, which are part of the presidential administration. We think that the RSFSR should have an analogous system. National parks are the calling cards of the country, characterizing the state attention to the questions of nature protection in the country. Soviet propaganda had long asserted that the USSR was the most “civilized” country in, among other matters, environmental protection. Now, with environmentalists less bound to ideological constraints, they exposed this as a lie. The failures of the national park system were becoming an oft-cited example by environmentalists of the Soviet Union’s poor environmental stewardship.

Part of the problem lay in a lack of understanding about the central functions and purposes of national parks. Zapovedniki had frequently struggled to preserve the inviolability of their territory. However, the ministries that held jurisdiction over them generally understood their function. As a completely new and poorly understood form of nature protection that did not make claims to “inviolability” but rather the “complex” use of land, national parks were met with confusion and often dismissiveness. The appeals of the administration of Pribaikal’skii National Park to the Irkutsk Oblast Executive Committee to prevent illegal cuts in the park’s territory led to foresters blatantly sabotaging the work of the national park. I will discuss this in the next chapter. In Samara Bend National Park, illegal mining activity

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8 For more on Rasputin’s environmental protection advocacy see: Valentin Rasputin, Sibir’, Sibir’ (Moscow: Molodaia gvardia, 1991).

within the territory of the park continued after its establishment. Chapter 7 will explore this episode in detail. In Sochi National Park, the Krasnoiarsk Forestry Administration expanded the timber harvest in the park’s territory in each of the years following its establishment. Relict species were reported to have disappeared.\textsuperscript{10} Because of the command economy’s generous rewards to ministries for fulfilling production quotas and the absence of conservation incentives, it is hardly surprising that the managers of forestry districts had difficulty adjusting to a completely new, conservation-oriented, juridical entity under their supervision. On top of that, foresters had no training in managing recreation or developing recreational facilities.

Inadequate funding was an even greater problem. From 1981 to 1987, national parks in the RSFSR received a small fraction of the 200 million rubles dedicated to the staffing, maintenance, and development of protected territories. Sochi National Park, for instance, only received 150,000 rubles for recreational development in 1986 despite the fact that the Central Laboratory of Nature Protection had estimated that the development of individual parks would cost tens of millions of rubles.\textsuperscript{11} In most national parks, recreational facilities remained completely undeveloped and park administrations largely ignored nature protection projects. A 1986 Gosplan report about the efforts to establish national parks concluded:

The work on the construction of a set of roads, of excursion trails, of administrative-organizational buildings, of museums of nature, hotels, camping and other objects necessary for realizing the enumerated tasks for them, especially, the establishment of conditions for the organization of the leisure of working people, has not been carried out.\textsuperscript{12}

While parks were supposed to be the exclusive provider of recreation within their territories, departmental recreation bases continued to function and their practices frequently represented

\textsuperscript{10} GARF, A-259, opis’ 48, delo 9334.  
\textsuperscript{12} GARF, A-259, opis’ 48, delo 9334, 81.
the most reviled behaviors of “uncultured” tourists. Regional administrators and enterprises continued to give out land for the construction of dachas and other private tenements on park territory.\textsuperscript{13} Enterprises banned within the territories of parks continued to operate with impunity.

Established in 1986 as concern increased about the damage created by unregulated tourism in the Northern Caucasus, Prielbrus National Park, for example, was a park in name only and had taken no steps towards organizing recreation, which continued to be carried out by trade union council hotels unassociated with the park.\textsuperscript{14} Three years after the park's establishment, a \textit{Pravda} article presented a bleak picture. In addition to the park’s low level of service and organization, the article stated that the park was a territory littered by household appliances and polluted by 20 boilers working in the region while 5,000 head of sheep and cattle continued to graze in the park.\textsuperscript{15} Few national parks, however, experienced more problems in enforcing regulations than Elk Island National Park in Moscow.

\textsuperscript{13} Vokhianin, 40. This was discussed in relation to Sochi National Park at a meeting of the Commission on Nature Protection under the RSFSR Council of Ministers.

\textsuperscript{14} GARF, A-259, opis’ 48, delo 9334, 21. In calling for the establishment of the national park, M.I. Dokshokov, Chair of the Council of Ministers KBASSR, wrote to the Council of Ministers RSFSR “Prielbrus is a large center of tourism and alpinism. Its unique nature attracts a large quantity of tourists and excursionists. Because of the intense recreational impact, forests have been seriously degraded and its long-term survival because of its self-reviving potential is under threat. In large areas the undergrowth is completely absent.” Also see: GARF, A-259, opis’ 48, delo 9334, 73. In justifying the establishment of Bashkiria National Park, Gosplan wrote to the Council of Ministers RSFSR: “Currently acquire greater significance as a place of recreation in forests are acquiring great significance. But people the overload of forest areas, especially next to cities and towns, by often leads to complete destruction of grass cover, damaged topsoil that washes out. Subsequently, the productiveness of many forest species is reduced, many species of fauna disappear reduce; however, with the growing fleet of private cars, our population can use more distant forests...... All this suggests that in satisfying the rights of workers to rest should be organized in such a way to avoid or reduce the harmful effects maximum rest on the nature.”

\textsuperscript{15} Iakoblev, “Gostepriimno Prielbrus’e” \textit{Pravda}, September 19, 1989, 6. After mentioning about the many scenic areas in the area, the author asks: “But are all tourists and excursionists left with a good impression during their time in Prielbrus? The mood of guests is frequently spoiled by the low level of service, the weak organization of food and cultural recreation. The area's ecology is causing concern. The Baksan gorge, despite the formation of the state national park, is being dug up by twenty-boiler, coal-fired and oil-fired plants. The innumerable flow of automobiles, rushing to the Narzanov Valley and the base of the majestic Elbrus, called by local residents Oshkhamikho—the mountain of happiness, gives the air a grayish look from exhaust gases. The unique mountain vegetation withers. This impoverished picture is also seen in the rivers, which are contaminated by household waste.”
Elk Island (Losinyi ostrov) National Park provides a rather characteristic example of the struggle that national parks had in meeting their goals to become schools of ecological education that would transform the consciousness of Soviet citizens. After the park was proposed at the VOOP’s conference on national parks in 1967 (as mentioned in chapter 3), Konstantin Blagosklonov, the pioneer of Soviet ecological education, became one of the strongest proponents of the idea. Throughout the late 1960s, he took students from the Department of Geography of Moscow State University and the Geography Club of the Moscow Zoo to the territory of the future park. While carrying out studies on tourism’s impact on Moscow’s forests and the recreational preferences of Muscovites in conjunction with recreational geographers, he frequently spoke about the importance of establishing the national park. One student, Boris Samoilov, was particularly impressed with this idea.

After graduating from Moscow State University with a degree in geography in 1968, Samoilov moved to the Novosibirsk Oblast where he worked in a zapovednik for two years. He returned to Moscow in 1971 to work in the Central Laboratory Hunting and Zapovedniki, which was located in the center of the forests of Elk Island. Samoilov proposed the idea to the director of the laboratory, Victor Gavrin—a biologist who had recently come from working in Belorussia’s Belozerskaia Pusha. Shortly thereafter, Gavrin proposed it to Viktor Vasilevich’ Grishin—the head of the Moscow City Committee of the Communist Party and deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. On July 14, 1972, the Moscow City Executive Committee passed a resolution that ordered General Plan of Moscow to develop the technical and economic foundations for the national park Elk Island.16

The very conception of Elk Island National Park demonstrated the flexibility of the national park idea. While there were strong differences in the visions for national parks

throughout the 1970s, most of their supporters agreed that they should be far away from large population centers. Moreover, in 1969, the New Delhi Conference of the IUCN mentioned this as one of the criteria for national parks. Samoilov viewed things differently. As we walked around the territory of the park in the summer of 2014, he said to me:

We were convinced that we must preserve wild nature not only in remote regions but also in the places next to where we live, mainly in large cities, especially a megalopolis. First off, the protection of nature—the air and the water sources—is necessary in such areas. At the same time, it is in the big cities where they make the important governmental decisions and where government officials are educated. In a territory like Elk Island, it is more likely that they can be educated in a way that will make them care about nature.17

Following the establishment of the “nature park” by the Moscow City Council, Samoilov, still in his twenties, went to work for the Souizgiproleskhoz (Union Landscape Design Institute), which with General Plan of Moscow would design the future park. Serving as the main ecological consultant, Samoilov worked on establishing the scientific foundations for ensuring that recreational development did not interfere with ensuring healthy biogenesis within the park’s territory.

All Muscovites needing fresh air could hike on accessible trails along the periphery of the park. Those with more time could venture deeper into the park’s interior on trails that would have an explicitly educational character.18 Every recreation center would be oriented to educating visitors about the plants, animals, and history of the park. The reserve zone in

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17 Interview with Boris Leontovich Samoilov, September 16, 2014.
18 National park supporters repeatedly argued that nature was an absolute necessity for urbanites. See: Aleksander Grigorovich Nikolaiyevskii, Natsional’nye parki (Moscow: Agropromizdat, 1985), 5. He writes: “With every year the circle of demands of man grows and in the final analysis only nature is capable of fulfilling them. The regular acceleration of the speed of life, the intensification of labor, the density of the population, the pollution of the city environment, the monotony of city surroundings and connected with this the increased psychological pressures have make many people want to return to nature. They want to see new places, to relax, to decompress in a natural environment that is more physically and psychological comfortable for them. Nature with its great value and as an inexhaustible source of health has not been lost to us. These words relate to nature as a whole, but especially to those territories in which are located nature complexes that have a special ecological, historical, and aesthetic value. In these territories, answering to specific demands, nature national parks are being organized.”
the center of the park, which had deer and wild boar, would be accessible only with official permission. Every aspect of the design and park’s activity, Samoilov believed, must serve the park’s goal of serving as “an authentic (podlinyi) ecological school that educates not simply nature lovers, but patriots of the Motherland who know and will protect the native soil.”

Like so many other parks, Elk Island’s path to establishment required intense lobbying, which involved conversations during leisurely strolls through the proposed park and behind closed doors among environmentalists, people’s deputes and members of the Council of Ministers. Throughout the 1970s, Samoilov invited many of the most influential environmentalists in the USSR to Elk Island—Oleg Volkov, Feliks Shtilmark, Vladimir Chivilikhin, and others—in an attempt to convince them that the RSFSR’s first national park should be in an urban area. The fact that such an unconventional location became the site of the RSFSR’s first national park is a testament to the strength of Samoilov’s lobbying efforts.

While highly original in conception, Elk Island’s story in the years following its establishment was highly reflective of the frustrations faced by national parks throughout the RSFSR during the 1980s. The RSFSR Council of Ministers placed Elk Island under the Ministry of Enlightenment. Although this seemed to make sense given Samoilov’s strong vision of the park’s “ecological enlightenment” orientation, the Ministry had neither the experience in managing tourism, nor the authority to arrest or impose fines on those who violated its nature protection laws. Because the park was always understaffed, it relied on voluntary green

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20 Ibid., 22.
21 Interview with Boris Samoilov, September 16, 2014.
patrols of Komsomol divisions. But there were not enough volunteers to keep private citizens from cutting wood and setting hunting traps for wild boar and using illegal fishing hooks (barliki) in the park’s reserve territory.

With the Mityshinskii Forestry district the only body with administrative authority over the park’s territory, recreational facilities, unsurprisingly, remained undeveloped for the first few years while “sanitary” timber cuts exceeded specified limits. Residents of areas neighboring the park cultivated personal gardens in the park’s territory with impunity. Five years after the park’s establishment, twenty enterprises whose activities had no relationship to the park continued to operate within it. One of these enterprises, a rubber boot factory called Red Knight (Krasnyi bogatyr), dumped its effluents directly into the park’s creeks, which flowed into the Iauza River. The litter problem increased each year despite the efforts of “nature lovers” who regularly carried out voluntary workdays (subotniki) to clean it up. In an article in Priroda i chelovek (Nature and humans), after ironically suggesting that the park might need to ban all humans in order to ensure its protection, Samoilov wrote: “We

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23 V. Korneev, “Teni u losinogo ostrova,” Izvestiiia, September 21, 1987, 3. Also see: V. Korneev, “I na ostavshuieishia dich’,” Izvestiiia, September 12, 1987, 3; A Illesh and E. Shestiinskii, “Na okhotu v zapovednik,” Izvestiiia, August 30, 1987, 2. As these articles indicate, there were licensed hunts for wild boar and elk in the national park.
24 RGAE, fond 709, opis’ 1, dell 310, 117. The park had only two ecological trails and a no visitors center in and no land use plan by 1990. Also see: TsGAM, fond 3200, opis’ 1: delo 10, 18. In 1985 there were 41 illegal cuts.
25 Gorokhov, 44.
26 TsGAM, fond 3200, opis’ 1, delo 41, 1. V. Blikova, “V lesu razdavalsia topor.” In an interview, one tourist said: “Almost every weekend I go to Elk Island park. But I have never seen a forestry professional. This situation leads to disorder. However, one day I saw two enormous piles of debris, laying directly on new growth. There were people employed by loggin enterprises nearby. They told me that they have no time to engage in trash clean up; their work is thinning the forest and for that they are paid a salary.”
28 G. Charodeev, “Pust u nashego zemle budet svi Losini Ostrov,” Izvestiiia, October 25, 1987, 1; A. Gorokhov, “Chelovek, zakon, i losiny ostrov” Izvestiiia, October 14, 1990, 3
cannot afford to strengthen the opinion of people that a littered forest can be considered a national park.”

He continued: “a meeting with the national park starts with a demonstration of an indifferent relationship to nature” and that the current state of Elk Island was “discrediting the goals and tasks of a national park.”

The myriad problems faced by Elk Island National Park displayed one of the vexing challenges for environmentalists throughout Soviet history. In the absence of a strong judicial system, protection often required the attention and care of high-ranking officials who could serve as a referee. However, while the Communist Party and the government of the RSFSR might have in theory wanted to improve the environment, they were rarely interested in enforcing compliance with environmental laws. Elk Island’s location in one of the world’s largest cities made enforcing land use regulations a complicated task that high-level officials seemed to want to avoid.

The 1986 explosion at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant changed the context for everything ecological in the USSR, including Elk Island. Nearly ubiquitous concern for the environment was one of the most striking aspects of perestroika. In 1987, the regional newspaper, Zvezda Altaia, asserted: “It is difficult to find anyone today who is not concerned about ecological problems.” A 1989 survey by the All-Union Center for the Study of Societal Opinion indicated that more Soviet citizens believed that environmental pollution was a

29 *Priroda i chelovek*, 49.
30 B.L. Samoilov, N.M. Zabelina, and G.V. Morozova “Natsional’niy park” *Priroda i chelovek* 1 (January 1987), 46 and 48. GARF, A-262, opis’ 17, delo 5373, 27. In early 1988, Gosplan and the Council of Ministers passed a joint resolution acknowledging the park’s failure to maintain its nature protection regime, but the resolution offered no solutions as to how to improve it. It stated: “The realization of the resolution (for the park) is being unacceptably strung out. To this time the established order is not defined and the protected zone of the park is not confirmed. The present situation does not provide for the regulation of the residential or industrial construction. A few enterprises even have expanded their industrial activity. Under different pretexts, different enterprises and individuals continue to take territory from within the boundaries and in the territories directly adjacent to the park.”
more important problem than the increasing crime rate, AIDS, shortages in food products, material items, alcoholism, and possible international conflicts. In 1989, the State Committee on Nature (Goskompriroda), which had formed two years before, received 10,000 letters from citizens about environmental protection. While the majority of these focused on environmental pollution or the construction and reconstruction of industrial and energy objects, nearly fifteen percent concerned national parks and zapovedniki.

From 1986 to 1991, environmental protests repeatedly garnered larger numbers than protests on any other issue. While most protests during perestroika had a few hundred participants, environmental protests brought out thousands. Unsurprisingly, most of these protests occurred in urban areas and addressed issues that posed an immediate health risk to Soviet citizens. Tens of thousands of environmentalists protested the construction of a Thermal Nuclear Heating Plant in Gorky, a facility to destroy chemical weapons in Chapaevsk, and against pollution at various points on the Volga River. Petitions sometimes amassed hundreds of thousands of signatures.

Elk Island served as a rallying point in protests against pollution and the construction of new industrial plants. With the local and central press calling on nature lovers to “defend” Elk Island, residents of the regions surrounding Elk Island sent dozens of letters to the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR and USSR, leading newspapers,
and television stations. These letters protested against the violation of the park’s nature protection regime and the expansion of industrial enterprises in the surrounding area. A segment “The News of the Day” in January, 1989 showed images of wild boar, elk, red squirrels, and other animals in the park's territory starkly juxtaposed to images of abandoned industrial equipment in Elk Island and protesters holding signs objecting to the construction of the Northern Thermal Electric Station. The narrator says: “The construction of Northern Thermal Electric Station continues as if there was not an outpouring of the public sentiment against it. Of course, the station is necessary for the enterprises that will be constructed. But why must this being done right next to a national park?” 39 He continues: “It is necessary to carry out independent ecological expertise. Otherwise, a disaster will not be avoided.” 40

The movement in defense of the park and against the Northern Thermal Electric Station strengthened in the first months of 1989. The plant, which would be the biggest such station in Europe, would emit sulfur gas, nitrogen oxide, and other dangerous pollutants likely to harm the forest cover of Elk Island. 41 In the two months that followed, 74 people’s deputes signed a letter calling on the USSR Council of Ministers to address the problems surrounding the park. 42 Responding to the public outcry and the pleas of government officials, on July 29, 1989, Nikolai Ryzhkov, the chair of the USSR Council of Ministers, and Lev Zaitkov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party visited the park. 43 Shortly thereafter, the Council of Ministers passed a decree, which called for the resettlement of people living within the park's territory, removal of more than forty enterprises, and the reclamation of damaged territory. Most importantly, the RSFSR Council of Ministers cancelled the

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39 “Kinozhurnal Novosti Dnia
41 GARF, fond 5446, opis’ 150, delo 689, 10.
plans to construct the Northern Thermal Energy Station.\textsuperscript{44} This victory for Elk Island, however, proved short-lived. By the following winter, construction on the station had resumed and citizens continued writing letters against it, but to no avail.\textsuperscript{45} The city administration argued that the station was necessary to avert an energy crisis.\textsuperscript{46} With the national economy spiraling downward and the government sinking into administrative paralysis, other measures to improve the condition of Elk Island went unrealized.

Elk Island had galvanized a broad swathe of the public who believed that their voice would help protect nature during a period when the government had given unprecedented attention to environmental problems. Like the supporters of many other parks, they met bitter disappointment. While Samoilov wanted Elk Island to be a “model” for nature protection, for some, more than any other park, it became the symbol of the unrealized promise of national parks. At a meeting of the State Committee on Ecology (Goskompriroda) on November 29, 1990, one participant stated: “We establish national parks on paper. We have three national parks in the Baltic, but the remainder exist only on paper. For example, the national park ‘Elk Island.’ We don’t yet have a document about land use in it. How can we say that is a national park?”\textsuperscript{47} Similar problems plagued most of the RSFSR’s national parks in the 1980s.

\textit{Stopping Extraction, Loving Nature}

Environmentalists found themselves in an awkward position by the early 1990s. At the aforementioned meeting of Goskompriroda in 1990, a participant by the name of E.V.

\textsuperscript{44} Anonymous, “Pomosch’ losinomu ostrovu,” \textit{Izvestiia}, September 14, 1989.
\textsuperscript{45} Iu Soci¢, L. Sokol’chik, and V. Shkatov, “Iz pochty AIF,” \textit{Argumenty i fakty}, February 17, 1990, 3.
\textsuperscript{46} R. Danilov, “Moskva na poroge energeticheskogo krisiza,” \textit{Izvestiia}, June 3, 1991, 3. Also see: Iurii Luzhkov, “Pochemu u nas v khoziastvennykh delakh kak v futbole, razburaiutia vse;” \textit{Literaturnaia gazeta}, July 23, 1992, 11. Iurii Luzhkov, the mayor of Moscow, assured readers of \textit{Literaturnaia gazeta} two years later that the construction of a 250-meter high pipe guaranteed that Elk Island would not be harmed by air pollution.
\textsuperscript{47} RGAE, fond 709, opis’ 1, delo 310, 117. For similar comments, see: Anonymous, “Losinyi Ostrov i ego zakhvatchiki,” \textit{Moskovskaia pravda}, October 18, 1990, 1.
Sirechovskii made a contradictory statement that thoroughly reflected this. He stated: “We must establish national parks. In this issue, we have lagged behind. We practically can do nothing in such a poor condition. We must develop the system with what has already been established.”

Despite the failure of many national parks to realize their stated goals, the enthusiasm for the planning of national parks remained strong. By the late 1980s, the recreational geographers in the Institute of Geography were arguing that ten percent of the country’s territory and 30 percent of the European part of the country should be devoted to tourism resources. Much of this, they believed, should be national park territory.

Throughout the 1980s, led by Natalia Zabelina, the scientists from the Scientific Research Institute for Nature Protection spent significant time on Kamchatka, Chukotka, Tadjik SSSR, Georgia SSR, Azerbaijan SSR, and Kyrgyz SSR on trips planning national parks. Environmental protection was not just an issue of narrow scientific interest or of economic expedience, but also rather an issue of conscience and morality. In 1985, the Institute completed their plan for the development of national parks to the year 2005, which was published in Zabelina’s book—National Park. With many similar descriptions found throughout the text, she wrote: “The natural values of a national park are capable of psychologically orienting the personality towards a certain style of mutual-relationship with wild nature. The methods of a national park not only educate tourists in the practice of a

\[\text{Figure 15 Natalia Zabelina leading a group on the study of Tadzhik National Park}\]

\[\text{RGAЕ, fond 709, opis’ 1, delo 310, 119.}\]
\[\text{Ekologicheskie vosпитание туристов в туристки секцii и клубе (Moscow: Turist, 1990), 24.}\]
\[\text{Historians have not yet delved into the extent to which the environmental rhetoric became increasingly moralistic in the late 1980s. The village prose writer, Valentin Rasputin, was one of the best examples of this. For some newspaper articles that demonstrate this see:}\]
\[\text{Natalia Zabelina, Natsional’nyi park (Moscow: Mysl’, 1987).}\]
careful relationship to nature, but also spur action by emphasizing personal volition, and conscientiousness of the consequences of one’s interference in and presenting the possibility of taking part in the work for the protection of nature."\(^{52}\) Much like Samoilov, Zabelina argued that national parks would become incubators of environmentally oriented civic activism.

Perhaps in no state have planning institutes dedicated more time to plans that were never realized than in the USSR. The story of national parks fits squarely into this larger story. The architectural institutes, Lengiprogor and Soiuzgiproleskhoz, both of which had been working on national parks since the 1970s, continued to spend millions of rubles into park plans that remained unimplemented. However, the efforts of these central institutes and the increased literature promoting a national park system undoubtedly provided encouragement to environmentalists to conceive and advocate for their own park plans. While protests on behalf of Elk Island demonstrated that national parks could serve as rallying points for environmentally concerned citizens and civic organizations, calling for the establishment of national parks, in turn, became a popular form of grassroots environmental advocacy and increasingly powerful argument for alternative visions of economic development during the USSR’s final years. The predicted profits from tourism, which had long been one of the main justifications for national parks, meshed with the emphasis on self-financing and the greater use of market-based incentives in Gorbachev’s economic reform agenda. National parks, therefore, were championed both for their transformative potential in the relationship between human and nature as well as a convenient economic rationale for blocking industrial projects and the expansion of extractive industries. National parks informed and sometimes even shaped the conversation in some of the most contentious environmental debates of the Gorbachev era. While I can hardly do justice to the individual movements for the establish-

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\(^{52}\) Zabelina, 54.
ment of national parks throughout the USSR, I will now turn to a few such examples in Siberia and the Far East where dramatic landscapes inspired expansive visions for their role in the economic future of different regions.

The “Altai Alternative”: Hydroelectric Development vs. Tourism in the Altai Mountains

The movement to establish a national park in the Katun River Valley of the Altai Mountains developed in the late 1980s out of the increasing concerns about the consequences of the construction of a dam on the Katun River during a time when hydroelectric projects had fallen far from their once iconic status. From the 1950s to the 1970s, Soviet planners prioritized large-scale hydroelectric projects to provide the energy for the transformation of relatively backward regions of Siberia into powerhouses of industry. Projects such as the Bratsk, Krasnoiarsk, Sayan-Sushenskaia, and the Ust Illimsk Hydroelectric Stations (GES) became iconic symbols of the Soviet system’s capacity to transform the natural world. Soviet propagandists boldly asserted that only socialist economic systems could achieve such feats. Their construction hence proved socialism’s superiority to capitalism.

While the benefits of large dams went unquestioned for two decades, Valentin Rasputin’s *Farewell to Matyora* (1977), which portrayed the tragic resettlement of a village by the

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53 There had been discussions about the creation of national parks in the Altai Mountains in the Central Laboratory of Nature Protection and the Siberian Division of the Academy of Sciences in the early 1960s and then again in the early 1970s. For information on this see: N.G. Salatova, “Razvitie seti zapovednikov i prirodnnykh parkov kak osnova gornyykh landschaftov Sibiri,” *Okhrana gornyykh landschaftov Sibiri* G.V. Krylov ed. (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1973), 199. Says that it was initially conceived by A.S. Kruukov. RGAE, fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 135, 51.

Angara River awaiting inundation, transformed the narrative about hydroelectric development.\textsuperscript{55} For the first time, an influential well known public figure acknowledged that large hydroelectric projects had negative impacts on rural communities. Despite the more mixed understanding of large dams that was developing throughout Soviet society after Rasputin’s work, Gidroproekt and other institutes nonetheless resurrected an idea for damming the Katun River to transform the “backward” and mountainous Altai Region in the late 1970s.

Having first proposed the dam in 1962, Gidroproekt developed a new plan designed to produce 6 million kilowatt-hours of energy a year.\textsuperscript{56} At the XXVI Congress of People’s Deputies in 1981, the construction of a Katun GES became part of the Party program. In the ensuing years, central newspapers celebrated the potential economic growth that this region would experience while giving little mention to the ecological consequences.\textsuperscript{57} But the celebratory narrative about “transforming” rivers took another more significant hit when Rasputin and other writers led a successful movement against the plan to redirect the north-flowing Ob, Irtysh, and Enisei Rivers to the Aral Sea in Central Asia.\textsuperscript{58}

Meanwhile, Gidroproekt and other institutes prepared to begin the construction of the first of a series of dams on the Katun in 1986. With environmental catastrophe on everyone’s mind after Chernobyl, the prospect of another large dam on a Siberian river, which would inundate 11,200 square kilometers, caused great concern among scientists throughout the USSR. They believed that Gidroproekt had not taken the potential ecological impact upon


the region into account. On December 1, 1986, making references to the adverse ecological consequences caused by big dams in Siberia in the previous three decades, Iu. Vinokorov, the head of the laboratory of ecology in the Siberian Division of the Institute of Geography, and A. Vitovtsev, a journalist from the Barnaul/Gorno-Altaiisk newspaper—*The Altai Star* (*Zvezda Altaia*), called for a conference in 1986 to discuss the proposed Katun Hydroelectric Station.\(^{59}\)

From the time of the publication of this article to late 1990, hundreds of articles in regional and national publications by scientists, journalists, famous writers, concerned citizens, and government officials discussed the construction of the Katun GES. Economists and workers from planning institutes argued for its construction by pointing to the backwardness of the region and the fact that many residents still did not have reliable electricity. Scientists of different specializations expressed concerns about the inundation of forest area, the potential for mercury poisoning in the area of the reservoir, and the dangers of building a large dam in a highly active seismic zone. Archeologists asserted that the flooding of much of the region’s cultural heritage alone justified ending the construction of the dam.\(^{60}\)

With regional radio and television reporting on the issue regularly and bringing in famous environmentalists like Valentin Rasputin and Iurii Efremov to discuss the issue in early 1987, a wide cross-section of the public quickly grew concerned. Rasputin, who had also been active in fighting for Baikal’s protection, said in reference to the project: “Wherever an armada of dam builders passes through, nature is left incurably ravaged.”\(^{61}\) In meetings with the second secretary of the regional committee of the Community Party, Valery Ivanovich,

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Chaptynov, Rasputin emphasized the long-term economic and therapeutic value of preserving scenery. 62

Residents of Bisk, a city of about 200,000 located on the banks of the Biia River into which the Katun flows, were particularly concerned. In early 1987, the Biisk Literature Association, the Council of Veterans, the city committee of Komsomolsk, the Biisk division of the VOOP, the Biisk Local History Society, the Biisk Club of Tourists, and the Biisk Travel and Excursion Bureau of the Central Trade Union Council formed the initiative—“Mountain Altai—national park of the country!” 63 In a collective letter, signed by more than 1,500 people and printed in Komsomolskaia pravda, the authors wrote:

Is it possible you ask, after the catastrophe of Sevan, the misfortune in the Ob Sea, where now only one turbine works and not at full power, the appearance of terrible ecological conditions after the construction of the Bratsk and Krasnoiarsk Hydroelectric Stations that we will destroy the most vulnerable parts of the Altai.

In an editorial printed alongside the collective letter, S. Brovashov called for the end of the “war” against Siberian rivers and stated that the public opinion “must be taken into account.” 64 Citizens groups also formed in Moscow, Leningrad, Novosibirsk, and Barnaul in protest of the dam. 65

In previous eras, scientists had quietly made plans for national parks as an alternative course of regional economic development without using the press for public confrontation. With perestroika having changed the accepted rules of engagement on environmental issues, the “Altai Alternative”—the creation of a national park—became arguably the most important rallying point in the public fight against the proposed Katun GES. 66 In the months

62 Rasputin, 207.
64 S. Brovashov, “U poslednei reki.”
65 Siberia, Siberia, 205.
following the proposal of the national park, the local press printed several articles in support of the proposal with one even stating that the tourism in the region would grow three-fold to nearly five million persons a year by 2000.67

Siberian scientists continued to dedicate significant attention to the problem. In July 1987, the presidium of the Siberian Division of the Academy of Sciences called for the development of a “complex territorial scheme” for the development of natural resources in ways that did not damage the region’s ecology and the advisability of developing a recreation zone and nature reserves. While the scientific community gave recommendations without prescribing specific courses of action, much of the public was emphatic in their opposition to the dam and their support for a national park. The dam, its opponents argued, would deprive the region of the immense profits accrued through tourism services in a national park.

The idea was gaining traction far beyond Western Siberia. Writing in Turist in the summer of 1987, Feliks Shtilmark, the longtime supporter and historian of zapovedniki, stated:

*I understand that emotions alone cannot determine economic decisions. For the mountainous Altai to become a national park not just in our dreams, but also in reality, we need institutional and economic restructuring (perestroika), as well as the restructuring (perestroika) of people’s minds. To confront successfully the technocratic approach to nature use, we must merge nature conservation with tourism, health care, recreation. We must not spare any effort and means to protect such places as Lake Baikal and Altai Mountains.*68

As a self-financing and profitable institution, the national park, Shtilmark argued, was much more sensible from an economic standpoint, especially in the context of perestroika reforms, than an expensive hydroelectric installation that would depend on the central organs of the command economy.

68 Ibid., 19.
With scientists warning of the ecological consequences and civic organizations, institutes, and individuals voicing their support for the national park in the form of petitions and articles in both the regional and central press, supporters of the hydroelectric station painted opponents as alarmists who were peddling misinformation.\(^69\) Undoubtedly influenced by the continuing surge of ecological concern throughout Soviet Union, the Presidium of the Siberian Division of the Academy of Science’s opinion towards the proposed project was becoming more critical with each subsequent “expert commission” from 1987 to 1990. In turn, some of the most influential scientists in the country and leading cultural figures expressed outright disapproval. While the vice president of the Academy of Sciences warned the chair of the Council of Ministers, Vladimir Ryzhkov, about the potential of creating a “man-made” (rukotvorny) region of ecological disaster; Dmitrii Likachev, perhaps the most important figure in the cultural preservation movement since the late-1960s, asserted that the very “existence” of the indigenous populations was threatened by the project.\(^70\) With the overwhelming majority of letters to central organs speaking against the project, Gosplan RSFSR, the Main Commission on State Expertise, and Goskompriroda called the project inadvisable in the summer of 1989. Perhaps most symptomatic of the transformed cultural context in which this opposition occurred, even the Ministry of Energy and Electrification acknowledged the inadequacy of ecological research by Gidroproekt.\(^71\)

The USSR Council of Ministers reviewed the project on September 12, 1989 at an extended meeting of the Presidium. Interested ministries and departments, scientific and design organizations, local party and Soviet organs, and representatives of the public and indigenous

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\(^70\) GARF, fond: A-259, opis’ 49, delo 2371, 13.

\(^71\) GARF, fond 10026, opis’ 4, delo 1530, 53-54.
populations of the Gorno-Altaisk Oblast took part in the meeting. Different interested parties presented their continuing work on the issue at the Siberian Division of the Academy of Sciences in Akademgorodok from April 13-15, 1990. With the overwhelming number of participants strongly opposed to the dam, predictions of the ecological consequences had become increasingly dire. Moreover, in the search for economic “alternatives” for the Altai region, some participants believed that the establishment of a national park would provide the framework for the complete economic and cultural transformation of the region. N.N. Amshinskii of the Siberian Scientific-Research Institute of Geology, Geophysics and Mineral Raw Materials gave perhaps the most effusive support. He asserted:

The Altai Mountains are a place in Western Siberia of unique natural beauty. It has long deserved the status of National Park. Inept economic management in this wonderful oasis has not yet fully destroyed nature but has nonetheless led to the impoverishment of its economy and the decline of culture. Altai must be saved as a pearl, which is able to provide huge profits. Livestock, lapidary art, mining of ores of rare metals and decorative stones, maral breeding, beekeeping, resorts, the tourism industry: this is the path to further development of the Gorno-Altai Autonomous Region, which will take place in the context of the status of the Altai State National Park.

As a representative of a geological research institute, Amshinskii was probably most worried about the inundation of a territory with valuable minerals. Nonetheless, he clearly understood the resonance of environmental protection arguments and the widespread appeal of the national park proposal. Several participants further asserted that the territory needed to be protected by not only Russian public opinion, but also that of the international environmental community through UNESCO World Heritage designation, and in coordination with international organizations such as the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and UNEP.

74 Ibid, 97, 100, 102.
hough the conference resolution did not specifically mention a national park, it again discour-aged the construction of the Katun GES while repeatedly referring to “alternative” courses of economic development, which by this time had become synonymous with the national park.

In the months that followed, Russian and international environmental organizations wrote to ministers in the governments of the USSR and RSFSR as well as to people’s deputies against the dam and in favor of the national park. Organizations such as David Brower’s Friends of the Earth, the Association of Siberian Cities, the civic-scientific association—Ecological Alternative, wrote to government officials with calls to prevent “the destruction of one of earth’s most beautiful valleys.” They called on the RSFSR Council of Ministers to establish a national park, and to develop a system of “ecologization” for the Soviet economy, which would place environmental sustainability on par with economic growth in planning decisions.75

On September 5, 1990, a parliamentary committee of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet convened to discuss the Katun GES and the economic development of the region. After a hearing that included the Ministry of Energy RSFSR, members of protest movements against the GES from Tomsk, Novosibirsk, Barnaul, Gorno-Altaisk, Biisk, and other cities, people’s deputies of the RSFSR, members of the committee voted unanimously against the construction of the Katun GES.76 Moreover, the Committee called on the Ministry of Energy to re-claim parts of the landscape that had suffered under the construction work, called for the development of plans for the development of alternative sources of energy, and the development of a complex plan for utilizing the productive strength of the Altai Region until 2005.

75 GARF, fond 10026, opis’ 4, delo 2545, 12-13, 16.
In its final point, it called for the establishment of a Nature-National Park and putting the Katun Valley on the list of Soviet sites deserving the designation of a world heritage site under UNESCO. The following month the Council of Ministers RSFSR approved the recommendations of the parliamentary committee and called for “alternative” means of economic development in the Gorno-Altaiisk Oblast.

In the end, the territory of the proposed national park became a zapovednik for reasons that will require research in archives of the Gorno-Altaiisk Region. However, from 1987 to 1990, the public’s rallying around the idea of the formation of a national park demonstrated just how strong the idea had become. The recreational “alternative” proved critical in combatting hydroelectric expansion, which had once been symbolic of the USSR’s conquest of the natural world. However, with increasing numbers in Soviet society viewing ennobling, not conquering, the natural world as the measure of a nation’s level of civilization, internationally recognized protected territories, many believed, were the best chance to save the nation’s most pristine corners from the inefficient and predatory ministries that threatened vast destruction to one of nature’s most beautiful nations. In few places was this truer than Kamchatka.

_Kamchatka_

Kamchatka embodied much of the ambivalence among Soviet environmentalists regarding tourism’s growth in the 1960s and 1970s. Few regions could potentially better serve tourism’s role of instilling pride in native nature. At the same time, no other place

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77 GARF, fond 10026, opis’ 4, delo 1530, 30.
78 Ibid., 9.
exemplified the fears about tourism’s potential adverse environmental impact than the Valley of the Geysers. But as the geography of tourism expanded in the years following the Kronotskii Zapovednik’s closure to tourists in 1974, most people on the Kamchatka Peninsula believed that more areas needed to be opened up to tourists. For much of Soviet history, Kamchatka’s main employers were the fishing industry and the Soviet Navy. By the late 1970s, tourism was becoming central to the visions for the peninsula’s development.

As a territory the size of California, but with less than 350,000 people and few roads, Kamchatka was something of an economic blank slate on which different interest groups could project their visions. In 1977, a journalist suggested the formation of a 170,000 square kilometer national park on the Kamchatka Peninsula. The park would cover 63 percent of Kamchatka’s territory and .76 percent of the territory of the Soviet Union.79 The Kamchatka Oblast Section of the All-Russian Society for Nature Protection, the Central Laboratory of Nature Protection, the Kamchatka Branch of the All-Union Geographical Society, and journalists discussed the establishment of national parks on Kamchatka from the early 1980s.80 Even the director of the Kronotskii Zapovednik acknowledged that the ban on tourism in the Kronotskii Zapovednik was costing the Soviet Union an important opportunity to instill Soviet citizens with pride for the nation’s nature.81 In turn, he proposed the establishment of a national park next to the zapovednik from which tourists could come see the Valley of the Geysers in a more controlled manner. In 1982, Natalia Zabelina began leading trips to the

80 GAKK, fond. 587, opis’ 1, delo 111, 27. At an October 23, 1980 conference of the Kamchatka Branch of the All-Russian Society for the Protection of Nature, one participant (surname Latereva) said: “We need a national park because on Kamchatka there are many unorganized tourists. And in a national park it is possible to establish organized recreation for working people and not allow the littering of forests and rivers. We must teach children a careful relationship to nature.” O Dziub, “Okhanyia gramota,” Kamchatskaita pravdu, June 25, 1982, 3.
81 RGAE, fond. 7486, opis’ 52, delo 2455, 59. At the “All-Union Meeting on the State and Future of the Reserve Region, which took place in Moscow from December 27 through 30, 1981, he called for the establishment of a national park next to the Kronotskii Zapovednik. The park, he stated, would not only serve as a buffer to the zapovednik, but from it they would establish excursion trails that would allow tourists to see Uzon, the Valley of the Geysers, and Burlyashi.
Valley of the Geysers with the Scientific-Research Institute of Nature Protection to plan this park.\textsuperscript{82}

Throughout the 1980s, documentary films featured the Valley of the Geysers. The fact that Soviet citizens could see it on television, but needed special connections to see it firsthand struck many as an injustice, especially when compared to the most scenic territories in other countries.\textsuperscript{83} As one writer noted, over 270,000 visitors a year visited Whakarewarewa National Park in New Zealand, which had a significantly smaller and less spectacular geyser field.\textsuperscript{84} Journalists also commented on the accessibility of geysers in Iceland and Yellowstone National Park in their arguments for opening the valley.\textsuperscript{85} While almost every article on the subject characterized the exclusive access to high placed officials as a great injustice, some journalists proposed equally radical


\textsuperscript{85} Dziub, 3.

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measures to reverse this mistake. In 1990, a journalist, A. Papernov, proposed the construction of a rail line from Petropavlovsk to the zapovednik to capitalize on the great potential economic benefits of foreign tourism.

Journalists emphasized that the Valley of the Geysers was far from Kamchatka’s only natural wonder that would attract hordes of tourists. In late 1987, the popular television program, Club of Film Travelers (Klub Kinoputeshchestvennikov), named Kamchatka the most interesting place on the planet. Kamchatka was home to 28 active volcanoes, numerous geyser fields and thermal springs, spectacular rock faces in inlets of the Pacific Ocean that were populated by humpback whales, difficult to access regions where Koriak and Itelmen still lived by reindeer herding, and other unique attractions. With nearly 25 percent of the spawning Pacific Salmon populations and over 30,000 brown bears, it was a veritable paradise for hunters and anglers. Many journalists noted that foreigners seeking trophies might pay top dollar to come to the peninsula. However, the peninsula’s meager tourism infrastructure meant that it could not yet reap the benefits of its scenic and wild allure.

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86 For some articles on the Valley fo the Geysers in the central press see: “Kliuch ot Kamchatki,” Pravda, May 24, 1990, 8. Valery Bikasov, “Stolko stoit dolina geysеров” Svet. 8 (August 1990), 39. Bikasov acknowledges that while there was a range of opinion most people had come to the conclusion that some tourism opportunities in the Valley of the Geysers needed to be expanded. He wrote: “I think that ‘Our Valley’ should not be oriented towards the elite, but should be accessible for all. May it remain a wonder. May it be visited by everyone who desires with moderate pay difficulty.” Also see: Vasilev, “Dolina dlia izbrannikh?”, 11. In this article, Vasilev writes: “This wonder—Kamchatka’s Valley of Geysers—is no longer there for us. Permit me to say without exaggeration, but its widely-advertised beauty is entirely unaccessible to most people. One must go to the valley in order to understand how much this inaccessibility is not right.” Gromova, L, “Dolina Geysерov ot-krivat nado,” Leninskiaia znamia. September 22, 1990. S.A. Alekseev, the director of the zapovednik, said: “We, scientists, are called to protect and replenish the natural reserves of the biosphere zapovednik, nonetheless are forced to admit that the Valley needs to be opened but in a way that ensures it protection from the invasions of unorganized tourists.”


90 Zhigulin. Zhigulin writes: “Unfortunately, today tourists from the mainland, yes and Kamchatkans themselves, can only admire the beauty of the peninsula on the screen of the television.”
Beginning in the mid-1980s, the debate about tourism on Kamchatka was no longer an either/or proposition of access or preservation as it had been during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Rather, much of Kamchatka’s environmentally concerned public argued that the development of tourism provided an attractive alternative to resource extraction. Would Kamchatka develop its resources as an “export of impressions” for Russians and foreigners alike, or for extracting valuable metals that lay beneath the surface of spellbinding geographical forms? Gorbachev himself provided hope to tourism’s proponents on a 1986 Far East trip when he said: “Without a familiarity with your enormous and beautiful region there cannot be a full presentation of the Motherland, its history, its present and future. The Far East must become a large center of internal and international tourism.”

Mineral discoveries coupled with the economic downturn threatened this vision. Geologists had discovered large deposits of oil off the peninsula’s western coast in 1980 and they were regularly finding large deposits of gold in various places on the peninsula throughout the decade. As the Soviet economy cratered in the late 1980s, they argued that expanding extraction was necessary to buttress the regional economy. While panning for gold had long taken place in Kamchatka’s streams, the Ministry of Geology was now proposing open-pit cyanide heap-leach mining, which had the potential to bring catastrophic losses to fish populations. Tourism’s proponents argued that rogue “uncultured” tourists (dikary) here or there paled in comparison to scalping mountaintops and allowing sodium cyanide to run into rivers. While an article in Turist de-

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91 I Dvorov, “Kamchatskoe teplo” Kamchatskii komsomolets, April 8, 1986, 3.
scribed tourists as “lovers of nature” and people working in agency offices as “barbarians,” an article in the journal Nature (Priroda) argued that Kamchatka risked going the way of the shrunken and polluted Aral Sea if the tourism economy was not developed and extractive industries were given free rein.\textsuperscript{94}

Few believed that Kamchatka’s future must be as a center of Soviet and international tourism more than Vladimir Semenov and Vitalii Men’shikov. Born in Vitebsk in the east of present-day Belarus in 1905, Semenov had aspired to become a geologist, but his social origins as the son of an official in the city administration under tsarist rule made this impossible.\textsuperscript{95} After attending classes with little interest for two years at the Moscow Land Use Planning Institute, he transferred to the Leningrad Polytechnic Institute where he graduated with a degree in refrigeration engineering. Not long after his first tourist trip to the Urals at the age of 33 in 1938, Semenov accepted an invitation to work on the construction of fish factories on Kamchatka.\textsuperscript{96}

The peninsula’s expanses of unmapped, unexplored territory captivated Semenov upon his arrival to Kamchatka. Over the next four decades, he charted over 100 previously untraveled paths and made 40 first ascents of Kamchatka volcanoes. In 1963, he became the first chair of the Oblast Council of Tourism while also working on the executive council of the Kamchatka Oblast Branch of the Geographical Society USSR. Two years later, he established the Gleb Travin Club of Tourists, for which he would serve as director for over 20 years. Semenov became the first “Master of Sport”

\textsuperscript{94} Mertsalov, 23. Mertsalov writes: “Yes, and they are not barbarians actually, tourists, but people sincerely loving their Motherland, their native nature, and it is them precisely who raised their voice in defense of the northern and Siberian rivers, of Baikal, and of other places close to our hearts. It must be protected from the barbarians from the agency offices.” V.S. Kirpichnikov, “Sud’ba Kamchatki v nashikh rukakh!” Priroda 11 (November 1990), 40.

\textsuperscript{95} See: Sheila Fitzpatrick, Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

\textsuperscript{96} GAKK, fond 855, opis’ 1, 4.
in Tourism on Kamchatka in 1969. From the 1960s through the 1980s, he delivered lectures to promote tourism and the local history movement at tourist seminars and rallies, at schools, and before different youth organizations. From 1977 to 1980, he served as the chair of the Oblast Commission on Kraevedenie and Tourism within the Kamchatka Branch of the Geographical Society USSR and he served as the Assistant Chairman of the Geographical Society beginning in 1980.\footnote{GAKK, fond 855, opis’ 1, 5.} In 1982, he organized a Petropavlovsk city club of local history. From the early 1970s to the late 1980s, he wrote five books that doubled as guidebooks and travel narratives.\footnote{V. Semenov, V kraiu zaoblachnykh vershin (Petropavlovsk: Dal’nevostochnoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1970). V. Semenov, V kraiu vulkanov i geizerov (Moscow: Fizkul’tura i sport, 1973); V.I. Semenov, Po vulkanov i gor’chim istochnikam Kamchatki (Petropavlovsk: Dal’nevostochnoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1983).} By the late 1980s, Semenov had come to fear for the peninsula’s possible future as a center of resource extraction. As he noted in his personal journal and articles for the regional press, the claims of the inexhaustibility of Kamchatka’s resources rang hollow for him after observing threefold drops in the catches of herring, cod, flounder, salmon, and crab during his 50 years living on Kamchatka. While mining, he acknowledged, might provide benefits that would last for 25 to 30 years, it would eventually squander the region’s “pristine” nature, which was its most sustainable and potentially profitable resource.\footnote{GAKK, fond 855, opis’ 1, delo 90, 8. He writes: “With what is left after 25-30 years of Kamchatka, and what resources it will exist? Biological resources will inevitably decrease and may reach a point where no longer be able to play a decisive role in the economy. Sanitarium-spas do not get too may fully develop because of the reduction of the region’s medicinal sources.”} He wrote:

The time will come when all the useful minerals will be dug out, the slopes and valleys dug up, the hot springs exhausted....Materially, but only materially, in one, a maximum of two, generations will benefit, but the damage to all future generations of our Motherland, millions of people, from whom we will deprive the possibility to fall in love with the exotic nature of Kamchatka.\footnote{GAKK, fond 855, opis’ 1, delo 91, 19.}
He continued: “From this there is only one conclusion to be made. The mining industry, which is destructive of nature, is entirely incompatible on the Kamchatka Peninsula with the biological and recreational resources and their future development.”

He asserted that mining activities should instead expand in the Magadan Oblast, the Amur region, and in the Circumpolar Urals, where the prospect of gold mining was already threatening the establishment of a national park.

Vitalii Men’shikov shared these concerns. As was the case for so many in Petropavlovsk, Semenov was Men’shikov’s teacher in matters related to tourism and nature protection. Men’shikov came from Leningrad in 1968. When not working as an oceanographer, he traveled during his vacation time, which was considerably longer in northern areas like Kamchatka. Having worked at the Valley of the Geysers tour base in the early 1970s, Men’shikov maintained good relationships with the staff of the Kronotskii Zapovednik. After the closure of the base, he continued to bring independent tourists to the Valley of the Geysers with special permission. During the time of the base’s closure, Men'shikov observed tourism’s increasing adverse impact of the Valley of the Geysers. Independent tourists, scientists, and high-placed government officials continued to visit the zapovednik and without the tour base to maintain the tourism infrastructure, as it had in the past, tourists made an even larger impact than before. He arrived at the conclusion that Kamchatka needed to re-open the Valley of the Geysers and establish national parks to lessen tourism’s negative environmental impact. Profitable tourism would thereby weaken the argument that natural resource extraction was necessary for the region’s economic development.

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101 GAKK, fond 855, opis’ 1, delo 90, 9.
102 Ibid.
103 Interview with Men’shikov, April 20, 2015.
Men’shikov and Semenov agreed that national parks provided the best means to reorient the peninsula’s economy towards tourism. The Soviet Union’s increased openness, they and many others believed, made this task more important and potentially more profitable than ever. However, developing mass tourism without the adequate infrastructure would be, in the words of Semenov, “criminal” in its destructiveness to Kamchatka’s environment.¹⁰⁴ He acknowledged that development would be more difficult as the economy’s downward spiral showed no signs of abating. Noting that Yellowstone National Park attracted over 6 million visitors in 1985 alone, he wrote:

This analogy with the USA speaks to the enormous potential benefits, which foreign tourism can bring to Kamchatka, even under a system of limited permission and the truncated tourist season. However, for this we need, firstly, to establish the entire infrastructure for service and the transportation of tourists, to organize trails, and secondly, to protect nature. Without this, foreigners will not come here. This will demand foreign investment and organization.¹⁰⁵

He continued: “Domestic and international experience speaks to the fact that, thanks to the unique nature of Kamchatka, tourism can take on such a size that it may become one of the leading if not the leading part of the economy of the oblast.”¹⁰⁶

Semenov and Men’shikov called on tourist clubs, the Geographic Society, the Institute of Volcanology, and other civic organizations to push the Kamchatka Oblast Executive Committee to help rally support for designating temporary reserves (zakazniki) throughout the oblast. They hoped that the RSFSR Council of Ministers would then convert them into national parks.¹⁰⁷ With this aim, In the Region of Hot Springs (1988) Semenov called for designating zakazniki on 130 thousand square kilometers, which

¹⁰⁴ GAKK, fond 855, opis’ 1, delo 90, 9. Semenov writes: “What tourist from the many millions on the mainland did not want to come to Kamchatka! But the capacity is limited and taking them all is not possible. And it would be criminal before them to allow the destruction of the regions that are suitable for tourism and without that small number of lucky ones to whom it works out to come here.”
¹⁰⁵ GAKK, fond 855, opis’ 1, delo 90, 6.
¹⁰⁶ GAKK, fond 855, opis’ 1, delo 91, 11.
¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 13.
would amount to 30 percent of the territory of the oblast and 50 percent of the peninsula. Through national parks’ work in cultivating the “proper” relationship to nature, Semenov believed that the problems of the late 1960s and 1970s would be avoided even as Kamchatka’s wonders lured hordes of tourists from the mainland and overseas. One journalist even proposed the entire peninsula be designated as a national park.

The RSFSR Council of Ministers did not establish national parks on Kamchatka before the collapse of the Soviet Union. While Semenov still occasionally put on a backpack and took multi-day hikes, nearly 80, he lacked the vigor to lead the campaign following the USSR’s collapse. Men’shikov would take full responsibility for their development in the wake of the USSR’s collapse. While his belief in tourism’s economic potential and his commitment to protected territories for tourists only strengthened, the new political reality would change his thinking on the form of protected territories most suitable to Kamchatka. We will return to this story later. Right now, we will move to the north of Kamchatka where American and Soviet scientists were envisioning a plan more transformative than what Semenov and Men’shikov were calling for on Kamchatka. That project was Beringia International Park.

**Beyond the National: Beringia International Park**

The USSR’s push to establish “international parks” and protected areas in the late 1980s was in many ways a logical outgrowth of the adoption of the national park idea in the 1950s. In the years after World War II, environmentalism increasingly became “internationalized” through the establishment of the IUCN and the national park

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idea was a staple in the discourse within this organization and between environmentalists from different countries. National parks were the most widespread institution of nature protection throughout the world and Soviet environmentalists believed that they were necessary to reconcile tourism and nature protection while bringing increased respect and understanding to Soviet environmental protection efforts among the international environmental community. By re-conceptualizing what had been strictly Soviet into “international” space through the park idea, the USSR sought to “internationalize” its environmental protection efforts and increase its responsibility before the world in protecting the environment in ways that would have been inconceivable just a few years before.

The governments of the United States and Canada established the first international park, Glacier-Waterton Lakes, in 1932. Since that time, two others had formed on the US-Canadian border and numerous parks had been proposed on the borders of African nations. By the mid-1980s, the Scientific Research Institute for Nature Protection (NII Priroda) began working on plans for several international reserves and peace parks. Such parks were opportunities for Soviet scientists to expand their international connections and were often seen as a means of both ameliorating past tensions and strengthening diplomatic relations with other countries. Explaining the rationale for these parks in a report, Natalia Zabelina wrote: “The deployment of a network of specially protected natural territories on national borders marks a return to a single biosphere and the human understanding of our place in it.” She continued: “From the political point of view the attention that states play to nature protection measures on

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111 Personal archive of Natalia Zabelina.
borders is an additional factor in trust, stability, and the humanization of international relations.”

The Scientific Research Institute of Nature Protection would work toward the establishment of Polish-Belarusian Bialowieza Forest Zapovednik, Ubsunur Soviet-Mongolian Zapovednik Zaysansgo Chinese Soviet-Mongolian, and Lake Hanka Soviet-Chinese Zapovednik. Zabelina and the institute proposed the establishment of Kuril Bridge International Park with Japan for the protection of marine mammals, rare and disappearing species of animals and plants, fish spawning grounds, and the organization of ecological tourism as well as ecological enlightenment activities. Zabelina also asserted that this park could prove “one of the most effective means of resolving the territorial debate” that began when the Soviet Union took the islands after World War II.

In few places in the USSR, or for that matter the world, did political boundaries seem more artificial in light of shared history, ecology, and culture than the political space of eastern Chukotka and western Alaska. Fifteen-thousand years ago or more, North America’s first settlers traversed a land bridge connecting Chukotka and Alaska that formed thanks to lower sea levels during the last Ice Age. While connections between the natives of Chukotka and Alaska were sparse for millennia, Eskimos, Yupik, Inupiat peoples of Chukotka and Alaska were trading with one another when Russians arrived in the 18th century. Under Russian rule, trade exchanges continued in more mediated form. But the languages of natives of the two regions still resembled one another. Moreover, because their environments were almost identical, they had similar lifestyles that revolved around fishing, reindeer herding, and the

112 Ibid.
113 RGAE fond 709, opis’ 1, delo 310, 164.
114 Ibid.
hunting of large marine mammals.\textsuperscript{115} Eskimos continued to visit trade fares in Chukotka following the sale of Alaska to the United States for two cents an acre in 1864.\textsuperscript{116} While these exchanges became less frequent under the first three decades of Soviet rule, Alaskan Eskimos continued to come to Chukotka for festivals of game, song, and dance until 1948 when Cold War tensions prompted the USSR to terminate the passage rights of natives.\textsuperscript{117}

*Perestroika* presented an opportunity to melt the “ice wall” and allow indigenous groups to reestablish connections of a shared history, economy, and culture that had been severed due to a geopolitical conflict that meant little to them. In 1986, the Soviet Union and the United States set up a working group “Conservation and Management of Natural and Cultural Heritage,” which focused on Chukotka and Alaska. The passage of native peoples between the two areas began again in 1989 when a group of twelve Yupik, Unupiq Eskimo, and Chukchi, as well as Russians and Americans took part in the Bering Bridge Expedition. For two months, the group travelled over 1,600 kilometers from Chukotka to Alaska by dogsled, skis, and boat.\textsuperscript{118} During the course of the expedition, Mikhail Gorbachev wrote to the team: “The name (The Bering Bridge) is not just a symbol for me. This name represents my own true feelings. You are truly helping to build friendly cooperation between Chukotka and Alaska as well as between the Soviet Union and the United States. We are united by common challenges, such as preserving northern cultures, protecting the arctic ecosystem and, of course, the most important challenge, the strengthening of peaceful relations among all countries of the world.”\textsuperscript{119}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{118}Ibid.
\bibitem{119}Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
Initially proposed in the late 1960s by director of the National Center for Atmospheric Research, Walter Orr Roberts, the establishment of the Beringia International Park was to be the most important step in melting the “ice wall.” The idea remained dormant until perestroika when “new thinking” called on the USSR to engage in cooperative international projects in, among other areas, environmental protection. Such projects with the US had been dormant since the USSR’s invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. In October 1987, the US and the USSR formed a joint working group for the project. At the 1988 General Assembly of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), one hundred countries including the United States and the USSR called for the region to be given special status that would help revive the cultures of the natives. The Soviet press waxed enthusiastically about the region serving as a model for the complex collaboration between Soviets and Americans in the sphere of environmental protection. In September of 1989, three months after the successful completion of the Bering Bridge Expedition, a joint Soviet-American planning team undertook a 10-day assessment of the park. A trip of equal duration to Northwest Alaska immediately followed.

Beringia International Park was to include Beringia Land Bridge and Cape Krusenstern National Monuments on the Alaska side and a national park, which the Soviet Union promised to establish in Chukotka. In November 1989, the United States National Park Service published its report “Beringia Heritage: A Reconnaissance Study of Sites and Recommendations.” Through a common set of land use policies, a unified

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120 Graham Jr, 53.
121 “Beringian Heritage: A Reconnaissance Study of Sites and Recommendations.”
122 Anonymous, “Beringiya” Kraitni sever, July 6, 1995:
125 Ibid.
international park, the report argued, could develop a more rational system for managing biomes. In addition to establishing a scientific center that would carry out joint Soviet-American projects in the region, the park would develop ecotourism as a form of economic development that could stave off extractive industries. Perhaps most importantly, Beringia International Park would bring together indigenous groups that shared a common language, culture, and for whom geopolitical rivalry—now considerably softened—had always meant little.126

On the Soviet side, the park would focus on reviving the Chukchi and Inupiat traditions, which the Soviet government had tried to extirpate.127 Explaining the park’s significance in the report’s introduction, the authors wrote:

In order to come together, people must see each other through the walls erected by politics and understand that the beauty is not in exclusive property of states but the common property of all of the inhabitants of the earth. Nature is a potential means of mutual understanding.128

At the US-Soviet summit the following year, George Herbert Walker Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev signed a declaration that called for joint Soviet-American expeditions to help organize the territory of the park in 1990 and 1991. At a meeting of the United States and USSR Trade and Economic Development Council in late 1990, Gorbachev said that it was Chukotka and Alaska, which “holds the future of relations between our two countries.”129

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126 Ibid. The study said that broad authority should be granted to the parks to develop these agreements that could include the spheres of planning, design, architecture, linguistics, ethnography, archeology, native arts, history, and prehistory.


128 Ibid.

129 Frank Graham Jr. “US and Soviet Environmentalists Join Forces Across the Bering Straight” Audubon, July-August 1991. Late that year, at a Meeting of the United States and the USSR Trade and Economic Development Council held in the Kremlin (1990) Gorbachev went around the room shaking hands with the Americans. Pointing to an ARCO representative from Alaska by the name of Dave Heatwave, Gorbachev reportedly said loudly to one of his ministers: “This man is from Alaska. It is this area-Chukotka and Alaska--which holds the future of relations between our countries.”
While Gorbachev and others waxed optimistically about the region’s future, the USSR was navigating in waters that might have given the irrepressible optimist pause. By 1990 the USSR was in an economic tailspin amid growing political instability. Without a single steward and with limited resources, national parks still seemed like “step-children” to the departments that managed them. Moreover, the Soviet Union had no experience with administering similar international territories, much less experience in coordinating management with its main geopolitical rival of the previous four decades. Additionally, US mining and oil companies had begun scouting the region. Perhaps the most complicated aspect of the park’s organization, however, was the fact that aggrieved indigenous populations lived within the borders on the Soviet side. With seemingly endless problems of stewardship within other national parks, this presented a unique challenge. The fact that indigenous groups were increasingly making territorial claims in different areas around the world following discussion within the United Nations about the adoption of a declaration of rights of indigenous peoples dramatically elevated the expectations of native groups as to what the park could achieve.

The Chukchi and Eskimos of Chukotka on many occasions expressed their overwhelming support for the park and their desire to be involved as closely as possible in its organization and management. While expressing anger openly about the USSR’s “predatory” relationship to the natural resources of the area, indigenous peoples also repeatedly referred to the Soviet government’s attempts to eradicate their cultural heritage during the previous decades. With the region now opening up to foreign natural resource companies, they saw the possibility of the continued destruction of their native region and were already observing the “looting” of their historical sites by unorganized tourists.¹³₀ A Resolution of the Society of Eskimos of Chukotka in the summer of 1990

¹³₀ GARF, fond 10200, opis’ 4, delo 4479, 127.
stated: “We find ourselves on our own land a minority and are forced to watch powerless the heartless (bezdušno), and predatory relationship to nature that is killing our land and its peoples.”

The international park, they asserted, should strengthen the cultural heritage of the native groups—folklore, songs, dance, and crafts. It should promote the traditional economy of native peoples—reindeer hunting, fishing, furs, gathering, and hunting at sea; moreover, many believed that it should eliminate all scouting for and exploitation of valuable minerals, and strengthen the historical rights of Eskimos to the land and water of Beringia.

In its plan for the organization of the park, Lengiprogor prioritized the interests of native populations above all else. With the full support of other organizations involved in the planning, Lengiprogor called for the establishment of a new legal definition of the national park’s territory—a protected “ethnic territory.” Such a territory would aim to preserve the natural and cultural heritage as well as to develop the new socioeconomic foundation of nature use and the traditional way of life of indigenous people’s (Chukchi and Eskimo) of Beringia. The ethnic territory, Lengiprogor’s Technical Economic Basis (TEB) for the park stated, would provide the “favorable conditions for the self-definition of the indigenous population” while giving them authority to “make decisions about their economic and social problems.” The plan acknowledged that alcoholism afflicted a large portion of indigenous residents, most of whom had little education. Without explaining how, it then asserted that their level of education and professionalism would be elevated so that they could actively take part in scientific research and manage ecological tourism. The appropriate management of tourism, the

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131 GARF, fond 10200, opis’ 4, delo 4479, 11.
132 GARF, fond, 10026, opis’ 4, delo 892, 3.
133 Ibid.
134 Ibid.
report stated, would prevent the growing problem of uncontrolled looting by unorganized tourists. By involving the indigenous population and reviving the traditional economy based on hunting, reindeer herding, fishing, and crafts, the TEB argued that the park could eradicate unemployment, which had increased significantly as the Soviet economy spiraled downward.

A joint Soviet-American group met for the third time—this time on the Russian side of the park in August 1991. After hiking in different areas of the proposed park’s territory for several days, the group heard disturbing news from Moscow. In what appeared to be a coup, Mikhail Gorbachev had been put under arrest by a group of hard-liners who thought they were saving the country. While the Americans rushed to arrange a flight back to the United States, the Moscow-based Russian scientists took the first flight possible to Moscow 8,000 kilometers away.

The proposal of Beringia International Park in many ways marked the apogee of hopes in the transformational potential of national parks. While the idea for developing a Soviet system of national parks was both a means of reconciling economic development with environmental protection and gaining more international recognition for Soviet environmental protection, the proposal for Beringia International Park demonstrated an unprecedented step in the internationalization of Soviet environmental protection efforts. While the RSFSR Council of Ministers would pass a new law that would

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135 Ibid., 66.
drop the name “state” (gosudarstennyi) from “national nature” parks later that year, na-
tional nature parks were far from most people’s minds. As the country descended into
political chaos and then collapsed, a crisis of authority and the country’s dire economic
situation made the development of national parks even more complicated. While envi-
rontmental protection had been one of the public’s greatest concerns at the height of pe-
restroika, its importance with the public waned as a large part of the Russian population
could focus on little more than survival. We will return to the impact of the Soviet Un-
ion’s collapse on proposed and existing parks as well as its cumulative impact on Rus-
sian national parks in a later chapter. The next part of this dissertation, however, will
look at the histories of four different national parks—Pribaikal’skii, Samara Bend, Iu-
gyd Va, and Vodlozerskii National Park—from their conception to the eventual frustra-
tions their supporters experienced as a result of the political and economic crises of the
1990s.
Part III: The Formation and Challenges of Four Russian National Parks

The previous two sections have provided a chronological perspective of the development of Soviet tourism, the efforts of environmentalists to infuse it with a nature protection agenda, and the Soviet national park movement from its conception to the years following the model regulation. The focus will now turn to four regions—Baikal, the Circumpolar Urals, the Samara Bend on the Volga River, and Karelia—and the efforts of scientists, students, professors, civic organizations, and interested individuals to form national parks in these regions. I have visited each of the four parks that I will write about here and therefore have incorporated small sections of travelogue into each chapter.
Chapter 6: The “Shield” of the Sacred Sea: National Parks around Lake Baikal

High hills and exceedingly high rocky cliffs are all around it—over twenty times one thousand versts and more have I dragged myself and nowhere seen any like these. Exceedingly many birds, geese, and swans swim upon the sea covering it like snow. It hath fishes—sturgeon, and salmon, starlet, and omul, and whitefish, and many other kinds. The water is fresh and hath great seals and sea lions in it: when I dwelt in Mezen, I saw night like unto these in the big sea. And the fishes there are plentiful: the sturgeon and salmon are surpassingly fat—thou canst not fry them in a pan, for there will not be nought but grease. And all this hath been wrought by Christ in heaven for mankind so that, resting content, he shouldst render praise unto God.¹

—Archpriest Avvakum, 1662

Lake Baikal is a place that leaves an indelible impression. I will never forget the first time I saw the lake. Looking onto Baikal from the east shore near the village Babushkina, I saw a sunset unlike any that I have ever seen. With little waves washing gently over the beach and dampening the sand beneath my feet, the lake’s ripples in front of me radiated a fiery orange, which melted into a blue that slowly faded in the water further from the last light that the sun would shine on the lake that day. Just over a dark tangerine haze that hovered above the gently undulating ridgeline on the opposite shore, the sky was a light peach color that abruptly changed to dark orchid with some streaks of fiery orange evanescing into hot pink in the thick layers of clouds above. Tilting back my head, I stared into an emerging vast darkness through which the faint glimmers of night’s first stars were becoming visible.

As Soviet tourists were coming to see this “miracle of nature” in increasing numbers with each passing year during the 1950s, Lake Baikal remained little changed from when

Avvakum, a leader of the schismatic “old believers,” saw it during his Siberian exile three centuries earlier. Numerous mountain ranges—the Barguzin Ridge, Khamar Daban, the Kodor, and the Sayan Mountains—near the lake attracted hikers and mountaineers. On different parts of the lake, snowcapped peaks, and dormant volcanoes reflect off the lake’s translucent water, which in some parts is so clear that one can see depths of 40 meters. With parts of the lake more than a kilometer and a half deep, Baikal holds twenty percent of the world’s freshwater and could hold all of the water of all five of the North American Great Lakes. If the lake’s 334 tributaries were diverted, it would take the Angara River, the lake’s only outlet, over 400 years to drain Baikal. The lake hosts more than 1,000 species of plants and 2,500 animals, eighty percent of which are endemic to Baikal. Over half of the lake’s 60 species of fish, including the delicious omul, are endemics.

During the first three decades of Soviet rule, Baikal’s distance from the European part of the USSR and the region’s low population density limited industrial development in its environs while keeping extraction of raw materials to a minimum. However, following the reconstruction of the European part of the USSR after World War II, central planners anticipated dramatic economic growth, which they believed necessitated tapping the vast natural resources of Siberia, especially Baikal and the Angara River watershed. In the late 1950s, facing fantastical plans of engineers that had the potential to harm Baikal and its environs significantly, much of the Soviet scientific and environmentally concerned public came to Baikal’s defense. With the idea that national parks could provide an economically viable form of environmental protection gaining traction, game management professionals, architectural institutes, workers in nature reserves, and other interested Soviet citizens called for the

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2 Led by Avvakum, the old believers were a group that broke off from the Russian Orthodox Church in 1667 following their rejections of the Nikonian reforms. For more on the Old Believer controversy, Kenneth Bostrom, *Avvakum: The Life Written by Himself* (Michigan Slavic Publications, 1979). Also see: Robert O. Crumney, *Old Believers and the World of the Anti-Christ* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970).

3 Mathiessen, 3.
establishment of national parks (or a single park) on Lake Baikal’s shore and in the surrounding territory. The competing versions of the plans for national parks on Baikal reflected the differences in visions for the development of national parks within the Soviet environmental community. Nonetheless, influenced by the USSR’s increased involvement in international environmental agreements and the understanding that tourism was one of the fastest growing areas of the world and Soviet economy, Baikal’s defenders universally agreed that tourism in the Baikal region could generate significant profits, which would justify the end of industrial development on its shoreline and in its watershed.

Because the construction of a cellulose plant on Baikal’s southern shore had galvanized a wide cross-section of the Soviet environmental community in the mid-1960s, the proposal for national parks on the shoreline of Baikal drew a wider range of support than any other proposal for a national park in the USSR. Many of the supporters for parks, or a unified park, on Baikal, in turn, argued that Baikal’s parks should serve as a model for Soviet national parks and that they would be significant to “all of humanity.” The frustration caused by the sluggish push towards establishing a national park on Baikal (for reasons mentioned in chapter 4) only intensified when upon the establishment of these parks, especially Pribaikal’skii National Park (henceforth Pribaikal’skii), myriad land disputes and a lack of strong support from Moscow impeded their development. These problems again demonstrated how poorly the 1981 “model regulation” (tipovoe polozhenie) on national parks as well as the decree establishing Pribaikal’skii were conceived. The failure of the parks, especially Pribaika’lskii, to actualize the ambitious visions of the many environmentalists who conceived them was indicative of the paradox (discussed in the previous chapter) in environmental protection during perestroika that thoroughly frustrated environmentalists. Although environmental concern had reached unprecedented levels in the USSR and had never before
received so much attention from the Communist Party, the country’s economic decline crippled government financing for nature protection projects. Moreover, the devolution of state authority empowered local interests motivated by newfound opportunities to accrue profit, often at the expense of protecting Baikal. Despite the lake’s “global significance,” which became even more central to the understanding of its defenders during perestroika, Pribaikal’i i was mired by problems of a local character.

The collapse of the Russian economy and the almost complete lack of confidence in governmental authority during the early 1990s ensured that national parks on Baikal would not receive the support from the state necessary to carry out the complementary goals of protecting the environment and developing the regional economy through tourism. Appealing to the lake’s “global significance,” environmentalists and the administrations of Baikal’s national parks looked to foreign support while environmental NGOs and international organizations saw Baikal as a testing ground for implementing the newly popular idea of “sustainable development.” This idea resonated following the United Nations’ 1992 Rio Earth Summit where nations throughout the world expressed the belief that the end of the geopolitical division of the world would make solving common environmental problems possible. While Baikal had once been a unique natural wonder for which the Soviet Union stood responsible before the world community, the Russian environmental community vested almost complete hope in international organizations for the lake’s protection. By the end of the decade, Baikal’s national parks were still little developed and the ambitious vision for protecting the lake and its watershed was still largely limited to planning documents. The lake’s defenders felt deeply embarrassed by the Russian Federation’s inability to protect a unique natural wonder and profoundly disappointed by the realization that support from NGOs and international organizations and UNESCO World Heritage status offered no panacea for the lake’s environmental problems.
Making Baikal’s Protection Economically Viable

As the USSR looked to Siberia’s vast stores of natural resources following World War II, Soviet planners embraced a technocratic optimism common throughout the world in the 1950s. Central planners called for the development of unprecedentedly large industrial projects that would transform vast tracts of “pristine nature” into blooming industrial oases with modern cities, unified electrical grids, and state-of-the-art enterprises. They gave little thought to the environmental consequences of such transformations. As the Soviet Union sought to prove socialism’s superiority to capitalism by “catching and surpassing” the economy of the United States, central planners viewed large-scale industrial projects in Siberia as central to this goal. Such projects gained iconic status.

Soviet planners and government officials believed that the Angara River and Baikal surpassed all other Siberian regions in industrial potential. At the 1947 Conference for the Development of Industrial Strength of the Irkutsk Oblast, participants recommended the immediate commencement of the construction of a set of dams on the Angara River, the “daughter of Baikal,” which would provide the energy for the region’s economic and industrial transformation. Two years later, the Academy of Sciences established an East-Siberian

5 Bratsk was the classic case of such a city in Siberia. Located on the Angara River, which flows out of Baikal, the construction of the Bratsk dam was touted as the transformative project that would help make Siberia a center of Soviet industry.
6 For an example of how the narrative of the Angara’s damming was used to assert socialism’s superiority over capitalism, see: Ervin Tsukker-Shilling, “Po Sibiri,” Pravda, September 25, 1960, 6. Tsukker-Shilling concluded the article: “The symbol (Bratsk) of the new socialist Siberia is full of joy and enthusiasm. Young people are going there voluntarily to build a new world. Those who have seen the new Siberia, its wealth and its people, know where real freedom is and understand that capitalism has lost in the great historical competition with the socialist system.”
Branch in Irkutsk to dedicate science to the task of exploiting the region’s natural resources. The construction of the Irkutsk Hydroelectric Station began in 1950. Six years later, the erection of the Bratsk GES commenced. With the Angara taking on the status of the most iconic river in the “battle” to “conquer” Siberian rivers and industrialize Siberia, no idea to increase its energy output was too fantastical. At the Conference for the Development of the Industrial Strength of Eastern Siberia in 1958, N.A. Grigorevich, an engineer at the institute Gidroengoproekt, proposed detonating 25,000 tons of TNT at the Angara’s origin to increase the river’s flow and thereby its energy potential. This proposal and the plan to construct a factory on the lake’s southern shore, which would use Baikal’s “pure” water for the production of rayon cord for airplane tires, transformed scientific concern for the fate of the “sacred sea” into a national environmental cause.

Nicholas Breyfogle correctly argues that this conference marked the beginnings of a movement to protect Baikal, and that no other environmental issue galvanized a larger number of scientists or a broader swathe of the Soviet public than Baikal. For three decades, scientists navigated the limited channels available to them in their attempts to stop government agencies from damaging the lake’s ecosystem while bringing the broader public to Baikal’s defense. However, neither Breyfogle nor other scholars have paid much attention to


10 Breyfogle. There were other environmental concerns that resonated deeply throughout Soviet society at this time. The planned construction of a dam on the Ob River, which would have inundated a significant portion of territory to the west of the northern Urals, is another example. Sergei Zalygin spoke out passionately against this.
how the lake’s defenders championed the idea of national parks (or a single unified park) to protect the lake. As the lake figured prominently in broader conversations about environmental protection in the Soviet Union, the establishment of a national park on Lake Baikal was central to conversations about the development of a system of national parks in the USSR.

As the region emerged as an industrial center during the 1950s, tourists streamed to Baikal in unprecedented numbers. Scientist-naturalists, such as Vasillii Skalon and Y.M. Grushko, were writing tourist guidebooks that celebrated the landscape of Baikal and its environs. Following the 1958 conference, Skalon, who had already raised concerns about untreated sewage flowing into the lake, called for the establishment of a reserve on Baikal that would be “the greatest of nature reserves of the world.” A little more than a month later, a collective letter in Literaturnaia gazeta signed by several conference participants, including a deputy on the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, scientists (one of which was Grushko), and an engineer, called for the designation of all of Baikal as a nature reserve. The signatories argued that Baikal belongs “not only to us, but our descendants, and all of the people of the epoch of Communism.” However, in an era characterized by an urgent quest for economic growth, locking up an area with rich natural resources seemed wildly impractical to many. Moreover, as I have already demonstrated, many scientists were already encouraging tourism in the nature reserves to highlight their “useful” functions during a time when government officials looked upon them with increasing suspicion.

In early 1959, Frants Taurin, editor of the literary journal Angara and writer of popular novels and short stories, argued that a Baikal Nature Reserve should include tourist bases,

12 For Skalon’s efforts to address the pollution problem see Breyfogle, 165. V.N. Skalon, “Pust’ Baikal budet velichaishim iz velichaishikh zapovednikov mira,” Pravda Buriatii, September 11, 1958, 2.
houses of recreation, spas, and sanitarium.\textsuperscript{14} Several months later, V.I. Galazii, the director of the Baikal Liminological Station, proposed the creation of several nature reserves and a national park along Baikal’s shore.\textsuperscript{15} Shortly thereafter, Oleg Gusev, who had worked in the Barguzin Nature Reserve for years and hiked over 2,000 kilometers of Baikal’s shoreline, made a similar proposal.\textsuperscript{16} With the Commission on Nature Protection widely promoting the system of national parks and tourist guidebooks celebrating Baikal’s nature being published every year, the idea for a national park or parks along Baikal’s shoreline gained firm traction by the early 1960s as the prospect of polluting the “sacred sea” loomed with the beginning of the cellulose plant’s construction.\textsuperscript{17}

Even while calling for Baikal’s industrial development, the Soviet state sent conflicting signals by also prioritizing its protection. On April 15, 1962, the Presidium of the USSR passed a decree, “On the Protection and Use of the Natural Riches of Lake Baikal.” Echoing Galazii, Vasilii Skalon and Oleg Gusev, the decree called for making all of Baikal a reserve that would create a large recreation zone of all-union significance and be managed by one steward.\textsuperscript{18} The zone would include sanatoriums, houses of relaxation, tour bases, and a national park, or possibly a few parks, that would provide sanitary-technical control for work of all enterprises—chemical, forestry, fishing, and water transport—in the region of Baikal.

Like many other decrees passed for the protection of Baikal from the 1960s to the 1990s, this

\textsuperscript{18} RGAE, fond 7486, opis’ 33, delo 22, 36.
one lacked specifics or a corresponding actionable plan for carrying out its measures. Moreover, national parks had no legal status, which made realizing this decree impossible. Nonetheless, the idea for a national park or parks on Baikal had now become important in the discourse about protecting the “sacred sea.” As I have already noted, the well-traveled director of the Institute Geography, Innokentii Gerasimov, made establishing a national park on Baikal central to the goals of “constructive geography.”

Gerasimov gave a presentation entitled “The Problem of Baikal” at a meeting of the Bureau of the Department of Earth Sciences on February 16, 1965. In this presentation, he stated that it was “categorically necessary” to transform the lake into a large “natural plant” (eststevenyi kombinat) of fresh water, which required a single steward who would oversee a special regime of economic use. The Baikal National Nature Park would harmonize economic development with environmental protection and have greater “authority” over the territory's natural resources than any national park in the world. Without mentioning the plant by name, there is little doubt that Gerasimov intended the establishment of this park to force the closure of the cellulose plant, which began production in 1966.

Gerasimov’s influence helped him convince prominent members of the Siberian division of the Academy of Sciences, such as Andrei Alekseevich Trofimuk, of the project’s enormous potential. With Galazii as its director, the Limnological Institute was fully onboard. The Council of the Study of Productive Strength of Gosplan, the Irkutsk Medical Institute, and the architectural institute Lengiprogor also expressed support for the national

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19 RGAE, Fond 544, opis’ 1, delo 15, 198. Prior to the 1960s, Gerasimov spent time in India, China, Japan, Cy- lon, Senegal, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Guinea, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Mexico, New Zealand, Australia, and the United States. As the Commission on Nature Reserves expanded its mandate and looked towards changing its name in late 1954, Gerasimov encouraged it to develop a wide range of foreign contacts. In 1959, Ger asi mov wrote a book about his foreign travels. See: I.P. Gerasimov, Moi zarubezhnie puteishstviia (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’svo geograficheskoi literature, 1959). Conceived in the mid-1960s, constructive ge- ography sought to orient the field of geography to providing solutions to economic and environmental problems.
20 ARAN, fond 1858, opis’ 1, delo 24, 14.
park. Still frequently comparing Russian landscapes to European tourism destinations, tourist promoters called Baikal the “Siberian Switzerland,” which could attract Soviet citizens and tourists from around the world.21 In 1966 and 1967, the Moscow State University Department of Geography undertook an expedition around the lake to scout territories of future national parks.22 Architects from Lengiprogor published their first proposals for the exact location of national parks in the publication Construction and Architecture in January 1966.23 From 1966 to 1971, the institute carried out several studies for the establishment of “a zone of recreational use,” which would showcase the lake’s nature. While this zone would prohibit industrial and extractive use, the zone would emphasize recreation and call for the construction of spas, houses of recreation, tourist bases, and three nature/national parks.24

The Organization of Industrial Production of the Siberian Division of the Academy of Sciences was projecting the dramatic profits that tourism could generate to transform regional economies and, in turn, make the calls for the traditional exploitation of natural resources irrelevant. Led by P.K. Oldak, the Institute conducted extensive research on global trends in tourism and wide-ranging sociological surveys to determine the leisure preferences and

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22 Iu.B. Khromov and V.A. Klushin, Oranizatsiia zon otdykha i turizma na poberezh’e Baikala (Moscow: Storizont, 1976), 49.


24 Ibid. The largest of these would be six thousand square kilometers and would include the southern shore and the Khamar Daban Mountains. They planned the second park for the area of Maloe More (Small Sea), Olkhon and much of the southern part of the western shoreline from Bol’shoi Onguren to the mouth of the Angara River. The final park, which would be just over two thousand hectares, would include Sviatoi Nos, Barguzin and Chivyrkuiskim Gulfs and the archipelago of Uskan’i Islands, where nerpa, one of three freshwater seals in the world, frequently basked in the sun.
spending habits of Soviet citizens while analyzing the more subjective issues of the relative appeal of different recreational areas, which considered such issues as the beauty of landscape and the region’s history. Looking at the growth of tourism as a sector of the world economy, which had surpassed oil and gas, Oldak asserted the tourism could provide the springboard for economic development in Siberia and the Far East, especially Kamchatka, Tuva, Sakhalin, the Kuril Islands, Altai, and most importantly Baikal. The flow of tourists from more developed economic regions would infuse regional economies with the capital to carry out the modernization of airports, the improvement of roads, the construction of restaurants, movie theaters, and hotels, the landscaping of cities, the revival of natural and cultural monuments, the protection of forest masses, and cleaning up of polluted bodies of water. Limiting or even excluding the development of intensive natural resource industries would preserve the scenic value of regions.

The arguments for protecting Baikal offered the same logic as virtually every other movement to establish a national park. However, Baikal’s natural variety and iconic value brought Baikal’s proposed parks far more attention than most other areas proposed. Accordingly, supporters believed that parks on Baikal would likely be the most profitable of the USSR’s future parks. This case was made at a Novosibirsk Conference in 1968. “In Siberia,” the conference report asserted, “we need to consider Baikal the most important region. Lake Baikal and its environs have such resources for the industry of tourism, which have the highest world value.” The development of tourism resources—trails, hotels, and boat

25 P.K. Oldak, “Industriia turizma—odno iz vedushchikh napravlenii razvitiia sovremennoi ekonomiki” in Problemy razvitii industrii turizma P.G. Oldak ed. (ANSSSR: Novosibirsk, 1970), 12. Oldak writes: “In modern conditions the potential resources of the industry of tourism have no less important economic significance than the potential of natural resources or of qualified workers. Tourism services is an important factor in the accelerated economic development of the region.”
26 Ibid., 13.
27 Ibid., 3.
travel—would have a far greater return on investment than forestry, gold mining, or cellulose production. With the average foreign tourist spending more than one thousand dollars on trips to the USSR, the report estimated 10,000 foreign tourists a year would spend $10 million. By then, they estimated that the park would bring the USSR 216 million rubles a year when taking into account the indirect economic benefits derived from tourism. Maximizing profits would demand extensive infrastructural development. This would require a significant change in the natural landscape’s appearance to accommodate increased tourist traffic, which would pose a significant threat that Oldak and the Institute did not acknowledge. Moreover, Oldak and the Institute also argued that long hiking trips in remote areas should be discouraged because such trips relied less on services, thereby bringing less money to the state coffers. This maximalist vision, which privileged stationary tourism over outdoor recreation, profoundly concerned Professor of Game Management, V.N Skalon, who returned to the Irkutsk Agricultural Institute in 1968 after six years of teaching at the Kazakh Pedagogical Academy in Alma Ata.

28 Ibid., 8.
29 Ibid., 9.
30 Ibid., 22.
31 D.R. Dabranov ed., Voprosy razvitiia industrii turizma na Baikale (Ulan-Ude: Buriatskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel’stvo, 1973), 65. Dabranov writes: “The most accepted effect of capital investment in the industry of tourism as in any economic accounting enterprise is profit. Profit is the foundational indicator of the economic activity of an enterprise and in the final analysis one of the foundational forms of the pure earnings of society. It is directly connected with the level of production and productivity of labor.” Tourism’s profits would be accrued through paid services, like guides, restaurants, and boat rides, the purchase of souvenirs—furs, locally produced crafts, etc.—and accommodation in hotels of an unmistakably “urban type,” which Skalon spoke so vehemently against.
Experiencing the “Taiga Lifestyle”: Vasilii Nikolaevich Skalon’s Vision for a Unified Baikal National Park

The son of a well-known lawyer and amateur naturalist and the grandson of a famous economist, Vasilii Nikolaevich Skalon was born in the Samara Guberniia in 1903. Through hunting trips with his father, Vasilii developed a love for nature at an early age. His father’s death in 1918 forced him to go to work early in order to support his mother, but he managed to begin studying in the Department of Medicine at Tambov State University in 1922. Having already completed two years of study, during which time he changed his focus to zoology, he became a member of the Russian Geographical Society, and worked at a biological station in the Novosibirsk Oblast. Tambov State University expelled Skalon because of his non-proletarian background at the end of the 1924 academic year. After taking part in expeditions in different parts of Siberia with the Kamensk local history museum and working at the Siberian Regional Station for the Protection of Plants in Irkutsk, Skalon enrolled in Tomsk University in 1926.32

For the next fifteen years, Skalon travelled by foot, boat, horseback, and reindeer sled across thousands of kilometers in many unstudied areas of the Siberia taiga, tundra, mountains, and steppe. He travelled through Altai, Tuva, Yakutia, and the areas to both the East and West of Baikal in the Irkutsk Oblast, Buriatia, and Chita. After he became the first person to receive a graduate degree in game management from a Siberian university, Moscow University awarded Skalon a kanidatskaia degree in 1938.

32 GAIO, R-2844, opis’1, p. 1. (General description of fond)
on the basis of his publications, despite the fact he never wrote or defended a dissertation. After serving in an infantry division in the Mongolian Republic during World War II, Skalon received a position in the zoology department at Choibalsan University in Ulan Bator. He defended his doctoral dissertation on beavers in Northern Asia at Moscow State University (MGU) in 1947. That same year he returned to Irkutsk for the Conference on the Study of Industrial Strength of the Irkutsk Oblast. There, he proposed the formation of a game management department in the Irkutsk Agricultural Institute.

After two years of correspondence with the director of Irkutsk Agricultural Institute, Skalon established the Institute’s game management department in 1949. Having, in his words, experienced the “majesty” of Baikal, he decided to dedicate much of his work to the study and protection of the “sacred sea.” Skalon was already thoroughly disillusioned by the “utilitarian” attitude that he observed towards Baikal—its moil, nerpa (a freshwater seal), but most of all its forests—and the erroneous conventional wisdom that the lake and its greater ecosystem’s resources were “inexhaustible.” Holding the deep conviction that nature protection was above all else a “pedagogical problem,” Skalon emphasized the protection of the lake and inspired several generations of students to act as stewards for Baikal and its environs. In addition to teaching courses in game management, zoology, ecology, ethnography nature protection, and even beekeeping, he wrote a tourist handbook for Soviet citizens traveling in

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33 Ibid. The “kanidatskaia” degree is roughly the equivalent of a Ph.D. However, it usually takes less time and many Soviet scientists eventually worked on towards the “doktirskaaia” degree, which was rarely awarded individuals under the age of forty.

34 V.N. Skalon, Rechnye bobry Severnoi Azii (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Moskovskogo obshchestva ispytatelei prirody, 1951).

35 GAIO: R-2844, opis’ 1, delo 90, 2.

36 GAIO: R-2844, opis’ 1, delo 90, 4.
Siberia and a book on Russian explorers.\textsuperscript{37} After a six-year stint in Alma Ata, Skalon returned to Irkutsk in 1968. Having become increasingly concerned that the proposals of Lengiprogor and the Institute of Economy and the Organization of Industrial Production reflected the “utilitarian” approach to Baikal, Skalon decided to develop his own vision for a national park on Baikal.

Skalon had closely observed tourism’s negative environmental impact. As previous chapters have indicated, these problems had become especially bad by the time he returned in 1968.\textsuperscript{38} While he shared Oldak’s optimism about tourism’s profitability, he, like Bannikov, Zabelina, Kritinskii and others in the Scientific-Research Institute for the Protection of Nature, feared that a single-minded vision for maximizing profits from tourists could lead to equal or greater harm than that caused by industrial development and resource extraction. With the help of students from the Agricultural Institute, he conducted a study “On the Development of the Scientific Basis of a Scheme of Nature Parks, Nature Reserves, and Temporary Nature Reserves (zakazniki) in the Watershed of Lake Baikal.” Beginning without a kopeck of state support and unsure whether or not the study would be published (it was not), Skalon conducted the study from 1968 to 1970, during which time he and his team travelled to different parts of the lake to research tourist behavior and tourism’s impact on different landscapes.\textsuperscript{39}

Skalon argued passionately for the establishment of a single national park that would encompass all territory within five kilometers of the lake’s shoreline. He wrote:

It must be recognized that in the watershed of Lake Baikal it is not enough to establish one isolated national park, but rather a park on THE ENTIRE SHORELINE OF THE LAKE. This, the shoreline,

\textsuperscript{39} Skalon did eventually receive 15,000 rubles for this work, but he does not indicate who provided the funds.
is a united (edinoe), whole (tseloе), and natural phenomenon of world significance. There is no possibility, or need, to establish a few small parks on portions of the shoreline as a few authors have proposed.\textsuperscript{40}

Unlike Lengiprogor and the Institute of Economics and Industrial Development’s vision, which called for significant capital investment for infrastructural development, Skalon argued that the expenses for the park should be kept to a minimum because tourists most of all wanted “to observe nature in its natural state.”\textsuperscript{41} “Tourists,” he wrote, “are attracted by the wild beauty of nature, not to the beauty of the city that they are accustomed to at home. THIS "wildness” must be saved in full.”\textsuperscript{42} Park regulations would prohibit roads for automobiles. Footpaths not visible from the shore would provide the only transportation networks. While park regulations would allow no constructions of an “urban type,” tourists could stay in taiga huts. “It is important,” he wrote, “that they (tourists) observe the taiga lifestyle.”\textsuperscript{43} Any signs—trailheads, mileage markers, and other markings—would need to be “extremely modest.” Clearly criticizing Lengiprogor’s plan, he said that “attractions and jazz orchestras,” or other “frills” were not necessary to attract tourists to the park.\textsuperscript{44}

In addition to his faith in the innate appeal of wild places, Skalon believed that the minimalist approach would mitigate environmental damage occurring along the lake’s shoreline and the surrounding areas. He noted that numerous areas around Baikal were strewn with litter, had barren patches of forest, and trampled vegetation.\textsuperscript{45} Animals seemed to have completely disappeared from such areas and careless tourists frequently caused forest fires that raged out of control. Poaching was rampant. In Skalon’s opinion, tourism professionals

\textsuperscript{40} GAIO: R-2844, opis’ 1, delo 90, 33.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 34.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} GAIO: R-2844, opis’ 1, delo 142, 223.
\textsuperscript{45} GAIO: R-2844, opis’ 1, delo 90, 33.
were largely indifferent to the cleanliness of the environment.\textsuperscript{46} While tourism, he argued, could indeed be a potential “gold mine” for Lake Baikal, it should not develop haphazardly. The creation of an intelligently designed and well-regulated national park would bring profits and help preserve the landscape whereas: “Wild and feral tourism” would bring “only destruction to the landscape.” He continued: “And on Baikal right now that is the only sort of tourism that there is.”\textsuperscript{47} Concluding this thought, he said: “Such places are many, and their number increases. Around the shores of the lake, there are trampled areas and scattered debris on trails everywhere…What remains of the wild beauty of the lake and its shores to attract someone when they are turned into a dump?”\textsuperscript{48} “Biological deserts” would continue to spread if tourists were lured to the “miracle” lake before the appropriate administrative and regulatory regime for recreation had been established.\textsuperscript{49}

Skalon had more restrictions in mind. He proposed imposing strict standards for visitation per unit of territory, enlisting the help of the local population in nature protection efforts, banning the incursion of independent or unorganized tourists into the national park, and recruiting game wardens to carry out monitoring. He also called for the strict prohibition of tourist visitation to individual nature reserves within the territory of the national park during the peak tourist season from May to September when tourists “storm Baikal.”\textsuperscript{50} Nature protection efforts would extend well beyond restrictions imposed by the park. Naturalists would

\textsuperscript{46} ANIIO, fond 2948, opis’ 1, delo 18, 27. Criticism of workers in the Irkutsk Oblast Council of Tourism was common. This also occurred in the central and regional press. A participant at a meeting of the Plenum of the Irkutsk Oblast Council of Tourism in February of 1969 said: “Today in the oblast council on tourism, in the presidium among the workers there are many “accidental people,” who have either died spiritually, forgotten about tourism, or found their comfortable place with a decent salary and have decided to take on no responsibility.”

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 39

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 40.

\textsuperscript{49} GAIO: R-2844, opis’ 1, delo 90, 44.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 56.
educate tourists on the “Baikal type of nature use” and teach them to become careful stewards of the natural world.\textsuperscript{51}

In the two years following the completion of this study, Skalon wrote pleading letters to an array of governmental ministries and interested parties in which he called for the establishment of individual nature reserves to curb the flow of tourists.\textsuperscript{52} He wrote to natural resource ministries in attempts to convince them that their activities made Baikal less appealing to tourists. With “Baikal’s beauty fading,” as he said, perhaps with significant exaggeration, Skalon’s greatest concern continued to be the “utilitarian” attitude towards Baikal. For Skalon, Oldak embraced such utilitarianism in a different form. With sociological surveys published in \textit{Literaturnaia gazeta} indicating that more Soviet citizens wanted to go to Baikal than any other region, Oldak again called for extensive capital investment in the pages of the newspaper.\textsuperscript{53} Referring to this proposal, Skalon wrote in his report:

\begin{quote}
There are projects being planned that will require enormous investment. There is the aspiration to bring tourism to Baikal and make it accessible to up to half a million people. I am confident that haste in this task and aspirations of gigantomania are very dangerous.\textsuperscript{54}
\end{quote}

By subjecting tourism’s development to the same obsession with large-scale projects that pervaded the culture of different governmental agencies, Skalon believed that both Baikal’s environment and the opportunity for humans to experience “pristine” nature would be undermined.\textsuperscript{55}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 52.
\textsuperscript{52} Skalon wrote to the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR, the All Russian Society for the Protection of Nature, the Buriatia Branch of the Siberian Division of the Academy of Sciences, the Baikal Commission, and the Commission of Nature Protection of the Siberian Branch of the Academy of Sciences
\textsuperscript{54} GAIO- fond 2844, opis’ 1, delo 34, 14.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 24.
\end{footnotes}
Skalon’s writings reflected the passion of a man who knew Baikal with a sort of intimacy that can only come through time observing its natural wonders firsthand. Oldak’s compendious economic analysis, which conceived of Baikal as a product for consumption, hardly evoked passions, but it held significantly more sway with government planners. Much to Skalon’s consternation, his persistent appeals to the Academy of Sciences and his original vision did not earn the Irkutsk Agricultural Institute a seat on the Baikal Commission—a consultative body comprised of civic organizations and governmental agencies for the use of the natural resources of Lake Baikal and the greater Baikal ecosystem.\textsuperscript{56} Although the archival record does not indicate the reasons why, we can infer several reasons. First, Skalon promoted a vision far outside of the mainstream of Soviet planning institutes. While he fondly remembered his wilderness travels through Siberia, which were central to both his personal and professional development, central planners saw Siberia through a different lens. The Institute of Economy and Industrial Development and Lengiprogor’s maximalist view for attracting more tourists through extensive infrastructural development was more compelling to planning agencies. While Oldak and Skalon agreed that Baikal’s natural beauty was its greatest resource, Skalon focused much more on how mass tourism could degrade it. In one letter, the recipient of which is unclear, Skalon summed this view up best: “TOURISTS SEEK THE PLACES WHERE NATURE IS PRESERVED IN ITS PRISTINE FORM. THE MORE WILD THE LANDSCAPE, AND FEWER TRACES LEFT BY THE ACTIVITY OF HUMANS, THE MORE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO GO TO IT.”\textsuperscript{57} This was likely difficult for government officials and central planners to understand.

\textsuperscript{56} GAIO: R-2844, opis’ 1, delo 142, 186. He writes: “On Baikal the state spends literally millions. People from all ends of the Union are coming to work on Baikal, but the Agricultural Institute remains on the side. This is completely unacceptable and I hope that the directive organs of the oblast will help us join with all of our strength to help solve the problems of Baikal.”

\textsuperscript{57} GAIO: R-2844, opis’ 1, delo 142, 223. Skalon typed this in capital letters for emphasis.
Oldak’s effusive projections about future profits did not take into account how the degradation of the natural landscape might discourage tourists from coming to Baikal. Effusive optimism regarding infrastructural development undoubtedly resonated more than calls of caution about its potentially harmful consequences. Finally, while there were certainly environmental protection projects that developed out of voluntarism on the local level, the development and protection of Baikal was already a hotly contested issue among many governmental ministries, civic organizations, and branches of the Academy of Sciences. With little more than nominal support from *Soiuzvodproekt* and the Buriatia branch of the Academy of Sciences, the passionate vision of a Professor of Game Management at the Irkutsk Agricultural Academy gained no traction.

Although Skalon’s unique vision was never even published, it is important for several reasons. In arguing that Soviet citizens yearned for wildness and an escape from “urban conditions,” Skalon echoed the words of recreational geographers and sociologists who thought that Soviet citizens were experiencing increased “nervousness” and “psychological stress” because of their distance from nature.58 Secondly, Skalon’s efforts reflected the growing opinion that tourism was the best means though which to engender love for native nature and that national parks were the best place to do this. We have seen this in the case of *Operation CH*, the work of the Moscow State University’s Nature Protection Brigade, tourist clubs, and pioneer camps. Finally, Skalon’s project is historically significant for what its failure reveals. In an era when economic concerns seemed to trump others, environmental protection proposals without a strong economic basis were increasingly, as Adolph Bratsev, who conceived

a park in the Circumpolar Urals told me, “empty noise.” The conflict between environmentalists who wanted minimal development and architects who wanted extensively developed recreational facilities played out in several cases in debates over Russia's national parks.

Most of the interested scientific community, however, realized that only by shifting the logic away from the “utilitarian attitude” towards the lake, for which Skalon expressed open disdain, could they hope to save Baikal from “predatory agencies” and fulfill the USSR’s responsibility before the rest of the world. The most “rational” use of Baikal would take into account its aesthetic and recreational, but most of all its economic value.

*A Vision of Regional Economic Transformation: Lengiprogor and the Buriatia Academy of Sciences*

Much of the Soviet environmental community viewed parks or a single unified park on Baikal as the cornerstone of a Soviet national park system, much as Yellowstone or Yosemite was in the early years of US national parks. Conversations regarding national parks at the Central Administration of Hunting and Zapovedniki almost unfailingly gravitated to Baikal. In a discussion on national parks at a meeting of the Main Administration’s Scientific-Technical Council in December of 1969, Iurii Efremov called the establishment of a national park on Baikal as “the direct fulfillment of Lenin’s position—the justness of which has been proven by past years of experience.” Undoubtedly, with much exaggeration, one participant from the Moscow Society for Naturalists argued:

It is necessary to preserve the natural complex of Lake Baikal not only today but forever. And what is being done to it now must be stopped! The preservation of natural systems under socialism and communism is our obligation. If this is taken away from the party program, the scientific foundations of communism are undermined.

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59 Interview with Adolph Bratsev (Syktyvkar, July 22, 2012).
60 RGAE, fond 7486, opis’ 33, delo 22, 35. “Lenin’s position” here refers to the 1921 sovnarkom decree “On the establishment of gardens, nature reserves, and parks.”
61 Ibid., 71
Writing in the youth magazine Smena, Oleg Gusev referred to the lake as an indelible part of “national consciousness” and “our souls” and a national park for Baikal as a potential “heaven on earth” and a “nationwide dream.”

The Irkutsk Oblast Executive Committee tried to accelerate the park’s establishment despite the absence of laws providing for the establishment of national parks in the RSFSR. On August 5, 1971, it passed a decree that called for the establishment of a national park on Lake Baikal’s southwest shoreline. Because of the wide and growing resonance of national parks among the international environmental community, this decree undoubtedly strengthened the growing belief of Baikal’s defenders that the lake was a globally significant natural treasure important for all of “humanity.”

From a purely ideological standpoint, such universalistic language in describing Baikal might not seem surprising. Marxism’s prediction of the dissolution of national boundaries made it an inherently universalist ideology. However, the Soviet government no longer spoke in any concrete teleological terms about the endpoint of the October Revolution. But the global environmental movement introduced a new sort of internationalism that grew prolificaly in the fertile ground created by Marxism-Leninism’s universalistic pretensions. Thus, perhaps more than environmentalists of most countries, Soviet writers characterized environmental protection as a universal striving and a shared goal that could unite all of humanity despite the fact that the United States and Europe had established the institutions for and fostered the culture of international environmental protection. While they would dutifully repeat the tropes that capitalism had an inherently predatory relationship to the natural

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63 The Central Committee of the Communist Party (CPSU) and the USSR Council of Ministers on September 24, 1971 passed “On Additional Measures for Providing for the Rational Use and the Preservation of Natural Resources of the Watershed of Lake Baikal” called for accelerating measures for the rational use of its natural resources...The Supreme Soviet USSR in September 1972 addressed the questions of the improvement of nature protection, which including Baikal.
world and that socialist society provided the foundation for a harmonious relationship with it, Soviet environmentalists were increasingly following and borrowing from the environmental protection discourse of the West. The sense of Baikal’s international significance would increase as the US-Soviet Joint Committee for the Protection of the Environment established a program for the collaboration of US and Soviet scientists oriented towards protecting Baikal, Tahoe, and the Great Lakes of North America.64

The planning on national parks on the shoreline of Baikal required cooperation and collaboration between different institutes. It was always unclear who had final authority over the project. After Gosstroy SSSR assigned Lengiprogor the task of designing this park and a more extensive recreation system in the Baikal area, the institute worked closely with the Institute of Geography, the Institute of Economics and Industrial Production, and the Buriatia Branch of the Siberian Division of the Academy of Sciences from 1973 to 1976.

Fortunately for Skalon and others of his mindset, Lengiprogor’s final project proposal for a zone of recreation around Baikal, which was published in 1977, reflected the influence of recreational geographers as much as the Institute of Economy and Industrial Production. As a primarily urban architectural institute, Lengiprogor would not embrace Skalon’s vision of “taiga tourism” in which he rejected all constructions of an “urban type.” However, the planners recognized the dangers posed by over development and the need of many tourists to experience undeveloped nature. “It would seem paradoxical,” the published

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report read, “but the demand of people to relax in the bosom of nature outside of a city brings to life new cities.” 65 Unlike Oldak, the architects of Lengiprogor acknowledged that this could compromise Baikal’s aesthetic value, which was essential for attracting tourists. 66

The architects developed a 5-category landscape classification system that characterized the recreational potential of the territories and sought the “optimal mutual interaction of people, technical systems, and natural complexes.” 67 The plans addressed the needs of both stationary tourists staying in hotels and those that preferred turizm. Lengiprogor also applied the concepts of recreational geographers, such as “recreational capacity,” to determine how many tourists could spend time in different territories within the five parks planned by the institute. Three of these parks would be located in the Buriatia Republic and two more would be located in the Irkutsk Oblast. Lengiprogor planned Barguzin National Park on a territory of 362,000 hectares on the western slopes of the Barguzin Ridge and Baikal’s eastern shore. The park would be used primarily for backpackers during the summer. Just to the south, Chivyrkiuskii National Park would occupy a territory of 155,000 hectares from the peninsula Sviatoi Nos (“Holy Nose”) and up the shorelines of the Chivyrkiuskii and Barguzinskii Bays. The park would also include the Ushkanikh Islands, which the Baikal nerpa frequented.

Many forms of mass tourism could take place in this park. To the south of the lake in the Buriatia Republic, Khamar Daban National Park—the only park completely away from the lake’s shoreline—would occupy the southwest part of the Khamar Daban Ridge with peaks

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65 Iu.B. Khromov and V.A. Kliushin, 37.
66 Ibid., 48.
67 Ibid., 25. The first category included only unique natural features that could be found nowhere else on the lake. The second category—maximum scenic value—included cliffs, large caves, waterfalls, and rare types of flora and fauna. The third category—scenic landscapes—included typical high mountain and taiga landscapes. These would be the areas with the widest network of transport and tourist trails. The fourth category consisted of minimally scenic territories. The fifth category—non scenic territories—included wetlands and other areas deemed less fit for the development of tourism. Tourists would not be allowed in territory of the sixth category—landscape significantly degraded as a result of human activity—until such territories had been revived after being taken out of use for an extended period. While construction that compromised aesthetic values would not be permitted in the most scenic territories, the architects realized that they would need to develop extensive constructions of the “urban type” to accommodate stationary tourists who preferred greater comfort and those who wanted to spend times in spas. 67
of 2,400 meters. The park would be oriented exclusively to turizm—mainly mountaineering, backpacking, and skiing.

In the Irkutsk Oblast, Olkhon National Park would encompass all of Olkhon Island’s 175,000 hectares, which are known for dramatic rock faces, archeological monuments, unique cliffs, and large caves. Favorable climatic conditions would make year round tourism possible on Olkhon. While Lengiprogor only established the principle directions and territory for the four above-mentioned national parks, the institute had developed an extensive plan for the final of these parks—Angarskii National Park. The 219,000 hectare Angarskii National Park, would be located to the east of the Irkutsk reservoir and extend to Lake Baikal. Primarily mountain taiga landscape, the proposed park included ridgelines that stood at 300 meters, numerous caves popular among spelunkers in Irkutsk, important archeological sites where prehistoric humans had lived, and varied views of the lake along the shoreline. The territory would include heavily trafficked areas—Listviianka, Malaia Kadilina, and Bukhta Peschanaia (Sand Bay). Considering this, the architects in close consultation with the Institute of Geography carried out a comprehensive analysis of the “recreational capacity” of each hectare of the proposed park. Through their analysis, they estimated that the park could hold a maximum of 45,000 tourists in one day.

Angarskii National Park would cater to tourists who wanted to see Baikal from boat, turizm enthusiasts who wanted to take multi-day hikes, and people sent by doctors to heal at a spa. The park would require significant state investment not only in building the infrastructure to accommodate the hundreds of thousands of tourists that would come every year, but also to restore natural landscapes that had been degraded by tourists in the recent past. Park administrators would make sure that no more tourists entered designated areas than the established maximum capacity would allow and that park rangers would regularly patrol to look
for signs of “ecological regression.”  

When tourism professionals observed these signs, the park would close one trail and redirect traffic onto a parallel trail. Both established shelters and tent sites would be located next to the trail for tourists who wanted to take multi-day trips.  

Lengiprogor acknowledged the priority that the Central Administration of Hunting and Nature Reserves had given to ecological education in future national parks. Accordingly, as part of the functional zoning in the park’s plan, the institute called for a zone of education where park visitors could become familiar with the basics of geology, botany, soil science, landscape science, and other sciences. However, the pedagogical component was clearly less important to the architects of Lengiprogor than it was to Skalon, who idealistically believed that many of Baikal’s environmental problems could be resolved by transforming the hearts and minds of tourists and hoped that the state would be willing to sacrifice significant profits in order to maintain Baikal’s “untouched” appearance. For Lengiprogor, the challenge was establishing the appropriate model, developing the landscape, building the appropriate infrastructure, and enacting the appropriate restrictions. If successful, the architects believed that tourists could come to Baikal in large numbers and still pose only a minimal environmental threat. Moreover, by bringing profits to the state, Baikal’s national parks would prove that the most economically rational use for the “sacred sea” was tourism and thereby establish the rationale for removing all industrial enterprises from the lake’s shore and the surrounding area. Such profits, however, required capital-intensive infrastructural development. The institute’s architects could not have guessed how difficult obtaining this investment would be.

_The Establishment of Parks on Baikal_

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68 Ibid. 95.
69 Ibid., 95.
While the Institute of Geography established working groups to accelerate a project for national parks on Baikal into law, central newspapers intensified their calls for establishing national parks or one national park on Baikal to take advantage of the “colossal” opportunities for the development of tourism. Frants Taurin, the famous Siberian writer who had been among the first to call for the park’s establishment in the late 1950s, said that the opportunities that the park would provide for people to encounter “untouched nature” would “enoble humanity.” Quoting a letter from an angler on Baikal, he wrote:

There is a dream. Let everything in and around Baikal be saved as it is. Let a hundred years pass, two hundred, and let it be as it is now. May the forest not be cut and the glorious sea and everything around it be clean...It is very important that we have such untouched places.

Miners, writers, academics, mariners, farmers, and children wrote to Literaturnaia gazeta calling for the establishment of a national park on the lake. With nearly three million tourists coming to the lake independently each year, some individuals who had studied and advocated for the lake for decades, like Oleg Gusev, argued that the tempo of the ecological damage caused by tourists was accelerating. Gusev argued that the establishment of a national park was the most important task for saving the lake. In a 1984 article in which he pushed for the immediate establishment of national parks on Baikal, he wrote: “No cosmic travel to

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70 V. Molozhnikov, “V spasitel’nyi krug Baikala,” Vostochno-Sibirskaja pravda, January 4, 1987, 4. V. Ermolaev, “Baikal smotrit v zavtra,” Pravda, September 8, 1980, 7. V. Ermolaev wrote: “We must bring to life another important idea: declare the lake and the forest, and all areas 15 kilometers from the lake a national park. The establishment of it will allow for the use of the natural riches of the “sacred sea” most of all for the organization of recreation and healing of people. The opportunities here are colossal.”

71 Ibid.


73 Ibid.

74 Oleg Gusev, “Baikal 80,” September 3, 1980, 11. At a meeting of the Irktusk branch of the All-Russian Society for the Protection of Nature Oleg Gusev showed photographs of the ecological degradation caused by recreation in the previous years.

75 Ibid.
the dead craters of Mars, but a walk along live Baikal has become a justification of our existence for our descendants. A corrupt relationship to nature will not be forgiven.”76 While space travel had demonstrated the fragility of earth and helped usher in an “Age of Ecology” that bound humanity together out of concern for its protection in the 1960s, two decades later, it had become clear that space travel would not allow humans to inhabit other planets anytime soon. This realization caused an increasing sense of urgency to protect the earth’s life-giving resources.77

In the 1980s, as the RSFSR was establishing numerous national parks, citizens from all over the USSR wrote to central ministries pleading for the establishment of parks on Baikal. These letters were read at the All-People’s discussion of the materials of the XXVII Congress of the CPSU.78 Skalon’s dream for a unified park lived on among many, most notably the Buriatia Council of Ministers. Noting that 80 percent of the shoreline and 60 percent of Baikal’s catchment area was located in Buriatia, the Buriatia Council of Ministers wrote to party officials calling for a unified national park with the administrative center in Ulan-Ude in early 1984.79 Not wanting to cede land to its neighbor to the east, on November 23, 1984, the Irkutsk Oblast Executive Committee passed a decree that again called for the establishment of a national park on Baikal’s southern shore. The park, which would include the territories of the proposed Olkhon and Angara National Parks would encompass 170,000 hectares. The Executive Committee sent the decree to the working group on the protection of

76 O.K. Gusev, “O Baikale s nadezhdoi,” Fostochno-Sibirskaiia pravda, November 2, 1984, 2. He writes: “I have to admit that among the defenders the idea of a national park did not have a universal understanding--its foundational tasks, legal status, and obligations, who needed to manage national parks and finance them in our country, and in the final analysis, what would be in it.” Gusev later stated that there should have been a unified national park but that local interests made this impossible. See: Oleg Gusev, “Sviashchennyi Baikal,” Sotsialisticheskii sovet, February 13, 1987, 1.
78 V.V. Vorob’ev, “Natsional’niy Park na Baikale” Geografiya i prirodnie resursi 4 (April 1986), 31. Unfortunately, these letters are located somewhere in a closed document collection in RGANI.
79 GARF, fond A-259, opis’ 48, delo 9334, 33.
the environment and the rational use of natural resources under the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR, which sent it to all interested agencies and ministries. With the exception of the Ministries of Forestry and Agriculture, both of which would lose land under their jurisdiction, the decree received unanimous support.80

The dream for a unified national park that encompassed all of Baikal’s shoreline died when the RSFSR Council of Ministers passed a decree that established Pribaikal’skii National Park on 418,000 hectares in the Irkutsk Oblast on February 13, 1986. 81 With the park under the authority of the Irkutsk Oblast Administration, the Buriatia Republic realized that the Irkutsk Oblast would likely have authority over any unified park. The Buriatia Council of Ministers thus passed a decree for the establishment of a national park on Sviatoi Nos, Chiuviriskii Bay, the Barguzin Bay, a portion of the Barguzin Ridge on the lake’s eastern shore, and the Ushkanikh Islands. This park would be under the authority of the administration of Buriatia. Despite the outside perception of an “all powerful,” centralized Soviet state, national parks, paradoxically, remained mired by poorly crafted legislation that usually placed them under regional administrations.

80 In what would become its frequent opposition to national parks, the Ministry of Forestry asserted that the borders of the park needed to be more precise in order to avoid future conflicts with ministries and departments with territories in the future park. BTsBK, the letter stated, requires 1.5 million cubic meters of wood a year and 450 thousand of them came from within the proposed territory of the park. The Ministry of Agriculture came out against it because it would take 153,000 hectares out of production.
81 GARF, fond A-259, opis’ 48, delo 9334, 105. For the next several years, writers from the Buriatia Republic emphasized that it would be more sensible to have one national park. See: N.I. Rubtsov, “Slavnoe more ili zakhlamlenny Baikal,” Molodezh’ Buriatii, September 12, 1987, 2.
Of these two parks, Zabaikal’skii is perhaps the more scenic. However, it is uninhabited and remote. Therefore, few tourists came to it in the years following its establishment. As a frequently visited park with many people living in 54 settlements within its boundaries, Pribaikal’skii National Park better illuminates many of the larger land use conflicts created by national parks in the Soviet Union. Moreover, the public largely pinned their hopes on Pribaikal’skii National Park for the lake’s salvation. I will therefore turn to Pribaikal’skii’s tortured early history.

Pribaikal’skii’s stated goals were “preserving the unique natural complex of the watershed of Lake Baikal, propagandizing its protection, and establishing the conditions for the development of a zone of organized leisure.” The park was placed under the jurisdiction of the Irkutsk Oblast Forestry Administration and its territory was located in eleven different forestry districts. According to the decree that established the park, mining would be banned and forestry activity would be limited to cuts of dead wood that posed a fire hazard. The decree banned independent tourism outside specially designated zones and allowed hunting only with payment to the park. The park would hold those living within its territory responsible for making sure that their territory remained in the clean condition expected of a national park. The park would take 112,000 hectares out of production from agricultural and forestry enterprises, but because of the inter-ministerial disputes about the park’s borders, the decree acknowledged that the

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82 M. Shagraev and F. Shtil’mark, “Natsional’nyi park—glazami ekologa: Sokhranit’s Baikal nash sviashchennyi dolg,” Pravda Buriatii, November 11, 1987, 2. The authors write: “Zabaikal’skii National Park by all of its natural conditions without doubt can be considered the most beautiful and scenic in the country.”

83 GAIO, R-3523, opis’ 1, delo 2, 2.
The Irkutsk Oblast Executive Committee together with the Ministry of Forestry RSFSR would be responsible for finalizing the borders, and Soiuzgiproleskhoz along with Lengiprogor were assigned the task of developing the “general scheme” of the territory of Pribaikalskii.⁸⁴

Fueled by an environment of uncertainty, hope, and a sense of unlimited possibility during perestroika’s early years, the park’s establishment sparked a wave of enthusiasm.⁸⁵ Referring to Pribaikal’skii as “the national park of the Soviet Union,” A.A. Trofimuk, one of the USSR’s most famous living geologists, asserted that the park’s future profits would make the losses of closing BTsBK and other industrial enterprises irrelevant.⁸⁶ Another article referred to the national park as “the lifeline of Baikal.”⁸⁷ “We must feel our guilt for the impoverishment of nature,” one writer wrote in Sovetskaia molodezh’, “the responsibility for it, as for a child. It is in our power to destroy much in nature, but to revive it, to bring back to life—is much more difficult. In order to not cause this destruction, the national park has been established. And so too it is also our responsibility.”⁸⁸

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⁸⁴ Among the organizations taking part in this study were the Institute of Geography SO AN SSSR, the Limnological Institute SO AN SSSR, the Institute of Soil Sciences and Agronomy, the Institute of Biology of the Buriatia Branch of the Academy of Sciences, and the administrations of several forestry districts.


⁸⁸ Ibid.
Following the USSR’s ratification of UNESCO’s World Heritage Convention on October 12, 1988, talk of making Baikal the USSR’s first UNESCO World Heritage site nurtured the dreams of many of the lake’s longtime defenders. In a quixotic proposal that illuminated the extent to which Soviet citizens were viewing Baikal as a “sacred” international space, over 100,000 Soviet citizens, united by the Baikal Fund, signed a letter calling for the Soviet government to immediately close BTsBK and declare Baikal a “neutral zone of non-proliferation” in the event of future global conflicts. The USSR Council of Ministers passed a decree that BTsBK would be turned into a furniture factory by 1993 that sparked the hopes of Baikal’s defenders that they might be witnessing a transformation of the state’s relationship to nature. The continued operation of the plant in the following years would repeatedly bring Russians out into the streets in protest against the pollution of the “sacred sea.”

But while perestroika might have kindled the dreams of environmentalists, including Baikal’s supporters, the USSR’s economic freefall compounded the difficulties created by the park’s poorly conceived decree. Winning the trust of people in the communities located within the park’s territory proved to be one of the most intractable problems. Environmental historians have written extensively about the conflicts between national parks and populations who had traditionally used the territory of the park prior to the establishment of the respective parks. While such conflicts were present in several areas of Pribaikal’skii National

89 http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/ru
Park, the most intense dispute occurred on Olkhon Island—perhaps the park’s most scenic area—because the island had several settlements whose inhabitants feared imposed restrictions on their use of the land. Before the park’s establishment, residents of Olkhon had supplemented their income from the state by selling 30 to 40 tons of omul a year. The national park banned this practice. Moreover, Pribaikal’skii’s ban on hunting cut what could have provided a valuable lifeline for the residents during this time of economic difficulty. While environmentalists wanted a park of “universally human significance,” the locals, as a journalist for Vostochno-Sibirksaia pravda wrote during the summer of 1988, did not need the park. He continued:

“What do we have today? The situation is becoming burdensome, to say the very least, to the local population living in the territory of the national park. It must be said directly that the people native to the region do not need the national park. It infringes on their economic use of the territory.”

Residents within the park’s territory had no interest in seeing the park question “more broadly” as another journalist stated. They were not interested in the tourist opportunities


93 GAI0, fond R-3523, opis’ 1, delo 17, 36.
94 V. Butygin, “Kakoi park nam nuzhen? O pribaikal’skom natsional’nom parke” Vostochno-Sibirksaia pravda, July 7, 1988, 2. He blamed these problems on the mindset among the park’s supporters that the national park must be “the best in the world.”
95 Z. Snimkina, “Bespravnyi Park: O zadachakh, problemakh, perspektivakh razvitia pribaikal’skogo gosudarstvennogo prirodnogo parka,” Vostochnaya Sibirksaia pravda, February 14, 1990. He writes: “The limitation in the regime of the use of natural resources, necessary for any national park, weighs on the interests of the local population and brings undesirable changes in the program of social and economic development in the territories in and adjacent to the national park. This complicates the relationship with local governments, which cannot, and frequently don’t want to look at the problem more broadly, or consider the development of the region in the conditions of the national park.”
for Muscovites, the lake’s international significance, or the quixotic fantasies of Baikal becoming a designated site of neutrality in the event of future global conflicts. With each passing month, they were thinking increasingly about how to survive.

The park’s administration recognized the tensions between residents and the park and proposed designating a “zone of traditional land use” to the Forestry Department of the RSFSR. The park’s director, Petr Abramnenok hoped that this would even encourage Olkhon residents to help the national park with carrying out its functional tasks. Olkhon residents, however, were not waiting for the designation of this zone and continued to sell fish and hunt, which was now labeled poaching. Taking full advantage of the inability of the national park administration to enforce its land use rules and the greater acceptance of private enterprise, the Olkhon Executive Committee established the Sarminskii Hunting Society, which was a commercial enterprise that would lead hunting trips on the Island. Letters flooded in from the Baikal Branch of the Russian Geographic Society, the Academy of Sciences, the Fund of Baikal, the All-Russian Society of Nature Protection, and other civic organizations as well as private citizens. Almost all articles asked the same question: “Can Baikal be sold?”

As with many parks around the world, tensions arose over the proper role for people living within Pribaikal’ski’s boundaries. I.P. Orkhonov of the Olkhon District Executive Committee insisted at a regional conference in 1988 that traditional land uses should not be compromised. Moreover, Orkhonov asserted that the national park should have to pay rent to the Olkhon District for using its land. The patronizing response of most of the conference participants undoubtedly intensified the resentment towards the park. Residents of Olkhon

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96 GAIO, R-3523, opis’ 1, delo 23, 1. Abramnenok proposed that the national park be responsible for giving hunting licenses to the residents of Olkhon.

97 V. Kalinkin, “Valiutnaia okhota: o perspektivakh razvitiia Pribaikal’skogo prirodnogo natsional’nogo parka” Lesnaia promyshlennost’, April 26, 1990. Numerous indigenous groups in Siberia took advantage of the weakened state, which was unable to protect its natural resources. See: Armin Rozencratz, “…And Cutting Down Siberia: Like the Rainforest, the Vast Fragile Taiga is Being Destroyed” ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Washington Post, August 18, 1991, C3.
were criticized for their “parochial interests” and the illegal character of their traditional uses that degrade nature.\textsuperscript{98} The Head of the Irkutsk Oblast Committee of Nature Protection, O.I. Vasilev stated: “I don’t understand whether the question under discussion is the protection of nature of the Pribaikal area or the protection of traditional land uses that have impoverished nature? I think that the priority needs to be placed on the protection of nature.”\textsuperscript{99} Despite the sensitivities that he had previously expressed for the plight of the local population, Abramenok called for the immediate acceptance of the general scheme. As the Irkutsk Oblast Executive Committee debated the general scheme with seemingly no urgency in the years to follow, Abramenok pleaded that it not accept the demands of Olkhon residents, which had expanded to making the entire island a “special zone of free enterprise.” Abramenok argued that this would go against UNESCO criteria for World Heritage Sites.\textsuperscript{100}

While Olkhon residents felt marginalized by the park’s attempt to curb their traditional uses of the land and newfound opportunities to take advantage of market-based reforms, the park was compromised by the seeming indifference of administrators in the Irkutsk Oblast Executive Committee and the hostility of the Irkutsk Forestry Administration. In an interview with \textit{Vostochno-Sibirskaiia pravda} in early 1990, Abramenchuk said:

\begin{quote}
It is revealing that for the entire time of the existence of the park not one of the members of the executive committee has shown an interest even in the idea of establishing Pribaikal’skii National Park--its tasks, problems, or future development. The Executive Committee, and more specifically its leaders, are interested in one question: what can the national park give to the region? The question, as it has been posed, is interesting, but it is a pity that a second question does not follow: what should the region give to the park and how can it help preserve the nature of \textit{Pribaikal}?.\textsuperscript{101}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{98} ANIIO, delo 705, 5.
\textsuperscript{99} ANIIO, delo 705, 6.
\textsuperscript{100} ANIIO, delo 738, 4.
With funding from the forestry districts or the Irkutsk Oblast Executive Committee consistently below the minimum for the park’s fulfillment of its basic functions, it was unable to construct the infrastructure that architects and economists had long said was necessary to bring in profits. For the four years following the park’s establishment, the construction of two campsites and the renovation of one tourist base were the only infrastructural projects completed.\textsuperscript{102} To try to raise money to carry out many of the park’s most basic functions, the administration introduced entry fees, but without services to provide for tourists who had previously been able to travel in the park’s territory independently, people complained that they were being asked to “pay for air.”\textsuperscript{103} Seeming to insinuate corruption on the part of the park administrators, others expressed distrust that the entry fees would actually go to infrastructural development and park maintenance as Abramenchik had claimed.\textsuperscript{104}

While the Irkutsk Oblast Executive Committee might have treated the park with neglect, the eleven forestry districts under Irkutsk Territorial Forestry Production Association treated it as non-existent at times and with contempt at others. The forestry districts regularly carried out unlawful timber cuts and illegally fished with nets and constructed banias in the protected zone. The harassment to which they subjected park administrators culminated in an illegal “audit” in which they raided and closed the offices of the national park for four days at the end of September, 1991.\textsuperscript{105} Illegal large-scale agricultural enterprises continued to operate and use banned pesticides within the park’s boundaries. Small-scale industrial enterprises

\textsuperscript{103} Abramchenik, “Den’gi za okhranu Baikala” Voctochno-Sibirskaja pravda, May 16, 1989. G. Mikheichik and Ju Balykov, “Kakaia okhrana” Vostochnaja Sibirskaja pravda, July 18, 1989, 3. One reader, A.M Zavalenkov wrote: “Why refer to intelligently organized recreation if it is completely irrelevant now on Baikal? After all, there are no service facilities. What kind of services do you have to offer? A convenient place to sleep? Firewood? Boat and tent rental? Everyone would be happy to give the ruble if things would be better organized.” Less than one year later, Zabaikal’skii National Park also introduced entry fees. See: V.S. Mel’nikov, “Rubl’ z vkhod” Pravda Buriati, August 3, 1990.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{105} GAIO, R-3523, opis’ 1, delo 46, 103.
took no steps to modernize their filtration equipment. Mining enterprises were pushing the Executive Committee to allow new quarries for mining marble within the park’s boundaries. The litter problem had become so bad that the park was forced to spend 40 percent of its budget on cleaning it up. With the park and the country’s future appearing especially bleak in the summer of 1991, Abramok wrote to the Irkutsk Oblast Executive Committee: “The position is best described as catastrophic. In Baikal irreversible processes are developing. The establishment of Pribaikal’skii as a ‘shield’ in the defense of Baikal demonstrates nothing more than hypocrisy: over the course of five years only five million rubles has been spent on the park. With a projected cost of 780 million rubles, the park will be constructed in 700 to 800 years at the current pace.”

If the park was going to be the “lifeline” of Baikal, as one article had stated, then it would also have to find a lifeline of its own. It was clear that it was not going to be the Irkutsk Territorial Forestry Production Association with which the park’s growing acrimony would soon become revealed in Vostochno-Sibirskia pravda. Abramok had requested transferring the national park to the RSFSR Ministry of Forestry as early as 1988 and would later propose putting it under the control of the State Committee on the Environment (Goskopriroda). Like so many others, he also called for the establishment of a bureaucracy within the USSR akin to the United States National Park Service. The Soviet and then

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106 G. Mikheichik and Iu. Balykov, 3. Kalinik, 3. Mikheichik wrote: “Right now the national park is so poor that it is not in any condition not only to construct the places for tourists to stay but to clean up the trash left by those spending time in the park on the shoreline.”
107 GAIO, R-3523, opis’ 1, delo 46, 121.
108 GAIO, R-3523, opis’ 1, delo 46, 105. In September of 1991, the Irkutsk Territorial Forestry Production Association ordered an illegal audit of the national park after the park’s director, Abramok, published an article in Vostochno-Sibirskia pravda accusing the director of the Association of various forms of corruption. In turn, Abramok wrote to the Executive Committee of the Irkutsk Oblast and the Ministry of Forestry RSFSR expressing “complete mistrust” in the association’s director and requested that the national park be placed under the jurisdiction of Goskompriroda.
109 ANIO, delo 660, 15.
110 GAIO, R-3523, opis’ 1, delo 33, 147-148.
Russian governments never realized this hope and the park was not transferred to federal organs of power until after the Soviet Union’s collapse. Moreover, while the park had started a fund for private donations shortly after it was established, this fund only had 500 rubles by 1990. As one journalist ruefully noted, Lahemaa National Park in Estonia had a private fund of 5 million rubles, 250,000 of which was given by the Estonian Society for the Blind.111

This pessimism about the park paralleled a broader disillusionment among the environmentalist community. The Soviet government had proven either unwilling or unable to meet the expectations that it had created by rhetorically giving more emphasis to environmental protection than in any other period of Soviet history.112 Finding international support for both the park and the lake therefore seemed like the best option. And Gorbachev’s politics of “new thinking” (novoe myshlenie) encouraged both the park’s administration and environmentalist community to look outside the USSR more than ever before. In a February, 1989 Izvestiia article, “Baikal Under the Protection of World Opinion,” Minister of Foreign Affairs, Eduard Shevardnaze said that Baikal should be the USSR’s first UNESCO World Heritage Site. Describing the purpose of such a designation, he stated: “It promotes overcoming the spiritual disunity of peoples, saving the very foundations of the planet….the convention is based on the principle that some natural monuments are the responsibility of all of humanity.”113 “Ecological problems,” the Soviet Foreign Minister wrote in Literaturnaia


gazeta later that year, “do not know national boundaries.”

On a Baikal fishing trip with Shevardnaze in July 1990, James Baker, the US Secretary of State, reaffirmed cooperation in many environmental protection endeavors, including the joint commitment to a program for preserving Lake Tahoe and Lake Baikal.

The park’s administration became increasingly sensitive to how far short Pribaikal’ski fell of international standards as it began interacting more with international partners and UNESCO designation was becoming more widely discussed. Beginning in 1989, Abramnenok had begun actively corresponding with national park officials in the United States, Czechoslovakia, and Austria, and environmental organizations, such as Greenpeace. He also started hiring American firms to provide expertise on the development of tourism.

In February 1991, the park along with the Baikal Ecological Museum wrote a memorandum of mutually beneficial cooperation with the California State Committee on Ecology. That summer, Abramnenok and several other workers from Pribaikal’ski spent several days in Denali National Park to learn about nature protection laws in Alaska. Russian and American participants taking part in the first program of the Tahoe Baikal Institute constructed ecological trails and a center of ecological education in the national park.

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114 Eduard Shevardaze, “Ekologiya i diplomatiiia” Literaturnaia gazeta, November 22, 1989, 9. On this point, Shevardaze writes: “Now we have turned the page on our ecological inactivity. The Soviet Union in word and action confirms its readiness to wide international interaction in the area of ecology. I will emphasize again that we are against the ideologization of this sphere of international cooperation where there are general human interests and values, and we consider that here there is no place for political ambition and confrontation.”


116 GAIO, R-3523, opis’ 1, delo 23, 145; GARF, fond A-259, opis’ 49, delo 3400, 71.

117 GAIO R-3525, opis’ 1, delo 46, 71.

118 Sotsuzgiproleskhoz archive: During that time, they shot 6 video films that they would in turn send to different Soviet national parks to learn about American administration of national parks.

119 GAIO R-3525, opis’ 1, delo 46, 69.
lished contact with legendary conservationist David Brower and his Earth Island Institute earlier in the year, Francis Macey, Gary Cook, and Brower came to Baikal to visit Pribaikal’skii and Zabaikal’skii National Park in August with 24 representatives of Canadian and American ecological organizations in order to make recommendations for establishing ecotourism.120

One day after the red, blue, and white Russian flag was raised above the Kremlin to signal the end of the Soviet Union, Abramenok effusively complimented his American partners in a letter to the Irkutsk Council of People’s Deputies. Soviet people needed, he stated, to think about what should be done to “avoid ecological catastrophe.” Without seeming to understand the magnitude of what had just occurred the day before, Abramenok said that looking to the Americans might be a good place to start.121

**Baikal National Parks in the First Years of the Russian Federation**

In late summer and fall of 1990, Paul Winter, the famous American saxophonist known for seeking inspiration in wild places, and Peter Mathieson, one of America’s most renowned nature writers, took a trip to Baikal. They would visit the most scenic areas in Pribaikal’skii and Zabaikal’skii National Parks and meet with some of the lake’s staunchest defenders, such as the controversial writer and environmentalist, Valentin Rasputin, and longtime director of the Limnological Institute, Grigorii Galazii. The expedition would be Winter’s third to Baikal since 1984.122

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120 David Brower served as the Executive Director of the Sierra Club from 1952 to 1969 during which time he transformed the organization from a mountaineering club to the most important environmental lobbying organization in the United States. Under his leadership, the Sierra Club took the lead in fighting many of the day’s most important environmental battles, including the push to establish the Wilderness Act (1964), the protection of Dinosaur National Monument from inundation (late-1950s), and the establishment of North Cascades National Park (1968). After being forced to resign by the Sierra Club’s Board of Directors in 1969, he went on to establish Friends of the Earth and Earth Island Institute. See David Brower, *For the Earth’s Sake: The Life and Times of David Brower* (Salt Lake City, 1990). GAIO, R-3523, opis’ 1, delo 46, 69.

121 Ibid.

122 Winner of seven Grammy Awards, Winter refers to his music as “earth music.” His music incorporates the sounds sounds of the natural environments that inspire him. See: http://www.paulwinter.com/paul-winter/musical-vision/
Over the course of his first two trips, Winter became close friends with one of the most famous living Russian poets, Evgenii Evtushenko, who was a native of the Baikal region. When the Sierra Club’s publishing arm was preparing to publish Mathiessen’s *Baikal: The Sacred Sea of Siberia* two years later, Winter asked his Siberian friend to write the foreword, which Evtushenko completed a month after the Soviet Union’s collapse. Having expressed admiration for his American friends for their hopes to “rescue” Baikal, Evtushenko wrote:

People of the so-called capitalist and socialist worlds have come far to face with the same tragedy—the deficiency of freedom. In capitalism this deficiency is less apparent because it is masked by the illusion of freedom, while that which was called socialism has collapsed just because the degrading visibility of this deficiency. Absolute freedom isn’t possible—indeed, it would be criminal, for a man who has become completely free becomes free from his conscience and from a sense of beauty, and that is fascism. But there is a grand sense of freedom preserved in feeling the preciousness of space, in feeling the uniqueness of each blade of grass on which the dew gleams like tiny eyes of the earth. Precisely because we die with rapture before the wide-open lap of the Grand Canyon, and before Baikal, which seethes in anger and caressingly licks its shores in moments of tenderness, we are in this instant neither Russian nor American, but heirs of the indivisible treasure of all humankind: nature.\(^\text{123}\)

He concluded his foreword: “Dostoyevsky once wrote: ‘Beauty will save the world.’ But who will save beauty.”\(^\text{124}\) While the goal of saving the “sacred sea” had become an increasingly international concern, who and what would save Baikal was increasingly uncertain.

Could the fledgling government of the Russian Federation actually “save” Baikal and Pribaikal’skii National Park, as it seemed unable to limp out of the rubble of socialism’s collapse? Following a government decree on December 27, 1991, which made national parks exclusively federal property, the government of the Russian Federation moved the park from

\(^{123}\) Mathieson, xii-xiii.

\(^{124}\) Ibid., xiv.
the Irkutsk Forestry Administration to the Federal Forestry Service of the Russian Federation. In theory, federal jurisdiction seemed to match the definition of “national” park more appropriately and temporarily gave environmentalists hope that it would not be subject to parochial concerns and vulnerable to local machinations. A law signed eight days previously reaffirmed that park land could not be employed for economic uses that went against the goals of the park and that damaged the environment. But the park received less than forty percent of its needed operating expenses in 1992, and the government’s draft resolution for a “Law on Baikal” in early 1992 made no mention of national parks. The park administration could not afford to build new infrastructure. If the park’s problems with litter became no worse, it was only because far fewer tourists had the time, resources, or energy to travel to the park. On the other hand, as was the case in much of the Russian Federation after the USSR’s collapse, poaching became even more common within the park’s boundaries as game animals became for many the most reliable food source. The park lacked the funds to monitor its territory. While Abramenko frequently defended the park by stressing the “advantages” for local populations living within a territorial entity where land was used in an

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125 GAIO, R-3523, opis’ 1, delo 75, 127.
127 For general comments on the problem of poaching throughout the Russian Federation see GARF, fond 10200, opis’ 4, delo 4477, 19. This letter from a group of scientists in the Academy of Sciences to President Yeltsin talks both about the pervasiveness of the problem and more specifically about protected territories having paid organized hunts for foreigners. Similar letters are found throughout this delo.
128 Dobrushin Archive, Pribaikal’skii National Park file. In 1995, the directors of Pribaikal’skii and Zabaikal’skii National Parks sent a joint letter to MVD calling for more monitors because poaching had become an unmanageable problem. I. Il’iashevich, “Pogranichnye konor,” Sovetskaia molodezh’, January 12, 1993, 2. According to this article, the park lacked the authority to fine poachers.
“ecologically enlightened manner,” the Irkutsk Oblast Administration sought to stoke the already strong suspicions of inhabitants within the park’s territory by portraying Abramok as an imperious steward who wanted a private fiefdom.\textsuperscript{129}

While the Irkutsk Oblast Administration had given permission to individuals and enterprises to illegally construct private dachas and bases of relaxation within the park territory during the Gorbachev era, this practice increased dramatically during the two years following the USSR’s collapse despite Abramok’s multiple appeals to the arbitration court of the Irkutsk Oblast.\textsuperscript{130} Although the national park was now legally under the Federal Forestry Administration, in late 1992 the Irkutsk Oblast Administration established a commission to redraw the park’s boundaries.\textsuperscript{131} As the administration propagated the argument that the national park was impeding the interests of the local population, the park administration argued that federal control best served their interests. In 1993, a research associate for the park wrote: “We are not selling Baikal to Moscow. Putting the national park under federal, and not oblast, jurisdiction, although at first glance it might seem paradoxical, is to protect the interests of the local population.”\textsuperscript{132} He continued: “It is possible that people simply do not understand that only the regime of the national park can save the shoreline of

\textsuperscript{129} GAIO, R-3523, opis’ 1, delo 62, 67. See: A. Gorbunov, “Deviatkaia Proverka,” \textit{Vostochno-Sibirskaia pravda}, September 10, 1992, 3. In this article, Gorbunov says that Abramok said that he wanted to establish his own “village council” (Sel’sovet) within the park’s territory. In a letter to the Kuibyshev People’s Court, the park denied that Abramok ever said this and expressed their desire to sue Gorbunov for slander.

\textsuperscript{130} GAIO, R-3523, opis’ 1, delo 44, 124; GAIO, R-3523, opis’ 1, del 76, 10. In a letter to the head of the administration of the Irkutsk Oblast, Y.A. Nozhikov, Abramok wrote: “In recent times more and more organizations, enterprises, and individuals are coming up with reasons to receive portions of land along the shoreline of Baikal to construct a house of relation or a private house (cottage).” These actions were a violation of Statute 24 of the Land Code of the Russian Federation.

\textsuperscript{131} P.P. Abramok, “V dvakh shagakh ot sine-zelenogo chuda,” \textit{Sovetskaia molodezh’}, June 6, 1992, 2. The park was moved to the Federal Forestry Service of the Russian Federation on May 18, 1992. Whereas the national park had previously carried out logging activity like a typical forestry district, Abramok believed that this would force the foresters to reorient their activity to the environmental monitoring of the park. He wrote: “Our forestry districts will become part of the service of the park. In essence the very structure of our structural units will finally be able to occupy itself with its original purpose--the defense and protection of nature.”

Baikal.”  

That spring, ignoring the pleas of the park and the independent ecological expertise, the Irkutsk Oblast Administration appealed to the government of the Russian Federation for the immediate removal of 112,000 hectares of the park’s land. The conflict between the park, the Irkutsk Oblast Administration, and those living within the park’s territory became widely discussed by newspapers, civic organizations, radio, and on television.

Operating under the jurisdiction of the federal government did not protect the park from the attacks of the Irkutsk Oblast Administration. The first assistant to the head of the Irkutsk Oblast Administration and the heads of the Olkhon and Sliudianka Districts wrote a letter to the Federal Forestry Service on June 10, 1993 that criticized Abramov and the government of the Russian Federation while tacitly questioning an undeveloped park’s right to retain so much territory. Other than that interfering with the livelihoods of local populations, the three officials asserted that Abramov had done little to distinguish the activities of the park from an ordinary forestry district. Moreover, the letter tacitly suggested that the government of the RSFSR and then the Russian Federation completely neglected the park. They wrote: “Pribaikal’skii National Park has not developed; the material base has not been established and the national park practically does not exist. The federal organs have no control over the work of the park.” If the park did not, for all practical purposes “exist,” why should the Irkutsk Oblast not use its territory as it saw fit?

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133 Ibid.
134 GAIO, R-3523, opis’ 1, delo 63, 76. About the Commission, Abramov wrote: “In the work of the commission public opinion played absolutely no role; the opposite occurred: public opinion was deliberately ignored. In making the decision in the administrative council no representatives of the national park took part, nor did members of the oblast committee on the protection of the environment. The commission practically ignored the conclusions of two state ecological expertise (Irkutsk and Moscow).”
136 GAIO, R-3523, opis’ 1, delo 74, 69, 29-03-1993: This is a prikaz essentially stating that there is little control of the workers of the national park and that they frequently break the rules of nature protection, bringing friends/relatives into the protected zones. Other documents make frequent mention of poaching in the territory of the NP.
137 Soiuzgiproleskhoz archive (In possession of Julis Dobrushin).
Following months of pleas by the park and the reports of the Irkutsk Committee of Nature Protection, which showed that the Irkutsk Oblast Administration was brazenly breaking nature protection laws, the government of the Russian Federation confirmed the illegality of the Irkutsk Oblast Administration’s removal of 625,000 hectares of the park’s territory later that summer.\textsuperscript{138} One month later, the directors of seven national parks and four nature reserves and representatives of many environmental protection organizations wrote an open letter to people of the Baikal region, the Irkutsk Oblast Administration, the Irkutsk Oblast Council of People’s Deputies, and the Federal Forestry Service.\textsuperscript{139} After accusing the Irkutsk Oblast Administration of trying to “discredit the system of national parks and protected territories of Russia,” the letter called for the organization of “international ecological monitoring” to safeguard against the caprice of government officials. The park and such a system, the letter argued, was in the interests of the citizens living within the park's territory to whom the letter was also addressed. The fact that so many residents living within the park had vehemently spoken against it seemed lost to them. Moreover, they did not seem to embrace an almost humorous irony about their proposal for “international monitoring”: if the local populations were suspicious about Moscow exerting control over their land, would they be more accepting of Americans, Germans, and other foreigners bringing practices that were more “enlightened”? The surviving documentary record reveals, unsurprisingly, that the opinions of the citizens varied depending on their respective interests.\textsuperscript{140}

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid. Also see GARF, fond 10200, opis’ 4, 4476, 87.
\textsuperscript{139} Soiuzgiproleskhoz archive. The letter was signed by directors or assistant directors of Vodlozerskii National Park, Panarivi National Park, Zabaik’al’skii National Park, Tunkinskii National Park, Samara Bend National Park, Taganat National Park, Pribaikal’skii National Park. It was also signed by the Baikal Fund, the director of the Baikal Ecological Museum, and others.
\textsuperscript{140} Soiuzgiproleskhoz Archive: As I have noted, the residents of Olkhon stood vehemently against the park. However, one letter that I found in the Soiuzgiproleskhoz Archive signed by nearly half of the residents of the settlement Khalgai on Olkhon, implored the Irkutsk Oblast Administration to stop taking land out of the park’s territory illegally. They concluded the letter: “We believe that the national park must retain its former boundaries or expand them according to the General Scheme of the Organization and Development of Pribaikal’skii National Park. We request that you do not interfere with the park’s work.”
For much of 1992 and 1993, the government of the Russian Federation appeared unable to stop the Irkutsk Oblast Administration from giving away portions of the park and of providing material support for the park’s development. But the government’s impotence came during a wave of global environmental idealism regarding the potential to create an “ecologically sustainable” future for all of humanity in the wake of the Rio Earth Summit (1992) and the dawning hope that humans had reached “the end of history”—a time in which the clash of political ideologies ceased to exist. In the absence of these divisions, many, like Evtushenko, believed that humanity could act together to save the Earth during this era of dramatic geopolitical transition. In this climate, Baikal’s defenders, like environmentalists in many regions, and the administrations of the lake's national parks transferred their hopes to foreign governments, environmental NGOs, and international organizations. For the duration of the 1990s, the bulk of funds for protecting Baikal and other regions of the Russian Federation came from the West.

Following the introduction of the Freedom Support Act, through which the United States sought to take advantage of the “historic opportunity” of helping Russia transition to democracy and capitalism, on March 6, 1992, George H.W. Bush and Boris Yeltsin signed an agreement that called for the two nations to work together to “save the unique ecosystem of Baikal.” Also in 1992, the Federal Ministry of Environmental Protection of Germany and

141 GAIO, R-3523, opis’ 1, delo 76, 6. The decree of the Council of Ministers on 10 August 1993 established that the land of national parks were under federal jurisdiction.
144 Laura Henry, Red to Green: Environmental Activism in Post-Soviet Russia (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 58. According to Henry, contacts with Westerners and Russian environmental leaders increased 10 times from 1991 to 1998 and that by the end of the decade Russian environmental organizations received 75 percent of their financial support from the West.
145 Ministry of the Protection of the Environment and Natural Resources, Problemy okhrany ozera Baikal i prirodopol`zovania v Baikal`skom regione (Moscow, 1994), 89.
the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Russia signed an agreement for collaboration on the development of ecological tourism. From July 26 to August 10, the Buriat and Irkutsk branches of the Academy of Science held an international symposium on landscaping recreational territory. In late 1992, representatives of the World Bank came to Baikal to discuss financial support for the development of recreational and environmental programs.

Because Baikal’s longstanding role in mobilizing citizen protest within a system in which government organizations independent from the state could not exist, environmental organizations and democracy proponents from around the world viewed Baikal as particularly fertile ground to promote the “rebirth of civil society” in the Russian Federation. The parks reciprocated by independently reaching out to international NGOs. Funded by the US Agency of International Development (USAID) and led by forester and former executive director of the Wilderness Society, George D. Davis, the NGO Ecologically Sustainable Development brought Americans to Olkhon Island. Working with Russians, they constructed interpretive walking trails, restored traditional architecture, and developed ecological education programs. A group from the Sierra Club also came to Baikal each year during the early 1990s to take part in recreational planning, constructing bridges, shelters, trails and cleaning up the territories of Zabaikal’skii and Pribaikal’skii. The administrations and several workers from both parks took part in yearly exchanges with the national park services of the United

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146 GAIO, R-3523, opis’ 1, delo 63, 149-150.
147 Henry, 3.
States and Canada from 1992 to 1994. In 1993, David Brower’s Earth Island Institute established “Baikal Watch,” which sought to coordinate training for Russian park officials while lobbying international organizations, such as the World Bank, to provide financial support for Baikal’s parks.

With environmental activism ebbing throughout the Russian Federation as the economic situation worsened, the foreign interest in Russia gave hope while causing understandable self-consciousness and insecurity. Speaking of the establishment of Baikal Watch, S. Domborvskii wrote in *Pravda Buriatii*:

> It seems that the foreign ecologists know better than us what is happening in our country and are more concerned about the fate of our forests and lakes. We are only learning how to orient ourselves towards nature. Through direct communication with these foreign ecologists, we can see their high level of culture and bring their experience to our country.

For decades, environmentalists had pushed for elevating the “culture of tourism” by making environmental protection one of its principle aims. Now, it seemed as though Russians had forgotten both the tourism and environmental protection traditions that had formed over decades under Soviet rule. The dream of a vibrant Russian civil society that would lead to the protection of Baikal still seemed far away.

During the 1990s, Baikal became a sort of testing ground where international organizations sought to carry out the ideas of sustainable development espoused by the Rio Earth Summit. Prominent international development organizations led two conferences for sustainable development on Baikal in 1994 with one referring to Lake Baikal as a “model territory

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149 Soiuzgiproleskhoz Archive. Abramenco and other national park workers in turn went to California and were made members of the Sierra Club. Upon returning to Irkutsk, he established the “Irkutsk Branch” of the Sierra Club. They visited Glacier, Waterton Lakes, Jasper, Shenandoah, and Harpers Ferry National Parks.


http://www.baikalwatch.org/?page_id=7. In Canada, the Society of Friends of Russia’s National Parks was also established also in 1993.

for the world." In 1994, the World Wildlife Fund began a project named “Conserving Russia’s Biodiversity,” which called for a $17.5 million investment in conservation projects in the Russian Federation. It called for directing $1.5 million to the conservation of Baikal and its environs. To lay the groundwork for UNESCO World Heritage Status, the US government under the auspices of USAID developed a land use plan for the Baikal watershed.

In sum, from the collapse of the USSR to 1998, international working groups carried out forty projects on Baikal priced at a total of more than $20 million. UNESCO named Baikal and the Volcanoes of Kamchatka Natural World Heritage Sites on December 4, 1996. For Baikal and other parks, environmentalists placed great hopes on UNESCO World Heritage status as both a tool for environmental protection

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152 Sustainable Development of the Lake Baikal Region as a Model Territory for the World. (Ulan-Ude, Siberian Branch of the Academy of Sciences. 1994). From May 11-17, 1994, the International Association for the Promotion of Cooperation with scientists from the Independent States of the former Soviet Union (INTAS) and the Siberian Branch of the Academy of Sciences sponsored a conference: “Baikal as a Natural Laboratory of Global Change.” From September 11-17, 1994, NATO’s Scientific Affairs Division and the Siberian Division of the Russian Academy of Sciences sponsored a conference, “Sustainable Development of the Lake Baikal Region as a Model Territory for the World.


155 N.L Dobretsov, “International Cooperation in Basic Research in Siberia: Major Results, Potentialities and Perspectives” Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO. International Conference: Baikal as a World Natural Heritage Site. Ulan-Ude, September 9-12, 1998), 30. This project provided direct financial support for 10 model sustainable development projects in the region, which were oriented around land use planning, sustainable agriculture, forestry, protected areas creation and management, historic preservation, environmental education, recreation planning, ecotourism and alternative energy.

156 A. K. Tulokhonov, “Assessment of International Cooperation Effectiveness from the Position of the Baikal Region” in International Conference: Baikal as a World Natural Heritage Site (Ulan-Ude, Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO 1998), 71. The largest programs were: TACIS, USAID, Global Ecological Fund, the Japanese Fund of Assistance to the Development of Political and Humanitarian Resources of Mankind, INTAS, and the Eurasia and International Baikal Center of Ecological Studies
and for publicity, which could attract tourists. In the afterword of Peter Mathiessen’s *Baikal: The Sacred Sea of Siberia*, David Brower wrote: “With World Heritage designation officially recognizing the universal importance and magnificence of Baikal, tourist dollars certainly would follow.”\(^{157}\) Baikal had received this designation, but significant profits from tourism seemed far off. Baikal’s national parks, which environmentalists hoped would be the “shield” and “lifeline,” disappointed another generation of Russian environmentalists. In *Vostochno-Sibiriskaia pravda* in May 1996, Abramenko lamented the situation. He wrote: “It is shameful that in our country until this time it is not clearly understood what is meant by the term national park.”\(^{158}\) On the one hand, Pribaikal’skii National Park had survived the attempts of government officials in the Irkutsk Oblast to reduce its territory, which the lake’s defenders argued would “discredit” Russia’s national park system. However, as Abramenko’s comment revealed, Pribaikal’skii, and for that matter, Zabaikal’skii had not protected the Baikal region in the way hoped for by Oleg Gusev, Innokentii Gerasimov, and especially V.N. Skalon, who wanted “the Baikal way of nature protection” to serve as a model for the USSR.

Despite the hopes of Russian environmentalists and the international community that Baikal could become “a model territory for the world,” BTsBK was still sending dangerous pollutants into the lake from the southern shore. Hundreds of international experts had come to the region to give their advice and share their experience. But it seemed to many that different international organizations had spent millions of dollars for the Baikal region’s development and protection primarily on the airline tickets that...

\(^{157}\) Mathiessen, 82.

would allow these experts to come and marvel at the lake’s beauty as they talked in circles. Evtushenko believed that beauty could bring humanity together in this new era in which history had supposedly ended. Perhaps people came together in a purely physical sense: people long-separated by a world polarized into rival geopolitical camps met on one of the world’s most inspiring landscapes. But Baikal’s environmental problems seemed no closer to resolution than when the hope of salvation from the outside world emerged from the wreckage of the USSR’s collapse.

While Baikal’s national parks had attracted more attention than parks anywhere else in the USSR and the Russian Federation, the stories of Baikal’s parks follow a trajectory common to Russian national parks. Viewing parks as a pragmatic approach to reconciling the development of tourism with economic development, environmentalists hoped that national park status could reorient economies away from industrial production and the extraction of natural resources while transforming the ecological consciousness of tourists and people living in and near the park. Political instability, a lack of clarity regarding authority over the park, the lack of transportation on a mass scale, and the almost complete lack of financial support resulted in the inability of the park to realize the ambitious goals and plans of environmentalists, architectural institutes, and the park’s administration. Facing perceived indifference from the government of the RSFSR and then the Russian Federation, park supporters looked to the international environmental community with hopes to realize their goals, only to meet bitter disappointment. We will see a very similar story on the Volga’s Samara Bend—the subject of the next chapter.

159 A. K. Tulokhonov, “Assessment of International Cooperation Effectiveness from the Position of the Baikal Region” Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO. International Conference: Baikal as a World Natural Heritage Site. Ulan-Ude, September 9-12, 1998. Tulokhonov asserted that as little of 1/20 of the expenses for many of the environmental projects on Baikal were going into the implementation of the projects. Most of the budgets, he argued, were used for airline tickets and accommodation for the many foreign experts who were coming to Baikal.
Chapter 7: Paddling Upstream: The Samara Bend National Park and the Transformation of Citizen “Environmentalism” from Soviet to Post-Soviet Society

“There is no Russia without the Volga and there is no Volga without the Zhiguli.”1

In the summer of 1890, a teenaged Vladimir Ulianov took a four-day float trip known as the Zhigulevskaia krugosvetka, which takes place in one of the most scenic and morphologically unique parts of the Volga River—the Samara Bend. Describing the trip many years later, A.A. Beliakov, one of Lenin’s companions, wrote: “Beauty confronted us at every turn. It came at us from every bend in the river.”2 A peninsular-like formation, the Samara Bend is shaped by three sharp turns in the Volga; after flowing south from Kazan for about 200 kilometers with occasional meanderings to the east and west, the Volga takes a hairpin turn and then flows west for 80 kilometers. Just beyond the village Shiraev, where Ilia Repin painted The Volga Boatmen, the river begins an arc to the south before turning west just beyond Samara.3 After flowing west for 130 kilometers, the Volga turns south and then maintains a much more direct course to the Caspian Sea.

Figure 23: Ilia Repin, The Volga Boatmen

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2 T. Krainova, “Luchshe drugikh povol’zhe,” Samarskaia luka 4 (April 1992), 4. Aleksei Beliakov, “Krugosvetnoe puteshestvie,” Legendy i byli Zhigulei (Kuibyshev: Kuibishevskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1979), 106. Beliakov wrote: “Vladimir Illich was here, full of movement and life. Apparently, he delighted in the infinitely powerful elements, among which, or rather in the power of which, our little boat seemed pitiful and helpless.” He also wrote: “I looked at Vladimir Illych and was happy because it was obvious that he was having a good time and relaxing with all his soul.”
3 V.V. Chitova and S.V. Saksonov, Samarskaia luka: zhemchuzhina Rossii (Zhigulevsk, 2004), 6. Ilia Repin once said: “The Volga showed itself to me as some sort of musical song.”
Wolves, elk, bears, and wild boar inhabit the territory of the Samara Bend. While much of its territory is comprised of gently undulating steppe, the Zhiguli Mountains, which rise up 600 meters above sea level, are its most scenic area. Reflecting on his trip around the Samara Bend much later in life, Lenin reportedly said: “In Switzerland it is good, but it is better in the Zhiguli.”

Since the early 20th century, the Samara Bend and the Zhiguli Mountains have attracted the attention of geologists, biologists, and geographers. In 1914, the famous geographer and geobotanist, Vladimir Nikolaevich Skuchaev, said: “It is unlikely that the naturalist can find in central Russia a more interesting place than the Zhiguli.” Thirteen years later, the establishment of the Zhiguli Zapovednik put the Zhiguli Mountains under protection. As the region became one of the USSR’s fastest developing hubs of industry after World War II, the zapovednik was liquidated 1951, re-established in 1958, and then liquidated again in 1961. During these years, the territory was targeted by the mining industry for its nonferrous mining materials. As tourists flocked to the region from all parts of the USSR to take part in the Zhigulevskia krugosvetka, the environmental degradation in the region was becoming increasingly well known throughout the Soviet Union. With the future of environmental protection in the region still in much doubt even after the zapovednik was reestablished a second time in 1966, members of the All-Russian Society for the Protection of Nature (VOOP) began pushing for the formation of a national park to protect the entire Samara Bend.

This chapter will tell the story of the successful efforts of scientists, civic organizations, and a broad cross-section of the Soviet public in pushing for the establishment

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4 Krainova. In 1921 in a questionnaire of delegates to the 10th Congress of the Russian Communist Party, to the question: “what area of Russia do you like best,” Lenin answered: “The Volga is the best of all.”
5 "Iz publikatsii i dokumentov," Volzhskii komsomolets, June 17, 1990.
6 Ibid. In 1914, V.N. Skuchaev, who later established the Institute of the Forest, stated that naturalists could not find more interesting places in central Russia and called for the protection of the Zhiguli. By the initiative of Ivan Sprygin, a pioneer in Russian environmental protection, the Zhiguli Zapovednik was formed in 1927. Although the zapovednik’s territory was expanded eight-fold in 1932, parts of it were excised for oil extraction during the World War II.
of Samara Bend National Park. While many of the scientists who led the push to create national parks on Baikal did so from positions of considerable influence in the Soviet scientific community, the movement for the establishment of Samara Bend National Park grew out of citizen activism in concert with the region’s academic community. As the park’s supporters in the Kuibyshev Oblast galvanized the region’s environmentally sensitive public and gained the support of influential scientists in Moscow, industries expanded their foothold, enterprises built houses of recreation, and high-placed individuals built private dachas within the territory of the proposed park. By the time Samara Bend National Park was officially established in 1984, extractive industries and numerous enterprises proved much more difficult to dislodge than park supporters had imagined, and the park administration struggled to sell its vision of transforming regional economic transformation through the development of tourism to the people living within the park’s territory. At the same time, the rhetorical prioritization of environmental protection under Gorbachev fueled the hopes of the park’s founders that the park might actualize its ambitious vision for economic transformation and cultivating a higher level of ecological awareness. As the gap between these hopes and the reality cast doubt on the vision for the park, the park’s longtime supporters vented their anger towards the state and communism’s inability to protect a “national shrine.” Samara Bend’s problems contributed significantly to the disillusionment with the Soviet system among environmentalists of the Kuibyshev Oblast.

In the wake of the USSR’s collapse, the introduction of contradictory laws turned the territory of Samara Bend National Park into an acrimoniously contested space. No stakeholder would give quarter and state officials were unable to settle the disputes through the assertion of strong authority. As the park’s longtime supporters argued that the actualization of territory’s recreation potential was impossible with the continued exploitation of its natural
resources by timber and mining industries, industry leaders asserted that closing these operations would be catastrophic for the region’s economy during a time of dramatic political and economic transition. Emboldened by their newfound freedoms, their sense of Samara Bend National Park as a space of international significance, and their concern for the image of the Russian Federation before the international environmental community, a radicalized generation of environmentalists staged one of the most explosive environmental protests to take place in the young Russian Federation. Ultimately, the park’s supporters met bitter disappointment and concluded—like their counterparts at Baikal—that neither the government of the Russian Federation nor oblast authorities cared about the park or protected territories.

From Visions of Transformation to Hopes for Protection

As technocratic optimism pulsed throughout Soviet planning agencies and among Party elites in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Soviet state planned to make the area around Samara Bend one of the USSR’s largest industrial centers. As part of the Great Stalin Plan for the Transformation of Nature in 1950, the USSR began the “Big Volga” program, which would involve a series of dams to produce the energy that would allow for dramatic economic growth on different points of the Volga while making the river more easily navigable for freight ships. The Kuibyshev GES, which would inundate the territory where the Volga turns sharply to the east, would be the largest hydroelectric station in the world upon its completion. Throughout the decade, journalists and propagandists celebrated the “conquerors of the Volga” and the “assault” on the Volga. Kuibyshev Hydroelectric Station, journalists frequently noted, was superior

8 K. Lapin, Pokoritely Volgi (Kuibyshev: Kuibyshevskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1956). L. Kovalev, Shturm Volgi (Kuibyshev: Kuibyshevskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1956). Volzhsko-Kamskii kaskad gidroelektrostantsii
to Grand Coulee, Hoover or any other dam in the United States. One journalist described completion of the Kuibyshev GES, which would produce six times more energy than all energy stations before the 1917 revolution, as the “incarnation of a dream” that once seemed fantastical, even “utopian.”

The “conquest” of the Volga would help the USSR move towards the Khrushchev Era dream of a socialist society in which cheap energy would propel economic growth, especially in the production of the consumer goods. The new industrial region at the Samara Bend would include fertilizer plants, petrochemical and electronic factories, and the USSR’s largest automobile plant. The construction of the Kuibyshev GES, these new industries, the model socialist city of Togliatti, and the living space for residents of the rapidly growing industrial region required access to vast stores of natural resources, much of which planners wanted to take from the Zhiguli Mountains. The Zhiguli had already been dubbed as a “second Baku” (Baku was the center of the Soviet oil industry) upon the discovery of oil deposits during the Great Patriotic War. In 1950, a mine opened on Mogutova Mountain in the Zhiguli to extract the stone needed


In major newspapers Soviet journalists consistently made comparisons to dams in the United States, especially Grand Coulee and Boulder Dams. In addition to noting that Kuibyshev was bigger and more powerful than any dam in the USA, they kept records of the amount of concrete laid for a dam in a day, hydroelectric production, size of dams, etc. I Kozmin, “Vvesti v stroy Kuibyshevskuiu gidroelektrostantsiiu v 1955 godu,” Pravda, August 21, 1955, 2. G. Krzhizhanovskii, “Dva giganta na Volge,” Izvestia, September 3, 1950, 2. Evgeny Kuizmov, “Zhigulevskaia letopis’” Literaturnaiia gazeta, December 31, 1955, 2. See: Paul Josephson, Industrialized Nature (Seattle: Island Press, 2002), 33. With some exaggeration and oversimplification, Josephson argues: “Most important, the dam would beat America’s Grand Coulee in capacity. This was hydropower envy at work, pure and simple.”


I. Osipov, V zhiguliakh (Moscow: Gosoptekhizdat, 1948). This book celebrates the oil deposits found in the Zhiguli and the possibilities that it presented for the transformation of the regional economy.
for the construction of the Kuibyshev GES. The Zhiguli Zapovednik was closed in 1951 and extractive activity expanded widely in the former reserve.  

With the central press focusing more on environmental problems throughout the USSR during the “Thaw,” the Zhiguli became an object of public concern. Viktor Vaninin painted a bleak picture of the Zhiguli in a 1959 Literaturnaia gazeta article. He wrote:

The new plant crumbles, crushes, and explodes the slopes of the Zhiguli, and it will only be a few dozen years when nothing remains of the charming pristine beauty of the mountains, which inspired generations of poets. Already, the right slope of the Zhiguli has been transformed into a sea, which causes a joyless impression. There are fallen trees, heaps of rubble, and huge mining pits.

He continued: “Daily, hourly, we must think about the Soviet person. It is for him that cities and miracle seas are constructed. It is for him that we must protect native nature!”

As concerns for the area's environment increased, tourists were coming to the area in larger numbers. In 1963, two years after Khrushchev liquidated the zapovednik for a second time, a group of 22 students from the Krasnoiarsk Pedagogical Institute, who had travelled on by boat around the Samara Bend that summer, wrote to the Kuibyshev Oblast Council of Ministers:

We Siberians, having spent time on the Volga, were inspired by the beautiful nature of the Zhiguli Mountains, which are no less beautiful than the landscapes of the Krasnoiarsk Pillars—the unique zapovednik of Siberia. Therefore, we were surprised to learn that these beautiful places are not protected and are being predatorily destroyed: forests are being cut, mining is taking place, although there are other areas to do this in the oblast. We are members of the Society of Nature Protection and we consider it our duty to say a

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16 Ibid.
word in defense of the Zhiguli and request the restoration of the Zhiguli Zapovednik.  

As was the case in many regions in the USSR, expanded tourism in the Zhiguli made the area’s environmental problems important to a geographically diverse group of Soviet citizens.

The defenders of the Zhiguli won some victories. After the Nature Section of the Local History Museum—led by Tatiana Tezikova—and the oblast section of the VOOP, which grew to 400,000 members by decades end, gathered petitions from different organizations, the RSFSR Council of Ministers reestablished the zapovednik in 1966. But this hardly assuaged the concerns of the region’s environmentalists who were now uncertain about the zapovednik’s future viability after it was dissolved twice and with the USSR’s largest automobile plant was beginning its operations just across the river in Togliatti. There is little doubt that seeing the sight of this new city rising on the scenic banks of the Volga increased a yearning for untouched nature, which in the ensuing years so many would argue was so important. Writing about the Zhiguli in the Kuibyshev newspaper Volzhskaja kommuna less than a year after the RSFSR Council of Ministers reestablished the zapovednik, I. Egorov wrote: “In many places the banks of the Volga are being turned into dusty, stone wasteland.” In an Izvestiia article the following year, N. Kozhelov described the zapovednik as “a weak establishment” and a “small island surrounded on all sides by oil drills, towers, quarries and crossed by power lines.” The

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18 GARF, R-10010, opis’ 5, delo 277, 53. The Kuibyshev Local History Museum began working with the VOOP on the question of reestablishing and expanding the zapovednik in 1965. See: GARF, R-10100, opis’ 5, delo 275, 66.
20 I. Egorov, “Byt’ Volge bogache i krashe!,” Volzhskaja kommuna, October 22, 1967, 3. A. Bochkarev, “Kar’er v zapovednik,” October 29, 1981, 2. In April of 1968, the Oblast Executive Committee passed a resolution that stated that the village of Shiraieva, where Repin lived when he painted “Burlaki na Volge,” was being turned into a “dusty wasteland.”
zapovednik had no scientific workers and almost no dormitories to house its few employees. Izvestiia quoted the chief forester of the zapovednik as saying: “This is a typical picture in the Zhiguli. They blow up the mountains, take away the forest, and fulfill the plan.”

Some concluded that a national park was necessary to save the Zhiguli. Shortly after the Central Committee had called for the liquidation of the Zhiguli Zapovednik along with others in 1961, the Commission on Nature Protection discussed forming a national park in its place. By 1965, the Kuibyshev branch of the VOOP had already established a working group called “The Protection of Significant Places and Natural Monuments,” which planned to map the best locations for protected territories in the oblast. The members of the Kuibyshev VOOP realized that the region's rapid pace of development meant the complete “inviolability” of the Samara Bend was unrealistic. Nonetheless, they knew that the region’s natural beauty needed be protected so that workers living in the region’s growing cities and towns, as well as people from all over the USSR, could have the opportunity to spend leisure time in what was perhaps the Volga’s most scenic area. In early 1966, Aleksei Zakharov, one of the progenitors of the idea for Samara Bend National Park, stated:

Nature is not only for the people in the sense of the resources it provides. We cannot forget that nature is an important factor in health of our people and from this point of view we must remember Natural monuments must be thought of as places of mass recreation for working people.

The local press touted the future prospects of the region for health resorts and tourism.

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22 Ibid.  
23 RGAE, fond 544, opis 1, delo 91, 30.  
24 SGASPI, Fond 616, opis’ 1, delo 105, 94.  
25 I. Egorov, 3.
The region was getting increasingly broad attention as a tourist region. The Central Council of Tourism had designated the Zhigulevskaya krugosvetka as an “All-Union Marshal.” In 1968, a group of students from the Kuibyshev Aviation Institute held the first Grushinskii Festival of Tourist Songs to honor their fellow student, Valerii Grushin, who died trying to save a young boy during a float trip on the Irtys River in the Sayan Mountains.\textsuperscript{26} Tourists from all over the Soviet Union taking part in these traditions could see the damage at the Zhiguli.\textsuperscript{27}

Planners soon came up with proposals for a park. By late 1968, the Central Scientific-Technical Council of Landscape Design had already completed a preliminary plan for a “nature park” that called for an infrastructural intensive “nature park” that would include high rise hotels. In October 1969, the Executive Committee of the Oblast Council passed a resolution that called for the establishment of a “Nature Park of Republic Significance,” which would include the Zhiguli Zapovednik and create four new temporary reserves (zakazniki).\textsuperscript{28} In December, Volzhskii komsomolets, a Kuibyshev newspaper, published a long article by L. Iarkaia describing the future national (no longer referred to as nature) park. Writing that the “landscape of the Zhiguli is under the threat of destruction,” Iarkaia asserted that the preservation of the Zhiguli and its

\textsuperscript{26} Christian Noack, “Songs from the Wood, Love from the Fields: The Soviet Tourist Song Movement” in The Socialist Sixties: Crossing Borders in the Second World, ed. Anne Gorsuch and Diane Koenker (Bloomington, IN, 2013). For a brief history of the festival and a description of Grushin, see: “XV Festival” Vol’zhskaiia zaria, July 3, 1988, 15. For an article that talks about both the festival and the Zhigulevskaya krugosvetka, see: M. Iurev, “Zacharovanniaa Volga” Volzhskii komsomolets, June 13, 1969, 3. L.I. Krivolutskaiia, “Festival na Volge” Samarskii kraeved (Samara: Samarskoe kniznoe izdatel’stvo, 1991). In the Fall of 1967 a telegram arrived to Kuibyshev that said that Valerii Grushin drowned on the Uda River in Siberia on August 29. In August 1968, Grushin’s friends took a trip on the Uda to set up a memorial at the place where he died. When they returned, they held a song rally in the place where they travelled on local trips. The organizers of the rally were the tourist club “Zhiguli.” They carried out the rally on the anniversary of his death.

\textsuperscript{27} Krivolutskaiia. By the late 1970s, over 100,000 people were coming to the festival each year and would celebrate his life and Soviet tourist song and tourist traditions.


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environ was possible only through the creation of a national park that regulated tourism and prevented natural resource extraction. While he described the forest as “attraction number one,” Iarkaia stated that the national park would need a health resort, apartments, boat clubs, beaches, and tourist bases. The future park, which would include a 40-story hotel, would contain four zones and would be able accommodate 180,000 people simultaneously.

**Galvanizing of Public Support for the Park**

Disagreements emerged among proponents of the park as to how unspoiled the park should be. The landscape architects’ vision of infrastructure-intensive development deeply concerned the head of the Kuibyshev local history museum—Tatiana Tezikova. Born in Samara in 1926, Tezikova worked in a Kuibyshev weapons factory during the Great Patriotic War. She entered the Rozhdestvenskii Agricultural Technical School in 1944 and graduated in 1947. After working as an agronomist at a seed base for six years and then continuing her education through correspondence courses, Tezikova began working at the Kuibyshev Museum of Local History (kraevedenie) as a research associate in 1956. She became the head of the newly established “nature section” in 1965. In this position, Tezikova would teach, among other subjects, the natural history of the region, the plant and animal world, climate, water resources of the Kuibyshev Oblast and nature protection.

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30 Ibid.
31 GARF, R-10010, opis’ 5, delo 275, 35.
32 GARF, R-10010, opis’ 5, delo 295, 8.
Under her leadership, in 1966, the museum along with the Kuibyshev section of VOOP carried out extensive work in gathering materials as many of its members argued for the reestablishment of the Zhiguli Zapovednik. In 1967 alone, her nature division carried out 242 excursions. She organized expositions on the natural attractions of the region and a television program, “Our Region,” along with the Society for the Protection of Historical Monuments. Presented at the museum, different educational establishments, and factories throughout the oblast, her lectures articulated her uncompromising vision for protecting the most scenic and historically significant places of the Samara Bend. Tezikova frequently stayed for hours after the scheduled end of her lectures to answer questions from enraptured audiences. While her teaching would inspire many, Tezikova’s unflinching devotion to nature protection would not endear her to all.

Upon her death in 2013, Yuri Roshchevskii, who would become one of the park’s strongest supporters and eventually the assistant director, described her character:

She was deeply respected by some while causing deep discomfort and fear in others. And that was because there was no hypocrisy in Tezikova, no guile, and no compromises; when it came to nature she spoke frankly and demanded that the law be followed regardless with whom she was speaking.

Her passion, persistence, and uncompromising positions helped engender strong environmental protection values among a generation in the Kuibyshev Oblast.

Many environmentalists in Kuibyshev shared Tezikova’s concerns. Letters from concerned citizens flooded into the Kuibyshev section of the VOOP and the Kuibyshev

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33 Ibid., 14.
34 GARF, R-10010, opis’ 5, delo 278, 5 and 87.
Local History Museum. In 1970, a group of young people from Togliatti wrote: “We demand from the architects to leave the Zhiguli Mountains wild. For the sake of humanity and science, do not kill this beautiful place.” A week later, the Kuibyshev branch of the VOOP held a meeting that included different civic organizations and representatives of universities in Kuibyshev, Togliatti, and Zhigulevsk. They discussed establishing a regional land use plan that focused on preserving the Zhiguli Zapovednik and protecting the shoreline of the Samara Bend through the establishment of the park. They passed a resolution that called for immediately declaring the territory of the Samara Bend a single zakaznik of “republican significance.” Signed by representatives from several universities, institutes in the Academy of Sciences, and local history museums, the resolution stated: “As a nature-historical complex and unique corner of Russian nature, the Samara Bend must be preserved forever in its natural form.”

Several months later, with Nikolai Alekseevich Gladkov, a renowned ornithologist and one of the most important environmentalists in the USSR, leading the effort, the All-Russian Society for

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36 SOGSPI, fond. 656, opis’ 197, delo. 534, 22. On March 27, 1970, a person by the name of Polkovnik Mel’nikov wrote: “I categorically protest against the construction in the territory of the jewel of the Middle Volga. I want this to charm to be preserved for our descendants.

37 Ibid. These letters are recounted in a letter that Tezikova wrote considerably later. Another letter from associates of the institute Kuibyshevpromstroiproekt said: “We strongly request that the nature of Samara Bend and the Zhiguli be saved in its natural condition and not allow construction in the mountains, especially close to Molodetskii and Usinskii Kurgan and the Zhiguli Gates and by the zapovednik.” Over 200 workers from the Masslenikov Factory wrote: “The Zhiguli Mountains must be saved in their natural condition as natural and historical monuments that are dear to us and as a place for tourism.”

38 L.V. Guseva and V.N. Kolmianskaia, “Roli” Tat’iany Vladimirovny Tezikovoi v Sozdaniii Gosudarstvennogo Prirodnoho Natsional’nogo Parka ‘Samarskai Luka’” Samarskaia luka: problemy regional’noi i global’noi ekologii 4 (April 2014): 193-201. The resolution was signed by members of the geological and botanical societies, members of the Northern Paleolithic Expedition, scientific associates at the Institute of Languages, Literature, and History of the Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Biology of Internal Water Bodies, the Institute of Geography, the Darwin Museum, research associates of the Local History Museums of Chuvash, Novosibirsk, Briansk, and others. There were 40 signatures in total. See: L.B. Guseva and L.V. Stepchenko, “Nikakikh podvigov ia ne sovershala, Ocherk o zhizni i deiatel’nosti T.V. Tezikova” Samarskaia Luka: problemy regional’noi i global’noi ekologii, Vol. 18, No. 2 (2009), 13.

39 SGASPI fond 616, opis’ 1, delo 105, 140.
the Protection of Nature's Central Council passed a resolution calling for a “national nature park.” Gladkov called Samara Bend “the equal of Baikal.”

In the course of the next few years, Tezikova and other park supporters wrote tirelessly to government officials, party members, and the scientific community. From 1970 to the park’s official establishment in 1984, Tezikova said that she “scribbled on hundreds of kilograms of paper” in letters to writers, journalists, scientists, local organs of power, the RSFSR Supreme Soviet, the government of the USSR, and high-ranking Communist Party members at the level of the Kuibyshev Oblast and the USSR. Within a few years after it was proposed, the idea had already received support from a wide cross-section of the Soviet scientific community in the Kuibyshev Oblast and beyond. Influential scientists, such as Grigorii Nikol’skii, Valeria Obedientova, and Aleksei Iablokov wrote letters to the Party and Council of Ministers calling for the establishment of the proposed park. In 1974, Iablokov, who would eventually serve as Yeltsin’s chief advisor on environmental matters, sent an open letter published in the magazine *Trud (Labor)*, which many renowned scientists had signed. It said: “When conversation goes to the Zhiguli, the shore of the great Russian river--the beautiful Volga--awkwardly shows itself before your eyes,” He continued: “The fate of Samara Bend is an evolutionary problem, which has theoretical (for

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40 *Problemy ratsional’nogo ispol’zovaniia i okhrany prirody Samarskoi Luki: Mezhvedomstvennyi Sbornik* (Kuibyshev, 1983), 4.
41 Guseva and Kolmianskaia, 197.
42 Among the organizations that expressed their support for the project were the Central Zoological Museum of Moscow University, the All-Union Zoological Society, the Ulianovsk branch of the All-Union Society of Botany, the Zoological Institute of the Academy of Sciences, the All-Union Entomological Society, the Kuibyshev Planning Institute, the Kuibyshev Pedagogical Institute and the Kuibyshev Polytechnical Institute.
43 No Author, “Iz publikatsii i dokumentov,” *Volzhskii komsonolets*, June 17, 1990, Nikolovski, a zoologist, wrote: “The question of the preservation of the nature complex of Samara Bend in the system of projects of nature protection of our Motherland has great significance from the scientific and the practical point of view, which expands beyond local interests.” T.V. Tezikova, “Naucho-pravovoiia osnova natsional’nogo parka,” *Samarskaya Luka* (Samara, 2001), 294. Representing the zoological society, A.P. Andriiasheva, a professor of ichthyology, wrote: “Samara Bend with its unique relief, islands of forests and animal world is a unique natural phenomenon in the Russian Valley. For Samara Bend it is necessary to develop a general plan for the organization here of a large national park.”
the theory of evolution and for biogenesis) and practical significance. The destruction of the nature complex of Samara Bend without any doubt will irredeemably impoverish our science and our people.”45

Iablakov’s rationale for establishing the national park demonstrated the larger ambivalence about the role and function of national parks in the Soviet Union. While Lengiprogor had clearly prioritized mass recreation, Iablakov’s interest was clearly in preserving the area for science and research. He and others believed that such a park posed as great a threat to the region’s nature as extractive industries. However, an area with increasing appeal to tourists and with nearly 70,000 permanent residents could not be locked up like a nature reserve. Led by Viktor Timofeev, a professor at Samara Pedagogical Institute and member of the VOOP, a group of environmentalists from the region sought to strike a middle path.

Born in Saint Petersburg in 1912, Viktor Timofeev moved to Kuibyshev in 1932 after finishing Semipalatinsk Agricultural Technical Institute. In 1933, he enrolled in the Kuibyshev Agricultural Institute and studied botany. Timofeev finished his Ph.D. before the war and then fought in the Red Army from 1941 to the war’s end. In 1946, he began working as an assistant professor at Samara Pedagogical Academy.46 Throughout the 1950s, Timofeev took long treks by foot, bicycle, and motorcycle in the territory of Samara Bend. By 1960, he had become an active member of the Kuibyshev Oblast VOOP and developed extensive contacts with Moscow environmentalists. Along with Tezikova and others, he had worked tirelessly for the reestablishment of the Zigulevskii Zapovednik.

45 “Iz publikatsii i dokumentov” Volzhskii komsomolets, June 17, 1990.
46 ASLNP: delo 57: Biography of Victor Timofeev.
Timofeev sought to enlist science in support of the park. Supported by the Kuibyshev branch of Gidroproekt, Timofeev began a study in 1974 called “The Scientific Basis for the Use and Protection of Samara Bend.” During the summers of 1974 through 1976, Timofeev and a group of geobotanists and zoologists from Kuibyshev Pedagogical and Kuibyshev State University took groups ranging from 20 to 50 students to the Samara Bend to carry out an extensive examination of the territory’s plant cover. Most of the students were members of Kuibyshev State University Nature Protection Brigade (druzhiny), which had formed in April of that year. With the state encouraging citizen-led environmental protection initiatives, such groups were thriving throughout the USSR. The professors consulted with the VOOP to work out plans for dividing the park into different zones with varying levels of protection. The final report consisted of the study of the biogeography of the proposed park, an inventory of the plant cover and animal world, nature protection zoning, and recommendations for nature use and protection.

Describing Samara Bend as a “green island” in the middle of “giants of chemical production and automobile construction,” the report asserted that the degradation of

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47 In my conversation with Iurii Roshchevskii, he told me that they used the utmost care not to use the word national park because of the potential controversy that this could cause, both because national parks did not have official status within the USSR, and the word “national” still raised the concerns of many.

48 ASLN: Delo 57: Biography of Victor Timofeev. Valerii Erofeev, “Dvadsatlet sputstia” Vremia ikst Source (May 17, 1994): 2. Erofeev writes: “However, the young activists of the nature protection movement (they were all then between 17-18) did not know anything about stagnation. And therefore decided to bring their full effort into lessen the ecological crisis, in which already then was brought in all the country and of course Samara Oblast.” Other nature protection brigades were organized in the Kuibyshev Pedagogical Institute (1976), the Kuibyshev Medical Institute (1979), the Kuibyshev Polytechnic Institute (1980). In 1978, a nature protection brigades formed in the Kuibyshev Oblast Komsomol where an inter-university oblast headquarters. It was the third such institution in the country. In 1980, the Togliatti Polytechnic Institute formed a nature protection brigade.

49 SGASPI, fond R-2305, opis’ 3, delo 40, 5.
the area’s natural environment stemmed from the absence of a unified decision-making center for the region’s development. With some of the USSR’s most rapidly growing urban centers in the region—Togliatti, Novokuibishevsk Dimitrovgrad, Naberezhniye Chelny and others—having increased several times over the previous two decades, unaltered nature was becoming more necessary for the “aesthetic and emotional pleasure” of the region’s inhabitants.\(^{50}\) Central governmental agencies, factories, mining organizations, sanatoria, and pioneer camps as well as tourist camps had been using the territory without concern for environmental impact. Out of this “chaos,” as the authors described it, the Samara Bend became more impoverished with each passing year.\(^{51}\) To improve the ecology and recreation value, the plan called for the removal of all tourist bases, dachas, houses of recreation, industrial enterprises, and extractive industries.

Sometimes referred to by the authors as a “museum in nature,” the park would simultaneously preserve the scientific, aesthetic, and recreational value of the Samara Bend. Tezikova and Zakharov asserted that Lengiprogor’s plan for hotels, motels, houses of recreation, tourist bases and a ring highway was unacceptable.\(^{52}\) They wrote: “Such intensive use of the territory of Samara Bend does not provide the possibility of preserving its natural values (which cannot be revived, but only preserved) and will transform it into a typical inhabited area.”\(^{53}\) Tourists, they argued, needed places unlike the urban areas that they desperately needed to escape.

Samara Bend will serve as an additional place of recreation where humans can relax in communion with pristine

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\(^{50}\) SGASPI, fond R-2305, opis’ 3, delo 40, 159.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 4. Asking the question: “In what sort of condition is Samara Bend,” the report stated: “Unfortunately, it is not possible to answer that it is good.”

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 2.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 158. Tezikova published many of the conclusions from this section of the report. See: T.V. Tezikova, “Samarskaia Luka” Kраеvedcheskie zapiski 3 (Kuibyshev Knizhnoe Izdatel’stvo: 1975).
By alleviating stress, they argued, workers would become more productive.\(^{55}\) The natural beauty and the area’s good weather, Tezikova and Zakharov assumed, would draw hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of people who could enjoy a wide range of recreational trails. While 75 percent of the park would have reserve status, the remaining one-fourth of the park’s territory would be dedicated to recreational purposes. Using the language and concepts of recreational geographers, the authors emphasized the necessity of establishing scientifically organized recreation zones to mitigate and even reverse the ecological impact of tourism.

The most important goal of the park’s supporters was to win powerful allies. In 1976, Timofeev sent the report out to numerous civic organizations and governmental ministries.\(^{56}\) Few in positions of authority welcomed the proposals to reduce industrial development.\(^{57}\) But transforming the regional economy to one oriented around tourism was exactly the point for Timofeev and the project’s other authors. The Samara Oblast Branch of the VOOP again called for the immediate establishment of a temporary zakaznik that would impose the land-use restrictions proposed by Timofeev and the project’s authors.\(^{58}\) Their activism, the authors hoped and believed, would spur government action.

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\(^{54}\) SGASPI, fond R-2305, opis’ 3, delo 40, 159.

\(^{55}\) Ibid.

\(^{56}\) The report was also sent to the Kuibyshev Geological-Scouting expedition, the Oblast Council of Tourism, the Zhiguli Zapovedniki, the Oblast Administration of Architecture, the Kuibyshev Oblast Museum of Kraevedenie, the Kuibyshev Pedagogical Institute, the Kuibyshev Planning Institute, the Kuibyshev Botanical Garden, and others.

\(^{57}\) SGASPI, R-2305, opis’ 3, delo 40, 194. The Kuibyshev Forestry Administration informed Timofeev that it had already planned cuts that would violate the proposed nature protection regime of the park. K.P. Iakovlev, head of Department of Construction and Architecture of the Kuibyshev Oblast Executive Committee, responded: “It is impossible to agree with the proposed plan on the full reduction of economic activity and carrying out of recreation projects in the territory of Samara Bend.”

\(^{58}\) Ibid.
While this project was something of a middle-path between the infrastructural-intensive plan of Lengiprogor and the stated priorities of some in the scientific community that the park should focus primarily on scientific research, the final project report and the VOOP resolution nonetheless left many unresolved questions and contradictions. The report emphasized that the park would answer the need of millions of citizens to spend time in “pristine” (pervozdannyi) nature. However, human activity had already extensively shaped the territory of the Samara Bend and over 70,000 people lived in the proposed park’s territory, with 50,000 in the city of Zhigulevsk alone! Were the authors proposing to carry out projects to re-cultivate anthropogenic landscapes to give the territory a more “natural” appearance? Would the inhabitants of the region have to leave? If not, what land use restrictions would the park impose on them? Was it realistic to assume that the service industry would provide enough work to compensate for the loss of work that would result removal of enterprises and the end of mining activity? And if enough tourists did come, how would the residents of Samara Bend react to hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of people spending their leisure time near their homes? When and where would the enterprises and industries within the park be relocated? Had the authors of the report not been working in virtual anonymity, the specifics of their proposal would undoubtedly have raised greater alarm.

Despite the lack of clear answers to these questions, the project and the VOOP resolution made the park the central rallying point for the environmentally concerned public of the Kuibyshev Oblast. Environmentalists would not relent until it was established. They had embraced the uncompromising view as to what constituted the appropriate land uses within the proposed park. Continued mining, above all else, stood as the foremost threat to the area’s recreation value. With Tezikova largely shaping the

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tone, the protection of Samara Bend had become the moral imperative of a group of increasingly uncompromising environmentalists. By the mid-1970s, the park’s supporters had set themselves on a collision course with the residents living in and the enterprises operating within the proposed national park.

**Industry’s Expanding Foothold**

As would occur with other proposed parks, the prospects of greater restrictions on extractive industries motivated these industries to expand their activities before the park was officially established. The Kuibyshev Oblast Executive Committee had done nothing to enforce the passage of 1969 and 1973 decrees, both of which called for the Kuibyshev Construction Materials Administration to carry out reclamation work in mining pits. On August 20, 1975, the RSFSR Council of Ministers passed a decree that blamed the Kuibyshev Oblast Executive Committee for neglecting these decrees, the RSFSR Law on Nature Protection, and the Land code of the RSFSR.60 The decree called on the USSR Ministry of Construction Materials to prepare a plan from 1975-1977 that would reduce mining in the Zhiguli.61 Every year mining operations took out up to 11 million cubic meters of rubble from the territory of the zapovednik.62 As Timofeev and his team were working on the Project for the National Park, the Oblast Executive Committee was negotiating with the Zhigulevsk Building Materials Combine on extending its lease in existing quarries. Illegal timber cutting also continued in the zapovednik.

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60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 K. Iakovlev, 47. A. Bochkarev, 2.
Throughout the decade, enterprises accelerated the pace at which they gave land for the construction of private dachas to their employees in the territory of the proposed park with over 10,000 constructed from 1971 until the park’s establishment in 1984.\textsuperscript{63} Moreover, during this time, different enterprises built more than 80 recreation bases, many of which marred the most scenic parts of the shoreline. The Zhiguli Zapovednik was living up to the criticism of it during the 1960s as a “weak institution,” and not just in its acquiescence to continued mining activity. In 1978, the administration of the zapovednik agreed to give land for the expansion of a limestone quarry in exchange for land of lesser value. In 1980 and 1982 respectively, the administration made no protest against the construction of a hotel by the VAZ Auto Factory within sight of its territory and the establishment of a hog farm in the land adjacent to it.\textsuperscript{64}

The regional press dedicated increasing attention to the environmental damage taking place in the Samara Bend. \textit{Volzhskyi komsomolets}, for instance, published over 250 articles related to nature protection in the Samara Bend during the course of the 1970s.\textsuperscript{65} The central press was also paying attention. \textit{Izvestiia} readers sent letters to the editorial board, which published many of them in a June 26, 1975 article. One reader from Volgograd wrote:

The Zhiguli is our pride, a region of rich nature and it must be inviolable. We need to remove quickly the heartless violators of nature. We have heard enough bureaucratic formal replies and promises. Our descendants will not forgive us for failing to preserve what nature has created for the joy of humans over the course of millions of years.\textsuperscript{66}

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{63} Iurii Roshchevskii, “Khronika obschestvennosti okhranit Samarskoi Luki,” (Togliatti: EBS, Obschestvo “Parkei” 1998), 6.
\item \textsuperscript{64} T. Zapredel’naia, “Budet li spasen unikal’nyi zapovednik” \textit{Volzhskii komsomolets}, February 5, 1993.
\item \textsuperscript{65} SGASPI, fond 616, opis’ 1, delo 353, 20.
\item \textsuperscript{66} Koshelov, “Prelestnye kartinki,” \textit{Izvestiia}, June 26, 1974, 3.
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In a 1977 *Pravda* article, “In Defiance of Logic,” after describing the disfigurement of the Zhiguli and the failure of the Kuibyshev Oblast Executive Committee to enforce previous decrees calling for reclamation work, Iurii Mironov wrote: “We believe that a state-operated national park must be organized here to preserve Samara Bend.”

Writing in *Sovetskaia Rossiia* in 1981, A. Bochkarev wrote: “We must utilize all our all strength to find deposits of construction stone so that we can finally end the destruction of the Zhiguli Mountains.” Soon they would get their park, if not all they had wished for.

**Establishment of the Park and Winning Friends**

Even as the park inched closer to establishment, the park’s supporters had not seen promising signs from government ministries that mining would end. The Ministry of Construction Materials had done nothing to investigate reducing the extraction of stone in the Zhiguli Mountains by the time that Bochkarev wrote the above-mentioned article. Moreover, in 1981, the year that the USSR Council of Ministers passed the “model regulation” on national parks, Gosplan RSFSR said that it would be “advisable” to stop quarry activity in the Zhiguli because of its importance in satisfying the interregional demand for non-ferrous metals. Nonetheless, with the support of VOOP, Kuibyshev State and Kuibyshev Pedagogical Universities, Tezikova, Roshchevskii, and Zakharov put together the necessary materials to send to the Council of Ministers.

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68 A. Bochkarev, 2.

69 Roshchevskii characterized the relationship of himself, Zakharov, and Tezikova as acrimonious and mutually-suspicious. Interview with Roshchevskii.
While Tezikova and Zakharov continued to barrage government officials with letters, Roshchevskii, as Timofeev had done several years before, took out members of nature protection brigades to the territory of the future park to carry out “green patrols” and continue zoning work for of the future national park.\(^70\)

After another RSFSR Council of Ministers decree calling for the protection of the Samara Bend and a conference that brought environmentalists throughout the Kuibyshev Oblast together to talk about the best means of doing this, the RSFSR Council of Ministers passed a decree in May 1984 that established the park and called for it to begin operations on July 1, 1985.\(^71\) The decree banned hunting, the collection of medicinal plants, and the use of herbicides by the date the park would begin operations. Of the park’s 125,000 hectares, over half came out of the state forest fund and 56,000 were from agricultural establishments (kolkhozy and sovkhozy). The Ministry of Forestry assigned the landscape design institute, Soiuzgiproleskhoz, the task of designing the park between 1985 and 1987.\(^72\) A resolution to the questions about the continued operation of mining and other enterprises within the park’s territory would wait until the plan for the park was completed. As with other parks, delaying decisions about the most difficult questions regarding the controversial land use practices within the park would only complicate the process of making Samara Bend National Park a functional nature protection establishment.

It is astonishing that the RSFSR Council of Ministers ever established the park considering the various land uses taking place within it that were irreconcilable to the

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\(^70\) SGASPI, fond R-2305, opis’ 3, delo 40, 6.

\(^71\) News with Commentary. “Byt’ natsional’nomu parku!” \textit{Volzhskaiia zaria}, March 5, 1984, 2. On February 27 and 28, 1984, the Samara Oblast Section of the VOOP along with the Zhigulevsk Zapovednik, the Brigade (Druzhiny) of Nature Protection of Kuibyshev State University, and 64 other establishments and organizations passed a resolution with specific recommendations for the national park, the official establishment of which was imminent.

\(^72\) Soiuzgiproleskhoz archive.
definition of national parks as envisioned by the “model regulation.” Four quarries operated within the territory of Samara Bend National Park. There were over 10,000 dachas and 60 establishments of short and long-term recreation located in the park. The Togliatti Chicken Factory, a hog farm, an airport, a psychiatric facility and the Zhigulevsk landfill also operated in the territory of the park. Park supporters insisted that they were illegal and aesthetic blights that must be removed. The profits from tourism, they argued, would make this possible. Tezikova believed that people living within the park’s territory would open cafes, souvenir stands, shops for renting tourism equipment, transportation services, and even dance halls.73 Describing her vision shortly after the official establishment in a letter to the central organs of the Communist Party, she wrote: “The social interests of the villages will merge with the interests of the national park. The villages will become an integral part of the composition of the park.”74 She asserted that work would be available to “every member of the family.”75 While Tezikova would continue to try to convince Party officials and different levels of government to make the changes that would make realizing this vision possible, Iurii Roshchevskii, who began working as a scientific associate for the park upon its establishment, would try to sell this vision to residents of the region.

73 SOGASPI fond 656, opis’ 197, 534.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
Born the son of an army officer of a group of Soviet soldiers located in Germany in 1947, Iurii Konstantinovich Roshchevskii moved to Kuibyshev in 1956. After graduating from the Kuibyshev State Pedagogical University with a specialization in teaching biology and chemistry in 1968, he taught in the pedagogical university for the next three years. In 1971, he started teaching at Kuibyshev State University and over the next fifteen years he taught courses in ecology and nature protection and led students on expeditions to Yakutia, the Murmansk and Astrakhan Oblasts, and Kazakh SSR. In 1975, he became the leader of the section of protected territories in the Kuibyshev Oblast Council branch of the All-Russian Society of Nature Protection. From that time, he began closely working with Zakharov and Tezikova. Having taken students to the territory of the proposed park for different ecological monitoring activities during the summers of the early 1980s, he began working in the park as the head of the scientific department in 1985 and brought many of his former students who had been active in nature protection brigades to work with him.

During his ten years working in the park, Roshchevskii was Samara Bend National Park’s public face as park directors, most of whom were political appointees who knew little about nature protection, came and went. From his first days working there, Roshchevskii wrote to anyone and everyone who he thought could help save Samara Bend. Recipients of his letters included officials from all levels of government, different
ministries, and some of the leading cultural figures of the day, such as Dmitrii Likhachev—the most authoritative voice in cultural preservation in the Soviet Union.76

Roshchevskii spent most of his time and effort educating the public about the national park. He wrote letters to tourist clubs about violations committed by their members. Each year Roshchevskii gave dozens of lectures in Kuibyshev, Togliatti, Zhigulevsk, and in small settlements throughout the area. He called for the “transformation” of the region’s socioeconomic structure with the park serving as the center for coordinating recreation, scientific, and economic activity.77 He wrote to heads of village councils and invited them to seminars about the nature protection regulations within the park territory, which they inhabited.78 All the while, he wrote consistently in regional newspapers, appeared on radio, and even wrote a documentary film script about the national park.

Beginning with the view of the Zhiguli Mountains from the Volga, the film’s narrator tells the viewer about the region’s geological history, the history of Stepan Razin and Emile Pugachev hiding from government officials in the caves of the Zhiguli, and the area’s many animals—elk, bear, wolves, wild boar, roe deer, and fox. Throughout the 45-minute film, the narrator consistently reminds the viewer to “respect nature.” The film concludes with a view from Molodetskii Kurgan, one of the most scenic points

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76 In a letter from September 1991, Roshchevskii wrote to Likhachev: “I hope that the nature of our region is dear to you. Therefore, I ask you if you will write three to four sentences for local newspapers. I hope that your great authority in the sphere of culture will give people strength to stand up for preserving Samara Bend.” The archival record does not indicate whether or not Likhachev responded. 77 Roshchevskii, delo 50 ASLNP. 78 Ibid. In one letter to a village council he wrote: “Many people still are not able to understand that in accordance to the nature protection goals in Samara Bend there are many things that one cannot do. One cannot arbitrarily erect constructions, catch butterflies, and plant a tree in conditions where it should not naturally grow.”
in the Zhiguli, onto the city of Togliatti—the city constructed to make the personal automobile accessible to all Soviet citizens. The narrator says: “Humans need modern comfort, but nature is no less important. Without it, humans cannot survive.”

Roshchevskii saw his and the park’s mission as inculcating a love for native nature. Moreover, he envisioned the park as an incubator of civic consciousness. Through educating citizens, he sought to empower them to feel that they could be architects of the society in which they wanted to live. The existence of the park, which had, in his words, developed “organically,” was a testament to this. Actualizing the vision of its founders required public support. In a 1988 article in Volzhskaia kommuna, he wrote: “Everyone must take into account that our nature national park is the only such organization in the country, established by the initiative from the bottom-up. And therefore it is precisely for us to decide what the national park will be like.”

Roshchevskii did everything possible to convince young people of this vision and wrote to any organizations—tourist clubs, participants of the Grushinskii Festival, Komsomol—that he believed would come to the park’s defense. Letters from concerned groups, in turn, poured into the offices of the RSFSR Council of Ministers, the Kuibyshev Oblast Executive Committee, and governmental departments and ministries.

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80 ASLNP, delo 50.
82 Iurii Roshchevskii, “Kraevedy na Grushinskom” Volzhskaia zaria, July 13, 1987, 2. On July 13, 1987, Volzhskaia Zaria, Roshchevskii wrote: “Young readers have the incorrect impression that the defense of nature cannot come from an initiative of the public and that it must be done from above.”
84 ASLNP, delo 54: Numerous letters from citizen groups conveyed concern for the park. In one such letter, a group of participants from the Grushin Festival in 1988 wrote: The unique nature, the legendary rich history, the original culture as before draws in people to Samara Bend. The establishment of the national park was an enormous step towards saving the peninsula, but it cannot be protected without immediate resolutions on the question of removing objects not compatible with its goals.” Another letter from the Kuibyshev Komsomol asserted: “The status of the park and the interests of millions of people, wishing to spend their free time there demands the removal of the dacha settlements outside of the territory of Samara Bend in order to realize the park’s foundational goals.
Despite the park’s broad base of vocal and passionate supporters, land use practices remained little changed in its first years. Some kolkhoz and sovkhoz administrators asserted that the park was an illegal entity and refused to abide by restrictions. In the first two years of the its existence, 90,000 cubic meters of timber were harvested in the territory of the park. The harvest continued in the following years with the pretext of removing dead wood. The park accrued nearly half of its revenues through timber sales. On the other hand, the park lacked infrastructure to bring in any revenues from tourism. Mining continued as before and poaching was common. The chicken factory and the hog farms emitted a putrid stench, which tourists frequently mentioned. Moreover, the Kuibyshev Executive Committee continued to propose the withdrawal of protected territory for the expansion of quarries in blatant violation of the “standard regulation.” Enterprises rushed to hand out more territory for dachas before the national park had the ability to enforce the new land use regulations.

Dachas posed their own problems. There were already 16,000 dachas in the water-protected zone near some of the most important natural and of architectural monuments. Trash heaps consisting of refrigerators, radios, and other household appliances on the property of private dachas littered one thirty kilometer stretch of the Zhigulevskaia Krugosvetka. One article characterized dacha owners as carrying out

86 GARF, fond 262, opis’ 17, delo 6086, 193.
87 ASLNP, delo 50. Roshchevskii writes: “Something scary happened: ignoring articles 16 and 40 of the Land Codes of the USSR, the decisions of the Oblast Executive Committee on the unacceptability of economic use in the water protected zone, the administration of the national park, the international criteria and the Soviet regulation of state nature national parks, the denunciatory articles in local and central press, thousands of developers of dachas rushed into the national park and took the most valuable parts of the shoreline.”
“chemical attacks” on adjacent lands. In early 1989, the Kuibyshev Council of People’s Deputies had stated that they would not address the prospect of removing dachas until 1997. Pioneer camps also impeded the park’s development of tourism facilities by taking up valuable space on the more scenic parts of the shoreline.

Even as the park seemed to be achieving little materially to develop infrastructure and become profitable, Soiuzgiprolekhoz worked on the “general plan” for the park, which was completed in 1989, but had relied little on the input from people living within it. But with the Soviet economy teetering on the edge of collapse, it looked unlikely that the park would realize its plan in the near future. Commenting on the situation, Roshchevskii wrote: “The park in actuality exists only on paper, but not on the Samara Bend.”

**Elevated Expectations, Disappointment, and Anger**

After 1985, glasnost allowed Party officials to acknowledge frankly that the Soviet Union had not paid enough attention to environmental issues. These same officials often welcomed protest and the airing of grievances to help the state best respond to environmental problems. This emboldened park supporters. Some articles in regional

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91 Ibid.
92 Anonymous, “Proekt est’. Shto dal’she?: O nekotorykh problemakh sozdaniia prirodnogo parka Samarskaia Luka,” *Volzhskaiia kommunu*, October 5, 1989, 4. Says that in the plans they did not inform the residents of Zhigulevsk which would be the administrative center of the park, the residents of the city of Togliatti, and the residents of the villages neighboring the park did not know about the plan. Iurii Roshchevskii, “Bushuit strasti” *Stroitel’ naia gazeta*, August 16, 1989, 3.
94 Marjorie Sun, “Environmental Awakening in the Soviet Union,” *Science*, August 26, 1988, 1035. At the 19th Party Congress in July 1988, Fyodor Morgun, chairman of Goskomekologiia, said: “One might say that for a whole era our Party, professional propaganda, and science have been entirely passive as far as ecology is concerned. For many decades, the environment has been undergoing catastrophic pollution.”
newspapers expressed the belief that the Soviet state would change its fundamentally exploitative relationship to nature.\(^{95}\)

With the park not able to change land use practices and motivate oblast officials to remove harmful enterprises, in the late-1980s, Roshchevskii, Tezikova, and others took a combative and moralistic tone. They frequently attacked “philistine” government bureaucrats who had a “consumerist” and “barbaric” relationship to nature.\(^{96}\) In one article, Roshchevskii insisted that dacha owners government officials, and the Kuibyshev Quarry Administration were determined to destroy the national park. A journalist by the name of A. Fedorov described the park land as developing into an “anthropogenic desert” and accused the Kuibyshev Oblast Administration of committing “crimes against ecology.”\(^{97}\) One article asserted that the nature of the national park would be “destroyed” by the end of the 1990s.

While the early criticisms in the press focused on the failures of the Kuibyshev Oblast Administration and suspicion towards different ministries, Roshchevskii, Tezikova, and others began tying their criticisms in the press and in personal correspondence to broader critiques of the Soviet system and the Russian state by the late 1980s.

\(^{95}\) V. Erofeev, “O budushem zadumaisia seichas,” Volzhskii komsomolets, June 5, 1987, 3. In an interview with Iuri Erofeev, a resident of Kuibyshev said: “We see the results of the reckless economic activity of the 1950’s now. Over the course of thirty years, a number of natural monuments, the former glory and pride of the Volga, have disappeared. Now the situation has changed in the country under perestroika. We are now considering society’s problems, including environmental problems. All this allows us to hope that posterity will remember us differently.”


In 1987, Tezikova wrote directly to Gorbachev about the “incorrect” relationship to nature demonstrated by Communist Party members of the Kuibyshev Oblast. She wrote:

The government of an enormous and powerful country should be ashamed of such robbery of national parks—saving mere crumbs of genuine nature, which are necessary both psychologically and physiologically, not to mention failing to meet the international obligations of the USSR to save relict and endemic species.

In letters to all levels of the government and the Communist Party, she chastised “communist-dachniki” (dacha owners) to illustrate the ironic hypocrisy of well-positioned members of the Party elite taking private plots in a system that purported universal equality.

Roshchevskii asserted that the problem had even deeper roots than the hypocritical Communist system. In a 1988 Volzhskaiia kommuna article, he wrote:

From the times of the tsars, there has been the incorrect point of view that first material needs must be satisfied and only then, if there is time and energy, spiritual demands of humans, including the protection of nature and culture, can be considered. This is a dangerous path. I think that as long as productive interests stand over our spiritual interests we cannot have an excess of objects of the first necessity and nature cannot be saved.

If Communism and the Russian state had done such a poor job at protecting nature, the question arose of whether other states were doing a better job. And the supporters of Samara Bend, like environmentalists throughout the USSR, were quickly concluding that they did. Writing about the park’s predicament in Volzhskii komsomolets, A. Fedo-

98 SOGASPI, f. 656, opis’ 197, delo 534, 42
99 Ibid., 65.
rov wrote: “In the West, reserves and national parks are national treasures. They receive attention and care from federal and municipal authorities. We just squander and foul up everything and everyone does whatever they want.” The “imagined West” had long been the measuring stick with which different groups of Soviet citizens—dissidents, refuseniks, hippies, and others—passed negative judgment on the Soviet state. National parks increasingly served as an important point of comparison for Soviet environmentalists to the superior commitment of Western democracies to environmental protection. While Soviet environmentalists had adopted national parks to modernize Soviet environmental protection efforts, the Soviet Union’s failure to develop Samara Bend, like other parks, was compromising the state’s authority before park supporters and the broader environmental community.

Above all other issues, mining in the national park continued to concern the environmentalist community and continued to attract attention well beyond the Kuibyshev Oblast. In 1987, the famous bard, Bulat Okudzhava, appeared at the Zhiguli Combine of Construction Materials to protest the continued quarrying activity following his appearance at the Grushinkii Festival, which convened for the first time that year after a seven-year hiatus. The following year the RSFSR Council of Ministers gave the park’s defenders a kernel of hope when it passed a decree that stated the Mogutova Quarry needed to close by 1990. Some environmentalists proposed leaving

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101 A. Fedorov, 17.
103 V. Koshevnikov, Kakoi byt’ zavtra Mogutovoi Gore” Volzhskaiia kommunia, February 28, 1988. Koshevnikov writes: “I consider the idea of the Zhigulevsk quarry administration as nothing more than a deceptive course of the agency, striving at any cost to protect its position at Mogutova. Saving Mogutova is possible by one means: closing the quarry.”
105 SOGASPI, f. 656, opis’ 197, delo 534, 50.
it as a reminder of an earlier era when “conquest” alone characterized the country’s relationship to nature. Mogutova could be, they argued, “a scary, ugly, cautionary reminder of thoughtless human actions.”

They still held out hope that the state’s relationship to the natural world would change. Others proposed to convert the quarry into a “cultural-sports center” with cable cars, cafes, a concert hall, a stadium, and water sports facilities.

Not surprisingly, the Zhigulevsk Quarry Administration and defenders of industry insisted that mining should continue. They characterized environmentalists as indifferent to the interests and livelihood of average citizens. In May 1988, the main engineer for the Zhiguli Quarry Administration asserted in *Volzhskaia kommuna* that it would be impossible to fulfill the region’s housing program by the year 2000 if the quarries operating in the Zhiguli stopped operating. In Togliatti, an organization of workers in different industries called “Social Justice” defended the interests of the industries under “attack” by the park. In an open letter to the newspaper, *Zhiguli rabochii*, the organization asserted that the closure of enterprises operating within the park’s territory would cost the oblast 3 billion rubles a year. Moreover, the letter said that the removal of pioneer camps, tourist bases, and houses of relaxation would have “serious social consequences.” Residents of the territory within the park increasingly expressed frustrations about the stringent land use regime that the new “masters,” Samara Bend National Park had imposed and skepticism about tourism’s promise to bring revenues that would be lost through closing enterprises.

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109 Ibid.
110 No Author, “Zashchitit’ Samarskuui Luku!” *Volzhskaia kommuna*, June 6, 1989, 3. One person who lived within the park, said, N. Novozhenyi: “Has anyone thought about whether they will pay for the park? One gets
Before the late 1980s, industries operating in the park did not need to galvanize public opinion in their defense. Production and extraction were the status quo and victories of environmentalists were rare. Now, environmental protection seemed more threatening with the Soviet economy spiraling downward and citizens throughout the country concerned about their ability to make ends meet. In this climate, it was not difficult for the defenders of industry and the enterprises that had long worked within the territory of the park to portray environmentalists as radicals who presented a threat to others' livelihoods.\footnote{For examples of such articles see: Vladimir Emelianov, “Zhiguli dolzhny zhit,” \textit{Volzhskaja zaria}, August 4, 1990. Vladimir Emilev, “Politicheskie Igry vokrug Zhigulei,” \textit{Samarskoe izvestiia}, October 31, 1990, 4. P. Zhigalov, “Po toiske u kar’era” \textit{Izvestiia}, July 12, 1990, 6.}

Defenders of industry were gaining strong support. In the summer of 1989, the Kuibyshev Oblast Council began setting timelines for removing mining enterprises. Citizens of Zhigulevsk and surrounding towns staged protests.\footnote{Ibid.} The city council reconvened and declared its responsibility for “reconciling the irreconcilable,” to provide for the continuation of mining in the national park.\footnote{See: E. Khrutina, “Sovmestit’ nesovmestimoe?” \textit{Volzhskaja komsomolets}, January 24, 1987, 3. The conflicts between the park and residents had simmered for many years. This article describes a conflict between the park and residents of three small settlements regarding the construction of a road through the park. Zakharov had argued that the park would undermine the scenic value of the territory through which it passed while the residents said that they already felt cut off from the outside world and needed it to get basic foodstuffs more easily.} To the enragement of environmentalists, the city council overrode the decree of the RSFSR Council of Ministers and called for the continuation of mining on 38 hectares.\footnote{GARF: A-259, opis’ 48, delo 6107, 3.} It also called for taking out of an additional fifteen hectares for clay mining. To add insult to injury, the decree asserted that the city of Zhigulevsk was taking responsibility for the “fate” of the national park.\footnote{Zhigalov, 6.} It all had seemed much simpler in 1987 when the narrator of Roshchevskii’s
documentary film told viewers that humans needed both material comfort and nature. Now, the council argued that the nature protection community needed to take into account the developing social and economic realities.

The park’s defenders still did not see it that way. Tezikova said that continued mining would be a betrayal of “national values” that any “self-respecting” state would uphold.¹¹⁶ If a city council could override decrees passed by the RSFSR Council of Ministers and blatantly violate the “model regulation” on national parks, what, if anything, made a national park “national”? Institutionalized state protection is what proponents of national parks had fought for in Baikal, the Samara Bend, and many other places. Reflecting ironically on the situation in an Izvestiia article, P. Zhigalov (likely a pseudonym) wrote: “In other countries national parks are under the direct guardianship of the of the government and the president. Will this happen at some point with us? In the meantime, at one of the meetings, a constructive proposal was heard…..hang the head of the national park so he wouldn’t stop the mining.”¹¹⁷ The heat of passions was reaching a dangerous temperature.

Post-Soviet Environmental Radicalism in Samara Bend National Park

The rise in the hopes of environmentalists, the USSR’s economic tailspin, and the backlash against environmental protection gave cause for deep reflection about the relationship between humans and nature in the RSFSR. In 1989, just two years before her death, the famous geographer of the Zhiguli and the Samara Bend, Galfira Valenteva Obedientova, wrote:

This story is the past of our Earth. Without history, we have no future. The Zhiguli...they are an open book, read it. And if we allow this book to crumble into pieces then who are

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¹¹⁷ Zhigalov, 6.
we? Owners? Barbarians? Protectors (khraniteli)? We are the people of the end of the 20th Century. But what are humans if they ruin the land? Of course, humans need bread, cement and fuel. But we need something else that will give the person spiritual fulfillment without which life, is meaningless.118

A generation of environmentalists in the Kuibyshev Oblast had found meaning in the belief that citizens could push the government to make changes that would improve their lives and the Soviet system. The nature protection brigades, which mobilized to the cause of establishing Samara Bend National Park, viewed themselves as (in the words of Evgeniy Shwarts) “children of the Soviet system” and in many ways its “ideal products.”119 By relying on state funding, nature protection brigades, like all quasi-independent organizations, had to keep their criticisms within self-imposed limits that required strict deference to the ultimate wisdom of the Soviet government, the Communist Party, and Marxist-Leninist principles. In this sense, the nature protection brigades believed that their work would help the Soviet system better provide for the “spiritual needs” of Soviet citizens.

By allowing citizens to air pent-up grievances against the state, glasnost had allowed the emergence of voices that shook the foundational values of the Soviet system. Glasnost publicly exposed the hypocrisy of Soviet ideology thereby rendering the system unable to offer meaning to groups, such as the nature protection brigades, who lacked a confrontational orientation. Clinging to their corporatist identity, the brigades failed to adjust to radically changed circumstances in which environmental

118 Ibid., 167.
119 Ianitskii,
protection took on an increasingly confrontational tone and pitted itself more directly in opposition to the system. Environmental groups were among the many “informal” organizations that proliferated throughout the Soviet Union starting in 1987. These organizations had names such as Green World (Kazan), Alternative (Saint Petersburg), Neformalniy (Volgograd), Green Shore (Gorky), Noosphere (Astrakhan), Pathfinders (Moscow), and Rebirth (Kaliningrad). Not controlled by the state, these groups would no longer be constrained by ideological platitudes and deference to governmental and Party authority, and they presented their cause as acting in concert with the global environmental movement. Their protests frequently drew thousands, even tens of thousands, of participants. Issues of environmental pollution on the Volga, including the area near the industrial ring of Togliatti, Kuibyshev, and Zhigulevsk, became one of the centers of attention for the nascent environmental protest movement.

Gorbachev’s reforms also allowed for the creation of new political parties in the Soviet Union, which further strengthened and emboldened the emerging environmental protest

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121 V. Komorovskii, *Argumenty i fakty*, June 3, 1989, 5. Alfred B. Evans, Jr. “Civil Society in the Soviet Union”, 46. The formation of “informal” organizations that could receive funding from non-state sources, which Gorbachev’s reforms allowed, changed the character of environmental protest. By the summer of 1989, the popular magazine *Argumenty i fakty*, estimated that there were 30,000 such “informal organizations” in the USSR. The following year, Pravda estimated that their numbers had reached 60,000. Moskovskie novosti estimated that there were 2-2.5 million members of informal organizations by early 1990. RGAE, fond 709, opis’ 1, delo 266, 170.
122 Vladimir Markov, “Demokratiia li fraktzionnost’?,” *Pravda*, April 18 1990. One article expressed the concern that the proliferation of such organizations were “categorically rejecting” the Communist Party’s leadership role.” See Vinogradov, 75-78. In 1986, following Chernobyl, there were mass petitions and numbers articles by well-known writers published in newspapers throughout the country. In Latvia, there were many lectures and thousands of letters written against the dams and hydro-electric stations on the River Daugava. June 5, 1987, around 70 thousand citizens gathered at a meeting; they demanded the end of construction of enterprises that were creating dangerous biochemical substances in the park zone June 1, 1988, in Krasnoiarsk there was an ecological demonstration; in the appeal of the initiating group thousands of people marched around the cities with different banners/slogans…most were focused on problems of the Enisei (pollution) (76)
123 Vinogradov, 78. In 1989, concern for the Volga became particularly accentuated by the concert “Rock for Clean Water” in which dozens of popular rock groups performed along different points of the Volga—from Nizhniy Novgorod, to Samara, to Astrakhan. Renamed to Musical-Ecological Protest Volga-90 the following year, over two hundred well-known groups performed to raise ecological awareness throughout the country and in particular about the Volga in June 1990.
movement. In April of 1989, a group of green “informal” organizations of the USSR gathered along the banks of the Volga across from Samara Bend National Park in Kuibyshev where they drafted the “Movement for and Establishment of Green Parties”. The founder of this movement, a 22-year old by the name of Sergei Fomichev, epitomized the shift in environmental thinking. Born in Dzerzhinsk, Fomichev was the son of a chemist and music teacher. He began his university studies at Kuibyshev State Cultural Institute, but did not finish. But Fomichev continued self-educating through reading previously banned literature about the green political movement in West Germany and the anarchist writings of Murray Bookchin, which had been inaccessible before glasnost. And in Kuibyshev, he saw firsthand the conflict surrounding Samara Bend National Park and the continued mining activity in Mogutova Mountain.

Fomichev became involved in the Samara Union of Greens. In 1989, he took part in a protest against the canals Volga-Don 2 and Volga-Chograi just before starting the Movement for the Founding of the Green Party.124 Two years later, he established the League of Green Parties, which he characterized as an organization devoted to the “radical re-ordering of the existing social structure.”125 With Bookchin’s teachings as the organization’s strongest ideological influence, the program of the league rejected both the capitalist and socialist mod-

124 RGAE, fond 709, opis’ 1, delo 266, 344.
125 O.N. Ianitskii, “Lager’ protesta na Mogutovoi Gore” Rossiia: Ekologicheskii vyzov (Sibirskii Khronograf: Novosibirsk, 2002), 337
els of industrial society and called for a “Third Way” (Tretii Put’) in which power was organized on the local, popular level. The anarchist orientation of the group rejected a centralized structure that would make the league members and component organizations subject to the single agenda. Rather, the league would provide a framework for locally-based independent organizations to get support on the informational and to a lesser extent material level.

Fomichev had already established one such organization, the “Rainbow Keepers,” in 1989. From its inception, the organization, modeled after Greenpeace, was oriented towards radical ecological protest. The Rainbow Keepers took active part in protesting the opening of the Chapaev Factory, which would be dedicated to the destruction of chemical weapons, which threatened the town’s water supply. The protest lasted 36 days and included over 7000 participants. In 1990, the Rainbow Keepers protested against the Balakovskii Nuclear Energy Station and in 1991 their protests helped stop the construction of the Gorky Nuclear Heating Plant.

The USSR’s economic tailspin resulted in the precipitous decline in environmental protest throughout the USSR in late 1990 and throughout 1991 and then nearly vanished in the Russian Federation’s first years. The Rainbow Keepers, however, remained active. In August of 1991, they blocked the administrative offices of the Zaporozhye Coke and Chemical Plant, climbed up chimneys of the tar refining section, and picketed for

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126 Ibid.
127 Fomichev had close relationships with the Association of the Movement of Anarchists, the Initiative of Revolutionary Anarchists, and the Anarchist Shock Battalion.
128 Ianitskii, 283.
129 Ibid.
130 Ianitskii, 283.
132 Jane Dawson,
13 days, demanding the redistribution of this ecologically harmful type of production to other similar plants in Ukraine. In 1992, Fomichev led a protest in Lipetsk against a Russian-Swedish enterprise for the production of sunflower oil that lacked adequate filtration equipment and posed a serious pollution risk. By the time the Rainbow Keepers had set their sights on Mogutova Mountain as their next place of protest, they felt increasingly empowered by their successes.

In the meantime, the Samara (formerly Kuibyshev) Oblast Executive Committee ruled that mining work could continue only in the form of reclamation. But rubble was being removed at a rate double that in the years prior to the oblast administration’s ruling. Moreover, the quarry operators continued carrying out earth-shaking explosions and in complete disregard of the ruling and despite the fact that the State Geological Committee had recommended many areas in the Samara and Saratov Oblasts where such mining could take place.

Given the significant time Fomichev had spent in Kuibyshev, it was only a matter of time before the Rainbow Keepers targeted Samara Bend as a place of protest. In early July 1993, they set up a protest camp next to Mogutova Mountain in Samara Bend National Park. The course and outcome of this protest was broadly reflective of the challenges to environmentalists and the desperate position in which national parks found themselves in the early 1990s. The reduced numbers of participants (46) in comparison to the protest at Chapaevsk (over 7,000) four years before reflected a dramatic decline in environmental protests throughout Russia. In the months leading up to the protest, protecting Samara Bend National Park through UNESCO designation or through UNEP had become widely discussed.

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132 Ianitskii, 284.
134 Zapredel’naia. She writes: “International science needs to know the condition this unique phenomenon, which belongs not only to Russia.”
Viewing Samara Bend as a subject of interest to the entire world, the participants included representatives from various anarchist organizations and Greenpeace. They came from Belarus, Ukraine, and even the United States.\footnote{In October 1990, the VOOP and the Zhigulevski Zapovednik carried out a scientific-technical conference “Samara Bend 90.” This was when UNESCO designation was first discussed.} In an interview for the magazine *Vremia*, Jennifer Adibi, a recent Russian Studies graduate from Brown University who was taking part in the protest, said: “Russian nature is the heritage of humanity, and therefore for us there is not a question of why I am here. The issue is saving a part of our common planet earth.”\footnote{Anonymous, “Matrosovy na gore mogutovoi” *Vremia*, August 1993.} During the protest, an anonymous correspondent for *Volzhskiy kommun* wrote: “But what significance does nationality have when somewhere a treasure of nature for all generations is being destroyed barbarically. This treasure belongs to all of humanity, and not to an evil quarry.”\footnote{Anonymous, “Srazhenie u gory mogutovoi,” *Volzhskaja kommun*, July 21, 1993.} As had been the case with Baikal, its defenders viewed the protection of Samara Bend through the internationalist paradigm made possible by the collapse of the USSR and the Rio Earth Summit, which emphasized environmental protection as a universal goal. Geopolitical divides no longer prevented Westerners from protecting the “heritage of humanity,” which happened to be located within the Russian Federation. While environmentalists had long emphasized the protection of nature as a universal striving, for a brief moment at the end of the Cold War, it seemed that citizens from around the world might be able to join together to save nature for the common good.

With people throughout the country struggling to make a living, animosity towards environmentalists became stronger in the early 1990s even as the hopes for international efforts for environmental protection continued to pique the imagination of a small minority. The local population and the workers of the quarry met the Rainbow
Keepers with greater hostility than environmental protesters had experienced in previous years. This hostility was understandable given the Rainbow Keepers increasingly radical tactics, which seemed now to resemble those of Earth First! as much as Greenpeace. The protesters set up camp on July 8 and immediately began blocking off sections of the hillside, seized drilling rigs, and laying down next to dynamite-filled holes. Quarry workers responded with threats of violence. On July 12, after the police arrested six protestors, including Iurii Roshchevskii, who was regularly at the protest camp and offered material, informational, and technical support through the protest. After threatening protestors that they would be forced to compensate the quarry for any financial losses, the police liquidated the protest camp on July 13.

Fomichev immediately made contact with the oblast prosecutor’s office, which confirmed that the quarry was operating in violation of the law. After the protesters reestablished the camp on July 14, unidentified assailants (in all likelihood quarry workers and perhaps, it was suspected, even the police) stormed the camp and assaulted several of the protestors. During the night of July 16, a group tore down the tents, forced members of the protest onto buses, and threw them out while going at a high speed. Less than a week later, explosions in the quarry resumed. After negotiations between the oblast administration, the director of the quarry, and the protesters, the Rainbow Keepers efforts temporarily seemed successful when the oblast administration changed course and called for the suspension of explosions until the completion of an “ecological review” on August 12. The success proved short-lived. In the months that

138 Zapredel’naia.
141 Ibid., 329.
followed, the official report concluded that the continued work “was not criminal.”\footnote{Ibid., 337.} The blasting in Mogutova Mountain was now legal and nature protection laws within national parks again proved both malleable and dispensable.

By his own admission, Fomichev was much more concerned with developing a strong activist-minded culture in the Samara Oblast and the growth of the Rainbow Keepers than he was about damage to a national park.\footnote{Ibid., 331. Fomichev said: “Strategically, I didn’t care that much about the fate of the national park. And saving Mogutova Mountain was not that important. It was about initiative an ecological movement that was capable to influence events in the region. It was even more important that the participants of the protest developed a feeling of identification and solidarity. Before the protest they accepted one another as separate activists. Now, more came to see themselves as members of the movement “Rainbow Keepers.”} In his focus on the means justifying the ends, Fomichev probably had more in common with Bolshevik revolutionaries than he cared to admit. But Fomichev’s approach did not discourage Roshchevskii, who had worked for the park since its first year, from supporting him for the duration of the protest.\footnote{Anonymous, “Stop, Mashina” Beringia 8 (August 1993).} In an interview with the ecological magazine, Beringia, Roshchevskii said:

I have never considered myself and do not consider myself now a follower of radical movements, but reflecting after the protest of the Rainbow Keepers I came to an unambiguous conclusion: in our country, where there is not a semblance of respect for the law, for ecological problems, and for nature protection, radicalism must become part of the activity of the public.\footnote{Anonymous, “Stop, Mashina” Beringia 8 (August 1993).}  

While Roshchevskii had believed that citizen efforts would transform the regional economy and the relationship of the average Soviet citizen to nature, now he and the park’s stalwarts were losing hope that the park could fulfill the most rudimentary nature protection tasks common to national parks throughout the world. His continued outspoken criticism of the “barbaric destruction of nature” in Samara Bend National Park led to
him being fired in 1996. In a public lecture two years later, he said, “People have become convinced that the most dangerous thing for nature is the government bureaucrat (chinovnik) who could clothe any unsightly action in the law.” Roshchevskii had once idealistically hoped bureaucrats would respond to grassroots environmental initiatives.

Roshchevskii, the nature protection brigades, and scientists throughout the USSR who had believed that society could push the state to act as a better steward of nature had become deeply cynical. Their disillusionment would only increase in the years to come. While the very establishment of the park proved that grassroots environmental initiatives had the potential to push the government to pass environmental protection laws, we will never know if the park’s supporters would have realized their larger vision of regional transformation had the USSR not collapsed. Tezikova, Roshchevskii, and others continued to push in vain from the outside and demand that the park fulfill its principal goals during the late 1990s. The Federal Forestry Service even demanded that its workers cut off all communication with Tezikova whose letters became increasingly embittered and accusatory.

With each passing year, the park became increasingly littered. All the enterprises and dachas that were supposed to be removed remained standing and regular blasting from the quarry in the national park was heard (and still can be today) in

146 Aleksander Petrov, “Odin zashchishchait prirodu, drugie khotiat povesit’ tekh, kto zashchishchaet,” Trud, February 11, 1995. In this article, Roschevskii says in an interview: “Neither ecology, nor the future of the enterprise worries the administrators. They are undertaking no effective measures to provide work for people or to stop the barbaric destruction of nature.”

148 Soiuzgiproleskhoz Archive.
Zhigulevsk and the surrounding area.\textsuperscript{149} Throughout the 1990s, as Roshchevskii, Tezikova, and others would continue to see protecting the Samara Bend as their life’s purpose and view its unmolested nature as a source of “spiritual fulfillment.” But for an increasing number of Russian citizens and the Samara Oblast Administration, “bread, cement, and fuel” (material necessities) were much more important. Moreover, fatigued from years of social and economic turmoil, the area’s inhabitants did not want any part of a vision of further reorganizing society after the “shock therapy” and privatization of the early 1990s. By the end of the decade, the Rainbow Keepers had disbanded. Nature protection brigades had faded into memory. Reflecting on the fate of Samara Bend National Park at a 2001 conference, Iurii Roshchevskii said: “The hopes of the public and its euphoria in regards to the establishment of a national park turned out to be naive. As might be expected, the region’s national treasure could not take care of itself.”\textsuperscript{150}

Traveling on the Zhigulevskaja Krugosvetka in the summer of 2013 helped me better understand Roshchevskii’s disillusionment. To this day, the enterprises continue to operate within the park’s territory. Dilapidated tenements from private recreation bases and empty beer cans and bottles line much of the shore. It seemed nearly impossible to find a campsite not strewn with litter. Blasting on Mogutova and other mines

\textsuperscript{149} See: S. Saksonov, “Samarskaia luka stala zhertvoi bazzakonii” Zhigulevskaja rabochii, April 24, 1993. Iu. Miganov, “Zhigulevskii sindrom: promblema sokhraneniia prirody Samarskoi Luki,” Volzhskaiia kommuna, November 9, 1994: 3. Iurii. Roshchevskii, “Zadachi menedzhmenta natsional’nogo parka ‘Samarskaia Luka,’” Samarskii krai v istorii Rossii: materially jubileinoi nauchnoi konferentsii February 6-7, 2001 (Samara: Samara State University, 2001), 299. At this conference Roschevskii said: “Trash was and remains a stumbling block for work of the national park....the most beautiful places Molodetskii Kurgan, Gavrilova Poliana, and many others are full of garbage.....trash in the national park has become a test of our belief in the possibility to preserve the unique heritage. Unfortunately, neither the regular visitors or the specialists on heritage, nor the government officials passed this exam. We all proved to ourselves that the cleaning up of trash in the best territory of the oblast for us is such an insurmountable problem, as for example, a flight to Mars.”

\textsuperscript{150} Iu. K. Roshchevskii, “Zadachi menedzhmenta natsional’nogo parka Samarskaia Luka” Samarskii krai v istorii Rossii (Samara: Samarskii Gosudarstvenyi universitet, 2001).
continues. In short, the establishment of a national park changed very little. The supporters of Iugyd Va—a national park in the Circumpolar Urals—would experience similar disappointments.
Chapter 8: Protecting the Pechoran Alps: The Formation of Iugyd Va National Park in the Komi Republic

Standing closely around the campfire and sharing a flask with night descending, we talked about the upcoming American presidential contest between Obama and Romney, the likelihood that the FSB knew my movements, the improvements in Komi Republic’s economy since Putin came to power in 2000, and how lucky we were not to have seen a mosquito for the past eight days. Not seeing a mosquito here in August was rare, but it seemed that our group had been lucky in most ways. True, I did eat an uncooked brown-top boletus mushroom freshly cut from Dima’s knife and for the next 24 hours was violently ill. For some reason, it did not have the same effect on him. But that was a mere blink in middle of eight days of sunny weather with clear views of the long undulating hills that quickly change to jagged and barren, granite peaks, including Manaraga, the highest point in the Urals, from which we took pictures holding the Russian flag overhead. We came independently from the Orenburg Oblast, Ekaterinburg, Syktyvkar, Perm, and Washington DC. For those eight days, we scarcely saw another soul and whatever was happening in the wider world seemed relevant only to the extent that it gave us something to talk about and the peace of knowing that we were temporarily not a part of it.

Dividing the Komi Republic and the Tiumen Oblast, the Circumpolar Urals, or “Pechoran Alps,” mark the “boundary” between Europe and Asia. While we never technically set foot outside of “European Russia” on this trip, the stark and rugged landscape of Iugyd Va—the national park through which we hiked—makes it feel like it is on the edge of the earth. Geologists discovered the vast mineral deposits located in the Circumpolar Urals, the Pechora River and its headwaters, which flow from the mountains’ base, during the late 19th
century. By the late 1920s, concerned about environmental degradation from extractive industries, scientists of various disciplines surveyed the region and pushed for its protection. Tourists, however, rarely visited this area until the 1950s and 1960s.

As tourists began discovering the Circumpolar Urals, the institute Gidroproekt was planning the diversion of the Pechora and Vychega Rivers southward to feed the Caspian Sea. Scientists of the Komi Scientific Center became deeply concerned about the fate of some of the most breathtaking scenery of the Komi Republic. But they realized the precarious position of the Soviet Union’s zapovedniki and understood the shift towards emphasizing economic, rather than scientific, arguments for the protection of nature. Employing the terms and rationale of recreational geographers from the Institute of Geography, the Commission of Environmental Protection of the Komi Branch of the Academy of Sciences argued that the establishment of a national park in the Circumpolar Urals could meet the “spiritual” needs of Soviet citizens for recreation in pristine nature. By so doing, it would bring the profits necessary for significant economic expansion in the remote republic.

Despite the positive reception from a public increasingly concerned with ecological problems and having powerful allies in the Komi ASSR Council of Ministers, Iugyd Va (“clear water” in the Komi language) received legal status at the national level in 1994 nearly two and a half decades after the idea for the park was originally conceived. Conflicting understandings of the purpose of national parks in the USSR, the skepticism with which Soviet

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1 First books on traveling in the Northern and Circumpolar Urals. G. Chernov, Turistskie pokhodi v pechorskie alpi (Syktyvkar: Komi knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1974). The first edition of this book was written in 1959. Chernov emphasized the connection between tourism and environmental protection. He wrote: “We appeal to tourists to remember to protect the scenic cliffs, the rare geological formations, the traces of activity of glacial cover, waterfalls, and so forth.” 11. A.O Kemmerikh, Pripoliarhny Ural (Moscow: Fizkul’tura i sport, 1970).
planners viewed tourism as a viable alternative form of economic development, and the center’s slowness to respond to regional concerns explain this long delay. As the park made its final steps towards attaining legal status at the national level in the wake of the Soviet Union’s collapse, supporters of industry portrayed conservation as a crippling impediment to the economic development of the Komi Republic and, in turn, argued for excising nearly one-third of the park’s territory. With few tourists traveling within the Russian Federation and the Russian government unable to develop the infrastructure that would be necessary for accruing the profits promised by the park’s founders, park supporters largely abandoned the economic arguments. Instead, as with Samara Bend National Park, the arguments of environmentalists took on a moralistic and confrontational tone in which they characterized protecting the “Pechoran Alps” as an issue of national dignity. Geologists, however, argued that the park was an unnecessary block to economic growth during a period of widespread hardship and suffering for the people of the Komi Republic. In turn, Iugyd Va turned into an acrimoniously contested space where extractive industries largely ignored the law protecting the park. Iugyd Va’s myriad problems reflected the tepidness of the Russian government towards national parks and other protected territories and the anxieties they aroused within the business community.

**Early Proposals and Fantastical Plans**

The first proposal for a national park in the Circumpolar Urals came from the Pechoro-Ilyich Expedition, which surveyed the Northern and Circumpolar Urals in 1929 with

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the goal of creating a reserve that would protect the endangered sable and the headwaters of the Pechora River. Although few tourists travelled to the region at the time, many respondents to a survey, which the All-Russian Society for the Protection of Nature (VOOP) sent to different government bureaucracies, scientific organizations, and interested specialists, also touted tourism’s potential in the region.⁴ A year after the expedition, the VOOP journal *Okhrana Prirody* presented the responses of scientists and interested organizations in an article that described the project as “in the model of American National Parks.”⁵

Alexandr Aleksandrovich Chernov, who achieved fame for opening the Pechoran coal basin just over a decade earlier, wrote in ebullient terms. “The *zapovednik* will be the only one for the Northern Urals, and by its sheer mass it will be outstanding not only for the Urals, but for the entire Union, comparing favorably in this respect with the National Parks of the United States.”⁶ One respondent stated that the park could eventually become self-sustaining from entry fees. When it received official legal status within the RSFSR in 1930, however, the Pechoro-Ilychskii Zapovednik’s explicit purpose was protecting the region’s declining sable population, which had been the justification for the establishment of the first Soviet *zapovednik* (Barghuzin Zapovednik) twelve years earlier.

By the mid-1950s, the Pechoro-Ilychskii Zapovednik and the equally scenic territory to the north of it were in danger. From 1934 to 1936, with the stated purpose of improving internal navigation, the Leningrad branch of Gidroproekt had proposed reversing the Pechora and Vychega Rivers through a series of reservoirs and canals that would divert the water into the Volga, from which it would flow to the Caspian Sea. One of the reservoirs would have

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⁵ Ibid., 66.
⁶ Ibid., 66.
inundated the zapovednik and areas adjacent to it. The outbreak of war in 1941 interrupted this “project of the century,” but 20 years later engineers found a more compelling rationale for the project. From 1929 to 1955, increased use of the Volga’s water for agriculture along with some natural fluctuation caused by tectonic activity under the Caspian reduced the level of the Caspian Sea by 2.4 meters. The sea’s surface shrunk from 114,000 to 84,000 square kilometers. The Caspian’s contraction had a deleterious economic impact. The fishing industry, which provided 17 percent of the USSR’s fish supply and employed 75,000 people, saw its catch fall off significantly. It also made shipping on the Caspian considerably more difficult. Engineers from the engineering institute Gidroproekt argued that diverting 60 to 70 cubic kilometers of water a year from Komi rivers would raise the level of the Caspian and stabilize the declining fish harvest, which would in time increase. They drafted new plans for diverting the Pechora and Vychega rivers beginning in the mid-1950s. In addition to the benefits to the fishing and shipping industries, supporters of the project argued that the increased water flowing through the Volga and into the Caspian would allow for the extensive development of vegetable production, viniculture, animal husbandry, and an additional 11 billion kilowatt hours from hydroelectric stations on the Volga. Moreover, they predicted a positive impact on the area’s arid climate. The net economic gains, the project’s authors argued, would pay for the costs in three to four years following its completion and would have a net benefit of

8 L.A. Bratsev, “Obsuzhdenie proekta perebroski stoka severnykh rek Pechory i Vychegdy v Bassein Kaspiia” Izvestiia Komi filiala geograficheskogo obschestva. 7 (July 1962).
A New Vision

One member of the rapidly growing Komi Branch of the VOOP, a hydrologist and research associate of the Komi Branch of the Academy of Sciences, Adolph Petrovich Bratsev, began conducting research on the potential impact of the project during the mid-1960s. He was convinced that the ecological impact would be catastrophic. On top of that, Bratsev was concerned that the creation of a reservoir would cost the Komi ASSR its most valuable scenic resource. While tourists had been coming to the Circumpolar Urals since the 1930s, they did not “discover” it in large numbers until the early 1960s following the publication of Grigorii Chernov’s *Tourist Trips in the Pechoran Alps* in 1959. Several years later, the well-known author of tourism literature and instructor of the Moscow Club of Tourists, Alexander Kemmerikh, wrote the first comprehensive tourist guidebook for the region published by a central publishing house. With increased flights to the republic and the completion of the Kotlas-Vorkuta Railway line, thousands of tourists were arriving to the Circumpolar Urals each year by the late 1960s. In turn, Bratsev started thinking about a national park at the base of the Circumpolar Urals to protect the headwaters of the Pechora and reap the economic benefits from the USSR’s tourism boom.

Because the Komi Branch of the Academy of Sciences did not have a department that could directly address this issue, Bratsev proposed the creation of the Commission of Nature Protection to two younger colleagues, Vladimir Petrovich Gladkov and Vladimir Petrovich

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Balibasov, both of whom enthusiastically supported the idea. After the Presidium of the Komi Branch voted unanimously in favor of the Commission’s formation, this commission of three held its first meeting, during which Bratsev proposed the idea of the formation of a national park in the Circumpolar Urals. With Gladkov and Balibasov supporting the idea, the Commission agreed that economic and quality of life arguments would resonate more widely among society and high-ranking government officials, who (in the words of Bratsev) often treated environmental protection advocates as “unwanted flies that they could just swat away.”

A gifted writer and the head of the division of media relations for the Komi Branch of VOOP, Gladkov led the public relations campaign for the establishment of the park. In August 1970, he made the case for the national park to readers of the Syktyvkar newspaper, Krasnoe znania. Asserting that the Komi was the last area of European Russia with a vast “wilderness,” which could serve as an escape from industrial civilization for Soviet citizens, he stated that a failure to act would lead to the exhaustion of the most “untransformed” areas of the Komi ASSR. He wrote: “Industry is eating up our beautiful natural places before our eyes. However, nature always pulls humans back. Previously, it was next to us. Now we must travel a little further.” Tourism and scientific research, he argued, constituted the only acceptable use of the land of the future national park. He concluded the article with an impassioned plea for readers of the newspaper to make their opinions known.

Tourists from all over the USSR wrote letters to the Commission on Nature Protection over the next two months. They extolled the “unique rugged beauty” of the Circumpolar

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14 Borovinskikh et al., Sokhranit’ prirodnost’. Pioneram gosudarstvennoi prirodookhrannoi sluzhbi respubliki Komi i ikh beskoristnim pomoschnikam posviashchaetsya (Syktyvkar: Minprirodi Komi, 2008), 23
15 In addition to using the press, Bratsev and Gladkov also appeared on radio programs in the Komi Republic. V. Gladkov, “Etalon severnoi prirodi. Sozdadim Komi natsional’ny park” Krasnoe znania, August 8, 1970, 3.
17 Ibid.
Urals, called for the expansion of the boundaries of the proposed park, and called on tourists to be good environmental stewards. The Syktyvkar newspaper *Krasnoe znamia* published many of these letters on October 1, 1970. Letters praised the idea and called for similar parks throughout the RSFSR. Emphasizing the potential educational importance of the park, the editors included one letter from a schoolchild from the settlement of Zheleznodorozhni in Komi, which stated: “The beauty of our Circumpolar Urals is very dear to me and I want this place to be protected. Our teachers of biology and geography instilled in me a love of nature, for the plant and animal world; therefore I am ‘for’ the national park!”

Fortunately, for the park’s supporters, V.A. Podoplelov and Ivan Pavlovich Morozov, the representative of the Komi Branch of the Academy of Sciences to the Komi ASSR Council of Ministers and head of the Komi ASSR Communist Party respectively, were sensitive towards nature protection. After Podoplelov agreed to the proposal, on May 28, 1971, the Komi ASSR Committee of the Communist Party and the Komi ASSR Council of Ministers passed a resolution: “On the Organization of the Nature Park in Komi ASSR.” The designated territory was 20.5 thousand square kilometers (nearly the size of New Jersey), stretching 300 kilometers north to south and 75 kilometers east to west. It encompassed the Circumpolar Urals in the Komi ASSR and the Pechora River watershed. The park would prohibit all industrial and economic uses except for regulated tourism. The resolution assigned

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19 Ibid. Y. Grube, a doctor from Syktyvkar, wrote: “The proposal must be presented in an even more affirmative form: the national park in our republic is needed by all of the country. This question has already been positively decided by specialists, on the one hand, and no less importantly, is has been decided by the thousands of tourists who have already judged the amazing beauty of the Pechoran Alps.” Another letter stated: “Speaking for myself, I am for establishing similar parks, not only in the Komi ASSR, but in every oblast, krai, and republic. It is necessary to save what remains untouched.”

20 Ibid.

the Komi Branch of the Academy of Sciences responsibility for making the methodological suggestions for the park’s development.

The following year, the Committee of Nature Protection led a trip to survey the geographical, biological, hydrological, climatological, and geological characteristics of the park. The resulting study made frequent mention of concepts from recreational geography, such as “recreational capacity,” which they measured at 30,000 visitors at one time, and referenced important works of the most prominent recreational geographers in the Institute of Geography of the Academy of Sciences. The authors also noted the lifestyle changes that came about with an elevated standard of living in the USSR. In the introduction, they wrote: “the lifestyle of the population has been transformed: with every year more people are captivated by travel. We call all of those travelers by the name of tourist.”

While only 1,500 registered tourists and perhaps 5,000 unregistered tourists from over 50 cities in the USSR came to the territory of the proposed park in 1972, the report stated that the park would eventually be able to host over 3 million tourists a year! It also explicitly stated that the tourists it was concerned with were those engaged in turizm (outdoor recreation) and estimated that their numbers would increase from 10 million in 1967 to 40 million throughout the USSR by 1980. Overly cultivated and developed areas, they argued, were not as interesting to Soviet tourists as “pristine” and “undeveloped” landscapes. While areas in Siberia and the Far East possessed similar appeal, the Komi Republic’s “proximity” to population centers in the European part of the country made it, they argued, the ideal location for the RSFSR’s first national park. A park in the Circumpolar Urals would, they believed,

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22 The other participants were V.P. Balibasov, V.P. Gladkov, I.G. Gladkova, L.P. Goldina, A.A. Estaphev, V.G. Kazakov, A.N. Latsenkova, V.N. Nadutkin, K.M. Plezhaev, V.V. Tureva.
23 NAKNTs UrO RAN, fond 1, opis 15, delo 18, 8.
24 Ibid., 7-8.
25 Ibid., 12.
allow larger numbers of tourists to experience “untouched” nature than parks in any other location in the USSR.

The Commission on Nature Protection continued its intense planning work despite a lack of involvement and cooperation from many of the bureaucracies to which the resolution had assigned responsibility. In 1973, the Commission conducted the study for zoning the park, which dealt with organizational and economic questions. It stated: “In recent years the possibility of economic development with non-industrial goals has appeared. This possibility is tourism, which has grown dramatically in the last decade.” The dramatic increase in tourism fueled incredibly ambitious projections about the park’s future economic benefits. The still unnamed park would work on the principle of “self-sufficiency,” accruing revenue through entrance fees, renting out tourist equipment, the sale of souvenirs and literature, and eventually renting out hotel rooms. This revenue would fund maintenance and the development of infrastructure (benches, docks, a hotel, campsites, etc.) as well as pay the salaries of game wardens, instructors, and the park administration. Frequently referring to the profitability of US national parks, such as Yellowstone and Great Smoky Mountains, the authors asserted that there was “no other branch of industry in the Komi ASSR that can pay off capital investment as quickly as tourism.”

The authors clarified that their goals differed significantly from previous nature protection efforts. They wrote:

26 NAKNTs UrO RAN Fond 1, opis’ 1, delo 1029: 25. Letter from V.P. Podoplelov to Z.V. Panev of the Council of Ministers Komi ASSR, April 25, 1972. This letter highlights serious organizational problems that the park faced. While the Ministry of Forestry was supposed to have ultimate jurisdiction over the park, they did not develop the organ that was supposed to coordinate the work of the various parties, thus leaving the park effectively without a steward. The Komi Oblast Council on Tourism and Excursions for the marking of tourist trails and the establishing of shelters for tourists at the mouth of the Vangir River was not being carried out. The Bureau of Hunting and Fishing under the Council of Ministers of Komi ASSR and the Committee on Physical Culture and Sport under the Council of Ministers of the Komi ASSR had not expressed their opinions on the new restrictions to use of this territory. Podoplelov concluded by requesting proposals from these organizations no later than July 1.
27 NAKNTs UrO RAN, fond 1, opis’ 15, delo 20, 85.
28 Ibid., 93.
We need to emphasize that a nature park is not a *zapovednik* in the full sense of that word. The park does not conserve natural resources as in a reserve, but the resources are *intensively* used. However, the economic use, as we consider it, is the recreational use of the natural resources. This use must not bring about the transformation or exhaustion of the landscape. In this case, the very purpose of nature park would be lost. Therefore, the most important condition for the long-term existence of the nature park is defining the stability of different types of landscapes under recreational pressure and the functional zoning of territory that will allow us to clarify the optimal capacity of different ecosystems.29

While much closer to large population centers than many areas of Siberia and the Far East, the park was nonetheless nearly a two-day train ride from Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Distance and the expressed “minimum comfort, maximum wild nature” approach that they wanted stood in contrast to the national park experience of the United States, and made the projections of 3 million visitors extremely unrealistic.30 Yellowstone, which was within a two-day drive of several metropolitan areas with over a million people, had just over 2 million visitors at the time they were making these projections.31

The Commission on Nature Protection and the Council of Ministers continued the public relations campaign at both the republic and national level during these years. The park received attention from the regional newspapers—*Molodezh severa* and *Krasnoe znamia*—while appearing in central newspapers and journals such as *Komsomol’skaia pravda, Lesnaia proyshlennost’,* and *Literaturnaia gazeta.*32 Three themes stand out in these articles. First,

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29 NAKNTs UrO RAN, fond 1, opis’ 15, delo 23, 31.
30 V.P. Gladkov, Letter to Gosplan RSFSR, Undated but probably from 1990. From personal archive of Alexander Kokovkin. The supporters of the park frequently referred to how they did not want to repeat the mistakes of US national parks where excessive infrastructural development caused noted environmental damage.
31 http://www.yellowstone.co/stats.htm
the writers, especially Gladkov, who was taking even more responsibility for the park’s promotion as Bratsev became more focused on studying the impact of the Pechora River diversion project, attempted to interest readers through descriptions of the park’s natural beauty--the diverse biology, the geology, relief, and other natural features. Secondly, they emphasized that the territory was unique to all of Europe in that it had not suffered from industrial or extractive use. Finally, these articles emphasized that the park was close enough to industrial centers to attract many tourists.

Gladkov and Bratsev hoped to garner more interest from the government of the RSFSR through exhibitions and writing about the park. They took part in an exhibition at VDNKh in Moscow honoring of the 250th anniversary of the formation of the Academy of Sciences in the spring of 1973. The local press celebrated their achievement and the ambitiousness of what would be one of the “largest national parks in the world.” In 1975, a Literaturnaia gazeta article featured the park and in 1977 the Komi Branch of the Academy of Sciences published a book--Priory park v Komi ASSR, which publicized the research conducted in the Commission of Nature Protection’s two aforementioned studies. This book (the first in the Soviet Union dedicated to a proposed national park), the Literaturnaia gazeta article, and an article two years later in Lesnaia promyshlennost’ implored the RSFSR Council of Ministers to give the park legal standing as soon as possible. Otherwise, industrial expansion and unregulated tourism would bring tremendous harm to the territory around the Kozhim River.

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33 This was one of the criteria established at the International Conference on National Parks in New Delhi in 1972.
34 Ibid. Celebrating their achievement, an article in Krasnaia znamia stated: “The scientists of the Komi Branch of the Soviet Academy of Sciences are the first in the country to establish a new form of nature protection and landscape use that will be in the north of our country. On the foundation of their work and recommendations, the Pechoro-Ilychskii Zapovednik needs to become in the future one of the largest national parks in the world.”
35 Zaboeva.
36 Ibid., 9. According to Gladkov, tourists had caused damage to the forests along the Kozhim River through cutting wood for their boats while destroying a large number of young salmon populations.
While the local press frequently spoke with pride about the imminent establishment of the park, the government of the Russian Federation seemed to be paying little attention to the pleas of the Komi Branch, the Komi ASSR Council of Ministers, and the press. In 1973, Gosplan assigned the Ministry of Agriculture the responsibility of examining the question of establishing the park. It considered the justification for the park inadequate for reasons not explained. After taking responsibility for the organization of the park in 1975, the Komi ASSR Ministry of Forestry, sent a list of the proposed staff of the national park to the government of the RSFSR. After refusing another request in 1976, Gosplan sent a letter only two years later to the Komi ASSR Council of Ministers that demonstrated the remaining confusion of the purpose and function of a national park. It stated:

In the territory of the Russian Federation, there are no Nature or National Parks, the statute of these parks is not developed, the tasks assigned to the parks and their organization is not clear. In connection with this, Gosplan RSFSR requests that additional material be submitted on this question, keeping in mind that the goals and tasks before the park must be clearly defined. What will be the goals and tasks in the organization of the park? What expenses will be required to achieve these goals, including the servicing of tourists? Who will maintain the territory of the park and manage tourism?"

The letter stated that forestry organizations would not agree to relinquish even a small portion of the forest. Moreover, Gosplan RSFSR expressed no willingness to counter their opposition.

Gladkov grew increasingly frustrated with the sluggish push towards the park’s establishment. In a 1979 Lesnaia promyshlennost’ article, he wrote: “The question of a

38 Letter from Presidium to Assistant Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Komi Republic (M.I. Chukichev) and to Gosplan, August 4, 1983 (Personal archive of Alexander Kokovkin)
national park in our autonomous republic must be resolved.”

After three years passed with no further progress, Gladkov again appealed to the Presidium of the Council of Ministers of the Komi Republic in March of 1982 to appeal to the Central Committee of the RSFSR. The “Model Regulation for State, Nature, National Parks” (GPNP) became law on April 27, 1981. Nonetheless, Gosplan RSFSR expressed deep skepticism about the economic arguments for a national park to the Komi Branch of the Academy of Sciences in a letter dated August 4, 1983. The letter stated: “in connection with the undecided questions of what branch of the economy to place national parks under, and also the planning for what organizations would oversee the capital investment of financial and material resources, the question of the establishment of a national park in the Komi ASSR is premature.”

Seemingly unaware of the painstaking work conducted by the Komi Branch of the Academy of Sciences, the letter stated:

In the opinion of Gosplan RSFSR, the remoteness of the region from the places of mass recreation and tourism and the inadequacy of well-constructed transportation routes will not allow recreation to develop fully in the near future in the proposed territory. This is the main purpose of national parks. The absence of adequate design plans, the technological-economic expenses, the expenses of the recreational use of the territory, the damage to forestry and other industrial enterprises does not allow us now to make a decision on the organization of the national park. For a resolution of this matter, deep scientific and design work needs to be completed.

Referring to this argument several years later in a letter to Gosplan, Gladkov emphasized that remoteness was precisely one of the most important criteria for national parks internationally. Obviously exasperated, he sarcastically replied that Gosplan would recognize the accessibility of these areas “if they would look at a geographic

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41 V.P. Gladkov, Letter from 10-3-1982 to the Council of Ministers of the Komi ASSR, “On the organization of a nature national park” (from personal archive of Kolovnikov)
“Accessibility” was clearly a matter of opinion, however. Without any evidence, Gladkov believed that large numbers would take the time to get to the park. He continued: “All of these questions are fairly well-illuminated in the mentioned book, which the ‘interested’ departments and Gosplan would have been well-served to acquaint themselves with before discussing this question.” Although understandably frustrated by the seeming lack of attention that Gosplan had given to the work of the Commission of Nature Protection, Gladkov failed to acknowledge that the park’s remote location likely made his projections of tourist visitation wildly unrealistic.

New Threats

As the park’s path to official establishment stalled in the mid-1970s, the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences decided that environmental protection was not science. In turn, it dissolved all Commissions of Nature Protection. Nonetheless, Bratsev, Gladkov, members of the VOOP, and other environmental activists took measures to protect the territory of the proposed national park and other scenic areas of the Komi ASSR through the creation of zakazniki and natural monuments (pamiatniki). Through the committee’s successful lobbying efforts, the Komi SSR Council of Ministers placed over 202 areas, which encompassed 2.3 million hectares, under protection. This encompassed five percent of Komi ASSR’s territory. By the end of the 1980s, the republic administration had put 44 percent of the proposed park under the status of zapovedniki,

44 Ibid., 8.
46 Interview with Bratsev. There was discussion within the Komi Branch of the Academy of Sciences about whether to put environmental protection under the Biological or Economic Section of the Komi Branch. Ultimately, at the urging of Bratsev, who told me that “environmental protection without a consideration of economics is empty noise (pustoi zvuk).”
"zakazniki, or pamiatniki prirody." But extractive industries also raced to establish a presence in the area of the proposed park. Despite his enormous influence in the Komi ASSR and enthusiastic support for the park, Komi ASSR Communist Party Secretary Morozov could not fully prevent these incursions without the RSFSR’s official recognition of the park. In 1975, the RSFSR Council of Ministers had designated the forests in the watersheds of Bol’shaia Sinya and the Shugor Rivers as part of the resource base for a criminal camp (PL-350), which would focus on timber extraction. Logging roads infiltrated “the last pristine area of European Russia” and from the mid-1970s to 1988 the timber industry had cut over 5 million cubic meters of timber and 35,000 hectares of forest.

Limited mining of crystal quartz had taken place in the area since the 1950s, but this slowed during the late 1970s and early 1980s when the development of various synthetics reduced demand for it. But geological surveys took place in all the major watersheds within the territory of the proposed park during the 1970s. Geologists discovered that the Kozhim watershed had rich deposits of gold and other valuable minerals, perhaps as much as one-third of the hard metal potential in the Komi ASSR. In 1977, the cooperative Pechora, later known as the “Kozhim Mining Company,” began mining alluvial gold deposits. The cooperative and other non-licensed groups mined the area intensively throughout the 1980s, often within the territory of protected geological monu-

48 In my interview with Bratsev he credited Morozov for slowing the incursions of industry into the region.
50 N. Melnikova and Burtsev I., “Natsional’ny park lugyud Va: Ekonomika i ekologiya dolzhni idti v mestse” Regyon 8 (August 1998), 16. One deposit alone, which would become known as “zhelannoe,” constituted 17 percent of the mountain crystal found in the RSFSR.
ments. By decade’s end, mining had destroyed much of the plant cover along the Ko-
zhim River and the river’s turbidity had increased significantly. Mining enterprises
had not carried out reclamation work. According to many, one 29 square kilometer
section of the Kozhim River appeared as a “lunar landscape” years after mining had
ended in this particular area.

Increased turbidity and pollution of the Kozhim River decreased the food base
for fish by 20 percent. With the prime feeding territory of salmon reduced and their
spawning grounds compromised, the salmon population had dropped by nearly 30 per-
cent by the end of the 1980s. Moreover, relict species, like the Siberian grayling and
char, diminished and many rare animals—pika, osprey, golden eagle, erne, sable—were
disappearing from the area. Speaking of this ecological damage, Gladkov wrote: “How-
ever you put it, the watershed of the Kozhim will lose its ecological, recreational signi-
cance.” Without citing any sort of methodology for making his conclusions, Gladkov
asserted that the loss of one species to be worth an estimated 32-64 million rubles.
Again, Gladkov risked his credibility by making wildly speculative and inflated claims
about recreation’s economic value.

Interest Group Politics in a New Political Reality

As had been the case for supporters of Samara Bend, Elk Island, Pribaikal’skii,
and other national parks, environmental concerns in the Komi Republic galvanized the

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51 GARK, fond 2425, opis’ 1, delo 8, 31
54 Ibid.
public as the Soviet government became more tolerant of dissent during the late 1980s. Scientists, writers, and concerned citizens rallied around “saving” the Pechora, for which many argued that the establishment of the national park was essential. With the Scientific-Research Institute Nature Protection under the USSR Ministry of Agriculture having commissioned several design and architectural institutes to develop the plans for the formation of national parks throughout the Soviet Union, the landscape design institute Soiuzgiproleskhoz started the design work on the national park in Komi ASSR in 1989. In September 28, 1990, the Komi ASSR Council of Ministers passed another resolution for the establishment of the park. The established park would be 1.9 million hectares, have a buffer zone of nearly 300,000 hectares, require the removal of the Ministry of Internal Affairs camp--PL-350, and request that the RSFSR Forestry Ministry provide the park with the resources needed for infrastructural development. Because the “Model Regulation” forbade all extractive economic uses within the territory of the park, mining companies cultivated relationships with government officials who would allow them to continue operating within the park’s boundaries. They clearly understood that in Russia who you knew was more important than the letter of the law. After Morozov’s death in 1987, environmental protection did not have a powerful ally to curb the appetites of industry or the corruption of local bureaucrats.

While new opportunities to amass profits invigorated capitalists, the transition to “democracy” emboldened environmentalists. The support of international organizations, such as Greenpeace, which could operate freely in Russia for the first time, made them feel integrally part of global environmental protection concerns and priorities.

56 GARK, fond 2425, opis’ 1, delo 39, 8. The Committee for Saving the Pechora wrote a letter directly to Gorbachev that stated: “When we destroy nature, we destroy ourselves. We can’t move further North; we must save what we have. If immediate measures are not taken there will be nothing more to save.”
With each interest group pursuing its own agenda in a reeling economy and in a time of great political uncertainty, an acrimonious environmental debate ensued. Supporters of industry argued that economic stability made preserving the existing boundaries unrealistic. On the other hand, newly formed environmental organizations, such as the Committee for Saving the Pechora River, the Center for Wild Nature, the Social-Economic Union, and organs of the regional press, especially the Vuktil newspaper *Siianie Severa*, made moralistic and patriotic (rather than economic) appeals for preserving the park’s original boundaries.\(^{57}\)

With business interests undertaking intensive lobbying efforts even before the USSR’s collapse, ministries and committees began working on projects to expand resource extraction in the Komi ASSR. In 1991, the Republican Committee, Transport, and Communication proposed a project, “On the organization the development of mining of valuable metals, minerals and mammoth bones and its realization in the Komi ASSR” to the Komi ASSR Council of Ministers. Three of the proposed excavation/mining sites were located within the territory of the proposed park. Towards the end of the year, A. Borovinskikh of the Inta City Council sent a letter to V. Khudaeva, the representative of the Council of Misters of the Komi ASSR. He stated: “We propose the removal of the watershed of the upper Kozhim from the territory of the national Park considering the great importance of mining in the region for the economy.”\(^{58}\) With a president who had not long before said that the regions should “take all the autonomy they can swallow,” it was indeed difficult for extractive industries to support increased control from Moscow over the territory of an “autonomous republic.”\(^{59}\) He argued that the region of the Kozhim River did not meet the criteria for national park land because

of the environmental damage already caused by resource extraction. Moreover, it would, he stated, undercut the republic’s efforts to assert more independence from Moscow. Gold mining would “provide for the economic independence as a base for the sovereignty of the Komi Republic, which is possible only with a strong currency or gold reserves....the laying aside of national reserves of gold of nearly 2 billion dollars is an economic crime against the Komi Republic.”

Succumbing to the mounting pressure, the Komi Council of Ministers passed a resolution on March 31, 1992 that ordered State Committee on Ecology (Goskomprirod) Komi SSR and the Komi SSR Polar Ural Geological Bureau (Polyaruralgeologiia) to prepare a proposal for “adjusting” the national park’s boundaries, taking into account the opportunities for the “complex use” of the Kozhim watershed. During the summer of 1992, the Komi Union of Entrepreneurs sponsored a “Public Expert Commission” to discuss the boundaries issue. The Commission claimed to be “independent.” It included representatives from the forestry-lobbying group—Komilesprom, the Institutes of Biology and Geology of the Komi Scientific Center, the Committee for the “rebirth” of the Komi people, the Commission for Ecology of the High Council of the Komi Republic, and the administration of the cities of Inta and Pechora. However, the director of the Polar Ural Geological Association (Poliarnouralgeologiia), Ivan Granovich, served as the leader of the committee, giving it a clear bias towards industry.

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60 Ibid.
61 GARK, fond 2425, opis’ 1, delo 8, 143. In forming this committee, the Council of Ministers of Komi SSR cited a decree passed by the Council of Ministers of the Russian Federation: “On the measures for fulfilling the order of the President of the RSFSR and the decree of the Russian Federation on the mining and use of valuable metals and diamonds in the territory of the Russian Federation.”
62 Unnamed author, “Natsional’nyi Park: shto pokazala ekspertisa” Respublika, November 4, 1992. The Kozhim River, the Commission asserted, had been a site of quartz mining (and other valuable stones) for over fifty years and since 1989 over 6 million cubic meters of minerals mined had been extracted from this area. The manganese ore extracted from the territory, they claimed, would practically meet the demands of all of Russia in
The Commission argued that the level of expertise for the organization of the park had been low and that its executive functions were poorly defined. It also asserted that a speculative methodology, which incorrectly viewed recreation and extraction as mutually exclusive, underscored assumptions about the area’s recreation potential. Furthermore, it stated that it was a “well-known fact” that recreation in northern areas was extremely low and that the proposed project did not estimate the damage that the national park would bring to the productive economic activity, reflect the loss of future profit from reduced mining, or take into account the expenses of future nature-protection projects.

The Commission claimed that the costs involved in the park’s development would likely total 60 billion rubles in 1993 value, but might even exceed 100 billion rubles. Moreover, they correctly stated that the profit that the park would accrue from individual tourists and the duration of the tourist season had been overestimated egregiously. Finally, the commission stated that park planners had underestimated the potential profits of mining in the watershed by 1000 times! Stating that withdrawing the Kozhim from economic activity would “cause irreversible damage to the economy of the Komi Republic,” the Commission concluded: “The National Park must be based on a sensible plan that is economically realistic. Therefore, a fundamental reworking of the project with all interested agencies is necessary.”

On December 8, Granovich wrote to V.I. Khudyev of the Council of Ministers of Komi ASSR:

1993. The “ecological disturbance” that had already taken place in the Kozhim River watershed made it unsuitable for being part of the national park.
63 GARK, Fond 2425, opis’1, delo 55, 5.
64 Anonymous, “Natsional’nyi Park: shto pokazala ekspertisa, Respublika November 4, 1992. The author writes The project almost entirely ignores the large deposits of technical and jewelry quartz, the alluvial and native gold, manganese, the potential deposits and actual of poly-metal, rare metals and rare elements and other useful mineable-products.
65 NARK, Fond 2425, opis’1, delo 55, 6.
66 Ibid., 8.
We believe that the growth of unbridled national self-definition in 1990 the Komi ASSR Council of Ministers made a decision that was based not on rationality or economics, but on emotions. Yes, we need a nature/national park. But why must the territory of the protected territories of our republic be five times larger as a whole and 50 times larger than any national park in the Soviet Union? Yes, we need a nature, national park. But why do we need to protect the watersheds of four rivers that have practically the identical natural-climatic and other characteristics? Yes, we need a national park. But why, without any serious scientific basis for such a large territory, are we taking out of economic use more than 2.2 trillion rubles, or more than 18 billion dollar, in the values of the first half of 1992?67

With even fewer tourists coming to the territory of the proposed park than when it was initially proposed, park defenders could hardly maintain the economic argument that its founders argued for so passionately.

While Bratsev had little interest in political battles, Gladkov’s declining health prevented him from participating in the public debate in the press. With the park’s projected economic value appearing wildly inflated, a new generation of environmental activists used moral and ecological arguments as well as appeals to Russian and Komi patriotism in their defense of the park. Their efforts demonstrated the persistence of passionate, if nonetheless diminished, support for environmental protection in the Russian Federation even as the overall supporters of environmental protection had dropped dramatically.

Komi-based newspapers seemed to side with the park over mining interests. The press referred to the still unnamed national park as “An Island of Hope,” “The Future of the inhabitants of the Komi ASSR,” and “The pride of the nation.” On July 30, 1992, Krasnoe znamia published an open letter signed by people’s deputies of the Russian Federation and the Komi ASSR as well as leaders of social movements and government de-

67 Ibid., 13-14.
partments that focused on nature protection. The authors stated that “predatory development” had worsened the ecology of the Komi ASSR’s most “pristine” region. They wrote:

For twenty years, hundreds of millions of cubic meters of timber have been cut out of our republic, hundreds of billions of tons of oil taken from the ground, and much much more. Have we really become richer from this? Have our lives become easier or happier? Can we just sit here thinking of the future that we are giving to our children and grandchildren? Will we really be richer if we dig out, ruin, and sell this last unique corner of our motherland—the nature, national park of the Komi Republic?”

In an article from January 23, 1993 in the newspaper Iskra, N. Bratenkov, of the Committee for Saving the Pechora, stated: “Who saw the ruined, wounded, almost dead Kozhim, will say: Stop! No more is necessary.”

The Komi ASSR Council of Ministers of the Republic established yet another commission to discuss the park boundaries in February 1993. As the commission held meetings, newspapers throughout the Komi SSR continued to appeal to the conscience of power. An open letter from “Young Ecologists and Teachers of the Republic Station of Naturalists” published (March 18, 1993) in Siianie severa stated:

We are very worried about the problem of the National Park of the Republic. We know that many honest and good people are agonizing about its fate. We children do not decide the fate of nature in our republic. However, we understand well that in a few years we will become society’s leaders. We want concrete measures to protect our natural riches. And today it is very important to protect our unique natural environment from the different assaults on the future national park, which is gradually being destroyed by gold mining and poaching with the approval of the republic’s government and industry.”

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However, the public was speaking to people in power who were not inclined to be sympathetic to the project. The Minister of Natural Resources the Komi Republic, Alexander Borovinskikh, who had previously served as head of the Committee for Geology of the Komi ASSR, was leading the project. He had already publicly stated his opposition to including the Kozhim in the territory of the park. Undoubtedly emboldened by the indications that the government of the Komi SSR was sympathetic to industry, on June 8, 1993 the former state, now private, farm Saranpaluski made an agreement with the mining company Oniks, which rented out 100,000 hectares of land in the territory of the national park for the purposes of “developing tourism.” Clearly a ruse for mining, the agreement would allow Oniks to “engage in the production of local raw materials and benefit from the natural bounty of the region.” The city of Inta confirmed the agreement two days later in a resolution, which guaranteed the city no less than fifteen percent of the Oniks profits.

It was a classic case of crony capitalism in the Russian Federation’s early years. After the national park and Komi State Committee on the Environment complained to the city of Inta saying that any lease longer than five years was unacceptable, the city sent a curt reply in December of that year that an arbitration court where the original agreement was made—the city of Inta—take up the issue. Despite appeals from both the National Park and the Komi Republic Committee on the Environment to nullify the resolution passed by the city of Inta, the Council of Ministers confirmed the city of

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72 NARK, Fond 2425, opis’ 1, delo 8: 57.
73 Ibid., 55.
74 Ibid., 54.
Inta’s resolution on January 4, 1994, but eventually reneged and reduced the lease to five years as Komi State Committee on the Environment continued to exert pressure.\textsuperscript{75}

The interested government bureaucracies sent their opinions about the national park to the government of the Russian Federation in late 1993 and through 1994. The Ministry of Forestry and Goskompriroda of both the Komi ASSR and the Russian Federation as well as the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation had no reservations about the establishment of the park. However, the Ministry of Economy expressed concern about the social and economic impact of losing 500,000 cubic meters of timber cut a year and in turn proposed reducing the park by 70,000 hectares.\textsuperscript{76} With this reservation, the resistance of the business community, and the tepid support of the Komi ASSR Council of Ministers, the government of the Russian Federation declared its support for the project on January 10, 1994, but called for all interested parties to work together to “finalize the boundaries” between 1994-1997.\textsuperscript{77} The government of the Russian Federation passed a decree establishing Iugyd Va National Park on April 23, 1994. It called for State Committee for Environmental Protection and the Federal Forestry Agency to form the commission to determine the park’s final boundaries.\textsuperscript{78}

As the Commission worked to resolve the issue, new federal laws and international involvement complicated the situation. A new federal law in 1995 reaffirmed the ban on extractive economic uses within national parks and stated that only the federal government could make changes in their boundaries.\textsuperscript{79} In December of 1995, UNESCO

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 50.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid. The Ministry of Internal Affairs’ estimate for this was 247,000 cubic meters. But they seemed more concerned about the ecology of the region than their narrow agency interests. They wrote: “Considering that the question of the national park was earlier worked on by the head of the Ministry of Forestry and the Council of Ministers of the Komi Republic with the goal of improving the ecological condition in the watershed of the Pechora River, Glavpetsles MVD of Russia are not against the establishment of a national park in the territory described.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 44.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 40.

designated “The Virgin Forests of Komi,” which included Iugyd Va National Park and Pechoro-Ilychskii Zapovednik, as the first World Heritage Site in the Russian Federation. While a UNESCO designation did not impose specific criteria for how the Russian Federation could use this land, it put the park under much closer observation during a time when the government of the Russian Federation sought to prove itself to the world as a good environmental steward.

Yet the people and the government of the Komi Republic poorly understood UNESCO designation. Despite the area’s “international significance,” by the summer of 1995, Pechoro-Ilychski Zapovednik and the National Park Iugyd Va had practically exhausted their funds. Both were chronically understaffed. The infrastructural development in Iugyd Va was not taking place and the biological reclamation of areas along the Kozhim River was still incomplete. On January 9, 1997, without approval from the Russian Federation, the President of the Komi ASSR, Iurii Smorodinov, illegally excised 200,000 hectares from Iugyd Va through an executive order. Eventually overturned by the High Court of the Komi Republic, Smorodinov’s decision demonstrated how weak the governmental support for the park had become in the Komi Republic. Ironically, after two decades of neglect by the government of the RSFSR, the federal government was now seemingly Iugyd Va’s strongest ally, despite its inability to develop Iugyd Va and other parks. It formed a committee for determining the borders of the park that was not in the pocket of industry. In 1998, the Committee, which included 13 people (doctors, candidates of sciences, Ph.Ds, and academics from the Russian and International Engineering Committee) presented their conclusions. Stating that because

80 Ministry of Natural Resources, Komi SSR, Goddarstveny doklad o sostoyanii okruzhayuschei prirodnoi sredi respubliki Komi v 1995 godu (Syktyvkar, 1996).
“the proposal on the redetermination of the boundaries was not a ‘redetermination,’ but a cardinal change in the boundaries of the national park,” the commission decided that the legislative process was the only way to make any change in the boundaries.82

Asserting that the Commission should have employed a more scientific approach, the government of the Komi ASSR expressed disappointment. Three members of the Commission presented minority reports. Each expressed concerns that in a time of economic hardship neither the Komi Republic, nor the Russian Federation could afford not to exploit such a rich source of natural minerals. Igor Burtsev, a Ph.D. (kandidat nauk) in geological-mineralogical sciences at the Komi Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences presented the harshest criticism of the decision. Arguing that the “idea of using the park as a recreational object had been discredited” and that the projections for tourism’s growth in the region were baseless, Burtsev stated that the Komi ASSR could not afford to make the enormous capital expenditures on infrastructural development for the park.83 Burtsev also took aim at the “ignorance” of Greenpeace workers who did not understand the particular circumstances of the Komi Republic and the UNESCO designation, which he believed compromised the republic’s autonomy. Moreover, he asserted that most people in Komi were either ignorant of or did not care about this designation. Biologists, he argued, exerted far more influence in the Commission than geologists did. In concluding his report, he stated: “There are some biologists and ecologists who are working on the question of Iugyd Va National Park on behalf of those who will not compromise, and worse yet, on the side of those engaged in ecological blackmail.”84 The powerful view that environmental protection was impractical during a

83 Ibid., 19.
84 Ibid., 19.
time of economic struggle had again reared its head and threatened to dash the dreams of the now much weakened Komi environmental protection community.85

Continued Struggles

The commission had preserved the borders, temporarily. But as has been the case with many national parks throughout the Russian Federation, Iugyd Va’s visitor traffic and profits remained low in the first decade of the 21st century. With the park’s overall economic value still appearing suspect to many observers, the city of Inta and the Council of Ministers of the Komi Republic made six additional attempts to reduce the size of the park.86 The government of the Russian Federation thwarted these attempts. Even though the government of the Russian Federation was not a vigorous steward of protective territories, this proved that national park status did offer protection.

However, in 2010, the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources removed 1,900 hectares from the park’s territory in the Kozhim River watershed. The company Gold Minerals received a license to carry out mining. At the 35th Session of the Committee of World Heritage Sites, UNESCO released the following statement. “We express our extreme concern in connection with the changes to the boundaries of the northern part of the World Heritage Site. We consider that what has been carried out at the World Heritage Site, and the support of gold mining at the “Wonderful” (chudnoe) site presents a clear potential threat to the remarkable universal value and integrity of the

85 Ibid., 20.
site." In turn, UNESCO threatened to give the Virgin Forests of Komi the status of a World Heritage Site in Danger.

The breathtaking scenery of Iugyd Va undoubtedly appeals to tourists throughout the Russian Federation, but the park’s remoteness from large population centers is a strong deterrent. Getting to Iugyd Va still requires traveling for seven hours on a 110 kilometer, cratered dirt road from a small town—Inta. Inta’s only airport was closed after the USSR’s collapse. Today, getting to Inta requires a 36-hour train ride from Moscow and a two-day train ride from Saint Petersburg. Convinced that distance would not stop a flood of tourists from coming to see the unique nature of the Circum-polar Urals, the park’s founders made tenuous analogies to US national parks, such as Yellowstone and Great Smoky Mountains, in touting the park’s economic potential. These comparisons seem even more suspect when we consider Gladkov’s statement that the park should have “minimum comfort and maximum wild nature.” Much of the revenues from American national parks came from the very comforts that Bratsev and Gladkov said that a national park in the Komi ASSR should limit. Thus, in fundamental ways, the founders’ vision demonstrated a lack of clarity from the beginning. Nevertheless, one wonders how much the construction of some infrastructure, much less an adequate road, would increase visitation to the park and transform the debate about its boundaries. In 2011, the park served just over 6,000 people while Gladkov had predicted 3 million visitors would visit the park every year!

On August 11, 2012, the General Prosecutor’s Office of the Russian Federation acknowledged to Greenpeace that the Ministry of Natural Resources’ action was illegal.

88 Ibid.
89 http://www.yugydva.komi.com/?news=592.htm
In itself, this shows a lack of coherence and even understanding of, or perhaps an indifference to national parks within the governmental ministries responsible for them. Yet Gold Minerals is still mining the “wonderful” site. The wrangling of different interest groups over the park’s boundaries is likely to continue for the foreseeable future, or at least until the park actualizes the economic vision of its founders, which is highly unlikely. The optimism of tourism’s transformative economic potential, which fueled the enthusiasm of Gladkov and Bratsev, reached its apex during perestroika in the conception of a young student from the Kharkiv Physics Institute for a national park in the Karelian taiga. His grandiose vision, which became Vodlozerskii National Park, and his eventual bitter disappointment are the subjects of the next chapter.
Chapter 9: The Vision and the Reality: Oleg Cherviakov and Vodlozero National Park

“Gospodi-pomuilui, godspodi-pomului, gospodi-pomuilui,” the tall, imposing priest in his early fifties repeats three, twelve, and forty times throughout the service, as is custom in the Russian Orthodox tradition. The small church where the service is taking place is at the northern end of the Vodlozero Lake in the village of Borishpul. Other than two horses and about ten goats, the only residents of this village are the priest, Oleg Cherviakov, and his wife Natasha. Every day, Cherviakov wakes before dawn, conducts an hour-long service with Natasha, works throughout the day on various restoration projects in the village, and then holds another service in the evening before going to sleep.

Once a week, usually on Sunday, he travels by boat for about 45 minutes to the village of Kugavalanok on the southern part of the lake where he can resupply and take part in services with a congregation. Other than this weekly trip and the fact that he is married, Cherviakov, the founder and first director of Vodlozero National Park, now lives the life of a hermit, known in the Orthodox tradition an otshelnik.

Building a new society, not a life apart from it, was Cherviakov’s original plan. In the summer of 1988, at a time when the intellectual and economic foundations of socialism were unravelling, the young, idealistic, and uncompromising Cherviakov took a float trip down the Ileks River to Vodlozero Lake that proved to be life changing. Cherviakov had felt a spiritual connection with the forest since childhood, but now he believed that he had found the ideal forest that he had sought since early in life. He penned an article for a Karelia newspaper in which he called for the creation of a national park for the territory of Vodlozero Lake and the Ileks River watershed, which
comprised the largest contiguous taiga forest in Europe. With Karelian scientists amenable to economic alternatives that would curb timber harvesting and local populations looking for any source of hope to revitalize their seemingly forgotten region, Cherviakov received wide support at the local and regional level. With prominent environmentalists and cultural figures throughout the RSFSR enthusiastically supporting the development of national parks, Cherviakov’s proposal resonated deeply among a broad cross-section of the scientific and cultural elite. While many founders of national parks labored for more than 20 years before their conceptions became reality, through his tireless work, determination, sharp intellect, unique vision, impeccable timing, and a fair amount of luck, Cherviakov’s efforts resulted in the establishment of what was at the time the RSFSR’s largest national park less than two years after he initially proposed it.

Its rapid path from conception to establishment, in and of itself, makes the story of Vodlozero National Park extraordinary. However, Cherviakov’s grandiose vision for a park that would bring about a broad regional economic, social, cultural, and even spiritual transformation of the region is the most interesting part of the park’s history. Cherviakov conceived of Vodlozero National Park as the institution that would revive the regional economy through attracting foreign tourists, reviving small-scale agriculture, and the production of local handicrafts. He also sought to restore churches and monasteries, which he believed would lead to the restoration of Orthodox traditions and a spiritual rebirth in the area. Eventually, he argued that this vision would spread and transform Karelia and perhaps the entire Russian Northwest. When the economic collapse of the 1990s left Cherviakov and Vodlozero National Park without the means to realize this vision, locals quickly turned against the park and even lamented the newly
imposed limits on the Karelia forestry industry, which so many had been quick to disparage for its predatory relationship to nature just a few years earlier. Cherviakov successfully cultivated international contacts and even received sizable grants from international foundations for the development of the national park. But Vodlozero National Park never received the funds from the state necessary to achieve Cherviakov’s transformational vision. When it became clear Cherviakov could not realize his grandiose plans, he left his position as director of Vodlozero National Park disillusioned, but remained determined to live out personally his vision for a new society grounded on a harmonious relationship to the natural world.

**A Love of the Forest**

“Maybe it is a normal story. In my youth, I loved to travel on different tourist trips,” Cherviakov says to me. Nevertheless, in many ways, Cherviakov’s youth was far from ordinary. He did not take part in normal teenage socializing—discotheques, parties, of his generation. He did not have many friends and never had a girlfriend. If he was not studying, he was spending time in nearby forests, or in forests far away in the Caucasus, Siberia, or the Far North. His beloved mother usually accompanied him. Cherviakov had developed a love for the forest initially from listening to his grandfather’s stories about his time as a partisan fighting the Nazis in the forests of the Briansk Oblast. “I don’t know how to explain this,” he says of one of his trips in the forest during early adolescence, “but one time it happened; it opened fully. Some sort of mysterious, mystical meeting with nature, a meeting with the forest. This changed my entire life.”¹ Frequently, as he walked through different forests throughout Russia, Cherviakov saw markers on trees that indicated impending cuts. “Every

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¹ Interview with Oleg Cherviakov, June 20, 2015.
time,” he says to me, “I left a forest I said goodbye, not knowing whether or not it would be there when I returned.”

In his final two years of high school, Cherviakov took trips to the eastern part of the Archangelsk Oblast where he spent significant time in villages that seemed frozen in time. This, he told me, was the second pivotal experience that shaped his worldview. In these villages, Cherviakov would meet with people who had lived before the revolution and through two world wars. In contrast to most places in the Soviet Union, people here seemed to have a deep spiritual connection to the land. Waxing romantically about his time in these villages, he says to me:

I realized that people in the city did not understand me. I could not express my relationship with nature to them as I could to these people. They lived in harmony with nature. They had an internal harmony with the landscape. They deeply feel nature. They live in such a way that nature does not suffer in its relationship to them. When I saw these villages, I realized that many generations and centuries lived here and the nature was beautiful. They cut the forest but the forest remains wild and beautiful. They catch fish but the fish do not disappear. They hunt but they do not destroy animals. They cultivate the land, but the land becomes prettier. They construct beautiful homes in harmony with the landscape.

Next to these traditional villages, Cherviakov frequently saw settlements of lumber-jacks. “When these people construct homes,” he tells me, “it is not pretty, even difficult to look at. When they go into the forest, they leave a desert. They catch all the fish. This is how they understand nature. They are like invaders. They do not feel the beauty. And they drink a lot of vodka.”

Numerous groups had been discussing the formation of national parks in the Far North—the Komi Republic, the Archangelsk Oblast, and Karelia, including the area

\[2\] Ibid.
\[3\] Ibid.
\[4\] Interview.
around Vodlozero before Cherviakov encountered the northern forests. In the late 1970s, the All-Russian Society for Nature Protection (VOOP) proposed national parks for the Kenozero and Kargopol regions in the Archangelsk Oblast. In 1980, the All-Russian Society for the Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments proposed the establishment of a national park near Vodlozero. In the early 1980s, groups from the Archangelsk Pedagogical Institute began working on church restoration projects and from 1982 to 1984 they undertook research on establishing national parks in the territory of several lakes—Svinoe, Dolgoe, Kenozero, Maloe, Porzhemskoe, Vil’no, Porzhemskoe, and Leshmorezo. Park proponents in the Archangelsk Oblast believed that the influx of tourists would be especially strong with the formation of a national park around Kenozero where some argued that restoration of wooden churches would create a “Golden Ring” of the North. The Komi Scientific Center continued to push for a national park in the Circumpolar Urals, which would become Iugyd Va.

Perhaps no other northern region felt a greater sense of urgency to bring more territory under protection than Karelia. Karelia accounted for 15 percent of the RSFSR’s timber harvest and had only .3 percent of its territory under protection, which was five times less than the average for the RSFSR. Expecting tourism to increase two or threefold by 2000,

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8 GARF, A-259, opis’ 49, delo 3399, 42 and 53.
the Karelia Institute of the Forest had begun working on plans for six national parks, including on Kizhi, an island on Lake Onega with a wooden church and Valaam—the site of a large monastery under restoration on Lake Onega. Throughout the 1980s, many articles in central newspapers argued for giving Valaam, Kizhi, and Solovki Islands in the White Sea protected status while developing tourism infrastructure to bring profits to the region and protect the area against the damage caused by unorganized tourism. In 1988, scientists from Moscow, Leningrad, Archangelsk, Vologda, Petrozavodsk, and Syktyvkar met in Archangelsk for a conference dedicated to establishing national parks in northern regions. There, participants acknowledged that the increasing tempo of extractive industries in the fragile ecosystems of the North made the task particularly urgent.

It was around this time that Cherviakov claims to have begun searching for his “ideal” forest in the North. During the summer of 1987, Cherviakov led a group of fellow students from the Kharkiv Physics Institute to Solovki on a work trip dedicated to the restoration of a monastery. After leading a group to Solovki again the following summer, Cherviakov had a month free during which time he took a 150-kilometer float trip on the Ileks River into Vodlozero where he believed that he had found the perfect, virgin forest, which he had sought since adolescence. Indeed, the Ileks River watershed and Vodlozero marked the largest contiguous patch of old-growth taiga in Europe, but unbeknownst to Cherviakov at the time, the expanding appetite of the cooperative Karellesprom (Karelia Forestry Production) now threatened the area.

One year before, anticipating the expansion of timber cuts into the region, a group of scientists from the Biology Institute of the Karelia Branch of the Academy of

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11 Pleshak, 5.
Sciences, led by the wetland scientist Vladimir Antipin, designated 86,000 hectares a
landscape zakaznik (temporary reserve) around Vodlozero. In late February and
March 1988, the Pialmskii Forestry District cut a road through the zakaznik directly to the
lake. Although the Karelia Council of Ministers had granted permission, the violation of the
reserve enraged environmentalists. Moreover, the area was now more accessible to tourists,
but lacked the necessary infrastructure to accommodate them. Describing the construction of
the road as a “national calamity,” L. Peregud wrote two months later in Znamia truda: “In
Karelia, very few untouched corners remain. One of them is Vodlozero, especially the north-
eastern part of this corner of our Pudozh land. Here we need to organize not only a zakaznik,
but also a zapovednik or a national park, which we can call Vodlozero or Ust-Ileks. It is still
not too late.”

Upon returning to Petrozavodsk after completing this trip, Cherviakov went to
the Karelia Institute of the Forest to learn more about forest protection in the oblast.
He learned about the recent intrusions of Karellesprom into the protected zone. While
traveling back to Kharkiv, he stopped in Moscow for a few days. In a bookstore, he ac-
cidentally stumbled upon the recently published book written by Natalia Zabelina. En-
titled National Park (Natsional’nyi park), the book provided the most comprehensive pub-
lished version of the philosophical basis for national parks and the most comprehensive
description of the Scientific-Technical Institute of Nature Protection’s plans for their fu-
ture development. Describing national parks as “resources of cognition” that could
transform the human-nature relationship while bringing profit to the state, Zabelina’s
vision resonated deeply with Cherviakov. At the time he discovered Zabelina’s book,

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12 AVGNPP, delo 1: 2. Other contributors included T.A. Maksimova, M.A. Boichuk, N.V. Stoikina, T.I.
Popova, I.P Zhizova, T.A. Shiryaeva, G.K. Kornilva.
Cherviakov was also reading Mikhail Pravshin’s *In the Place of Fearless Birds*—a fictional account of the society of Old Believers, Vygorots, which from late-17th to mid-19th century united several monasteries in the areas of present-day Karelia and the Archangelsk Oblast into a semi-autonomous economic and political center. \(^\text{14}\) Cherviakov’s face lit up excitedly as he told me about this:

> It is an amazing story, one of the great mystery and beauty, resembling historical legends in Russia. Many researchers have studied it but it remains unknown to many. I thought it would be possible to create such an alternative today in a society that is so hostile and aggressive to nature. If Andrei Denisov did it in the 18\(^{\text{th}}\) century, why couldn’t it be done in the 20th century? I arrived at the thought that in order to do this I needed some sort of idea. For Denisov it was a religious idea. I thought about what sort of idea could be a basis for that sort of republic today. Taking his accidental discovery of Zabelina’s book as some sort of sign from God, Cherviakov decided that a national park could be the instrument for realizing Denisov’s vision in the 20th century.

> When he returned to Kharkiv, Cherviakov wrote an article “Desert or National Park” that would be published in the Karelia newspaper *Komsomolets*. \(^\text{15}\) Cherviakov asserted that a landscape *zakaznik* was not a strong enough form of nature protection to prevent Karellesprom from penetrating into the “last ecologically clean region of the republic.” “I have seen how these loggers work,” he wrote, “they have no mercy on the forests, nor the wetlands. One is left with a depressing impression upon seeing the hundreds of hectares of ruined forest.” \(^\text{16}\) After asserting that a national park could transform the regional economy by reviving handicrafts and bringing in tourists from throughout the USSR and even other countries, Cherviakov concluded on the following note: “Vodlozero National Park is fully real. In my opinion, such situations clarify the moral health of society. Our society is


\(^{16}\) Ibid.
capable of selecting between fleeting economic interests of one agency or of protecting the full historical-cultural heritage of the nation. The logic is simple: empty souls will produce a desert around them, rich souls will produce national riches.”17 By implication, Cherviakov was asserting that the Soviet system had stripped people of their cultural heritage, a feeling of kinship to nature, and as a result had impoverished the natural world.

A few days after the publication of “Desert or National Park,” the editor of Komso-molets’ informed Cherviakov of the positive public response to the article, but also told him nothing would come of the idea if Cherviakov did not actively rally support for it. But Cherviakov was only 24 and still had a year and a half of university. He had regular work as a research assistant and his professors were already encouraging him to pursue a Ph.D. However his primary advisor, Vladimir Volovik, was intrigued by the thought and fueled Cherviakov’s imagination by proposing a name for the park that would encapsulate its transformative vision—a noosphere park.18

The renowned Russian geographer, Vladimir Vernadsky, conceived the idea of the noosphere during the 1920s.19 Presaging present-day geological debates about the Anthropocene, Vernadskii argued that human societies throughout the world had become not only agents of biological destruction, but of shaping the geological environment. Because the application of intellect and ingenuity in the name of material progress had caused such vast destruction, Vernadskii concluded that humans could direct their intellectual energy towards a harmonious and sustainable relationship with nature, as opposed to one characterized by the fixation on increased production. The idea blended elements of Russian cosmism with the

17 Ibid.
18 Interview with Cherviakov.
broader international ecological concerns. The Soviet environmental community had rediscovered Vernadskii’s ideas during the Brezhnev era and the noosphere had become a common trope in Soviet nature protection discourse by *perestroika.* The idea captivated Cherviakov. Energized by the transformative possibilities, he returned to Petrozavodsk to rally support for it just after the New Year holidays in 1989.

The charismatic and inspired Cherviakov began giving slideshows that winter to rally support. He met with officials from the Karelia Ministry of Forestry, regional leaders in environmental protection, and governmental representatives of the Pudozh District in which the proposed park was located. He organized meetings with village councils and called for members to write petitions to officials at the local, state, and union level of government. Throughout the first few months of 1989, *Pudozhskii vestnik* received over 750 letters about the national park, almost all of which were resoundingly supportive. On February 21, 1989, eighty workers of Vodlozero Forestry District wrote in an open letter to *Komsomolets:*

> Many of us were born here and lived here most of our lives. For all of us, Vodlozero is the Motherland. The lake and its forests are our wet nurses (*kormlitsi*). But year after year nature is becoming more impoverished, the lake suffers, and the main reason for this is the continued merciless clear cuts of the Vodlozero Forests and connected with this the destructive activity of the forestry district.”

The letter also emphasized the importance of the rational organization of tourism both to protect nature and to bring profits to the local economy.

Several weeks later, *Komsomolets*’ printed a letter from the teachers’ collective of the Kuganovolok Primary School. Calling the zakaznik a “half measure” that did not provide the

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20 Josephson et. al, 243.
23 Ibid.
necessary structure for the development of tourism, the teachers called for the immediate establishment of the national park with the forestry industry providing the necessary financial support. They wrote: “We think that part of these means must come from the forestry industry, which is the cause for the destruction of landscapes in the territory of Vodlozero.”

Only a few weeks later, in a meeting of the Pudozh Executive Committee, A.V. Minin said in a convincing speech:

> Our psychology varies considerably depending on the agency that we serve. From the standpoint of agencies, we have no relationship to the forest. From the perspective of the national park, it is the opposite. It is important to overcome the agency mindset and not only with respect to the protection of the environment.

During perestroika, many people openly acknowledged that the agency mindset had harmed the environment and degraded people. It made sense that extirpating this mindset would help nature and allow for new ways of thinking that could potentially ennoble humanity.

The park needed the support of local leaders. The most influential supporter of the park in the Pudozh community was Andrei Beckman, the director of the region’s largest employer—the fish-canning factory Ekodar. Beckman was sociable and widely trusted throughout the community—a real “muzhik” some would say. While he undoubtedly influenced others in his informal conversation, his article published in *Leninskaia pravda* on October 20, 1989, “How to Revive Vodlozero,” publicly voiced this support. He wrote: “The national park is needed not only for our distant descendants but firstly it is necessary for us, those living now.” He continued: “For in protecting the unique historical and natural watershed of Vodlozero and the Ileks River we affirm in our civic-mindedness, our responsibility for the

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24 Ibid. One letter said: “We teachers are also deeply discomforted by this. The great damage to the ecology of the lake was carried out by the melioration projects, the uncontrolled cutting and the preparation of timber by the Pialsk and Kubovsk Forestry Districts, and the unorganized recreation of tourists.” It continued: “If things continue as they have been then soon our region will not have forests, berries, mushrooms, fish, or animals. And in order for this not to happen, we must seek an alternative to the existing order.”

fate of the Fatherland.” With the wisdom of the environmental protection leadership from above now widely perceived as a lost cause with new revelations about the USSR’s environmental problems coming to light, locally supported environmental protection efforts, Beckman and others in the region believed, would not only be more successful, but would ennoble the citizens supporting them.

In addition to strong local support, Cherviakov gained support from influential scientists. Vladimir Antipin, the wetlands biologist responsible for establishing the Vodlozero Zakaznik, and Vladimir Drozdov—the head of the Karelia Institute of Biology—were foremost among them. Largely through their influence, the Institute of Biology became a strong supporter. Cherviakov travelled many times between Karelia, Moscow, and Kharkiv. In Moscow, he had begun meeting with high-level RSFSR officials and leaders of the national park movement, like Natalia Zabelina. In Kharkiv, he continued his studies and discussed the future national park with his adviser. Inspired by the idea, the cause of environmental protection, and the charisma of the young physics student, journalists rallied to the cause of Vodlozero National Park. In addition to articles by many journalists in the widely read regional newspapers—Pudozhskii vestnik, Komsomolets’, Leninskaia pravda, and Severny kur’er’, Cherviakov raised the proposed park’s national profile through writing articles in the more widely circulate Lesnaia gazeta (Forest Gazette) and Priroda i chelovek (Nature and people). These articles described the region’s forestry politics and practices in the region as unsustainable and characterized them as “colonial plunder” led by “looting central agencies,” which were out of step with perestroika’s emphasis on regional economic self-

Selivanov.
accounting. Moreover, calling for the “rational” and “complex” use of the forest, journalists painted Karelia’s forest as a common resource that industry had monopolized at the republic’s expense. Indeed, of the 2 million cubic meters cut each year, factories in the republic only processed 200,000 of these cubic meters. This resulted in a net loss of 30-35 million rubles a year. Tourism, the park’s propagandists argued, would provide a much more sustainable, diversified, and independent basis for the future of the Republic’s economy.

Taking their cues from Cherviakov, who now fully embraced his role as the leader of the movement to establish the park, the park’s supporters contextualized the fight for the formation of the national park through a broad national lens. They employed the terms that tapped into the rhetoric of the international environmental movement as had become common in so many of the environmental battles during perestroika. In his article “Battle for Vodlozero,” Peregud referred to Vodlozero as “one of the best corners of our small planet” that must be spared from yet another “technocratic conquest” of nature. Arguing that they were living in “a new era” in which environmental protection was no longer simply a noble yet futile aim, but a fully realizable goal, Cherviakov suggested that achieving harmony with the “natural” world was the highest goal of civilization.

28 Makarevskii, “Ostrovok taigi tatekhi prodolzhaiut govorit’ o natsional’nom parke v vodlozero” Leninskaia pravda, January 6, 1990. But the planned transfer to the Republic on regional self-accounting will become a harsh question: either we learn to correctly define our interests and defend them firstly from the dictate of agencies, or we will be beggars on a rich land.” He continued: “A little more about Karellesprom. It seems to me that if we will continue to live by agency directives, then most likely will commit a fatal blow to foresters and in 20 or 30 years we will be buying forest products from Canada, Finland and the USA.”

29 Peregud, L., “Zemlia u okeana,” Znamia truda, July 25, 1989, 3. He writes: “We are right now, in my opinion, playing very strange games. Figuratively speaking, the forest is a store without a clerk under an open sky. The forestry district forms the necessary documents, brings in the so called “stump pay”, goes into the store, then there is a logging site, picks out what it wants and doesn’t pay for what it takes. A lot of timber, wood, mainly deciduous conifer, which is already paid for, is left. Some even noted by state awards for service to Fatherland.” Also see: Viktor Shevchenko, “Esheko raz o natsional’nom parke,” May 27, 1989.

30 Selivanov, I., “Yuzhnee vetrenogo poiasa. O sozdaniia vodlozerskogo natsional’nogo parka,” Sel’skaia zhizn’, January 10, 1990. Selivanov stated that the forestry industry had called for increasing the cut 400-500 thousand cubic meters a year.

Through the spring of 1989 and into the fall of that year, Cherviakov hinted at, but did not fully reveal, the breadth and transformative nature of his vision. He envisioned it spreading throughout the Russian North and perhaps beyond. Never sparing an opportunity to disparage the Karelia Forestry Industry (Karellesprom), its “predatory politics,” and its “destructive war” against the forests of Karelia, Cherviakov sought to educate a largely uninformed public about national parks and the benefits that tourism, including foreign tourism, could bring to the region. Without preserving the nature of the area, he argued, tourism would lose its value. But without tourism’s regulation the environment would suffer and the local population would continue to feel the difficulties brought by the influx of wild tourists (dikari). He wrote: “Every year the beauty of Vodlozero attracts more tourists. The population of Vodlozero right now only experiences difficulties from tourism.” Controlled and regulated tourism would transform these difficulties into inestimable economic benefits. Moreover, without much elaboration, he argued that the national park “would help overcome the decades-long alienation of agricultural man from the earth.” Arguing that with national parks, “not only nature but all of us also win,” he called for the formation of more parks on Kenozero, Kizhi, and to the east of Lake Onega.

With the territory of the proposed park accounting for a combined 10 percent of the forest resources of the Karelia Republic and the Archangelsk Oblast, the idea caused deep anxiety within the forestry industry. It waged its own campaign. Industry leaders questioned tourism’s economic potential and falsely argued that the national

34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
park did not have broad support from the local population. Critics of the park characterized the territory of the proposed park as a "swampy backwater" in which tourists would not want to spend their time. They claimed that the park would put 4,000 people out of work.\textsuperscript{36} One article suggested reducing the park from 610,000 to 92,000 hectares.\textsuperscript{37}

That same month the Council of Directors of Karrellesprom sent a letter to the Karelia ASSR Council of Ministers intended for publication in \textit{Leninskaia pravda} and \textit{Komso-molets}.\textsuperscript{38} Arguing that the Council of Ministers had already created a deplorable situation by taking 36 million cubic meters out of potential production through the designation of protected territories, the letter asserted that the forestry industry, which employed 85 thousand workers, was Karelia’s “lifeblood” and that there was “no other path” for the republic’s future economic development.\textsuperscript{39} Calls to transition away from the industry that provided more than 50 percent of the Republic’s productive output by a young outsider left industry officials deeply embittered. The Council of Directors wrote: “Meanwhile, especially in recent times, a negative relationship towards the forestry complex is advanced by incompetent people in the republican press, radio, and television. The press has attacked loggers with different labels. They call them nothing less than barbarians, forgetting that their hard work has created many social benefits.”\textsuperscript{40}


\textsuperscript{37} A. Kurnosov, “Agroesprom i ne natsionalnyi park,” \textit{Leninskaia pravda}, May 4, 1989. The reader might be wondering why governmental organs in the Archangelsk Oblast did not take an active part. Findings in central archives indicates that there is no doubt that the issue was much more controversial in Karelia. However, the researcher must admit that work in the State Archives of the Archangelsk Oblast would broaden the story.

\textsuperscript{38} Thorough searching in these newspapers, I was never able to find if this letter was published. If it was not published, we can only assume that the newspapers were trying to steer the course of the events towards the formation of the national park.

\textsuperscript{39} GARK, Council of Ministers delo 4926, opis’ 1, delo 211, 2.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
Vodlozero stoked a much larger anxiety within the forestry industry. National Parks and protected territories in other regions threatened to reduce the industry’s productive capacity. In a letter to the RSFSR Council of Ministers in the fall of 1989, V.I. Mel’nikov of the Ministry of Forest Production expressed this alarm. He began his letter:

In recent years, by the initiative of variety of civic organizations, organizations of nature protection, Soviet organs, there have been decisions made about the organization of national parks on significant territories. As a rule, the necessary economic estimates of the consequences are not being undertaken.\(^{41}\)

Protected territories were removing valuable forest resources out of production in the Novgorod and Kemerov Oblasts.\(^{42}\) While the creation of Valdai Hills National Park in Novgorod threatened to take 250,000 cubic meters out of production, the formation of Vodlozero National Park threatened to take out 29 million cubic meters, which Mel’nikov valued at 52 million rubles.\(^{43}\) Paper and cellulose production would fall dramatically as well. He argued that the impact on local economies would be nothing short of disastrous. Mel’nikov saved his strongest criticism for the lack of a careful “scientific basis” for national parks.\(^{44}\) In the absence of sound “scientific basis,” he argued, national parks could not possibly achieve their projected economic benefits to offset the losses from new restrictions on timber extraction.

As the debate raged, the USSR Council of Ministers established a special commission to consider the question. With the exception of the outright opposition by Ministry of the Forestry Industry and the State Committee on Forests, the commission’s work made it clear that the park had broad-based support from state agencies, civic organizations, and some of

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\(^{41}\) Ibid.
\(^{42}\) Ibid.
\(^{44}\) Ibid., 212.
the most important names in environmental protection and cultural preservation, such as Alexey Iablokov and Dmitrii Likhachev.\(^{45}\) Arguing that Karelia was on pace to exhaust its timber resources in 20-30 years, Iablokov asserted: “It is impossible to call this relationship to the most valuable natural resources anything other than barbaric.”\(^{46}\)

As Cherviakov worked on the public relations front, he also continued to make connections with the scientific community. In late 1989, with the financial help of his advisor Vladimir Vokolin, Cherviakov put together a team of scientists from the Karelia Institute of the Forest, Ural Division of the Academy of Sciences, the Soviet Geographic Society, Rostov State University, and Tambov State University for planning Vodlozero National Noosphere Park. Having developed a close relationship with Natalia Zabelina and other important figures working on national parks, Cherviakov was offered a position by the head of the Main Administration of Zapovedniki and Hunting. He would live in the Kostomovskii Zapovednik on the Finnish border and his sole responsibility would be to plan the national park. Cherviakov found inspiration and contemplated transforming the relationship of civilization to the natural world in the reserve’s dense old-growth forests and amongst its beautiful waterfalls. With a completely flexible schedule, he continued to travel and meet with Russian scientists involved with the project, Finnish scientists whose advice for the project he sought, and with government officials before whom he argued for the importance of the project. Most of the time, however, Cherviakov lived in a cabin in the middle of the park where he wrote the “Ecological-Economic Basis for the Establishment of Vodlozero National, Nature, Noosphere Park.”\(^{47}\)

\(^{45}\) GARF: fond 259 Opis’ 49 delo 3399, 90.

\(^{46}\) Ibid., 50.

\(^{47}\) Archive Vodlozero National Park (henceforth AVNP) “Ecologichesko-ekonomicheskoe osnovanie sozdaniia Vodlozerskogo natsional’nogo, noosfernogo parka.”
Cherviakov’s Vision

Like all proposed national parks, Vodlozerskii National Park required a study with extensive analysis of the natural environment of the park’s territory, the projected uses of park territory for tourism and scientific study, and a system of functional zoning. However, the study for the formation of Vodlozero differed in fundamental ways to projects for other national parks. No park study had had such a young and inexperienced leader, or articulated such a transformative vision as the study for Vodlozero National Park. Moreover, while economic development and environmental protection in the areas around proposed parks were central to all these studies, Cherviakov called for the cultural and spiritual reinvigoration through the revival of local traditions, the restoration of architecture, and the fostering of a closer relationship of the region’s inhabitants to the natural world. With the possible exception of the proposed Bering International Park, Cherviakov’s vision was much more far-reaching than any other proposed national park in the USSR. Finally, while other studies limited their scope to the area of the proposed park and the communities adjacent to it, Cherviakov articulated a vision of regional transformation for which Vodlozero would be a model (etalon) for nothing short of this new way of life. In turn, by following Vodlozero’s example, he argued that the entire region of the Russian European North would eventually achieve relative economic independence from the now widely maligned “predatory” central agencies.

While it is likely that many of the study’s contributors viewed Cherviakov’s far-reaching goals with skepticism, prominent scientists would neither have signed on to such a study, nor expressed such unwavering public support for a plan based on such radical foundations in previous eras. The thrust of the document brought the very basis of the command economy

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48 Although the official the supervisor (nauchny rukovoditel) for study for Vodlozero National Park was Cherviakov’s advisor from Kharkiv University, V.D. Volovnik, the 26-year old Cherviakov, who had only an undergraduate degree, was the de facto leader of the project.
and Communist ideology into question. On top of that, it celebrated the very Orthodox traditions that the Communist Party had long sought to eradicate. At best, the “Scientific Basis” was a highly imaginative and passionate plan of regional transformation. Viewed more critically, one could characterize it as an attempt at social engineering by a young, idealistic outsider whose naive aim of restoring a traditional life did not interest most of the residents and whose projections about a future influx of tourists into the region were based on little more than hope.

Cherviakov benefited from the work that biologists, geologists, and geographers had carried out in developing maps for the Vodlozero Zakaznik. The remaining work largely consisted of Cherviakov’s explanation of his unusual vision. While Cherviakov never articulated it in the press in such explicit terms, the conception of a noosphere park, he believed, would lead to a “sustainable” relationship with the land, which he thought he had observed as an adolescent in agricultural villages of the eastern part of the Archangelsk Oblast. He wrote:

These parks provide a symbiosis of protected natural areas and economic development of areas where industry, agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing, recreation, and other types of nature are based on closed processes and comprehensive use of the local natural resources without any environmental risk.49

In the case of Vodlozero, the revival of traditional cultural practices, which had been stifled through decades of force-fed Communist ideology, would help achieve this ecological harmony. He wrote:

An important task of the functioning of Vodlozero National Park as a noosphere park is the spiritual aspect of forming a high general culture and new ecological thinking. The realization of this function will be realized in the careful protection of the best cultural traditions of the local population, the promotion of nature and cultural and also ecological-enlightenment of the population and in turn the rebirth of the culture and the full social-economic life in the Vodlozero region.50

49 AVNP, delo 3206.
50 Ibid., 215.
This would preserve the area’s “natural evolutionary development.”\textsuperscript{51} It was Cherviakov, however, who had already determined what constituted the “natural evolutionary development” and the “best” cultural tradition, which was Orthodox Christianity. The highly centralized command economy had already disrupted the process of organic, evolutionary development. Cherviakov never thoroughly addressed this contradiction.

Throughout the study, Cherviakov suggested, almost as if by an article of faith, that the architectural restoration provided the foundation for this revival. “Restoring ancient temples,” he wrote, “Iliinsky churchyard the deserted Iuryivskaia Monastery and their full inclusion into the social life will contribute to the revival of spiritual life in the province and return to the high cultural and moral values of Christianity.”\textsuperscript{52} The return to such a moral atmosphere, in turn, would cultivate a culture in which people valued their work and that would encourage creativity.\textsuperscript{53} As Vygorets had been a quasi-independent center of commerce within an increasingly centralized state, Cherviakov believed that Vodlozero National Park would begin a movement that would allow the Russian North to thrive based on the development of a vibrant and independent culture grounded in a strong sense of place.

Cherviakov seemed never to second-guess his belief that the national park would generate an economic revival that would make the region’s spiritual revival possible. Harvesting and processing of raw wood, wild edible and medicinal plants, fishing and fish processing, agricultural production, and developing tourism, especially foreign tourism, would form the foundation of the park and the surrounding region’s economy.\textsuperscript{54} While Cherviakov argued that the area’s residents could collect between 100 and 400 tons of cranberries and 200 tons

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 210.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 216.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid. He wrote: “Precisely the combination of the prosperous and cared for nature, accessible worship (poklonenie), and study the monuments of history and culture creates particular moral atmosphere in Vodlozero National, Noosphere Park that will best contribute to maximize returns to labor and constant creative search of the park’s residents.”
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid. “The most perspective direction for economic activity of Vodlozero National Park is tourism, however, with account of the economic situation in the country, foreign tourism firstly.”

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of cloudberry to sell, he did not estimate the number of person-hours necessary to gather such a large amount. He thought that the fish factory in Kugavalanok (Ekodar)--the region’s largest employer--could expand its operations in a way that did not compromise the region’s ecology. Cherviakov could not have predicted its closure 2 years later. However, it was tourism, which Cherviakov argued “had the greatest economic potential for the economic development of Vodlozero National Park,” and hence would lay the foundation for the larger vision. By bringing in tourism revenue, the national park would become the area’s main employer and compensate for the work lost through stronger logging restrictions. Cherviakov’s plans for tourism’s development, however, revealed several contradictory and irreconcilable elements of his vision.

While every year a few thousand unorganized tourists floated down the Ileks River in kayaks and rubber rafts through Vodlozero, Cherviakov acknowledged that organized tourism was still almost nonexistent in the area of the proposed park.55 The area simply did not have good roads or railway lines that would allow tourists to travel in less than a day’s time from large population centers like Petrozavodsk or Archangelsk. The tourists who would come to the remote park could enjoy paddling to the lake’s different islands, cross-country skiing, horseback, and hiking excursions. They would take part in excursions that focused on the area’s local history and literary traditions, scientific tourism that aimed for ecological education of the park’s guests, and “guest tourism” in which visitors would stay with locals and take part in the collection of berries, mushrooms, and medicinal plants. This final sort of tourism would give them a glimpse into the “exotic” of rural life.56 Expanding on this idea, Cherviakov wrote:

> Along with the traditional types of activity, we will develop local history tourism, oriented most of all with acquainting the visitors of the

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55 Ibid., 252.  
56 Ibid., 282.
national park with the nature of Vodlozero, with the culture of the region, and with the traditional mode (uklad) of life. In the tourist program, there will be fishing and hunting. Tourism for families will have a special appeal for the urbanites by appealing to their interest in the ‘exotic’ of rural life.\(^{57}\)

Cherviakov never seemed to question how commercialism might undermine “authenticity.”

But perhaps he could not be blamed; he had not lived in a system in which the commercial character of tourism had made kitsch places that initially appealed to tourists for their authenticity.\(^{58}\)

All of this, much less making the park accessible, would require significant investment. Cherviakov stated that the park could not rely on the state for this investment given the economic situation in the USSR at the time.\(^{59}\) Therefore, joint enterprises with foreign firms would construct the park’s infrastructure.\(^{60}\) Accordingly, he would frame the importance of the area’s preservation in language of international environmental discourse. With economic hardship making travel more difficult for the average citizen, he acknowledged that foreigners would be the park’s largest clienteles.

Some of Cherviakov’s other ideas demonstrated a profound naivété with respect to the relationship between money and power and more specifically between economy and culture. He claimed that local power with “high levels of professionalism and competence,” would shape the region’s managerial priorities. But despite this emphasis on local control, he

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\(^{57}\) Ibid., 269.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 270. In another statement that seemed to demonstrate a naivite about the danger of making the local culture a self-caricature, Cherviakov wrote: “The specifics of the particulars of the economy of Vodlozero must become the orientation on traditional methods of fishing, calendars the volume of the catch, etc... On the base of Vodlozero there can be established a zapovednik-museum of traditional fishing. The necessity of establishing such reserves-museums where elements of traditional culture will be protected not only as dead expositions, but as manifestations of human reality, will become all the more important.”

\(^{59}\) Cherviakov would have also considered this an undesirable option given his views on the Command Economy.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 261.
repeatedly argued that the virgin forests of Karelia and Archangelsk were “universal property” (obschechelovecheskoe dostoianie). Moreover, his proposed model of an “Ecological Economic Unit” would inform all decisions about the area’s development. This model held that the principle of “ecological stability” must undergird all decisions about the region’s economic development. While the park would determine these “units” through defining coherent ecosystems, such as watersheds, Cherviakov asserted that a system of monitoring and mathematical modeling could precisely determine the impact of different types of land use. He wrote: “So, if the scenario does not satisfy the most ecologically acceptable form of development, the option is not allowed for consideration.” While this new form of territorial organization would begin with Vodlozero National Park, other regions of Karelia could and would, Cherviakov believed, look to Vodlozero as a model (etalon). Again, writing with almost a sense of inevitability, he asserted:

Resources and effort must first be concentrated on model regions most suitable for these goals, transforming them into ecological-economic zones and only then expanding this system to the entire territory of the Republic.

But the ultimate impact would expand beyond the boundaries of Karelia. According to Cherviakov, the “Ecological Economic Unit” was “a task of global, or in any case, European scale.” It followed that it would prompt the interest of countries of the European community.”

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61 Ibid., 64.
62 Ibid., 41. Cherviakov wrote: “From the ecological point of view the most recovery of watersheds is only possible in the conditions if the activity of ecologization is connected with the cleaning of effluents starting from the headwaters of the river.”
63 Ibid., 39. Cherviakov is not consistent on this point throughout the document. In another section of the Basis, he writes: “In connection with this the priority directions of economic activity must become those that will bring profit.”
64 Ibid., 41-42.
While Cherviakov did not say so to me, Gorbachev’s appeal to a “common European home” might have influenced this vision. With significant foreign interest, Cherviakov hoped that interstate monitoring would take place to ensure proper ecological standards set by the International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) “Worldwide Strategy for Nature Protection” prepared by the IUCN and the United Nations. He also called for cooperation with UNEP and the Worldwide Fund of Nature Protection.” Arguing that such cooperation was necessary because of the diffuse, non-local, character of many environmental problems, such as pollution, he never hinted at the fact that such standards could interfere with local autonomy and initiative. Cherviakov recognized that external investment from ecological funds, commercial banks, and other entities were necessary for the park’s infrastructural development. But he did not seem to consider that outside investors would have leverage to alter his original vision might obtain advantages with the process of local decision-making. While Cherviakov’s vision reflected the sense of possibility that came in a period of dramatic cultural and economic transition, his vision demonstrated an economic illiteracy, which was hardly surprising given the top-down approach of the Soviet command economy. In one sentence, he might sound like a deep ecologist that believed in local solutions based on strong grounding in and awareness of place and local particularism. In other parts, he called for international solutions that would compensate for the weakness of the Russian Federation without ever seeming to account for how a locally-defined agenda would mesh with one that was internationally-informed.

65 Ibid.
Establishment and Disappointment

Throughout his efforts to establish the park, Cherviakov proved almost as adept a politician as he was an idealistic visionary. From the publication of “Desert or National Park” in 1989 to the park’s establishment, he impressed almost everyone he met and developed successful relationships not only with scientists, academics, and supporters of cultural preservation, but with influential government officials whose voice gave the push for the park’s establishment significant momentum. “He had,” Natalia Zabelina said, “a way of crawling into one’s heart.” Cherviakov also benefited from peculiarities within the Soviet system of allocating forest cuts, which pitted the interests of the Archangelsk Oblast and the Karelia Republic against one another. Despite the fact that the entire Ileks River (map) and its surrounding old-growth taiga forests were located in the Archangelsk Oblast, Karelles-prom had the rights to cut these forests long before Cherviakov called for the establishment of a national park. The Archangelsk Executive Committee realized that allowing Karelles-prom to cut these forests would bring no economic benefit to the Archangelsk Oblast. Moreover, by designating a zakaznik, the oblast administration would reach its yearly quotas for new protected territories as set by the Main Administration of Hunting and Zapovedniki. Accordingly, in the late 1990s the Archangelsk Oblast Executive Committee declared the 274,000 hectares of the proposed park in the oblast a temporary reserve (zakaznik). The Karelia ASSR Council of Ministers had been vacillating in its support of the national park in large part because of the projected benefits that timber cuts in this region would bring to the economy of the republic. Now, with much of the area inaccessible regardless of whether or not the RSFSR Council of Ministers established the national park, Vladimir Razonov, who

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66 Interview with Natalia Zabelina, July 21, 2015.
67 GARF, fond A-259, opis’ 49 delo 3399, 5. It forbade carrying out meliorative work, searching for useful mineable material, using pesticides and poisonous chemicals, podsochka of the forest, the concentrated cut of forest, the movement of transport off road and waterways; allowed hunting and fishing, preparing of firewood for the needs of the agricultural population.
became chair of the Karelia ASSR Council of Ministers in early 1991, expressed his support for the park to the RSFSR Council of Ministers.

All indicators pointed to the park’s establishment early in 1991. However, on April 14, 1991, Cherviakov met with a Deputy Chair of the RSFSR Council of Ministers, Vitali Parfenov, who had been a staunch supporter of environmental protection since taking part in student environmental protection efforts in the early 1960s. Parfenov informed Cherviakov that before we had received a letter from the Association of Workers of the Wood Processing Industry that expressed strong opposition to the park and a letter from the Ministry of Economy supporting this position. Parfenov told Cherviakov that he could “pretend he never saw these letters” for a week, during which time Cherviakov would need to write the decree for the park’s establishment and receive signatures from the State Committee on Ecology (Goskompriroda), the Ministry of Economy, the State Committee on Forests, and the Ministry of Finance. Waiting more than a week, Parfenov stated, would kill the momentum of the proposal. After drafting the resolution, Cherviakov travelled to different parts of Moscow to the offices of the heads and directors of these ministries and committees in search of signatures on April 15.

By the end of the day, Cherviakov had obtained all but one of the needed signatures. Because of the aforementioned concerns, the head of the RSFSR Ministry of Economy refused to sign it. This meant that the decree required the signature of the chair of the RSFSR Council of Ministers, Ivan Stepanovich Silaev, and not just the First Depute—Igor Trifonovich Gavrillov, who would have been able to sign it had the support been unanimous. Before that, however, Cherviakov needed the RSFSR Supreme Soviet to approve and sign the resolution. Having developed a strong relationship with Grigorii Aniikev, a depute from the

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68 See: Douglas Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom: Russian Nature Protection from Stalin to Gorbachev*, 328-332. Parfenov was one of the leaders of the Kedrograd Komsomol Committee when student groups in the Altai Republic protested against the cut of old-growth cedar forests.
Pudozh Region who supported the park, Cherviakov approached him about acquiring this signature as quickly as possible. Aniikev immediately called an “emergency meeting” of a “special committee” of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet, which met to discuss the question on April 16th in Hotel Rossiia. With the hastily organized “special committee” signing off on the resolution, it still lacked the signature of the Chair of the Council of Ministers—Ivan Silaev, who was leaving the country in three days. Immediately following the Supreme Soviet’s “emergency meeting,” Aniikev secured a meeting with the First Assistant Chair of the Council of Ministers, Igor Gavrillov, who promised to get Silaev’s signature before he left the country.

Gavrillov was preoccupied with a strike of miners from the Kuzbass region of the Kemerovo Oblast in Siberia where the establishment of Shorskii National Park had disrupted mining activity in many of the areas of traditional extraction. Cherviakov called Gavrillov’s office in the evening on April 17th and learned that Silaev had not signed the resolution. He did not sign it the following day either. The result was the same the following day. Assuming all hope was lost, Cherviakov told me that he “prayed unlike he ever had before when he went to bed on the night of April 19th. During the early afternoon of April 20th, Igor Gavrillov met Silaev at the airport just before the Chair of the Council of Ministers was preparing to leave the country. Silaev signed the resolution. The establishment of Vodlozero National Park was official. Cherviakov thought that there was much more at play than luck. He fully believed that God had intervened to answer his prayers.

Cherviakov’s sense of divine mission fueled his energy though the park’s first year, during which time most of the staff of highly educated specialists fully embraced his vision. Because he despised the USSR for, among other things, its condemnation of religion, the fall of the Soviet Union intensified Cherviakov’s sense of divine mission. Moreover, for Cherviakov, the Rio Earth Summit’s emphasis on “sustainable development” seemed to confirm not
only the righteousness of his vision, but also that the park was at the vanguard of a new epoch in world history. Local support remained strong for the first year and a half after the park’s establishment. One journalist asserted that all residents of the region supported the park a little less than a year after it was established. Others still wrote with confidence that interest in the park would “grow headlong” in other countries and that it would become a national park “of the highest category.”

In the year and a half after the park’s establishment, Cherviakov and the national park were working on enthusiasm alone while the villages of Kugavalanok and the wider Pudozh region’s support rested on hopes for the future. During this time, however, the park built almost no infrastructure and few tourists visited. Moreover, the park found itself in the position of exclusive provider of basic social services for the region—kindergartens, electricity, water—without receiving the necessary funds from the increasingly dysfunctional government of the Russian Federation to do so. The park also inherited all of the area’s agricultural enterprises without receiving the subsidies from the Ministry of Agriculture typically given to such enterprises. Agricultural activities were economically inexpedient and consequently the park’s inheritance of these enterprises increasingly forced it in the red. Moreover, the largest employer in Kugavalonok, the fish-canning factory Ekodar, went bankrupt in early 1993, which left the majority of the working population unemployed. Andrei Beckman, who had long been one of the most influential community members and initially a strong supporter of the park, moved to Petrozavodsk. While the population was increasingly looking to the park as a source of employment, the park was not bringing in revenue to the area and could therefore not expand its personnel.

The singularity of Cherviakov’s vision aggravated the frustrations created by dire economic realities. While Cherviakov had a charisma that attracted the region’s inhabitants

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69 Agarkov, V. “Pora brat’sya za inostranni v natsional’nom parke,” Pudozhskii vestnik, August 11, 1992, 2.
to his vision, he lacked the personal touch necessary to develop strong relationships with members of the community.\textsuperscript{70} Where Beckman had enjoyed close relationships with the community, the teetotaling Cherviakov had little time for socializing. The local population and the press increasingly viewed Cherviakov as imperious and uncompromising.\textsuperscript{71} By early 1993, it seemed that the tide of public opinion had shifted decidedly against the park. While many, including Cherviakov, had initially viewed the park as a means of exerting greater independence from Moscow, the local press began describing it, as so many other national parks had been described, as another imposition from Moscow, which had made incompetent and unknowledgeable people responsible for the fate of the region.\textsuperscript{72} Moreover, as was the case in so many regions, environmental protection was presented as an unaffordable luxury in a time of economic crisis, which forced many to resort to subsistence activities that compromised Vodlozero’s nature protection regime.\textsuperscript{73}

Tensions towards the park and Cherviakov boiled over at a March 30, 1993 meeting of the Pudozh City Council. As Cherviakov and others were proposing the establishment of a buffer zone that would bring 100,000 more hectares under state protection, area residents repeated criticisms of the young director’s ambitions and “growing appetite.” One participant said that Cherviakov was carrying this out “behind the backs” of the local population, which

\textsuperscript{70} A. Tamm and L. Peregud, “Legendi i bili Vodlozher’ya: V zalozhnikakh u natsional’nogo parka” Severnyi kur’er, June 11, 1992. V.I. Antipin told me that Beckman likely left Ekodar and moved to Petrozavodsk because of his inability to get along with Cherviakov. In his words, “they were like two bears in the same den.” Also see: E.V. Sidirova, “Po povodu sporov o natsional’nom parke” Pudozhskii vestnik, April 28, 1992. I. Dobrinina, “V krivom zerkale Vodlozer’ia” Servernaia kur’er, December 9, 1994.


\textsuperscript{72} “Ekodar na pasput e,” Pudozhskii vestnik, March 24, 1993.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid. The article stated: “When life is so complicated in the country, any limits on nature use for the local population threatens the existence of the population itself.” Also see: Vladimir Agarkov, “I vse poniatno,” Severnnii kur’er, April 4, 1993. Not helping mitigate the tensions, Vladimir Agarkov responded less than ten days later with an article in Severniy kur’er that seemed to validate the expressed concerns of the enterprises council. He wrote: “If the accountant and mechanic of the fish factory consider themselves more competent in questions of nature-protection sciences than specialists of the State Committee on Nature, Goskomles, than the scientists of Russia and Karelia, their academic centers, then this is, excuse me, humorous.”
was now “fed up.”74 Most participants denounced Cherviakov’s claims that the park would bring economic benefits. They expressed pessimism about the likelihood of the arrival of foreign “moneybags” (tourists) while expressing sympathy for the forestry industry, which the majority seemed to resent three years earlier. Now, they were saying that it could provide the region the most reliable source of employment.75 Stating that the national park had not given “one penny” to the region, I.I. Indushko attacked the “science” behind the national park while suggesting that its propagandists had deceived the residents of the region. He stated:

The national park has its professional writers, who can prove whatever they want. But the heart of the matter is that the national park wants to be the master of the region. In deciding the question, concerning the life of the region, only one side is present. Non-objective information has been given to us. The creeping annexation of the territory of Kubovski and Pialmsi complex forestry district is underway, all under the name of science. My personal relationship to science is that whoever pays more will have science prove what they want.76

The deputy N.D. Durnev perhaps summed up the prevailing concern the best: “The interests of the region and the interests of the national park are quite different.”77

The tactlessness of Cherviakov and others who wrote about the park exacerbated existing frustrations and distrust. When pointing to Cherviakov’s seemingly growing ambitions for the park’s expansion, his critics frequently referred to an offhand comment he made (“an appetite comes with eating”) when questioned about the establishment of a 100,000-hectare buffer zone. In interviews, he voiced frustrations with the economic situation in a way that likely seemed disparaging of the local population. In early 1994, he went on a radio program called “Hostage to the Village” and remarked perhaps truthfully but insensitively that the park had inherited not only an “unprofitable enterprise” and a “destroyed economy,” but also

74 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
a “demoralized collective.” Long one of the park’s strongest supporters in the local press, L. Peregud seemed to take offense to this remark and retorted in Severnyi kurer: “It turns out that the park has it bad because of the village. But what does the village get from the park?”

Unfortunately, for everyone concerned, Cherviakov and the park could give little to the village. As the decade wore on, the region’s residents accepted unenthusiastically that the national park was there to stay and would restrict timber cuts. At the same time, the national park had become the largest employer on which the local population now depended. Nonetheless, as national parks throughout the RSFSR faced a funding crisis, financing for Vodlozero National Park became more meager with each successive year. Employees hardly made subsistence-level wages. Cherviakov noted in 1996 that the park had tattered infrastructure and no good roads. Only 30 percent of the transportation fleet was in good enough repair to be functional. The lack of finances forced Cherviakov to reduce the working week in December of 1996. While the responsibility for maintaining the social infrastructure of the village Kugalanovok had complicated the park’s tasks, Cherviakov estimated that the park needed more than 225 million rubles more than it received from the state in 1996 in order to carry out these responsibilities. Already, he predicted that the allocation of 200 million rubles for the park in 1997 would only meet for 40 percent of the park’s needs. And this figure only accounted for maintenance of the area and carrying out the most basic social services for the population. There was no state money for infrastructural development, the absence of which he believed had prevented the park from becoming a popular destination for

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79 Ibid.
80 Soiuzgiproleskhoz Archive.
foreign tourists. While the Karelia Institute of the Forest estimated that 2.5 to 3 million tourists would be coming to the Republic by the mid-1990s, Cherviakov envisioned hundreds of thousands coming to Vodlozero National Park every year. At mid-decade, however, fewer than 3000 tourists were registering with the national park each year.  

With little hope that the government of the Russian Federation would provide the necessary funds for the park’s development, Cherviakov proved extremely adept in establishing foreign contacts and trying to raise the park’s international profile. And as was the case with almost every national park, international support seemed the only hope for Vodlozero by the late 1990s. In 1997, Cherviakov received a grant from TACIS (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States) of the sum of 2.5 million dollars for the park’s development.  

With this grant, the park established an office with an ecological education center in Petrozavodsk, an ecological trail, initiated the restoration of old churches and chapels, and developed an extensive strategic plan and system of ecological monitoring. However, the park needed far more funds to develop the infrastructure needed to create the tourism explosion in the park that would provide the self-sustaining economic foundation that would allow the park to serve as a model and lead to the spread of the noosphere throughout the region and perhaps beyond. While Cherviakov would continue to tout the varied tourist opportunities offered by the park, by the late 1990s, the park was serving just over 2,000 tourists a year even as the RSFSR Council of Ministers nominated it for consideration by UNESCO to become a World Heritage Site.  

Cherviakov had not completely relinquished his belief that the national park could be an agent of regional transformation and during the late 1990s and early 2000s led international groups in planning the establishment of several more national parks in

81 Ibid.  
82 Ibid.  
83 Ibid.
Karelia and the Archangelsk Oblast. These parks, however, remained proposals and Vodlozero National Park seemed to exist largely on paper as the end of the millennium approached.

Vodlozero’s failure to develop according to his grandiose vision increasingly pained Cherviakov. In 1998, he began restoring the abandoned village of Burishpul. There, with the occasional help of volunteers, he restored small chapels, a church, and started construction on a house where he and his wife, Natasha, would live. He also brought sheep, goats, and horses to the village. By the early 2000s, he was spending most of his time there and dedicated more energy to worship than to administration. While Cherviakov had been ordained a priest in 1992, he dedicated significant time to studying Old Church Slavonic and the rituals of the Orthodox service throughout the 1990s. Although his educational background was scientific, Cherviakov’s worldview was becoming increasingly religious.

Cherviakov had not completely lost hope. In 2005, a delegation from the government of the Russian Federation came to the territory of the park in response to calls by deputies of the Pudozh region for the federal government to invest in the region and the park’s infrastructure—mainly cell towers and better roads. While some of the technical infrastructure necessary for economic development hardly existed when Cherviakov conceived the park, the area’s appearance was little changed from the time that he took that fateful trip down the Ileks River in 1988. With the delegation asking Cherviakov and the deputies why the Pudozh region needed funding for development more than many other provincial, rural areas in the Russian Federation, they asked a series of questions to see if the region was suitable for the development of tourism. They first asked Cherviakov if people wanted to practice traditional agriculture as he called for in the TACIS plan. “No,” Cherviakov answered. “We can invest for the development of tourism, if there are people who want to work in the tourism business,” a member of the delegation said. “Are there?” “No,” Cherviakov replied. “Do young
people want to live here,” the member asked. “No, Cherviakov again answered. “It was a depressing moment,” he tells me. “And that is how it ended. We had a program. We made a great strategy for the sustainable development of the region. But no one knew what exactly to do with the money that would be invested. There were not people that wanted to take part in it, and I consider that to be why the park failed—the absence of social resources.”

It was almost 2 o’clock in the afternoon. Cherviakov and I had been talking for nearly four hours. Even though he lives a life largely apart from the modern world, Cherviakov’s perspective always had and still extends far beyond his locality, the Russian North, and the Russian Federation. For him, Vodlozero National Park’s failure is reflective of tragedy of the past 20 years of global history. “It is not possible,” he says, “to remember without a slight smirk that pathos and inspiration at the time of signing the Rio de Janeiro convention. It is clear that the world has not gone in that direction that was defined as sustainable development. After a brief pause he continues: “In the world the tendencies are largely similar. There is forming an all-world Babylon. This is a completely different world-view. People are becoming urban. Nature is becoming only a place for recreation but not a sphere of life. People do not think of landscape. And from this we have so many conflicts of culture, spiritual, ecological. Of course, Russia takes part in this process, which is leading us all to the end. By its own internal logic, an all-world Babylon cannot exist. God will not allow it to exist for a long time. Just as China and America, Russia takes part in this global process. Of course, the world of the 1990s was vacillating between the direction of sustainable development, or an all-world Babylon. It seems that we made a strong choice towards Babylon. In addition to our local situation, the absence of social resources, there is this general situation—Babylon.”

From his self-imposed isolation from the modern world in the village he

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84 Interview with Oleg Cherviakov, June 20, 2015.
85 Ibid.
reconstructed, Cherviakov nonetheless acutely felt that an era, what some refer to as “The Age of Ecology,” had already passed.

Cherviakov believed that Vodlozerskii National Park could revive a region that had lost its identity from the repressiveness of a highly centralized state, which had no respect for the region’s unique cultural traditions. Like the founders, directors, and supporters of many other national parks, he believed that the park could help fill the ideological and economic vacuum left by the collapse of the Soviet state, block extractive industries, and inspire local populations to protect nature better. On the second count, Cherviakov had largely succeeded. Although some illegal cuts probably occur from time to time, the taiga forest of Vodlozerskii National Park is largely protected. However, Cherviakov views the park today through the prism of his original expectations. While no other park founder or supporter would view the situation in such stark religious terms, park supporters throughout the Russian Federation grew similarly disillusioned by the mid-1990s. The final chapter will take a broad look at the state of Russian national parks in the 1990s and the environmental community’s widespread disillusionment about national parks.
Part IV: The Tragedy of Russian Parks and Environmental Protection in the Russian Federation
Chapter 10: Broken Models: The Crisis of National Parks in the 1990s

Shortly after the breakup of the Soviet Union, some social scientists were quick to characterize the multinational state’s collapse as death by “ecocide.” While such clever turns of phrase overstated the extent to which environmental degradation contributed to the USSR’s collapse, as previous chapters have shown, the damage that the Soviet Union inflicted on the environment was severe and undoubtedly strengthened disillusionment of environmentalists whose protests had spread the seeds of discontent beyond the environmentalist community and throughout the USSR. Following the USSR’s collapse, the young government of the Russian Federation was keenly aware of the international perception of the USSR’s environmental mismanagement and its failure to achieve its stated goals in this area. Boris Yeltsin, in turn, soon proclaimed environmental protection as one of the Russian Federation’s foremost priorities as part of an attempt to model itself on western democracies. In January 1992, Aleksei Iablokov, perhaps the most influential environmentalist in Russia at the time, said in an interview with a Los Angeles Times reporter: “At last now there is someone who listens. There is a possibility of accomplishment. If you can get the ear of Yeltsin or Burbulis (deputy prime minister) things get done.”

Since the First World Conference on National Parks in Seattle in 1962, national parks had been one of the hallmarks of a nation’s level of “ecological enlightenment.” Some prominent environmentalists, like Julian Huxley, even claimed “civilized” countries must have them. Along with reconciling the goals of making nature protection economically viable and providing recreational opportunities for the Soviet population, Soviet environmentalists

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2 Laura Henry, Red to Green: Environmental Activism in Post-Soviet Russia (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 42.
had been attracted to the idea of national parks as a means of seeking recognition and approval from the international environmental community. Looking to bolster its reputation for environmental protection and faced with the threat of Russia’s natural and cultural treasures falling into private hands, the government of the Russian Federation established more “national nature” (called national for convenience henceforth) parks—thirteen—in the four years following the Soviet Union’s collapse and more than in any other period in Russian or Soviet history.

Originally intended as one national park, Meshchera and Mescherskii National Parks were formed 1992 in the Vladimir and Riazan Oblasts respectively. In April 1992, an area with many lakes and wetlands, Smoleenskoe Poozer’e National Park was established in the northern part of the Smolensk Oblast. After three years of joint work between Karelian and Finnish scientists, the government established Paanajarvi National Park in the northern part of Karelia along the Finnish border. During this time, the government of the Russian Federation also established Chuvash Varmane in the Chuvash Republic (1993), Russian North in the Vologda Oblast (1993), Pripyshminskiye Bory in the Sverdlovsk Oblast (1993), Zyurtukul in the Chelyabinsk Oblast (1993), Khvalynskii in the Saratov Oblast (1994), Iugyd Va in the Komi Republic (1994), Orlovskoe Poles’e in the Orlov Oblast (1994), Shushenskii Bor in the Krasnoyarsk Region (1995), and Smolnyi National Park in the Republic of Mordovia (1995). By 1995, the Russian Federation had 26 national parks, which encompassed .4 percent of the nation’s territory. While this might not sound like much, it was more than the entire territory of France and including zapovedniki the Russian Federation’s protected territory measured four times that of France.

Soviet environmentalists had long asserted that the state’s (people’s) common ownership of all the land would simplify the establishment of national parks. Privatization, weakened central authority, and economic crisis, however, created fertile ground for resistance to
their establishment. The government was establishing parks amid a tide of anti-Moscow sentiment. Moreover, when they were established, the government of the Russian Federation could not adequately finance the most basic functions of national parks, which made accruing the long expected profits from tourism impossible. This, in turn, frequently made parks even more resented by regional administrators, foresters, businesses, and private citizens who came to view them as wasteful establishments that imposed unfair and irrational restrictions on the exploitation of vast stores of wealth. On top of that, as many social scientists have noted, most Russians were too concerned with survival to focus on environmental protection, which left parks with fewer defenders. The largest constituency for environmental protection, the academic and scientific intelligentsia, had contracted considerably.

With Russian environmental groups having vastly broadened their ties to environmental NGOs and foundations in the years after the collapse of the USSR, leaders in environmental protection and park administrators pled not only with Moscow, but also to the international environmental community to help protect the most scenic corners of Russian nature, which they argued were the “heritage of humanity.” With international collaboration between the government of the Russian Federation and other states proving more complicated and international financial assistance limited than expected, environmentalists came to view the Russian Federation's failure to protect and support its scenic treasures as an abnegation of responsibility before not only the Russian people, but also the entire world. Many, in short, considered the state of Russia’s national parks a national disgrace.

This chapter has three parts. The first will describe the challenges in establishing Meshcherskii National Park in the Riazan Oblast and the Beringia International Park in the

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Chukotka Autonomous Okrug. While both cases illustrated the desire of regional administrations to assert more independence from Moscow, the latter case also demonstrated the challenges in re-conceptualizing national space as international. The chapter’s second part will look at how inattention from Moscow and the hostility of local and regional administrations as well as private businesses stymied national parks’ development and the resulting frustrations of park administrators and environmentalists. Without strong domestic support, environmentalists and park administrators appealed to the international environmental community in seeking to save and develop the system. The third part of this chapter looks at the successful establishment and development of Nalychevo Nature Park on Kamchatka. Nalychevo provides a striking exception to this generally bleak picture of national parks in the 1990s and proved that parks—nature or national—could be established and successfully developed through the combination of international support and citizen participation, even in a climate of weakened central power and economic instability.

Resistance in All Directions: Mescherskii National Park and Beringia International Park

The Meshchera Lowlands is a 23,000 square kilometer forest-wetland valley located within the Moscow, Riazan, and Vladimir oblasts. The area has coniferous and mixed forests that are home to 850 plant, 170 bird, 50 mammal, 30 fish, and 10 amphibian species. During the 20th century, Sergei Esenin and Konstantin Paustovskii made this region a symbol of central Russian nature. In his novella Kordon 273, Paustovskii, who had frequently advocated for stronger nature protection measures in central newspapers, said of the region’s Pra River: “I have seen many wild and scenic places in Russia, but I have probably never seen a river as pure and mysterious as the Pra.”

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6 For an article that Paustovskii wrote about nature protection on the Oka River, see: Konstantin Paustovskii, “Za krasotu rondoj zemli!” Literaturnaia gazeta, July 12, 1955.
The first mention of a park on the Pra River came in the early 1960s from the director of the Oka Zapovednik, Andrei Rak. Through the course of the next two decades, unorganized tourists flocked to the region and set up “tent cities” along the banks of the Pra and nearby rivers as timber harvesting increased. From the early 1960s to the late 1970s, tourism in the Oka Zapovednik alone grew 600-fold. The region bore increasing anthropogenic scars throughout the 1970s, but the absence of a Union law on national parks made the establishment of a national park for the Meshchera lowlands, which might have mitigated the damage, impossible. However, less than a year following the passage of the “model regulation” in 1981, the nature protection brigades of Moscow State University and the Riazan Oblast resurrected the issue. From 1982 to 1985, along with the nature protection brigades, members of the Geographical Society USSR, and associates of the Oka Zapovednik carried out numerous joint projects in the region of Meshchera to establish the “scientific basis” for the formation of a national park. With the enthusiasm for national parks not yet tempered by the numerous disappointments that would come in the years to follow, one of the park’s supporters, V. Pankratov, wrote in 1983 in Priokskaiiaia pravda that a future park with well-developed trails and campsites would allow it to accommodate 160,000 people simultaneously.

The proposals had gained the attention of the Main Administration of Hunting and Zapovedniki. In 1986, it called for the establishment of Meshchera National Park in its plans for new national parks and zapovedniki by the year 2000. With V.N. Tikhomirov, a famous

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7 N.V. Maksakovskii, Meshcherskii natsional’nyi park” Riazanskii ekologicheskii vestnik 1 (January 1993), 51
8 The first book oriented towards tourism in the region was published in 1966. See: A. Popov, Po Meshcherskomu krai (Moscow: Provizdat, 1966).
9 V.P. Chizhova, Rekraisoinnie nagruzki v zonakh otdeka Moskva (Moscow: Lesnaia Promyschlenost, 1977) 34.
11 N.V. Maksakovskii, Meshcherskii natsional’nyi park” Riazanskii ekologicheskii vestnik 1 (January 1993), 51
12 Ibid., 52.
environmental educator from Moscow State University, leading different groups on land surveys in the years that followed, the public support for the park expanded to both the All-Russian Society for the Protection of Nature (VOOP), the Riazan Division of Komsomol, the Youth Council of Moscow State University, and other civic organizations. The idea gained even broader support because of the concern aroused by the proposed plans to build a sewage canal through a floodplain of the Oka River. A large protest against its construction led to a collective letter with over 15,000 signatures in the summer of 1988.14 Priokskaja pravda and Riazanskii komsomolets actively promoted the idea for the park with the latter soliciting readers for ideas and opinions regarding the form it should take. In turn, they wrote dozens of letters to the editorial board.15 The idea also found supporters among the most important figures in the protection of the RSFSR's natural and cultural legacy, such as Aleksei Iablokov and Iurii Vedenin.16

The first official proposals called for establishing a single park in the Riazan, Vladimir, and Moscow Oblasts. In numerous meetings held in the spring of 1991, residents of Klepikov Region of the Riazan Oblast expressed concern regarding the new land use restrictions that the national park might impose. However, the oblast administration expressed its support for the idea in a resolution that called for the inclusion of 103,000 hectares of land in the Klepikov region.17 But after realizing the implications of the “model regulation’s” ban on all economic activity not connected within park territory, the Klepikov Regional Council

14 Little Corner of Freedom, 432.
of People’s Deputies expressed concern to the Scientific-Technical Institute of Nature Protection and the Riazan Oblast Administration. In turn, the latter proposed to the government of the RSFSR jurisdiction over the entire park’s territory that fell within the oblast. Following months of correspondence between the Riazan Oblast Administration and different levels of the government of the RSFSR and then the Russian Federation, the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation established two national parks—Meschera and Mescherskii—on April 9, 1992 with the latter only within the territory of the Riazan Oblast.

The decree, which barred “economic activity that countered the tasks of the national park,” hardly assuaged concerns of the Riazan Oblast Administration and residents of the Klepikov Region. Residents believed that the decree’s language put the park’s interests above the 20,000 people living within it despite its promise to “ensure the optimal combination of the interests of the local population, tourism, and nature protection.” They had no idea if they could practice agriculture, graze their sheep and goats, gather berries, hunt, or even fish. Moreover, the decree did not specify how the park would be financed or under which department it would operate. If the government failed to invest in tourism infrastructure, there would be nothing to offset the economic harm caused by closing enterprises within the park’s territory. Moreover, with joblessness rampant and increasing, residents worried that they might be unable to survive with new increased restrictions on their use of the land.

The administration of the Klepikov Region called for meetings in different villages located within the territory of the park. From April 18-23, 1992, several administrative districts within the region held town hall meetings in which participants carried out referendums

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18 In a letter to the oblast administration and NII Priroda, they wrote: “It is important to note that in the circumstance of the transition to the market economy the natural resources of the region are acquiring for us special significance. Taking a significant part of the territory of the region—the most important with respect to the ecology out of economic use—will undermine the economic basis of self-administration, which will negatively influence the resolution of many problems in the region.”
19 GARF, fond 10200, opis’ 4, delo 2156, 36.
20 Ibid.
on the park.\footnote{Ibid., 87.} With hardly a person speaking for the park, most participants expressed vehement opposition. They repeatedly expressed the fear that a national park would make it possible for them to gather mushrooms and berries. Some even stated that park regulations would prevent them from entering its territory.\footnote{Ibid.} At one meeting, a concerned resident stated that the federal government would force them to turn over firearms.\footnote{Ibid., 92.}

When the votes were in, the result was one-sided. In the Bolon’skii Agricultural Council in Surgun, 268 residents voted against the park and only one for it. In another district, the results were 299 against and two for the park.\footnote{Ibid., 94.} At the meeting of the citizens of Kuzino and Krasnaia Gorka of the Kaldevskii Agricultural Council, 307 participants voted against it as compared to only nine who voted for it. Following the referendum, the Riazan Oblast Administration wrote a letter to the government of the Russian Federation expressing its opposition. It concluded by stating: “We would like to remind you that in our very difficult time when much of the population, including us, is living below the poverty line and has a shortage of food products, money should be invested in a much more promising direction than the organization of a national park.”\footnote{Ibid., 98.}

The Riazan Oblast Administration treated the park as if it did not exist even though the referendums could not overturn its legal status. While the Supreme Soviet would accuse the Riazan Oblast Administration of peddling misinformation to turn the local population against the park, neither the Riazan Oblast Administration nor the residents within the territory of the park had been well informed of exactly how and where

\footnote{Ibid., 98. This letter also said: “It is not clear for what goals the nature, national park is being established. If it is for the goals of preserving the nature complex as the polozhenie of national parks calls for, then in given nature complex of this territory the reclamation has long been destroyed, the forest has largely been cut down, and other economic activities have long taken place. To revive the nature complex is practically impossible.”}


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the restrictions would be imposed. The oblast administration began giving land allotments for the construction of boat docks, camps, recreation bases, and to auctioneering societies for various commercial purposes. Without any sign that the federal government would be able to invest in park infrastructure in the near future, it is hard to blame the oblast administration for trying to make economically fallow land profitable with the population suffering from the country’s economic collapse. Regardless of the illegality of the oblast administration’s actions, the government of the Russian Federation could not do anything to stop it. Mesherskii National Park, in essence, existed only on paper.

**The Limits of Transnational Cooperation: The Agonizing Fate of Bering International Park**

With Moscow incapable of developing and exercising authority over a park less than 250 kilometers away, it is hardly surprising that the grandiose plans for international parks in the Far East met disappointment. Less than two months after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation dropped the proposal for the formation of Kuril Bridge International Park because Japan would not agree to the formation of the park until the Russian Federation acknowledged Japanese sovereignty over Iturup, Kunashir, and Shikotan Islands, which Japan had lost after World War II. The death of the dream of Beringia International Park was slower and more agonizing.

Few national parks had been more ambitious in their goals or met a bitterer fate than Beringia International Park. The park had sought to empower Chukotka’s indigenous populations of Eskimo and Chukchi through reviving their traditional culture and

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26 Dobrushin Archive. According to an inspection carried out by the federal forestry service, from the establishment of the park in April to September of 1992, the oblast administration had rented out 188 pieces of park territory.

27 GARF, fond 10200, opis’ 4, delo 2151, 119.
transforming their economy to one based on tourism and traditional artisanship. Moreover, it also aimed to protect the area from the mining industry, reestablish regular contact between indigenous groups of Chukotka and Alaska, and to strengthen ties with its former geopolitical rival—the United States—through joint environmental protection projects. Even though both sides would maintain sovereignty and have jurisdiction over individual national parks, the conceptualization of shared international space between the United States and the Soviet Union had been unthinkable just a few years before. The idea meshed with the *zeitgeist* that came with the end of the bipolar world and in the aftermath of the Rio Earth Summit. However, petty jealousies, resentments over perceived historical injustices, issues of jurisdiction, rivalry between branches of the Academy of Sciences, and longstanding mistrust between different groups complicated the project. The climate of political instability and economic hopelessness intensified these tensions. In the end, this grandiose dream lay in tatters.

For nearly a year, Soviet and American scientists had done little on the park after the attempted coup preempted their work in August 1991. On June 16, 1992, Boris Yeltsin and George H.W. Bush signed another accord reaffirming the joint commitment of the United States and the Russian Federation to the park. The accord stated that the Russian government together with local authorities would finalize the plan for the Russian side of the park within two months. It assigned the Chukotka Okrug administration the responsibility for taking immediate measures for the protection of the territory, which was increasingly suffering from looters who took part in illegal excavations. However, no one had the rubles to complete the planning. The Chukotka Okrug Ad-

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28 GARF, fond 10200, opis’ 4, delo 4479, 127.  
29 Ibid., 120.
administration, in turn, informed the government of the Russian Federation that it intended to form a “regional nature park” directly under its jurisdiction. The Far East Division of the Academy of Sciences based in Magadan supported this idea.

A group of scientists from the Academy of Sciences, which included Iurii Vedenin and Larisa Boguslovskaia, expressed their growing concern over the fate of the park in a letter to the government of the Russian Federation dated October 22, 1992.30 Emphasizing the “planetary significance” of the park, the signatories accused the Chukotka Okrug Administration of unspecified “authoritarian actions” that had cut off the indigenous population from the planning process. They wrote:

Now, most residents who have been disappointed by the delayed progress on the establishment of the park and their lack of participation in it, are indifferent to the idea of the park. A few are coming to the point of view of our fellow foreign tribesmen (Alaska): the park is a task of white people and is only needed by them. 31

The letter further asserted that numerous telegrams to the government of the Russian Federation demonstrated that the Okrug Administration wanted only to create a “free economic zone” where foreign and Russian firms could freely exploit the region’s mineral riches.32 The letter concluded by expressing hopes for renewed participation of the region’s indigenous population in 1993, which the United Nations declared the year of indigenous peoples.33

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30 Ibid., 18. The signatories included T.I. Alekseeva (member of RAN and the Worldwide Association of the Biology of Humans), S.A. Atrium (President of the Association of Ethnographic and Anthropological Sciences), L.S. Boguslovskaia (Doctor of Biological Sciences and Member of the Supreme Ecological Council of the Russian Federation), Iurii Vedenin (Doctor of Geographical Sciences and the director of the Russia Scientific-Technical Institute for Cultural and Natural Legacy), A.I. Pika (Candidate of Historica Sciences and member of the Council of the International Working Group in the Affairs of Indigenous Populations, B.B. Prokhorov (member-correspondent of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Russia and the director of the Institute Human Ecology), V.I. Timofeev (Doctor of Physical-Mathematical Sciences and director of the International Institute of Computer Science of the Biosphere), Iu. I. Chernov (member of RAN)
31 Ibid., 25.
32 I have not located these specific telegrams in the archive.
33 GARF, fond 10200, opii's 4, delo 4470, 127.
While Moscow scientists might have thought that the Chukchi and Eskimos were increasingly indifferent to the idea, the archival record shows that they were profoundly disappointed by the lack of progress on the plan and, in turn, increasingly distrustful of Moscow scientists. Emboldened by the USSR’s Association of the Peoples of the North “Declaration of Free Development of the peoples of the North,” which asserted the rights of indigenous peoples to “self-determination” and the ability to “define their relationship to the state,” the park’s indigenous residents were ready to blame someone for the park’s shortcomings. Numerous influential leaders of these communities sent a joint letter (November 20, 1992) to the Academy of Science and several government ministries. After expressing aggravation at the collective letter of the Moscow scientists, who the signatories claimed to have never met, and resentment for having “long taken orders from Moscow,” the letter claimed that over fifty percent of the members of the commission established by the Chukotka Okrug Administration were from indigenous groups. They blamed Boguslovsk, and other Moscow scientists, “who knew nothing about the region,” for adopting the “pretense of concern of indigenous populations” to finance their travels to Chukotka and on to Alaska. They continued:

Convinced of the righteousness of our position, we protest against such politics of expansion. We do not need any sort of commissions from Moscow, even more now, when our people having acquired independence are forming community and farming economy. We do not need interdepartmental bureaucratic groups, which are proposed

35 GARF, fond 10200, opis’ 4, delo 4479, 91. The letter asserted: “For the last two years through different types of activity under the pretense of concern for the native populations of Chukotka, different people from different bureaucratic departments and scientists from Moscow and Saint Petersburg have to Chukotka, especially to the territory of the proposed park. Many of those visitors to Chukotka very gladly exploit the theme of the protection of indigenous peoples (it is not understood from whom). Hiding behind imaginary concerns, these people from Moscow, Saint Petersburg and other cities come to Chukotka supposedly for the good of our society and then continue on transit to Alaska. Only in the last two years by transit through Chukotka to Alaska under the auspices of the International Park Beringia 10 different “creative teams” (tvorcheskie kolektivy) made this route, including the Supreme Soviet. And there is no usefulness for Chukotka of such voyages. We are forced to accept reciprocal visits by people from Alaska. The last such voyage was organized as previously and others by L.S. Bogoslovsco, who included in the group supposed scientists from Chukotka and Beringia, but who actually had no relationship to the area. Then, it became clear none of these people had ever worked or been in Chukotka. The commission put such voyages to an end.”
by a group of scientists. And we know about the old style of management and order from Moscow, which forced us to write this letter.\textsuperscript{36}

After expressing suspicion that these Moscow scientists were carrying out similar roles of represented government inspectors from Soviet times, they concluded:

And tell scientists from Moscow to leave us alone. We assure the government of the Russian Federation that the project will be fulfilled, but with our active participation here on Chukotka and certainly with enough financing for carrying it out in the territory of Beringia. The government of the Russian Federation is not guaranteeing us anything and the project for the International Park Beringia to this time has not been given one ruble.\textsuperscript{37}

The park’s promises for economic revival and cultural rejuvenation now seemed hollow to the groups that had expressed great enthusiasm just one year before.

As the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources continued to insist that the park would be under the jurisdiction of the federal government, the president of the Far East Division of the Academy of Sciences, G.B. Eliakov, sent a scathing letter to Yeltsin that expressed similar sentiments as the letter of the representatives of native groups. Asserting that the Far East was not an “intellectual backwater,” Eliakov argued that the Far East Division’s proximity to the park made it a more logical point for the coordination of the park’s scientific work than Moscow. He continued:

We know in the history of our country many examples of deficient ‘grandiose’ projects, prepared and realized under pressure of central agencies ‘for the benefit’ of the territories, located many thousands of kilometers from Moscow and Saint Petersburg, and the people who regularly live in them.\textsuperscript{38}

The criticism of the national park as the imposition of a “grandiose plan” had an irony that probably neither the writers, nor the recipients of this letter had considered. Environmentalists in the regions had frequently conceived national parks as a means of contending with Moscow’s grandiose plans for economic development and the transformation of the natural

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 92.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 99.
world. Now, the regional administration presented the attempts by Moscow scientists to lead in the development of Beringia International Park in a similar light.

The Chukotka Autonomous Okrug never threatened to separate from the Russian Federation as had some administrative territories in the Far East. Nevertheless, its resistance to a new federal entity within its territory exemplifies the tensions that emerged in many parts of the Russian Federation as the result of a process referred to by the anthropologist Marjorie Mendelstam Balzer as “centralization after liberalization.” Without agreement from the Russian Federation Council of People’s Deputies, the administration of the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug established Beringia Regional Nature Park on January 27, 1993 despite the fact that Russian law did not recognize “nature parks” as an official protected territory. In a referendum on the decision to establish a “regional nature park” under the okrug administration, 83 percent of residents within the Providenskii Region and 68 percent of the residents of the Chukotka Region voted for the park to remain under the jurisdiction of the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug. Following the vote, in a letter to the government and Council of Ministers of the Russian Federation, the head of the Chukotka Okrug administration asserted: “Such a complex area with lots of native villages requires control outside Moscow. This is what the population wants.”

The following months would demonstrate that the population actually wanted little more than their lives improved and was willing to cast its lot with whomever it thought could do that best. They had bought into the promise of an “ethnic territory” where their interests would be protected and their culture revived, but they became disillusioned with Moscow

41 GARF, fond 10200, opis’ 4, delo 4479, 52.
42 Ibid., 53.
when the government lacked the resources, and perhaps even the will, to carry out the ambitious plans developed before the Soviet Union’s collapse. However, they had continued to maintain hopes that the Okrug administration would carry out this idealistic vision. When it became clear that the Okrug administration indeed had little commitment to doing so, they beseeched Moscow to intervene. In a letter to the assistant chair of the Interdepartmental Commission on Affairs of the Arctic and Antarctica, D.K. Zotov, the Regional Society of Eskimos and the Organization of Native Residents of the Providenskii Region now claimed that the Chukotka Okrug Administration established the regional nature park “behind the back of the local population.”

Calling Beringia “the heritage of all humanity,” they argued that history proved that indigenous groups fare better under federal than regional administrations. Protection through an international commitment with the United States, the letter argued, would grant them even stronger protection. The letter then expressed surprise at the “lack of interest” on the part of the Ministry of the Environmental Protection and Nature Resources to the “fate of a unique region and its indigenous peoples” and readiness to cooperate with scientists from Moscow, Leningrad, and with all “who were worried about the fate of our region.”

Concern over the fate of the region and Russia’s reputation before the international community had, in fact, become widespread throughout the Russian environmental community. On July 22, 1993, the Central Council of the VOOP wrote a letter to the Council of Ministers and the government of the Russian Federation that stated:

The delay in the realization of the project, many times agreed upon by the USSR and then Russia with the government of the United States, is undermining the international authority of our country and is bringing the destruction of the unique flora and fauna of Beringia, its rich ethno-cultural legacy, acknowledged by international public opinion.”

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43 Ibid., 13
44 Ibid., 13.
45 Ibid., 51.
A follow up letter three months later again warned of the damage to Russia’s international reputation. Federal ministries and institutes seemed to be losing hope towards the end of 1993 as Yeltsin’s grip on power seemed increasingly imperiled. Moreover, Yeltsin’s dissolving parliament delayed the passage a new law on protected territories, which brought the government’s commitment to Beringia International Park and national parks in general increasingly into question. Writing to the Council of Ministers in December, the Ministry of Nature Protection and Natural Resources asserted that while federal status would be “the most correct” for the park, the establishment of a “nature-ethnic park” on a regional level does not go against the existing law. While Yeltsin’s call for the regions to take “all the autonomy they could swallow” was likely more a statement of political expedience than conviction when he said it, now Moscow seemed less able to impose its vision with each passing month.

Yeltsin signed the federal act “On Specially Protected Natural Areas,” which provided for the establishment of “regional-nature” parks under regional (krai), republic, or oblast jurisdiction on March 14, 1995. National parks dropped the word nature from “national nature” parks. Less than two months later, the Federation Council Committee for Northern Affairs and Indigenous Peoples had a parliamentary hearing to discuss the organization of the “nature-ethnic” park Beringia. The acknowledgement of the status of the “nature-ethnic” park under Okrug jurisdiction effectively ended the efforts to establish the international park. With the euphoria of the idea of cooperating with a longtime rival having worn off, critics pointed out that in the territory of the proposed park the USSR’s portion of the park exceeded

46 Ibid., 8.
47 GARF, fond 10200, opis’ 4, delo 4479.
48 Vsevolod Stepanitsky, “Russia Adopts New Federal Law on Protected Territories” Russian Conservation News (May 1995, 4): 4-5. The adoption of the Law by the Soviet parliament was thwarted by the fall of the USSR. A second attempt failed in 1993 a few months before Yeltsin dissolved parliament.
the US portion four-fold. Moreover, they stated that no indigenous populations resided regularly in the territory on the proposed US side, and that the government of the USSR and the Russian Federation never considered important questions of territorial integrity. The two countries, one article in the Anadyr based newspaper Krainii sever argued, had essentially agreed to cooperate on unequal terms. The dream of a Beringia International Park died due to the weakness of the federal authority and the ambitions of regional government. The reemergence of longstanding geopolitical suspicions led to the discrediting of the idea.

Before national parks existed in the RSFSR, one journalists had noted that he had “never met an opponent” to the idea of a national park. Like Samara Bend, Pribaikal’skii, Iugyd Va, and Vodlozerskii, the establishment of Mescherskii National Park and the failure to realize the hopes of establishing Beringia International Park demonstrated how strong resentment towards national parks had become among many groups in the years after the collapse of the USSR. Both of these instances demonstrate Laura Henry’s argument that “haphazard decentralization” undermined the government’s attempts to carry out environmental protection initiatives. Successfully developing, managing, and protecting national parks proved even more difficult than their establishment. While some park opponents resented and scoffed at the limitations that parks placed on land use, environmentalists and park administrators would come to view international connections as critical to the survival of Russia’s protected territories. We will now shift our focus to these disappointments and the “international turn” of the Russian environmental community.

49 “Beringiia” Krainii sever, July 6, 1995:
50 Ibid.
51 Bannikov, “Garmoniia neprim” Literaturnaia gazeta, January 29, 1975, 13
52 Laura Henry, “Between Transnationalism and state power; the development of Russia’s post-Soviet environmental movement” Environmental Politics, vol. 19, no. 5 (May 2010), 763.
Broken Models: The Dysfunction of Russian National Parks and a Plea for Help

As previous chapters have established, the sorry state of Russia’s national parks in the late Soviet period worsened in the wake of the USSR’s collapse. Despite the dramatic increase in the number of zapovedniki and national parks, their 1994 budget had fallen 70 percent from its 1990s level when adjusted for inflation.53 Limited budgets prevented parks from hiring the qualified specialists necessary to develop educational outreach to the local populations, which were frequently unaware of the purpose of the national park in which they lived.54 Workers of both national parks and zapovedniki often lived below the poverty line without insurance and lacked basic equipment—uniforms, transportation, communication equipment, computers, printers, firearms—needed to carry out their basic tasks.55 Many workers practiced agriculture to help feed their families. With populations in and adjacent to national parks struggling to survive, poaching on park lands became rampant. The limited number of under-equipped park and zapovednik workers could do little to stop it.56

Hardly able to meet the needs of their employees for sustenance, national parks had no funding to build the infrastructure that could attract Russian or foreign tourists, receive revenue from them, and make parks the self-financing institutions that their supporters long claimed they would be. On top of that, for Russian tourists who could travel, journeying to other countries, often for the first time, was more alluring than visiting the most attractive landscapes in Russia, which had long been accessible but were increasingly less so in the ab-

53 GARF, Fond, 10200, opis’ 4, delo 7743, 109.
54 Personal Archive of Julius Dobrushin. For example, the conclusions of a review of Meshchera National Park in 1995 stated: “As a result of the developing situation the local population does not have reliable information about the tasks of the national park and personal rights. Practically no one of the administration has in hand the polozhenie of the national park and educational work is not being carried out. Unfortunately, the polozhenie of the national park and the map of its zoning were not presented to the administrators of establishments, which practically know nothing about the tasks of the national park, having in their motivated by one argument—the banning of cuts of the main user, they began to actively turn the local population against the national park.”
55 Margaret Williams, “March for Parks--International Celebration of Natural Heritage” Russian Conservation News (Spring 1996, no. 7), 18.
56 GARF, fond 10200, opis’ 5, delo 2301, 2. GAIO, R-3523, opis’ 1, delo 74, 69.
sence of a program of largely subsidized domestic tourism. Moreover, the Central Trade Union Council and the Council of Tourism, which might have supported trips to national parks, were disbanded with the collapse of the Soviet Union and most tourist clubs had closed their doors. The Russian Federation’s growing reputation as a place of corruption and lawlessness undoubtedly scared off many would-be foreign tourists. While parks undoubtedly wanted to attract tourists, most seemed unable to handle the ones that they did have. In more heavily visited parks, such as Samara Bend, Valdai, and Pribaikal’skii National parks, the lack of staff to control and infrastructure to accommodate tourists resulted in a litter problem, which grew worse every year. In a 1993 television program on environmental problems in Moscow, a five-minute segment featuring Elk Island showed abandoned industrial equipment, chopped down trees, and illegal private gardens throughout the territory of the park. After saying that the park “could” be a “true salvation” for Muscovites, the program’s narrator laments: “Alas, this green island has been overrun by dikari. The evidence of this is everywhere.”

As had been the case in most parks in the 1980s, regional forestry administrations, regional (oblast, krai, and republic) administrations, and private businesses frequently continued to disregard the land use regulations of national parks. We have already seen this problem in Pribaikal’skii, Samara Bend, Iugyd Va, Vodlozerskii, and Mescherskii National parks. In Sochi, residents went to the press on multiple occasions to report about the clear cuts of oak and chestnut trees within the territory of the park. Such illegal cuts were not discouraged by the Ministry of the Forestry, which had shown itself increasingly hostile to national

58 “Tolko vsem mirom”
59 Soiuzgiproleskhoz Archive.
parks. In a letter to Yegor Gaidar dated June 1, 1992, for instance, the Ministry of the Forestry Industry stated: “As practice shows, withdrawn from economic use, the material and financial resources are not used as national parks and actually become ownerless.” 60 Eighteen percent of the Sochi National Park’s territory was being rented out for the establishment of a zakaznik dedicated to hunting trips for high placed officials. 61 The director of Prielbrus National Park accused the settlement “Elbrus” of turning the local population against the park and the oblast administration of permitting various illegal uses of national park land. 62

While a large environmentally concerned public had rallied to the establishment and protection of national parks in the 1980s, environmental issues concerned a small subset of the Russian population after the Soviet Union’s collapse. In Nezavisimaia gazeta, Andrey Baiduzhy wrote in April 1994 about past ecological concern as if it were decades, not years, ago: “Ecological slogans that used to seem like a reflection of the legitimate human right to a normal environment are today being assessed by the same population as green extremism.” 63 But as we have seen with other parks, especially those next to Baikal, enthusiasm for international environmental cooperation had never been higher among the Russian environmental community following the Rio Earth

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60 GARF 10200, opis’ 4, delo 2447, 6. The letter also states: “The situation has developed when almost in every oblast, krai, and republic more forest is taken out of exploitation. In the developed regions, millions of cubic meters of ripe timber taken out of the forest resource base. This causes and acute shortage in paper products and puts to waste the huge material and financial resources invested in development of infrastructure of forest areas. The sharp decline in jobs leads to the exodus from forest villages, which complicates the future development of the forest industry.”

61 Souzgiproleskhoz Archive.

62 Souzgiproleskhoz Archive. Prielbrus National Park to Assistant Chair of the Committee on Forests, B.K. Filomonov (December 29, 1992) In a letter to the Assistant Chair of the Committee on Forests (December 29, 1992), the director of the national park wrote: “The management of the city executive committee has pitted the population against the national park, misinformed them that residents will be moved from the boundaries of its territory. Work of the park is carried out in intense conditions under the threat of closure or reorganization. Only thanks to the cohesion and organization of all of the working collective has the national park managed to be saved.”

Summit in 1992.\textsuperscript{64} With lower governmental and public support for environmental protection, Russian environmentalists, whose international networks had broadened and strengthened with increased political liberties, turned to the international environmental community comprised of NGOs, international organizations, and philanthropic funds. Russian environmentalists used these connections, as Laura Henry has noted, as a source of leverage in attempts to force the state to address environmental problems.\textsuperscript{65} Oleg Ianitskii has referred to this dynamic, the designation of protected territories under UNESCO designation, and the increasing financial dependence of Russian environmentalists on western foundations as the “westernization” of the Russian environmental movement. By the late-1990s, western organizations provided over 75 percent of the financial resources for Russian environmental NGOs.\textsuperscript{66}

While Baikal most clearly illustrates this reliance on the West because of the strong interest it attracted from the international environmental community, this was true for numerous national parks throughout the Russian Federation. Audubon, the World Wildlife Fund (Worldwide Fund for Nature), the Sierra Club, and numerous other NGO’s began carrying out assistance projects to national parks and zapovedniki.\textsuperscript{67} From 1990 to 1995, four hundred people took part in exchanges between the US and Russian national parks as part of the program “Ecology and Education.”\textsuperscript{68} Several

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Laura Henry, “Between Transnationalism and state power; the development of Russia’s post-Soviet environmental movement” \textit{Environmental Politics}, vol. 19, no. 5, 2010: 756-781. Henry writes: “Transnational linkages allow them to cery pressure on domestic political actors who may be more concerned about their international reputation and alliances than they are about responding to demands from their own constituents.”
\item Red to Green, 58.
\item Troianovskii, “Zhivet strana div” \textit{Positiia}. July 27, 1992. In 1993 they worked with the Socio-Ecological Union to compile an investment package on urgent measures for conserving Russia’s biological diversity.
\item Vladimir Koshevoy, “Russia-USA: Ecology and Education” Five Years of Activity in Environmental Exchanges. Russian Conservation News (October 1995), 10. He says that the exchanges organized by the US National Park Service, the Pocono Environmental Education Center have had the effect of “uniting Russian protected areas with those throughout the world.”
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Russian national parks were in line to become UNESCO World Heritage Sites, which environmentalists often viewed as a more promising safeguard than protection at the federal level. National parks and zapovedniki throughout the Russian Federation regularly took part in contests for foreign grants.\textsuperscript{69} Russian environmental leaders had even begun threatening international intervention to government officials as a means of illustrating the negligence of the Russian government toward protecting its natural heritage. Writing in early 1994 to the director of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources, Victor Danilov-Danilian, Aleksei Iablokov described a dire situation on Elk Island. He wrote: “In regards to the preservation of the Elk Island National Park, if it is not positively decided in the near future, we will be forced to go for help from international intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, including UNESCO, UNEP, and Greenpeace.”\textsuperscript{70} Not long afterwards, Iurii Efremov wrote that the Russian Federation risked their national parks becoming a “national disgrace” before the world.\textsuperscript{71}

While threats of “international intervention” might have given environmentalists an illusory sense of leverage that they lacked in Soviet times, environmentalists and park administrators nonetheless knew, as they had said many times in the past, that the protection and development of a national park system required significant capital investment that only the state was likely to provide. Although earlier in the year the government had committed to creating 42 new national parks and 72 new zapovedniki between 1994 and 2005, the directors of national parks were much more concerned about the development of the existing system.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{69} Vsevolod B. Stepanisky “A Few Words rom the Chief of Russia’s Protected Areas” Russian Conservation News. Stepanisky wrote: “One of our main achievements over the past five years is that we have learned how to apply for money from different ecological funds on a region, federal, and international level.”

\textsuperscript{70} GARF, fond 10200, opis’ 4, delo 4478, 3.

\textsuperscript{71} Iurii Efremov, “Natsional’nye parki vopiyut o spasenii” Okhota i okhotnich’e khoziastvo 4 (April 1994), 3.

\textsuperscript{72} GARF, fond 10200, opis’ 4, delo 7726, 16.
However, increased investment seemed increasingly unlikely when the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources informed the directors of national parks and zapovedniki in late November 1994 that it was stripping the parks of the right to manage their finances and that their budgets would be cut significantly in the following year. To address this and their many other problems, the directors of Russia’s national parks and zapovedniki held a conference at Sochi National Park in December of 1994. At the conclusion of the conference, they wrote a collective letter to Boris Yeltsin and other members of the government of the Russian Federation. It began as follows:

We, the managers of the federal Zapovedniki (Nature Reserves) and National Parks of Russia, turn to you with great alarm about the fate of our national system of Zapovedniki and National Parks. Attempted measures for their preservation and development are on the verge of collapse, while in your Decree of October 2, 1992, Number 1155 “On Specially Protected Territories,” this direction was proclaimed as a priority in the government’s environmental policy of the Russian Federation. The system of protected areas of Russia was formed during a period of eight decades and today includes 89 federal Nature Reserves and 28 National Parks, preserving natural and cultural heritage from the Arctic to the Caucasus. The uniqueness of this system is recognized throughout the world. In all civilized nations, similar nature conservation lands are supported by the government; their operation is maintained by a distribution of enough governmental financing. In Russia, however, Zapovedniki and National Parks have felt themselves to be the stepchildren of the government and more recently the situation has become unbearable. It is impossible to preserve our protected areas without any help from the government relying only on the enthusiasm of individuals who consider this their life’s work.

The letter then highlighted many of the myriad aforementioned difficulties caused by the lack of governmental support. It complained that many experienced professionals had already started leaving the zapovedniki and national parks because of the unbearable situation and that the allocation of finances within the reserve system was carried

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74 Ibid., 3.
75 Ibid., 3.
out by professionals in finance who knew nothing about nature protection. In perhaps its most stinging criticism, they asserted: “We understand perfectly well the current difficult economic situation and serious budgetary problems. But it is worth recalling that even in the years of WWII, management of protected areas continued to grow and had governmental support.”\textsuperscript{76}

The letter concluded with a request for increased funding for 1995 and the establishment of a Department of Nature Reserves within the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources as well as a Divisions of National Parks within the Federal Forest Service. They requested that these organs carry out all of the vital management functions including planning, financing, and construction.\textsuperscript{77} This would, the writers hoped, be a partial solution to the lack of a single state ministry in charge of national parks, over which park supporters had spilled much ink during the previous two decades. Rather than serving as the beginning of a constructive dialogue, the Ministry of Environmental Protection, Victor Danilov-Danilian replied with a letter in which he called the department the “least effective within the Ministry of Environmental Protection.”\textsuperscript{78} With no response from Yeltsin in the month after sending the letter, the directors appealed to the international environmental community. They asserted: “We have yet to hear a response from President Yeltsin. The situation requires immediate international intervention. Russia’s protected territories are too significant a part of world natural heritage for the rest of the world to stand witness as they are destroyed by neglect.”\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{79} Eugene Simonov and Vsevolod Stepanitsky, 3.
As Soviet environmentalists strengthened their relationships to international environmental networks, they borrowed the rhetoric of the IUCN’s push for the establishment of national parks throughout the world by arguing that the best corners of Soviet nature were the “heritage of humanity.” At the same time, they hoped that the Soviet government would help them actualize a goal of a well-supported system of national parks. By protecting some of the best corners of nature in the Soviet Union, the Soviet government could meet the demands of Soviet tourists and display the USSR’s landscapes with pride to the rest of the world. Whether it had been a rhetorical posture to make their efforts more amenable to the government or actual conviction, environmentalists maintained that socialism provided the best foundation for environmental protection and developing protected territories. Perestroika destroyed this illusion and the compulsion for environmentalists to say this in order not to aggravate government or Party officials. Now, the larger Russian environmental protection community believed that the government of the Russian Federation had demonstrated that it was an “uncivilized” country. Park administrators and environmentalists looked to the United States and the capitalist world to fill the void left by the “neglect” of the government of the Russian Federation.

To be sure, the government of the Russian Federation did acknowledge the problem and that their failure to support the zapovedniki and national parks might give it a black eye before an increasingly connected international environmental community. On March 14, 1995, it passed “Law on Protected territories on March 14, 1995,” which distinguished between regional “nature” parks under regional (krai), oblast, or republic authority and “national” parks under federal jurisdiction. A government decree from April 25, 1995 called for 1.3 trillion rubles of investment in the system in the following ten years and emphasized the necessity of establishing national parks and zapovedniki to
meet the state’s “international obligations” under the International Convention of Biodiversity. The text of the order stated: “As world practice has shown, only full state financing allows for the preservation of nature reserves and national parks, and also successfully to resolve the tasks standing before them.” The order called for the federal government to fulfill 83 percent of the investment in the program. The weakness of the Russian Federation made it more eager than ever to show that its values were evolving to resemble those of Western democracies and its environmental protection practices were developing in a way that would reflect the standards set by international organizations. At the same time, its weakness often proved to be the biggest stumbling block to realizing both of these goals.

Even though the state could recognize the problem and prescribe a solution for Russia’s national parks and zapovedniki, the supporters and administrators of protected territories remained understandably skeptical about the state’s ability to follow through in administering the prescription. The Yeltsin administration’s demotion of the Ministry of Ecology to the State Committee on Ecology later that year undoubtedly intensified this skepticism. For some, the failure of the Russian government was undoubtedly a source of embarrassment. On the other hand, it provided the opportunity for Russian environmentalists, who already were generally cosmopolitan in their orientation, to feel more connected than ever to an international movement that transcended national boundaries.

Reflecting this international orientation and hinting at the increasingly weak position that zapovedniki and national parks found themselves, the slogan of the newsletter, Zapovedniy vestnik, was “Nature reserves of all countries—Unite!” Throughout

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80 GARF, fond 10200, opis’ 5, delo 2301, 9.
the late 1990s, led largely by the Center for the Protection of Wild Nature, Russian zapovedniki and national parks sought western philanthropic organizations, such as the Mott Foundation, the Trust for Mutual Understanding, the W. Alton Jones Foundation, Robert R. Wood, the MacArthur Foundation, and many others. Representatives from these and other organizations came to Russia multiple times for conferences on “sustainable development” in the territory of the Russian Federation. The grants awarded to these organizations, however, usually lasted for only one year. Scientific projects in zapovedniki received more grants than those assigned for the infrastructural development of national parks. While international support could not create a national park system that achieved the grandiose visions that environmentalists had called for since the 1950s, in the case of Nalychevo Nature Park, it allowed an enthusiastic group of volunteers led by Vitalii Mensh’ikov to achieve considerable success and prove an exception to this generally bleak picture.

Kamchatka’s Nature Parks

The history of Nalychevo Nature Park demonstrates that nothing predetermined the fate of individual parks during the 1990s despite the dire economic circumstances and unstable political situation. In the wake of the Soviet Union’s collapse, the twin threats of privatization and the expansion of the mining and oil industry in Kamchatka increased the sense of urgency to establish parks among their supporters. In 1991, private companies began drilling for oil off the Kamchatka coast. That same year, a Kamchatka entrepreneur, Vladimir Kovalev, began investing his personal resources to de-

83 “Mezhdunarodnoe soveshchanie ‘Na puti k ustoichivomu razvitiu Rossii’: Ekologicheskaia politika” Zapovedniki i natsional’nye parki no. 27 (1999), 4.
velop the proper tourism infrastructure—boardwalks, helicopter-landing pads, temporary shelters, and other infrastructural development—that would allow the Kronotskii Zapovendik’s Valley of the Geysers to once again be accessible to tourists in 1993.

However, most of Kamchatka’s most celebrated tourist regions lacked official protection, much less infrastructure that could mitigate tourism’s environmental impact and allow it to be profitable. Tourism’s most vocal proponents continued to believe that the establishment of national parks would provide the best means of achieving this.

Vitalii Men’shikov, who had worked at the Valley of the Geysers tour base in the 1970s and became one of the strongest supporters of national parks on the Kamchatka Peninsula in the late-1980s, took full leadership of the movement for Kamchatka national parks in the early 1990s. He said to me:

I believed and argued that it was the future of Kamchatka. When there are no more fish, when they have dug all of the gold out of the ground, the parks will remain and will give bread to those living on Kamchatka. I believed that tourism was the economy of the future.84

Working as head of the recently formed “Kamchatka Recreation Expedition,” Men’shi-
kov concentrated his efforts most strongly on the establishment of a park in the Naly-
chevo Valley, a region with breathtaking surrounding mountains and hot springs that had long been a beloved destination of Petropavlovsk tourists. He attracted the attention of a broad cross-section of the Russian scientific community, which resulted in a “Russian Open University” conference in the summer of 1992—“Non-classical science and the problem of unique regions”—in the territory of the future park. The proceedings were published in the popular science journal Knowledge is Strength (Znanie-Sila).85

With scientists from all over Russia taking part, participants celebrated the peninsula

84 Interview with Vitalii Men’shikov, April 18, 2015.
as a unique region with no analogues in the world and juxtaposed recreational development to the extraction of natural resources in describing Kamchatka’s possible future development.

Gaining both international and local support was crucial to Men’shikov’s efforts. He was in continued correspondence with UNESCO, which was considering designating objects in Kamchatka as world heritage sites, and with Greenpeace and other environmental organizations to gain international support for the idea. Despite the waning of popular enthusiasm for environmental protection throughout the Russian Federation, he rallied members of the Gleb Travin Club of Tourists—one of a small number of tourist clubs that continued to flourish in the 1990s—to take part in a petition drive. Members of the club went door to door to raise support from the citizens of Petropavlovsk and Elizovo. They obtained 1,500 signatures in support of the park, which Men’shikov by that time decided would be better as a “nature park” under the direct jurisdiction of the Kamchatka Oblast Administration.86 Using his position on the oblast soviet, Men’shikov successfully obtained the support of all interested government ministries with the exception of the Ministry of Geology. Seeing the broad base of local, regional, national, and international support for the proposal, the governor of the Kamchatka Oblast agreed to the establishment of Nalychevo Nature Park in 1994. After the passage of the long expected law on protected territories on March 14, 1995, which gave “regional nature parks” official status, the Kamchatka Oblast Administration established Nalychevo Nature Park, Bystrynskyi Nature Park and South-Kamchatka Nature Park on August 11, 1995.

Men’shikov realized that Russia’s political and economic challenges meant that Kamchatka’s nature parks would require significant international support if they were

86 Interview.
to thrive. Following the establishment of the three nature parks, a German delegation led by Jim Torsell came to Kamchatka to determine the best places for UNESCO World Heritage designations. Serving as their guide, Men’shikov led them on helicopter tours to the three parks, the Kronotskii Zapovednik, and the South Kamchatka Zakaznik (Ku- rilskii Lake). UNESCO designated these areas together as a World Heritage Site called “Volcanoes of Kamchatka” at a conference in Mexico in December of 1996. This area accounted for eight percent of the territory of the Kamchatka Peninsula. (Map)

Men’shikov also knew that legal status and official UNESCO designation would not ensure the successful development of Nalychevo or other nature parks. Boris Petrovich Semsenkov, who began serving as governor of the Kamchatka Oblast in 1996, had told him directly that the oblast administration would support the parks, but was in no position to dedicate financial resources to them. Following the establishment of Nalychevo Nature Park’s administration in 1997, the park’s thirteen employees worked for five months without pay. Men’shikov had continued to court international organizations assiduously and in 1996 organized an expedition of members of the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) to come to Kamchatka to study bear populations during which time he proposed that the organization help with the construction of the park. The following March, Prince Phillip, the Duke of Edinburgh and the President Emeritus of the
WWF came to Kamchatka. In September, a WWF delegation from Germany awarded Nalychevo and Bystrinskii Nature Parks a $700,000 grant for infrastructural development and the development of ecological education programs. Beginning in the summer of 1998, Men’shikov led groups of volunteers from Petropavlovsk and Elizovo, most from the Gleb Travin Club of Tourists, to the territory of Nalychevo where they would construct park infrastructure—guest houses, a museum, a bathhouse next to hot springs, and trails. Despite an environment of increased uncertainty following the August 1998 default, Men’shikov garnered more Russian volunteers the following year.

Volunteers also came from Germany, the United States, Great Britain, and other countries. After working during the day, they would gather around the campfire, prepare their dinner, and sing at night. “I believe,” Men’shikov told me, “these were some of the happiest moments in many of our lives.” By the end of the summer of 1999, the volunteers had built over 30 structures. When the President of the WWF saw the work they had accomplished, he said to Men’shikov: “We did not give you that much money.” In the years that followed, volunteers returned to continue working on the park infrastructure. Having been to many Russian national/nature parks, including to Nalychevo as a backpacking guide, I can say that the infrastructure in most parks has reached nowhere the level of Nalychevo Nature Park.

In reflecting on this accomplishment, Men’shikov said to me: “This was a rare case in Russia. Change in Russia before and after the revolution has traditionally come from above. This was a movement from below.” To be sure, the history of the establishment of other national parks in Russia and the Soviet Union demonstrates, perhaps

87 Men’shikov.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
more than historians of the Soviet Union have acknowledged that civic organizations, scientists, private citizens, and the press could establish movements that led to the legal protection of territories. While it might be an exaggeration to say that the movements for the establishment of national parks illustrate a nascent “civil society,” they did demonstrate strong civic engagement in the late Soviet period. However, because of the lack of resources that the Soviet Union and then the Russian government could dedicate to them, the development of protected territories usually proved more difficult than their establishment. However, through creating a nexus of cooperation at the level of the local, regional, national, and international, Men’shikov and others who supported nature parks on Kamchatka had accomplished something highly unusual, if not unique.

When he left Kamchatka to return to Petersburg in 2006, Men’shikov estimated that the park was receiving 1 million tourist dollars a year, which made it partially self-financing despite the fact that no paved roads led to the territory with developed infrastructure where the park could accrue revenue from tourists. Although this sum is extremely modest compared to what many national parks in other countries earn, it showed that achieving the vision articulated by the earliest proponents of national parks, that environmental protection could be profitable, was, in fact, possible.

The success of Nalychevo Nature Park raises the question of why it experienced much greater success than other national or nature parks. I can identify four major reasons for this. The first is the spectacular scenery and the iconic status of Kamchatka’s nature. With the international environmental community realizing the opportunities to expand its influence into the Russian Federation after the USSR’s collapse, its support of places like Kamchatka and Baikal is understandable. With Men’shikov lead-
ing the effort, Petropavlovsk tourists, in turn, rallied around the protection of Nalychevo more than any other single landscape on the Kamchatka Peninsula. Their efforts and the sheer grandiosity of its scenery attracted international support, which was central to the success of Nalychevo Nature Park.

International support was not a sufficient condition for Nalychevo's success. After all, Iugyd Va had been the first territory designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and Baikal had attracted more support for environmental protection projects, including its national parks, from international organizations than any other area in the Russian Federation. However, in both the territory of Pribaikal'skii National and Iugyd Va National Parks natural resource extraction was already taking place despite the IUCN's standards for national parks or the requirements for UNESCO World Heritage Sites. While Pribaikal'skii was established within the territory of eleven forestry districts with administrators whose training made them reluctant to curb timber harvests and promote the development of recreational facilities, gold mining had started in the Kozhim River Valley several years prior to Iugyd Va’s establishment. In each case, the lobbies for resource extraction exerted a stronger influence than the park’s supporters and extraction continued either officially or unofficially. And in both cases, continued extraction damaged the reputation of these parks. The same was true in the case of Samara Bend National Park where mining continues to this day. By comparison, the increasingly aggressive mining industry had not gained a foothold in the territory of Nalychevo Nature Park. The absence of extractive industry is the second critical factor in Nalychevo's success.
The third factor in Nalychevo’s success was the absence of regular inhabitants in
the park or the territory adjacent to it. The settlements within the territory of the parks
were a constant thorn in the side of the administrations of Pribaikal’skii and Samara
Bend National Park. In both cases, most people living within the territory of the respective
parks did not understand the park’s purpose and largely saw them as little more than
institutions that imposed unfair regulations that affected their livelihoods. The dream of Oleg Cherviakov to transform the
settlements within the territory of Voldozero National Park proved to be that park’s
most insurmountable challenge. Although the indigenous populations of Chukchi and
Eskimos were initially strongly in favor of Beringia International Park, their support
turned into opposition when they came to doubt the state’s ability to realize the plans est-
ablished before the collapse of the USSR. Nalychevo, like so many parts of Kam-
chatka, remained an uninhabited “blank slate” upon which original visions for land use
could be imposed with little local opposition. On top of that, tourists from Petropav-
lovsk could drive to the park in a few hours’ drive, whereas Iugyd Va, despite being un-
inhabited, required a nearly ten-hour drive from the much smaller town of Inta.

Figure 32: Kamchatka Tourists 1970s
The final, and perhaps most important, reason for Nalychevo Park’s greater success was the strong grassroots support garnered by Vitalii Men'shikov throughout Petrovlovsk, but especially from within the Gleb Travin Club of Tourists. Samara Bend had benefited from grassroots activism, but this waned as nature protection brigades faded into obsolescence after the collapse of the USSR. The brigades defined their mission through the prism of state ideology. Tourism, however, was not ideologically dependent on the existence of the Soviet state and some tourist clubs survived thanks to the dedication of their members. Since the tourism explosion of the 1950s and 1960s, environmental activists had emphasized that tourist clubs should be centers for environmental activism and grassroots environmental initiatives. The survival of the Gleb Travin Club of Tourists and its continued activism was largely because on the isolated Kamchatka Peninsula tourism was and continued to be one of the only appealing forms of recreation. Moreover, largely because of the leadership of Men'shikov, they came to understand it as the region’s economic future, which they could take an active part in shaping. The importance of tourism in the lives of so many residents of Kamchatka and their hopes of its future economic benefits explains why they were so easily galvanized in the face of the threats from natural resource industries to the nature that they loved. Perhaps more than any other region in the former Soviet Union, Kamchatka tourists continued to live the ideal long espoused by Soviet tourism propaganda, that a tourist should be a “friend of nature.”
**Stepping Back**

The frustrations experienced by supporters of Iugyd Va, Samara Bend, Pribaikal’skii, and Vodlozero National Parks were much more typical of the overall situation than the modest success enjoyed by the supporters of Nalychevo Nature Park. During the late 1990s, directors of different national parks watched dispiritedly as ecologically harmful enterprises continued to operate within their territories. They often feared designs by regional administrations to excise significant parts of parks.90 By the decade’s end, only 0.3 percent of the state budget was dedicated to environmental protection despite government reports that explicitly stated that 3 percent would be a reasonable amount. Some prominent environmentalists, such as Aleksei Iablokov, expressed concern that the word “ecological” might soon disappear from the vocabulary of governmental officials.91 In 1999, the government of the Russian Federation was funding national parks at about 40 percent of what had been called for in 1995. The federal government was paying less than 40 percent of this despite having planned to pay 83 percent.92 Writing in early 1999 to the head of the Federal Forestry Service, V.A. Shubin, and E.F. Shatovskaia, the director of Kenozero National Park, which had long been and is still thought of as one of the Russian Federation’s most successful parks, said:

Unfortunately, national parks for the most part have found themselves in such a situation that they do not have the funds from oblast and republican budgets or from forestry profits for the investment in tourism, which should be the foundational source of receiving equity. Foreign investment is being put into specific programs, but the federal law allows this only in very limited quantities.93

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91 Alfred B. Evans, Jr. “Civil Society in the Soviet Union” At a meeting of the All Russian Congress for Nature Protection (1999) A.V. Iablokov and V.M Zakharov gave a report in which they said that the word “ecological” might soon disappear from lexicon of governmental officials.
93 Soiuzgiproleskhoz archive.
In developing the “conception of protected territories” that summer, the Russian office of WWF requested feedback from the workers of national parks and zapovedniki. A.M. Volkov, who worked in the Bashkirskii Zapovednik, presented an even bleaker picture than had Shatovskaia. He said: “Many of our zapovedniki and national parks as organizations are extremely ineffective, having in essence transformed into social funds for supporting their little-qualified staffs, and also retirees and locals living in protected territories and on their outskirts.”

Then, after asserting that expecting state help in resolving the problem was “senseless,” Volkov wrote: “Today the system of protected territories must find a new place in the social-economic life of the country. Otherwise, they await destruction.”

But what place could national parks find? The idea of national parks gained traction as the number of tourists traveling throughout the USSR skyrocketed and parks were seen as a means of making nature protection profitable. Russians were more interested in international travel during the 1990s. Without much of a demand for internal tourism and the country’s economy sputtering throughout the decade, it is hard to see why the government of the Russian Federation would make national parks a priority. Moreover, despite the broad international resonance of the national park idea, the limitations of international support for environmental protection in the Russian

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95 Ibid.
Federation had become apparent by the latter part of the decade. At the same time, the Russian environmental community increasingly evaluated their state's efforts to protect the environment through the elevated expectations that came from greater familiarity with environmental protection in other countries. By the turn of the 21st century, it had become clear that above all else state support would be responsible for this long celebrated environmental protection institution that had no clear identity in the social and economic life of the nation, nor a place in the Russian popular consciousness.
Conclusion: Russia’s Forgotten Parks and the Crisis of Environmental Protection in the Russian Federation

Having become more familiar with the national park idea during the Khrushchev era through participation in international environmental organizations, Soviet environmentalists aggressively promoted parks to address the environmental impact of tourism and to make environmental protection more economically viable. The increasingly cosmopolitan Soviet environmentalists also hoped that national parks would bring desired international respect to Soviet environmental protection efforts. While Soviet environmentalists argued that national parks could transform regional economies and even the relationship of Soviet citizens to nature from the early 1960s through the early 1980s, the widespread concern over environmental problems during perestroika often helped elevate the expectations of park founders to quixotic levels that could never have been reached, even during a more social and economically stable period.

Because the international discourse had for decades emphasized that national parks were essential for “civilized” countries, Soviet environmentalists pointed to the state’s inability to develop its national parks as evidence of the USSR’s and then the Russian Federation’s “uncivilized” approach to environmental protection. The USSR and then Russian Federation sought to appear a strong environmental steward before the world as the global community increasingly sought to define shared international goals for environmental protection with the aim to influence individual nation-states. These internal and external pressures pushed the USSR and then the Russian Federation to designate an unprecedented number of new protected territories. The Soviet and Russian national parks thus marked a demonstrable success of Soviet and then Russian environmentalists in bringing more domestic nature
under protection through learning from the global experience in environmental protection. However, by the late 1990s, the average Russian citizen had no interest in national parks and government officials largely neglected them. Perhaps more than any other environmental protection institution, national parks placed Soviet and Russian environmental protection efforts in an unflattering light domestically and internationally as environmentalists increasingly compared the inability of the USSR and then the Russian Federation to develop national parks with the well-known successes of national parks in the West.

The history of Soviet and Russian National Parks sheds new light on late Soviet history, Russian environmental history, and the global history of national parks. While Soviet history was long treated largely in isolation from the rest of the world, historians have recently begun putting it in the international context in which it belongs. Into Soviet Nature expands our understanding of the impact of expanding cultural and scientific exchanges between the USSR and the West during the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras. The increasing interaction between Soviet and Western environmentalists presented opportunities to learn from Western colleagues while holding up a mirror to shortcomings in the Soviet system. In addition to improving our understanding about these international connections, Into Soviet Nature moves well beyond Moscow-centric narratives of Soviet history. Through my regional case studies, I have demonstrated that the regional actors were increasingly active in developing alternative visions to those coming out of central economic ministries. This dissertation also adds to the growing scholarship on Soviet tourism.¹ It expands significantly on previous treatments of

outdoor recreation, and unlike other works in this subfield it looks at how environmentalists sought to use tourism to propagate environmental awareness.

The limited scholarship on Soviet environmental protection has failed to illuminate tourism's place in the history of Soviet environmental protection efforts. Moreover, as I have established several times in this dissertation, the scholarship in this area has been inadequate and sometimes incorrect with respect to the connections between Soviet environmentalists and the international environmental community. *Into Soviet Nature* not only demonstrates the influence of global environmental discourse and popular nature protection ideas internationally on Soviet thinking about protecting nature in the USSR, but it also displays Soviet and Russian environmentalists using their knowledge of environmental protection in the West to push the state to improve its environmental protection regime. Most significantly, *Into Soviet Nature* is the first work to provide a broad (as opposed to individual case study) history of national parks in the USSR and Russian Federation.

*Into Soviet Nature* significantly expands on the global history of national parks. National parks have received abundant attention from environmental historians. Recent works have added greater complexity to traditional narratives of the histories of

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park and park systems, which long fell roughly into two camps.4 Historians have argued that the formation of national parks (once referred to by Wallace Stegner as “America’s Best Idea”) demonstrated the institutional response to an increasingly industrialized and urbanized society’s yearning to return to “wild” nature. This largely celebratory view, however, looks at national parks through the perspective of white, educated, and wealthy elites. Other works have looked at national parks as impositions of the United States and later Europe on indigenous groups. In the American West and Africa, the formation of national parks necessitated the expulsion of Native Americans or African pastoralists.5 The national park experience in socialist and formerly socialist states is almost completely absent from this historiography.

The history of Soviet National Parks demonstrates the adaptability of the most internationally recognized environmental protection institution in the world to a context in which the term “national park” initially sparked anxiety. While Soviet and Russian environmentalists enthusiastically embraced the idea to address specific domestic environmental concerns, the international prestige of national parks made them particularly self-conscious about their perception that the USSR and then the Russian Federation had failed dramatically in developing a functional park system. Thus, while this subfield of global environmental history has previously elaborated on the North-South dynamic of national parks as one of imperial and post-imperial imposition, the history


of Soviet and Russian National Parks opens a much larger story of West-East power dynamics in international environmental diplomacy.

In the wake of the USSR’s collapse, Russian environmentalists placed tremendous hope in Western help that would somehow either push the government of the Russian Federation to develop national parks, or financially compensate for its neglect of them. However, this enthusiasm had largely faded by the end of the 1990s. Vladimir Putin’s actions further dispirited environmentalists. In early 2000, the new president dissolved the State Committee for Environmental Protection and the Federal Forestry Service and put Russia’s national parks and zapovedniki under the Ministry of Natural Resources. While the State Committee of Environmental Protection had always been a weak organ, the state no longer had a single department or ministry dedicated to this role. On top of that, in the years that followed, Putin repeatedly insinuated that environmental NGOs, in which Russian environmentalists had placed much faith in the previous years, were serving as a means for spies to infiltrate the Russian Federation. As a leader who has been obsessed with projecting strength since becoming president of the Russian Federation, Putin viewed internationally funded NGOs as a painful reminder of an era from which he desperately wanted to turn the page. In 2013, the government of the Russian Federation passed a law requiring NGOs receiving international support to register as “foreign agents.”

While many Russian environmentalists would indeed welcome turning the page back to the 1990s, some nonetheless remember these years as a period of “naivete.” Oleg Chervjakov told me that it is hard not to look back on the “spirit of Rio” with a smirk. Indeed, the profound political changes and surge in global environmental consciousness dramatically

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8 www.rbth.com/ngo_law. This law had put nearly 1/3 of NGOs operating in the Russian Federation out of business by October 2015.
raised the expectations of environmentalists, park administrators, and park supporters to levels that could not possibly have been satisfied in the face of the economic problems of the 1990s. But the failure of the international community to achieve many of the Rio Earth Summit’s bold proclamations demonstrated that Russian environmentalists were far from the only “naïve” environmentalists in the world. However, even if the efforts of different NGOs, the WWF, the World Bank, the IUCN, and other organizations interested in environmental protection had been more successful in meeting the world’s most important environmental challenges following Rio, Russia’s national parks would have nonetheless likely fallen far short of the grandiose visions of many in the Soviet environmental protection community.

Innokentii Gerasimov, Vladimir Preobrazhenskii, Vasilii Skalon, Natalia Zabelina, Adolph Bratsev, Iurii Roshchevskii, Tatiana Tezikova, and many others had envisioned national parks as a way of reconciling economic development and environmental protection. The conceptions for most parks demonstrated the hope that the Soviet economy would evolve into one that could deliver high-quality services to a population enjoying more material amenities as well as leisure time. Because Soviet leaders stated that Soviet citizens could expect an increased standard of living and more vacation time as well as a cleaner environment, environmentalists justifiably expected the state, which restricted international travel, to prioritize developing a national park system that would help it deliver on these promises. Had national parks achieved legal status a decade earlier, the USSR might have had the resources to develop them and, in turn, to give Soviet landscapes the sort of iconic status that national parks had given to many natural wonders in the the United States and other countries. Yet the movement only gained resonance beyond the community of environmentalists when it had become impossible for the state to develop the visions of park proponents.

Russian environmentalists faced a dramatically transformed social, political, and economic context during the 1990s. The Central Council of Tourism disbanded. Most tourist
clubs shut their doors. In the economic turmoil that ensued following the USSR’s collapse, few Russians had the time or resources to travel. Those who did were understandably much more interested in travelling to international destinations, which had been highly restricted in Soviet times. In this context, domestic tourism had little chance to become profitable, even in a free-market system. Oleg Cherviakov, who conceived of Vodlozero National Park in the Soviet Union’s waning years, believed that foreign tourists would come in droves, which would make the park economically self-sustaining. But Russia’s reputation for crime, discomfort, corruption, and general disorder deterred foreign tourists. Because of the vast distances between parks and the poor roads throughout the country, a tour of Russian national parks would likely never have become a vacation option for a large number of international tourists, even if parks had developed the infrastructure that their proponents had long maintained was necessary.

In the United States, foreign tourists can fly into Los Angeles, rent a tour bus, and then visit numerous national parks, each with distinct and spectacular natural features, in the course of a few days. They can visit the towering redwood forests, the spectacular geological formations of Yosemite, and the stark beauty of Death Valley National Park. Alternatively, if they choose to fly into Denver, they can be in Rocky Mountain National Park in a couple of hours. In less than a ten-hour drive on the following day, they could be in Yellowstone National Park, which is next door to Grand Teton National Park. In just a little over seven hours, they could be in Glacier, or, if they chose to go south, they could be in Arches National Park in Utah in less than ten hours. In Russia, by comparison, distances alone would make such tours wildly impractical. While the vast majority of America’s iconic landscapes in the lower 48 are in the American West, Russia’s most spectacular landscapes are spread over ten time zones!
This comparison with the United States is important because Soviet environmentalists repeatedly referred to the US model in touting the future profitability of national parks. It is this comparison that has shaped a narrative of profound disappointment and disillusionment with Russian National Parks among the Russian environmental community. But there are other ways to look at the history of Soviet and Russian National Parks. With increasing familiarity with environmental protection practices in other countries, Soviet scientists, writers, civic organizations, and interested citizens pointed to the success of national parks in other countries to justify the establishment of national parks in the RSFSR and other Union Republics. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the IUCN set increasingly ambitious goals for bringing more of the Earth’s terrestrial environment under protection. In turn, the Soviet and Russian state felt more bound by international expectations to bring land under protection as it sought to bring its domestic environmental protection regime more in line with international standards. The repeated appeals of Soviet/Russian environmentalists to international protection in “civilized” countries likely influenced the government to designate more national parks and zapovedniki.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the RSFSR and then the Russian Federation brought more territory under its protection than any other two-decade period. Forty-six years passed between the establishment of Yellowstone National Park and the formation of the US National Park Service. Just over three decades have passed since the creation of the first Russian National Park at Elk Island. Since the formation of this park in Moscow, the RSFSR and then the Russian Federation has established forty more parks. However, while nearly 12.2 percent of the Earth’s land is protected, only three percent of the territory of the Russian Federation is under federal protection. Nonetheless, I think that it is fair to conclude that the amount of territory protected in the Russian Federation would have been considerably less
had it not been for these strengthened international connections between Soviet (and then Russian) and Western environmentalists.

We can take yet another step back. Many park visionaries (but certainly not all park supporters) expressed disappointment at the lack of governmental funds available to develop the infrastructure to make national parks mass tourism destinations. But this begs the question of whether or not mass tourism would necessarily be a good thing for Russia’s parks. The answer depends upon one’s perspective. Certainly, it might have been good for the domestic economy. It might have also helped instill pride in the country’s nature among Russian citizens. But while Soviet environmentalists claimed that the proper education of tourists would ensure the preservation of national parks’ scenic attributes even as parks attracted large numbers of tourists, the history of national parks in the United States—the constant point of comparison for Soviet environmentalists—provides strong reason for skepticism of this claim.

The national parks in the United States became increasingly littered by the late 1960s as the number of tourists visiting them skyrocketed. The press frequently asked are we “loving our national parks to death?” While the situation with litter improved during the 1970s and 1980s, for purists, intensive infrastructural development undoubtedly undermined the central appeal—direct and unmediated interaction with nature—of going to the nation’s most spectacular landscapes. As Soviet society rapidly urbanized, an escape from urban conditions through unmediated interaction with the natural world is precisely what some national park proponents—most vocally V.N. Skalon—had argued was necessary.

There are many Russian national parks in areas of dense habitation. In these, a lack of infrastructure and poor staffing has undoubtedly made it more difficult for parks to deal

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with the problem of litter. However, other Russian national parks are remote and have something much more similar to the feel of areas designated as wilderness in the United States. Had these parks developed extensive infrastructure and in turn sought to accommodate hundreds of thousands, even millions, of tourists, their scenic attributes would be significantly diminished from what they are today.

Vladimir Gladkov predicted that as many as three million Soviet tourists would visit a remote national park in the Circumpolar Urals. Today, the park serves 6,000 people a year. On an 8-day backpacking trip, I saw two other groups. I saw only one sign indicating we were in a national park. Feeling such relative isolation amid the austere beauty of the Circumpolar Urals created an indescribable intimacy that we would have never experienced had Gladkov’s vision been realized. As I walked through the taiga talking about common acquaintances with the robed Oleg Cherviakov, I felt a blissful solitude in what remains the largest protected area of taiga in the world. Had Cherviakov realized his original vision, the large number of foreign tourists coming to Vodlozero would have undermined the tranquility that he had sought in Russia’s taiga. While Kamchatka’s Nalychevo Nature Park has reached a level of infrastructural development uncommon to most Russian National or Nature Parks, the numbers of tourists visiting almost any national park in the United States dwarfs the number of tourists visiting Nalychevo. While much would be gained for Kamchatka’s economy if the numbers of tourists going to Kamchatka’s Nature Parks multiplied, many solitude-seeking tourists would not longer want to go.

In the decades after World War II, nature in the Soviet Union provided millions a reprieve from dramatically expanding cities and a political system that seemed suffocating. Through the national park idea, some of the USSR’s most scenic areas provided a template upon which some visionaries have projected wildly quixotic dreams for social reform and revitalization. One of the most distinctive features of Russia today remains the sheer variety of
landscapes and the remoteness of many of them from “civilization.” Regardless of whatever future political system might shape the territorial organization and future environmental protection practices in Russia, travelling to these areas will likely remain appealing among many intrepid souls who find urban life stultifying. For many Russians, going to such wild places will likely continue to be, as it has been for John Muir and lovers of wild places throughout the world, akin to “going home.”
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