

# LEISURE SOON GETS

## BORING

### ORGANISED ACTIVITIES FOR LATE-SOVIET YOUTH

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In 1966, an article in the Soviet journal *Young Communist* described the dangers of 'wild tourism': hiking in the countryside without a carefully planned route. Posing a danger to the environment and themselves, spontaneous hikers also missed out on the new skills, knowledge, and moral development that a proper tourism club could give them. Pure leisure would soon get boring! Young people needed to join organised clubs that would help them direct their interests in a **socially useful** way.

Children and teenagers in the Brezhnev era had an array of clubs and groups to choose from. Based at schools and Pioneer palaces, these were part of the **official children's culture** of the late Soviet period. However, many were run by volunteers and attended voluntarily by their members, with most of the emphasis on the hobby and very little on ideology.

This project examines how the official norms and values of Soviet society found expression in the All-Union Youth Hike to Sites of Revolutionary, Military and Labour Glory of the Soviet People: a USSR-wide initiative administered by state and Party agencies and carried out by local historical, hiking and military-sporting clubs. Looking at sources including contemporary **newspaper and journal articles**, archived **correspondence between organisers and participants**, and **published accounts of expeditions**, it investigates key questions about Soviet citizens' understanding of official discourse and their relationship to Party/state authorities:

What guidance did local participating groups receive, and how did they interpret it?

What were the relationships between group members and leaders? And what kind of supervision were the leaders subject to?

What kind of language did local groups use to describe their activities? To what extent did they reproduce official formulas, and in what ways did their reports reflect their own priorities and interests?

How did the organisers view participants' attempts to write themselves into the authoritative discourse? What factors determined whether local groups received praise or criticism? And when criticised, how did they respond?

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