

FORSCHUNGSBERICHT

Tourists in Jūrmala, driven by pleasure and/or purpose?

by Aldis Purs

The study of tourism is a well-established trope for historians pursuing the study of modernity in the Western world. The historiography includes a wealth of analytical and conceptual frameworks and a mature, well-developed discourse about the topic generally and specifically. Initially, historians and sociologists differentiated between travel and tourism, with the former considered thoughtful and complex and the latter base, shallow, and commercial.¹ This value-driven and biased approach, however, quickly gave way to a more nuanced and critical dissection of tourism. Once under the microscope, the subject of tourism provided a great many thematic avenues for research and study. The study of tourism and vacations, for example, has elucidated class, status and collective identity.² Additionally, the study of tourism has touched upon the history of consumption. Generally, studies concentrate on either the place that is visited or the people visiting. Within each of these broad approaches, a plethora of more detailed options arise in the historiography. Studies of places often detail the presentation and message (intended and received) of sites visited, either generally, such as nature, or specifically such as battlefield tourism. Studies of tourists often include more theoretical discussions that outline the “consciousness of displacement” and the crossing of borders between everyday life and travel.³ The common ground is often a statement on the modern world. Either the study of a spa or on the meaning of travel to tourists may highlight the emergence of a middle class in the Western world.⁴ Furthermore, through travel, tourism, and leisure, this middle class formed a cohesive national identity and ordered its understanding of the modern world (and its place within the modern world).⁵

The study of tourism in East Europe and Russia is comparatively newer. Its desirability seems self-evident, as the question of how East Europe and Russia fit into a larger pattern of European and Western developments is an age-old debate. Clearly, the heavier hand of the state and the ideological impulses of socialism and fascism produce unique aspects to tourism in the region throughout the twentieth century. Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker’s edited collection, “Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist under

- 1 See for example Paul Fussell (ed.): *The Norton Book of Travel*, New York 1987; or James Buzard: *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800–1918*, New York 1993.
- 2 See for example Shelley Baranowski, Ellen Furlough (ed.): *Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture, and Identity in Modern Europe and North America*, Ann Arbor 2001.
- 3 See Rudy Koshar: *German Travel Cultures*, Oxford 2000 for a particularly well-developed theoretical outline to ‘travel cultures’.
- 4 See Rudy Koshar (ed.): *Histories of Leisure*, Oxford 2002.
- 5 See Marguerite S. Shaffer: *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880–1940*, Washington, D.C. 2001.

Capitalism and Socialism” was an important early coalescing of academic discourse on the region and an introduction to several of the most cogent themes for tourism in the region.⁶ One of the central themes raised throughout many of the collection’s contributions is the conflict and tension between the tourist involved in leisure and material consumption and the traveler involved in a purposeful journey. To the state, which controlled so many aspects of the tourist experience, the purposeful journey helped define socialist citizens and build socialist societies. As a result, whenever tourism threatened to challenge or contradict these lofty goals it presented a potential for a subversive meaning.

In the Gorsuch and Koenker volume, I presented an introduction to the Latvian state’s attempts to use ‘purposeful’ tourism to construct identity in the 1920s and 1930s.⁷ The article “read” the development of national tourism through the eyes of the state with a detailed examination of state sponsored and produced travel guides with only hints at actual experience of tourists. As a result, Latvia’s premier tourist site and attraction, Rīgas-Jūrmala, received relatively little attention: the state’s gaze moved purposefully away from the beaches and my academic inquiry followed the state. This short report is a preliminary gaze back at the beach with propositions for future work, likely thematic approaches, and potential conclusions. This is more a statement of intent than a finished product.

The history of tourism in Latvia generally and in Jūrmala specifically, if not in its infancy, is a relatively new subject of academic inquiry.⁸ The large encyclopedic tomes, from interwar publications such as “Latviešu konversācijas vārdnīca” (Latvian Conversational Phrase Book) and myriad government publications (often produced by the State Statistical Office), to the émigré encyclopedia “Latvju enciklopēdija” (Latvian Encyclopedia) first published in Sweden in 1953,⁹ to the Soviet reference books “Rīga 1860–1917”,¹⁰ “Rīga socialisma laikmetā” (Rīga in Socialism Times) and “Sovetskaia Latvija” (Soviet Latvia) all provide sound historical descriptions and statistics on the development of tourism. More recently, new encyclopedic endeavors such as the multi-volume “The 20th Century History of Latvia” continue this descriptive approach to tourism.¹¹ Along with many locally produced brochures and handbooks that tap into a vein of local studies, we have a descriptive foundation of the beginnings of tourism. From such sources, for example, the consensus narrative for the development of tourism in Jūrmala would begin with a geographical description. Jūrmala is a long, thin peninsula, roughly twenty miles long and two miles wide, anchored to land near the town of Sloka. The Bay of Rīga to the north, the Lielupe River to the south,

6 Anne E. Gorsuch, Diane P. Koenker (eds.): *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism*, Ithaca 2006.

7 Aldis Purs: *One Breath for Every Two Strides: The State’s Attempt to Construct Tourism and Identity in Interwar Latvia*, in: Gorsuch, Koenker (eds.), *Turizm* (see note 6), pp. 97-118.

8 See Maija Rozīte: *Turisma attīstība Latvijā* [The development of Tourism], in: *Latvijas arhivi* (1999), no. 1, pp. 96-110.

9 *Rīgas Jūrmala*, in: Arveds Švābe (ed.): *Latvju enciklopēdija* [Latvian Encyclopedia], Stockholm 1953, p. 2162.

10 See *Rīgas iedzīvotāju atpūtas vietas* [Resorts for the Population of Rīga], in: *Rīga 1860–1917*, Rīga 1978, pp. 457-463.

11 See for example the section *Masu kultūra* [Mass Culture], in: *20. Gadsimta Latvijas vēsture I: Latvija no gadsimta sākuma līdz neatkarības pasludināšanai 1900–1918* [20th Century History of Latvia: Latvia from the Beginning of the Century till the Time of Independence 1900–1918], Rīga 2000, pp. 525 f.

and the Daugava River to the east border the peninsula, known variously as Rīga-Strand, Rīgas-Jūrmala, and finally Jūrmala. Its tourist-worthy attractions have generally been its beaches, the “air of the sea,” and the supposedly curative properties of mineral springs and sulfuric mud in the area. This curative tourism, similar to the development of the great spas of Europe, began in the early nineteenth century. Undeveloped infrastructure, however, limited the early development of tourism in Jūrmala. The beaches near Rīga seemed ideal, yet they were remarkably unprepared for an influx of tourist-patients (even if the initial influx annually numbered in the dozens for the first several decades).¹² The beaches were geographically close to Rīga as the crow flies, but not as the horse and carriage travelled. For patients from Rīga, access to the Strand meant crossing the Lielupe River without a bridge or steady river ferry and arranging horse and carriage transport to a string of tiny, impoverished fishing hamlets that had no inns, hotels or other services for visitors. Lodging in very modest fishermen’s houses was the standard option for accommodation in the early days of the Rīga-Strand. Still, sensing economic opportunities, fishermen began to improve the lodgings that they offered to guests. Similarly, investment flowed into an early spa in 1820 and land was purchased for the construction of summer cottages. By the 1830s, an organized ferry carried tourists across the Lielupe River and the number of summer guests began to steadily increase. By 1844, a regular steam ferry plied the waterways from Rīga to the Strand and the number of guests increased at an even more rapid rate (approaching one thousand guests per summer). By 1872, a bridge was constructed across the Lielupe River further easing transportation to the Strand. Finally in 1877, a rail line connected Rīga to the Strand.¹³

The rail line introduced mass tourism to the Strand. From the 1880s, the Strand catered to different types of tourists, including aristocrats bound for the spas, the middle class of Rīga staking a claim to a prolonged summer holiday, and workers in search of leisure during a day off from work. Through World War One, however, there was no organized, central plan for the development of the Rīga Strand as a tourist destination. Market forces and the hunt for profits from any quarter determined most developments, but all development was facilitated by continued improvements in the transportation network (a second track that allowed for two-way traffic, more scheduled, trains, more wagons and greater carrying capacity). Even a long distance route that connected Moscow to the Strand without layovers or a change in trains was completed. As a result, the number of tourists skyrocketed. More than 60,000 people visited the Strand during the summer of 1912.¹⁴

With the rail option, the Strand became a legitimate mass tourist destination. Who were these tourists and how were they accommodated at the beach? The business response was varied. Private companies built and operated spas and hotels for the wealthy, while local fishermen, in ever-greater numbers, rented out rooms and houses to summer guests. The author’s maternal great, great grandfather began renting his modest fisherman’s home to summer guests in the late nineteenth century at the furthest western stretch of the Strand. During the lucrative summer, his family relocated to smaller, cramped quarters in an outlying

12 Rīgas Jūrmala (see note 9), p. 2162.

13 Ibidem.

14 Ibidem., p. 2163.

structure on his property.¹⁵ His lodgers came from the growing middle class of Riga: people with the means to take a summer for holidays, but still amenable to staying in a fisherman's house. The frequent trains also brought workers and others who could afford little else than a train ticket and spare a single day from work. In these patterns, the Strand followed closely other spa resorts in Imperial Russia from Yalta to Ust'-Narva and Druskeniki, the latter two also on the Baltic coast. As the historian Louise McReynolds has observed of prerevolutionary Russian tourists generally, a pattern emerged: first baths, then the railroad. Further, once the beach "became a day's ride away and the economy [...] could support thousands of residents with discretionary income, a summer rental on the seashore became preferable [...]"¹⁶

Through this era, the idea of tourism to the Strand was little discussed. Neither its meaning nor its potential was microscopically analyzed. Vacations (either long, summer idylls or short day trips) were ad hoc events that reflected the tastes and means of the individuals vacationing and those servicing their needs. Similarly, the historiography of tourism to this point is primarily descriptive. There has been relatively little academic work that borrows from the wider field of the history of tourism to examine class relations, ethnic interaction or the beginnings of consumerism before World War One. If, for example, some of the great thematic, and open, questions about pre-revolutionary Imperial Russia revolve around the strength of the foundations for a civil society, studying the nexus of tourism in a variegated place such as the Strand could be immensely rewarding.

Casino Tourism in Democratic Rīgas-Jūrmala

Tourism assumed new meanings and staked a more central place after the destruction of World War One. Faced with the massive task of rebuilding almost everything in the most damaged areas, the new state and its citizens thought more about what they were building and why. Still, even if greater significance was attached to the idea of tourism, the established cleavages around tourism remained: was it for the few or the many, for locals or a more distant clientele, and importantly was it for pleasure or specific purpose?

World War One was catastrophic for the Strand as the once bustling beaches became battlefields and no-man's lands. After the disastrous defeats at the Battles of the Masurian Lakes and Tannenberg, the Imperial Russian armies were in full retreat across much of their western front. In the Baltic Province of Kurland, Russian generals contemplated a complete evacuation of the province and a general scorched earth policy. These drastic plans by the army, coupled with popular press propaganda about the expected atrocities of invading German armies touched off a massive wave of refugees.¹⁷ The Strand was also all but deserted for tactical reasons when the front ultimately stabilized along the Daugava River with Riga still under Imperial Russian control and Kurland (and the Strand) under German

15 The Diary and Memoirs of Līze Rungains, unpublished, in possession of the author.

16 See Lousie McReynolds: The Prerevolutionary Russian Tourist, in: Gorsuch, Koenker (eds.), *Turizm* (see note 6), pp. 37 f.

17 Peter Gatrell: *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia During World War I*, Bloomington 1999, pp. 20 f., 25.

occupation.¹⁸ Over the next two years, the Strand witnessed intermittent shelling, military forays, and a general and repeated fortifying of positions: the strand was covered with trenches, bomb craters, and soldiers, not spas or sunbathers.

Neither peace between the Germans and the Soviets in early 1918 nor the more general German armistice of November 1918 brought a reprieve to the material destruction of the Strand. Instead, competing claimants to rule the eastern Baltic region battled back and forth across the Strand for more than a year. In January of 1919, Bolshevik forces captured the Strand. Soviet Committees confiscated the little wealth that remained, while looters took the rest (or vandalized the remnants of buildings and cemeteries).¹⁹ By the late spring of 1919, the counter attack of German forces under the command of General von der Goltz with supporting Latvian national forces recaptured the Strand and the Strand suffered a further three days of organized looting by victorious soldiers.²⁰ A half-year later, the Latvian national government headed by Kārlis Ulmanis successfully defended Riga (with the vital aid of Allied naval bombardments) from a siege organized by the White Army officer and adventurer Bermond-Avalov. The Latvian national army's slow, methodical counter-offensive captured the Strand by the end of November of 1919. Along the Strand, the extensive use of naval bombardment from British and French warships in the Bay of Riga further scarred the landscape. After nearly five years of nearly constant military action, little remained of the Strand for the newborn Republic of Latvia.

In the newly independent state, the Strand was officially renamed Rīgas-Jūrmala. Rīgas-Jūrmala, like the entire state, faced a herculean task of reconstruction with little to no resources. Foreign loans were difficult to arrange (in part due to the slow pace of international recognition and in part to the great need of reconstruction funds across most of Europe). Individual wealth had largely evaporated through years of war, occupation, hyperinflation and the introduction of new currencies. The central state was equally in need and could offer little to individuals or municipalities other than subsidized wood and deferred taxes. Still, within this poverty and chaos schemes for wealth and power were commonplace. Increasing numbers of embassies opened in Riga and a trickle of foreign businessmen arrived to make a quick profit. The demand for the old Strand returned, both for rest and relaxation on the beaches, but also for the nightlife and entertainment of the twilight of Tsarist Russia. For these very reasons, George Kennan particularly remembered his days at the Riga Strand as a junior diplomat while posted at the US embassy in Riga. In his memoirs, Kennan waxed poetic about "that magnificent, seemingly endless stretch of seashore known as the Riga Strand", and about his "weekends there in June and July, bathing in the sea by day, bathing then later, in the nocturnal hours, in the magic and, to me, commandingly erotic twilight of the northern world in the weeks of the summer solstice."²¹ One of the first, grand schemes to reinvigorate this kind of tourism in Rīgas-Jūrmala that catered to the wealthy and powerful was a new casino. Nobly, the casino would not only provide entertainment, but also fill humanitarian coffers.

18 Vejas Liulevicius: *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I*, Cambridge 2005.

19 G.K. Popov: *City of the Red Plague*, New York 1932.

20 Pēteris Radziņš: *Latvijas atbrīvošanas karš* [The war of liberation in Latvia], Riga 1991.

21 George F. Kennan: *Memoirs 1925–1950*, Toronto 1967, pp. 30 f.

The casino also exemplifies many of the themes of tourism to Rīgas-Jūrmala in the 1920s. In the 1920s, tourism primarily developed to satisfy “pursuits of pleasure.” Still, the national state looked apprehensively at the perceived societal ills of pleasure, and particularly attempted to shield ethnic Latvians from its ill affects. Pleasure and profit trumped meaning and purposefulness, at least initially. The episode of the casino outlines the costs and benefits of elite tourism and also exposes the new state’s paternalistic assumptions about their ethnic masses.

During the first years of independence, Rīgas-Jūrmala struggled mightily with reconstruction. In 1923, an enigmatic foreigner calling himself Jozef Gerde arrived with a plan to open a casino largely with private funds. Gerde, who had encountered difficulties in opening a casino in Rīga, appealed to Rīgas-Jūrmala’s dire need for social welfare. In return for permission to open the casino, Gerde offered the municipal council and more than a dozen charities an elaborate contract that promised limited profit sharing. For the municipal council, the lure of profits overcame serious misgivings about Gerde’s checkered past, and opposition from central ministries and the Rīga police.²² Gerde had been implicated in scandalous bank collapses and casino frauds in three different countries (France, Czechoslovakia, Italy) over a period of time spanning two decades. Despite these warning signs, the municipal council of Rīgas-Jūrmala and 15 charitable organizations from across Latvia signed a contract on August 20, 1923 with Gerde for the rights to open a casino in return for partial proceeds. The contract stated that the costs of opening and operating the casino would be Gerde’s alone. The casino would be elegant and meet the “best foreign standards.” The casino would also include fine dining, a reading room with foreign newspapers, and a variety show.²³ Gerde would further pay the wages of all government officials who would oversee the casino.

The contract also stipulated the profit breakdown from evenings where proceeds would be shared. If the gross income of the evening was up to 3,000 Lats, Gerde would receive 55% and the remaining 45% would go to the Rīgas-Jūrmala council and to the multiple charities. If the evening grossed more than 3,000 Lats, the gross income would be split equally. There seemed to be little that the charities and Rīgas-Jūrmala could lose from the arrangement. The casino’s first such evening seemed to be a success, the Rīgas-Jūrmala municipal council received nearly 500 Lats, three charities received 100 Lats a piece, and three others just over 60 Lats.²⁴ There were, however, complaints that Gerde had succeeded in switching the night in question away from a more profitable Friday night to a slower Wednesday evening.²⁵ Similar concerns and a creeping sense that Gerde and the casino

22 Secret letter to the Director of the Riga Criminal Police, August 2, 1923, in: Latvijas valsts vēstures arhīvs [Latvia’s State Historical Archives, LVVA], 3723, 2, 1892, pp. 32-35.

23 Pagaīdu Lihgums [Temporary Contract], August 20, 1923, in: LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, pp. 43-46.

24 Letter of August 10, 1923 by Minister of the Interior A. Birznieks, in: LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, p. 59. The 15 signatory charities with the casino were: the Independent Artists’ Society, the Riga Artists’ Group, Latvia’s Cultural Support Society, Latvia’s Women’s Aid Corps, Latvia’s Youth Society, Latvia’s Actors’ Labor Society, Latvia’s War Invalid Society, Latvia’s Writers’ Co-operative Society – Latvia’s Culture, Latvia’s Composers’ Society, The Committee of the Cemetery of the Brethren, the Refugee Re-evacuation Committee, Latvia’s Anti-Alcohol Society, the Council of Latvia’s Devastated Provinces’ Congress, and the White Cross.

25 Letter to the Minister of the Interior, August 1923, in: LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, pp. 54-56.

would seek to avoid or minimize the amounts that it contractually had to pay began to set in.

Throughout the remainder of 1923, 1924 and 1925, the relationship between Gerde, the Rīgas-Jūrmala municipal council, and various Latvia's charities remained tense. Significantly, on March 22, 1924, the casino succeeded in renegotiating contractual terms and was able to exclude municipal representatives from the Casino's bookkeeping.²⁶ Soon after, the Casino refused to pay the wages of police surveillance.²⁷ With the exception of one representative from the Ministry of the Interior who had no access to financial records, the casino extricated itself from local control. Almost immediately, the casino's relations with its charitable partners became more problematic. A suspicious pattern emerged wherein the Casino lost money due to the success of individual gamblers on the nights earmarked for profit-sharing and thus charities and the municipal council received little to nothing from the casino.²⁸ This echoed a similar complaint about a similar scheme that involved Gerde in 1919 Czechoslovakia (in both cases, rumors and allegations suggested that the fortunate gamblers had close personal ties to Gerde).²⁹ With time, the jilted charities looked to other sources of revenue.³⁰ Economic recovery supplied resources for the municipal council, and other casinos and spas in a slowly rejuvenating Rīgas-Jūrmala competed with Gerde's casino. The nightlife of Riga further weakened the appeal of Gerde's casino.³¹ Still, the story of the Casino tells us much more than an entertaining tale of fraud. The initial parameters of who could gamble and how that changed, reflects upon the competing claims on tourism in Rīgas-Jūrmala.

If the municipal council and charities did business with the casino for the promise of easy funds, the Ministry of the Interior obsessed about who would be allowed to gamble at the casino, and specifically worried about the citizenship and ethnicity of gamblers. Initially, the casino was intended for foreigners, hence the stated need for European standards. Citizens of Latvia were denied entry to the Casino, thus setting an extreme example of who the Strand was for. The forbidden fruit and the lure of the idea of a luxurious casino, however, were too much to bear, particularly for those in positions of importance. The rules for casino admittance were amended to include citizens of Latvia who received permission from the Minister of the Interior. A select few, deputies of parliament, and high-ranking members of government such as senators, judges, and ministers could even attend the casino without such permission.³² Everyone else needed to present bank statements to the Ministry of the Interior to prove "considerable wealth", defined as a yearly income of at least 12,000 Lats. By the end of 1923, the Ministry, under pressure from Gerde and the casino, further loosened the general restrictions regarding wealth, but inserted new ethnic provisions. From

26 Markus Ozols' report of April 1, 1924, in: LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, p. 122.

27 Ibidem, p. 130.

28 Ibidem, p. 172; report of September 1925, in: LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, p. 199.

29 Secret letter to the Director of the Rīga Criminal Police, August 2, 1923, in: LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, pp. 32-35.

30 Z. Meierovics (Prime Minister) and Ringolds Kalnings (Finance Minister), "Noteikumi par spēles kārtīm" [Decree About Playing Cards], in: Valdības Vēstnesis, September 6, 1922.

31 Markus Ozols' report of May 7, 1924, in: LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, p. 125.

32 J. Krumiņš' letter from the Chancellery of the Ministry of the Interior, February 8, 1924, in: LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, p. 110.

November, the on-site representative of the Ministry of the Interior was given the authority to issue daily or long-term permits to non-Latvian citizens of Latvia if he was convinced of their wealth (the form of proof was left vague).³³ The same agent, however, was strictly forbidden to issue permits to ethnic Latvians. As a result, not counting the steady stream of politicians and musicians, very few ethnic Latvians visited the casino.

There were nevertheless quite a few politicians, musicians, and artists that visited the casino with more or less frequency. Of the more prestigious government ministers or future ministers, Voldemārs Zamuels and Hugo Celmiņš, each a Minister President, visited. So did Dr. Miķelis Valters, Latvia's first Minister of the Interior and prominent diplomat, Jūlijs Arājs, a Minister of Justice, Ādolfs Kuršinskis, a Minister of Transportation, and Jānis Ķemanis, a Deputy Minister of the Interior.³⁴ Dr. Paul Schiemann, the leader of the Baltic German faction in parliament and the editor of the largest German newspaper in Latvia, was an occasional guest. Schiemann's first visit was on 5 September, 1923, when he claimed a need to "orient himself" with the casino.³⁵ Schiemann's well-known *joie-de-vivre* matched his political prowess and intellectual abilities.³⁶ Of the many musicians that visited the casino, the most well-known were Pauls Šuberts of Latvia's Conservatory, Valdemārs Upenieks, a music critic, and Alberts Berziņš, a maestro of the symphonic orchestra.³⁷ Similarly, the artist Jēkabs Kazaks "needed" to visit the casino for "artistic inspiration." Apparently, he needed to return for more inspiration on a regular basis.³⁸ Still, most of these prominent visitors, even if frequent visitors, enjoyed the evening and departed. If not for their fame, they would not have been mentioned in the reports of the Ministry of the Interior. Fricis Jēgermans, a municipal councilor from Rīgas-Jūrmala, was an exception to this rule. Jēgermans visited the casino in April of 1925 to "examine" the casino's operations. His examinations, however, ended when after drinking heavily and screaming at the gambling tables he was bound by police and removed from the premises.³⁹

By and large, though, the great majority of casino visitors were not bound by police nor were they artists, musicians, nor politicians. Foreign citizens and Latvia's minorities were the great majority of casino visitors. In 1924, for example, 1,634 foreign citizens

33 Circular of July 3, 1923, written by A. Birznieks, Minister of Interior, in: LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, p. 9; Letter from J. Krumiņš, November 17, 1923, in: LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, p. 99.

34 For Celmiņš' first visit, likely a behind-the-scenes diplomatic evening with two British Citizens, a Swiss citizen, an American citizen and a fellow Latvian, see LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, p. 36. For Valters at the casino, see LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, p. 41; for Jūlijs Arājs see Letter of June 18, 1924, in: LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, p. 138; for Kuršinskis see Letter of June 20, 1924, in: LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, p. 137.

35 Schiemann's attraction to the casino was little surprise to his biographer, John Hiden. For Schiemann's first visit to the casino, see LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, p. 42.

36 For more on Schiemann, see John Hiden: *Defender of Minorities: Paul Schiemann, 1876–1944*, London 2004.

37 For Šuberts' first trip to the casino, see J. Krumiņš' letter of April 25, 1924, in: LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, p. 123; for Upenieks see Letter of May 23, 1924, in: LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, p. 128; for Berziņš see Letter of June 4, 1925, in: LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, p. 177.

38 For Kazaks at the casino, see LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, p. 20; Letter of February 1924, in: LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, p. 111; Letter of February 8, 1924, in: LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, p. 110; Report of April 16, 1925, in: LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, p. 172.

39 See Markus Ozols' letter of April 13, 1925, in: LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, p. 173.

visited the casinos on the 227 evenings when it was open. Of these, Tsarist Russians and Germans accounted for roughly one third of all visitors (280 and 270 respectively). 244 Lithuanians, 136 Estonians, 86 Poles, and 50 Soviet Russians made up the contingent of tourists from neighboring states. The rest exemplified a cross-section of the diplomatic and business presence of foreign nationals in Latvia. There were 123 English, 64 Danes, 46 Americans, 42 Norwegians, 37 French, 33 Swedes, 30 Finns, 29 Czecho-Slovaks, 24 Swiss, 22 Dutch, 16 Belgians, Romanians, and Austrians, 14 citizens of the Free City of Memel, 9 Hungarians and Greeks, 8 Persians and South Africans, 7 Italians, and 2 Chileans.⁴⁰ Another 133 casino visitors were citizens of Latvia with permanent passes, but only 18 of them were ethnic Latvians. They were primarily Jewish and German by ethnicity (77 and 30 respectively).⁴¹ This same pattern crossed over into the ethnic breakdown of day passes issued to the casino. Of the 1,037 day passes for 1924, 929 were given to Jewish and German citizens of Latvia (606 and 323 respectively). Ethnic Latvians were unable to procure day passes.

It seems as if the Casino and, perhaps as a metaphor, Rīgas-Jūrmala generally, became the preserve of foreigners and wealthy members of the minority communities of Latvia. This conclusion, however, would miss much of the story. Soon after opening, the casino began to offer a lottery and *la boule* along with the more traditional casino games of roulette and cards. The lottery and *la boule* required little money to play, and were situated along the fringes of the casino in an area more or less open to the public. By and large, Latvians enticed by press accounts of the Casino⁴² and desperate for a financial windfall took the free casino train from Riga to the casino, wagered and lost on the lottery and *la boule*. According to the estimates for January of 1925 of the Ministry of the Interior's agent at the casino, these "low games" drew between 150 and 350 needy (*mazturīgs*) people on any given night and brought nearly 900 Lats into casino coffers. By comparison, the gambling tables in the casino proper fielded between 40 and 100 gamblers a night. By extrapolating through the year, the Ministry of the Interior agent believed that the "low games" brought into the casino up to 140,000 Lats a year. By comparison, the annual budget of the municipal council of Rīgas-Jūrmala, one of the benefactors of the casino contract, was only 120,000 Lats for the same year.⁴³ The casino, and by extension Rīgas-Jūrmala, relied as much, if not more, on mass (and in this case ethnic Latvian) tourism for its survival and prosperity. The casino and Rīgas-Jūrmala were part of a plan that imagined that money could be extracted from vacationing foreigners, the diplomatic corps of other countries, and wealthy Jewish, German, and Russian citizens of Latvia. This plan did not materialize, the casino and Rīgas-Jūrmala profited from mass tourism. During the 1920s, this was the result of the vagaries of the invisible hand of the market. Even if limited state support flowed to a casino that catered to foreigners and the wealthy, private economic initiative catering to the masses blossomed across Rīgas-Jūrmala nonetheless.

40 Markus Ozols' Summary of 1924 in Report of February 2, 1925, in: LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, p. 166.

41 Ibidem.

42 See for example Aiz Bulduru Kazino kulisēm [Behind the Scenes at the Bulduri Casino], in: Jaunākās Ziņas, July 16, 1925.

43 Markus Ozols' report of February 2, 1925, in: LVVA, 3723, 2, 1892, p. 166.

Although much more needs to be done in deciphering the place of Rīgas-Jūrmala in the national image of tourism, preliminary examinations of the popular press relay mixed impressions. On the one hand, the “sins” of the powerful and wealthy at the Strand were common fodder for political satirical newspapers. A 1931 edition of *Aizkulises* (Behind the Scenes) featured a caricature of Latvia’s most prominent politicians naked and engaged in a mud fight with the caption, “the political mud bath season is open.”⁴⁴ The clever caricature poked fun at the political elite for childish behavior, and for partaking in elitist mud baths simultaneously. If many newspapers and magazines frequently mined these stereotypes and portrayed Rīgas-Jūrmala with a moralizing condescension, the very same magazines just as frequently gossiped about the latest trends at or for the beach. The very same *Aizkulises* edition, for example, gossiped about a wealthy American woman vacationing at the beach in glowing terms. An early, preliminary examination of the press shows that Rīgas-Jūrmala was both an excellent destination for leisure and a potential trap that induced immoral behavior. The common denominator is that Rīgas-Jūrmala was for pleasure. When an authoritarian coup suspended parliamentary rule in 1934, the lesson learned for tourism to Rīgas-Jūrmala and across was not that tourism should encourage pleasure and leisure, but rather that tourism should be exploited for its instructive ability – tourism was purposeful. Tourism, and specifically the discouraging of tourism to Rīgas-Jūrmala, would become a transformative tool in the arsenal of an authoritarian Latvia out to mold and define the identity of its citizens.

The Lack of Regime-Sponsored Tourism in Rīgas-Jūrmala in Authoritarian Latvia

Conventionally, the authoritarian coup of Kārlis Ulmanis in 1934 had nothing to do with tourism in Rīgas-Jūrmala. Neither Rīgas-Jūrmala nor tourism figured in any of the official reasons for the suspension of parliament nor do they warrant particular mention in the historiography of the coup. Still, the story of the coup, the thinking behind coup supporters, and the change in state involvement in social affairs are all part of the story of tourism in Rīgas-Jūrmala. The Ulmanis coup is predominantly understood through the actions of an individual, Kārlis Ulmanis (either by his apologists or critics), but Janis Rogainis in a prescient article introduced the idea of a slide toward an authoritarian coup.⁴⁵ Well before the fateful night of May 15, 1934, significant political players had given up on the existing political landscape of Latvia and advocated radical change. This thread of discussion is well worn in academic analyses of inter-war Latvia. Less examined is a kind of culture war that emerged in Latvia in the late 1920s. Often, Rīgas-Jūrmala was at the epicenter of this moral battlefield.⁴⁶ Conservatives succeeded in restricting ever more literature from young people, for example, based on the idea that free access to pornography and other harmful literature

44 Politiska “dublu vannu” sesona atklata... [Political Season of “mud baths” Open ...], in: *Aizkulises*, August 7, 1931.

45 See Janis Rogainis: The Emergence of an Authoritarian Regime in Latvia, 1932–1934, in: *Lituanus* 17 (1971), no. 3, p. 61.

46 See, for example the press story Rīgas vidusskolu jaunatnes jūrmalas kaupas un aresta telpas [The Youth of Riga’s Middle Schools on the Dunes and Under Arrest], in: *Pedejais Bīdis*, December 5, 1929, and the following debate outlined in: *LVVA*, 6647, 1, 1493.

had harmed a preceding generation. Films needed censorship, and a temperance movement demanded restrictions on the sales of alcohol. The common theme through all of these movements was that the existing order of things that allowed for a free market to determine cultural and social affairs damaged the well being of the nation and the state. Many of the champions of these causes, at least initially, supported the Ulmanis coup because they saw in it a chance to use the power of the state to enact social transformation. As with most non-democratic regimes, the Ulmanis regime had supporters that were essentially motivated by the holding and retention of power and those that wanted the regime to harness the power and capabilities of the state for social transformation (in this case to turn back social developments to an earlier era). In the field of tourism, the regime encouraged a heavy dose of social transformation away from the kind of pleasure-based tourism that favored Rīgas-Jūrmala and spawned the casino in the 1920s.

After Ulmanis' coup of 1934, the state assumed far greater control and direction in the entire industry of tourism. The Tourist Department within the Ministry of the Interior (later within the Ministry of Social Affairs) commanded greater funds and capabilities than its non-governmental predecessors, the independent tourist societies of the 1920s and their umbrella organization, Latvia's Central Tourist Society. The Department "built observation towers, coordinated cheap group rail rates [...] offered tourist boat trips [...] and ordered local administrators to delegate volunteers to look after the interests of tourists and worked with the Chamber of Labor to organize group excursions for workers."⁴⁷ Along with this greater access to funds and capacity, however, was a concentrated effort to alter the content and meaning of tourism and the tourism experience: tourism was no longer about relaxation or amusement, but a tool to shape national identity. As such, Rīgas-Jūrmala was not on message with the general themes of national tourism. In Ulmanis' Latvia, the national tourist was meant to connect with a rural past and identity by travelling around the native land. Similarly, a travel itinerary laden with sites from Ulmanis' own life (his birthplace and childhood home, his first school, etc.) and travel guides that frequently quoted from Ulmanis' speeches underlined that the tourist experience was a part of a developing cult of personality around the leader.⁴⁸ Given the new imperatives of state orchestrated national tourism, it is not surprising that neither the hedonism of the casinos nor sunbathing on the beaches of Rīgas-Jūrmala were central to the new campaign.

Just as the massive two-part "Road Guide of the Native Land," the great tome of the state national tourist campaign, paid little attention to ethnic minority communities, neighborhoods, or historical sites, it overlooked Rīgas-Jūrmala.⁴⁹ Rīgas-Jūrmala did not figure in any of the detailed tourist excursions from Riga, which were instead pilgrimages to sites that showcased ethnic Latvian heroism such as two World War One battlefields or the longer history of the nation, such as the route Dole Island – Martiņš Island – Salaspils, which highlighted the arrival of Germanic knights and merchants in the twelfth and thirteenth

47 Purs, *Breath* (see note 7), p. 102.

48 *Ibidem*, pp. 104-107, 111.

49 Kārlis Vanags (ed.): *Ceļvedis pa dzimto zemi: tūristu ceļojumu maršruti Latvijā I. daļa: Vidzeme un Latgale* [Guide to the Fatherland: Tourist routes in Latvia. Part I: Vidzeme and Latgale], Rīga 1937; and *Ceļvedis pa dzimto zemi: tūristu ceļojumu maršruti Latvijā II. daļa: Zemgale un Kurzeme* [Guide to the Fatherland: Tourist routes in Latvia. Part II: Zemgale and Kurzeme], Rīga 1939.

centuries. Even more surprisingly, none of the eleven suggested routes emanating out from Riga (ranging from 200 to 720 kilometers) included stops along Rīgas-Jūrmala.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Rīgas-Jūrmala received some attention in the “Guide” within the greater body of the text that identified places of interest for tourists in each of the municipalities of Vidzeme, of which Rīgas-Jūrmala was one. The resort town of Ķemeri, an extension of Rīgas-Jūrmala at its western extreme, was similarly mentioned.⁵¹ In each case, the long historical past, the idyllic beauty of the sea, beach and pine forests, or the medicinal value of rest in nature was stressed. In the discussion of the beaches of Rīgas-Jūrmala, the quality and beauty of the beaches were particularly accentuated relative to others in Northern and Eastern Europe underlining the economic imperative of the domestic tourism campaign, that of staying at home along with one’s currency. Despite these acclamations, Rīgas-Jūrmala received short shrift in the national tourism campaign of the Ulmanis regime because its image did not match the identity building goals of the state campaign.

The message of national tourism was constantly explained in the literature of the Department of Tourism. Tourism was meant to be “a journey to one’s nation” where one was to consciously look for “all that is Latvian.”⁵² Furthermore, such travel, particularly into the countryside and into the wilderness was the best medicine against “tuberculosis, alcohol, movie culture, and nicotine.”⁵³ The contradiction between the healthy, traditional rural life and the sick, modern, urban life was an additional reason for urbanites to undertake national tourism. In a chapter on national tourism’s role in health and hygiene, the urbanite is described as unsatisfied, sullen, and tired. They have “survived the storms of war, the sharp struggle for existence, unhygienic work conditions, an inside-out manner of living, all of big city living ruins each persons’ nerves. The urbanite dissolves their energy and joy of life and poisons their spirit with novels, movies, alcohol, nicotine, games of chance, enjoyments and shallow delights.”⁵⁴

The only cure was in a return to nature. Still, too few people were embarking on such travels. In a veiled and unstated nod to the continued dominance of Rīgas-Jūrmala as the prime destination for Latvia’s tourists, the general “Guide for Tourists” regretted that: “It is true that all of Latvia is filled with beauty, but we can still see that the majority of urbanites, who still do not understand the value of tourism, know only how to go to one place for the Sundays in their summer.”⁵⁵

Along with the more general “Road Guides” for national tourists, the department of tourism devoted particular attention to developing a national tourist itinerary for two demographic groups of utmost concern to the Ulmanis regime: the youth and the working class. Young people were targeted for indoctrination through education to counter the materialistic and individualistic attitudes of the 1920s. The Ulmanis regime attempted to use schools,

50 Ibidem, I. daļa: Vidzeme un Latgale, pp. 20-39.

51 Ibidem, pp. 181-187, 96-102.

52 Kārlis Vanags (ed.): *Vadonis Tūristiem: Rokas grāmata dzimtenes apceļotājiem* [A Guide for Tourists: Handbook for Travelers in the Fatherland], Rīga 1936, pp. 13 and 20 respectively. Insightfully, both quotations come from the chapter titles “Travelling the Native Land unites the Nation.”

53 Ibidem, p. 31.

54 Ibidem, p. 43.

55 Ibidem, p. 71.

youth groups such as the *mazpulki*,⁵⁶ and national tourist experiences to foster a commitment to sacrifice for the nation, state, and leader. “The Guide for Tourists: the Handbook for Travelers around the Native Land”, part of the national tourist library series produced by the department, contained a chapter devoted to organizing national tourism for school aged children.⁵⁷ The chapter even concluded with an homily on the values and superiority of the son of the farmer to the urbanite.⁵⁸ The contention was that a tourist experience that reinforced this rural superiority could even arrest the exodus of young people from the countryside to the city and encourage urbanites to consider moving to the country. Not surprisingly, the hedonism of Rīgas-Jūrmala did not fit into this narrative.

For similar reasons, the department of tourism largely ignored Rīgas-Jūrmala in the national tourist literature devoted to the working class. If the youth represented the glorious future to the Ulmanis regime, the working class loomed as the most likely enemy of the current regime, having supported the Social Democratic Workers Party in the parliamentary era and being the target of ongoing anti-regime propaganda from a united opposition of leftist social democrats and communists. The regime’s response to the working class was a complex combination of carrots and sticks, rewards and punishments. The sticks included thorough observation and monitoring of former labor leaders (including internment in the first years after the coup) and frequent surveillance of workers’ mood and sentiment by police and secret police. The carrots included some government sponsored vacation and tourism excursions for factory workers. To manage these tours, the Department of Tourism produced a specific guide for such tours: “Summer Travels: Latvia’s Chamber of Labor’s Handbook for the Activity of Group Tourism for Workers Unions”.⁵⁹ This guide, like those before it, presented a mix of how to organize group travels, where to go, what to see, and what these destinations were supposed to mean. “Summer Travels” also included considerably more behavioral advice, apparently assuming that workers as tourists needed more reminding to not spit or litter than others.⁶⁰ “Summer Travels” also suggested that workers could benefit more from the recuperative properties of national tourism than most, having worked a long week in closed factories and poorly ventilated stores under artificial lights. Workers, the guide claimed, tended to spend their day off in equally unhealthy places: smelly and smoke-filled rooms, dusty dance floors, stressful cinemas, or reading shallow pulp fiction, abusing alcohol and nicotine or pursuing shallow pleasures and games of chance, all of which “slowly poisons a person’s spiritual and physical energy and joy of life.” National tourism would provide a respite from such a lot, with fresh air, exercise and more. The guide claimed a grand sequence. By “closely observing the beauty of the nature of Latvia, by following in the historical footsteps (ancestors’ hill forts, castle ruins, historical buildings), by observing the differences in regional cultures, the national spirit, values, work and life,

56 The *mazpulki* translate as the little regiments and were a regime-sponsored alternative to the Scout movement.

57 Ibidem, “Dzīmtenes apceļošanas nozīme tautas audzināšanā” [The Significance of Travel for the Education of the People], pp. 28-43.

58 Ibidem, pp. 41 f.

59 Kārlis Vanags (ed.): *Vasaras ceļojumi: Latvijas Darba Kameronas rokas grāmata strādnieku arodbiedrību tūrisma kopu darbībai* [Summer Routes: Latvian Chamber of Labor Handbook for the Tourism Cooperation of Unions], Rīga 1937.

60 Ibidem, pp. 39 f.

would create new, invisible linkages by the hundreds, which would tie them to the land, which would ignite in them a love for their fatherland.”⁶¹

Still, “Summer Travels” assumed that workers did not yet have this love for the fatherland and needed to be prepared and managed carefully. The “Handbook” paid particular attention to the logistics of tours of workers suggesting latent concerns about control and the importance of the message of national tourism to a potentially suspect audience. The “Handbook”, for example, discussed the advantages of tours by bus, trains, automobiles, boats, and bicycles, but in all cases strongly counseled against group tours of more than fifty people. The “Handbook” even suggested how to divide larger groups into multiple small groups and to then plan corresponding itineraries so that they did not intersect or such that no more than fifty workers would intersect at any given point. The “Handbook” warned that if large groups were together for extended periods of time, the trip would change into a relaxing vacation and not tourist travel.⁶² Similarly, a trip that would include Rīgas-Jūrmala would threaten to derail the patriotic duty of national tourism and descend into rest and relaxation. Of the thirteen one day trips listed in the handbook, only one passed through Rīgas-Jūrmala, and only briefly in the spa town of Ķemeri,⁶³ although a separate day trip suggested the swimming beaches of Vidzeme on the other bank of the Daugava River. Similarly, of the ten two-day itineraries, only one included a quick stop in Ķemeri in transit to the town of Kandava. None of the three-day itineraries passed through Rīgas-Jūrmala, nor did the boat, nor bicycle itineraries.

Several itineraries highlighted the site of the World War One battlefield, *Nāves sala*, the construction site of the hydro-electric dam at Ķegumi and sites associated with the life of Kārlis Ulmanis. Each of these played a symbolic role in the narrative of the regime. The World War One site showcased the bravery and valor of Latvian soldiers, the dam represented the future strength and modernization of a Latvia under the rule of Kārlis Ulmanis. Finally, visiting Ulmanis’ childhood home was a kind of pilgrimage in a nascent cult of personality around the *vadonis* (leader). Unsurprisingly, the only site in Rīgas-Jūrmala that warranted detailed discussion was the modern hotel and mud bath spa of Ķemeri, also a symbol of the new regime. The mud baths, Roman and Russian saunas, and modern hotel were all highlighted in the “Handbook”, but particular attention was focused on the fact that the hotel was built by Latvian tradesmen and workers at a cost of two and a half million Lats.⁶⁴ This, however, was the heart of the contradiction within national tourism under the Ulmanis regime, in this case specifically discouraging summer’s travels for workers to Rīgas-Jūrmala as a destination, but simultaneously trumpeting the modern hotel and spa at Ķemeri.

One of the primary goals of the national tourism campaign was to encourage Latvians (much less was done for members of ethnic minorities) to choose to travel around their native land in such a way as to foster a new national identity – one that placed a premium on the *vadonis*, and on a timeless rural identity of the Latvian nation. Considerable resources were marshaled for this campaign, from an extensive library of books, guides and pamphlets, to negotiated discount fares on trains and buses. And at first, the campaign seemed to

61 Ibidem, pp. 14 f.

62 Ibidem, p. 27.

63 Ibidem, p. 10.

64 Ibidem, p. 47.

produce results. In a three-year period (1936–1938), for example, the campaign succeeded in organizing more than 300 excursions for over 18,000 workers (just over the suggested maximum number per excursion of 50).⁶⁵ Anecdotal and scattered evidence from oral histories and memoirs suggests that middle class Latvians travelled around their native land with some enthusiasm.⁶⁶ Still, the numbers belie the gap between this regime funded and encouraged national tourism and the continued mass tourism to Rīgas-Jūrmala, despite the regime's best efforts to stem this tide. If roughly 6,000 workers a year took part in a factory organized tourist excursion, during peak season, upwards of 20,000 people flocked to the beaches of Rīgas-Jūrmala on any given summer weekend.⁶⁷ More than a half million people would swamp Rīgas-Jūrmala during a summer with close to 40,000 registered swimmers in a given year. Despite the work of the Department of Tourism, people voted with their vacations and chose beaches and the temptations of Rīgas-Jūrmala over travelling their native land.

Only the tourist infrastructure of Rīgas-Jūrmala, from hotels to rental homes and rooms, to restaurants and bars, to transportation could handle the influx of vacationers produced by mass tourism. The Department of Tourism was privately aware of the miserable state of most rural and provincial town hotels as evidenced by their internal scathing reports on conditions. Furthermore, government statistics overwhelmingly highlighted that outside of Riga and Rīgas-Jūrmala, the tourist industry could provide relatively few people with work.⁶⁸ Tourism and recreation remained essentially one of two options: for country folk to visit Rīga (for Rīga's inhabitants to enjoy the city's parks as well) or for vacationers to travel to Rīgas-Jūrmala for as little as a day or for as long as a season. The regime's investment in finishing the luxurious hotel and spa at Ķemeri, and the continued provision of abundant train and bus service to Rīgas-Jūrmala underscored the seemingly contradictory development of tourism during the Ulmanis regime. The regime pushed purposeful tourism, while most still chose pleasure.

The construction of the spa and hotel at Ķemeri was particularly grand, one of the regime's largest single expenditures outside of such massive construction projects as the hydroelectric dam at Ķegumi. The Ķemeri resort was begun with state financing during Latvia's parliamentary era, but the Ulmanis regime pumped nearly two and half million more Lats into the project. The project, in some ways mirroring the Rīgas-Jūrmala casino's contract stipulations to meet European standards, was grand and expansive.⁶⁹ One of Latvia's most celebrated architects, Eižēns Laube, designed the building. The baths were arranged in six different configurations ranging from different mud, sea water and fresh water sources. The hotel, a five story building with 115 rooms (107 of which were private one bed rooms), included modern plumbing, a radio and telephone central network, a modern kitchen, central heating and water, a rooftop cafeteria, terraced gardens, and a viewing tower. The interior

65 R. Bērziņš-Valdēss, S. Vidbergs (eds.): *Pieci Gadi: 1934.–15.v.–1939* [Five Years: 15 May 1934–1939], Rīga 1939, pp. 118 f.

66 Including the author's grandmother.

67 Rīgas Jūrmala (see note 9), pp. 2160, 2163.

68 According to government statistics, in 1935 the hotel industry provided employment to 4,731 people, 2,180 of which were establishment owners. V. Salnais, J. Jurevics (eds.): *Pirmā tirdzniecības skaitīšana Latvijā: 1935. gadā* [The First Commerce Census in Latvia], Rīga 1938, p. 31.

69 Ķemeri, in: Švābe (ed.), *Latvju enciklopēdija* (see note 9), pp. 1186-1188.

was decorated with lavish wood panels and molding, marble columns, and tiles. An adjacent park included walking trails, a water sports pavilion, a restaurant, and a “lovers’ island” in a nearby lake. The hotel and spa even attracted increasing numbers of foreigners, with nearly one thousand by 1937.

The continued popularity of Rīgas-Jūrmala as a site for tourism during the Ulmanis regime and the concomitant grand investment in a luxury spa and hotel in Ķemeri seems to undercut the national tourism campaign and reinforce the established themes around tourism at the beach: the dichotomy between elite and mass tourism and the provenance of its clientele. Even the iconic image of the national tourism campaign, the Travel Your Native Land poster, with all of its historical fort mounds, agricultural sites, war memorials, and Ulmanis’ childhood home included an allusion to the on-going appeal of Rīgas-Jūrmala. Along the beaches, treading into the waters of the Bay of Rīga, were two curvaceous swimmers while an effeminate man covered in mud beckoned from Ķemeri. The national tourism campaign seemed to pale in comparison to these two icons.

The dichotomy in tourism during the Ulmanis regime reflected the regime itself. As I have argued elsewhere, the regime cannot be easily labeled as conservative, authoritarian or fascist; it was some of each. Or rather there were elements within the regime that viewed the state as a transformational tool while others followed a pragmatic approach to what was possible.⁷⁰ The Department of Tourism and the Travel the Native Land campaign were parts of an attempt to marshal all of the powers of the state to transform individuals and society. This approach had much in common with other European regimes in the 1930s. The unanswered question is what these adherents would have done with individuals that could not or would not transform, and where this places the Ulmanis regime among other regimes of the day. Likewise, there were those in the Ulmanis regime, often in positions in places such as the Ministry of Finance that had to find the actual resources for transformational projects. They often advocated a more cautious, pragmatic approach to the goals of the regime. These figures would have unsurprisingly favored an approach to tourism that brought a more immediate and fiscal return on investments such as mass tourism to the beach or a hotel and spa that catered to the wealthy. Another unanswered question is where Kārlis Ulmanis fell within this struggle; whether he favored one approach or the other, or if, like many successful dictators, he played factions against each other with Machiavellian skill, or if he himself was unsure.

Still, the pragmatic, potentially profitable, approach to tourism was no more guaranteed of results than the transformational agenda of national tourism. By 1939, even the Department of Tourism altered its course to encourage the raising of standards across the tourist infrastructure. The Department in 1939, like Rīgas-Jūrmala all along, saw an approaching potential windfall in wealthy foreign travelers. They assumed that people in transit to the 1940 Olympics in Helsinki, Finland could be tempted into staying in Latvia along the way.⁷¹ Unfortunately for the regime, for Rīgas-Jūrmala, and for Latvia, no amount of western standards at hotels and restaurants was able to deliver these western tourists. The outbreak of war postponed the Helsinki Olympics and led to the occupation of Latvia.

70 Purs, *Breath* (see note 7), p. 97.

71 Kārlis Vanags: Ziņojums par provinces viesnīcu stāvokli [Report on the Condition of Hotels in the Province], 5 April 1939, in: LVVA, 3723, 2, 1893, pp. 2 f.

Tourism at Soviet Rīgas-Jūrmala

Soviet occupation of Latvia in June of 1940 brought an end to the Ulmanis regime. The state's subsequent incorporation into the USSR shelved Latvia's independence for more than 50 years. Still, if this seemed an end to the Republic of Latvia, there was no seeming end to tourism to Rīgas-Jūrmala, instead the place entered a phase of socialist tourism. Socialist tourism in the Soviet Union and East Europe has begun to receive extended, scholarly attention, most notably in the edited volume "Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism". Diane Koenker's article "The Proletarian Tourist in the 1930s: Between Mass Excursion and Mass Escape", for example, outlined "conflicting values in proletarian tourism" particularly appropriate to tourism to Rīgas-Jūrmala.⁷² Some of these conflicts, should tourism be "rugged or smooth," how should tours be organized, and about the purpose of tourism, have a familial resemblance to the same issues in Latvia in the 1930s. These issues would continue to be debated in Soviet Latvia and across the Soviet Union. The previously mentioned themes of tourism in Rīgas-Jūrmala also continued throughout the Soviet experience. Rīgas-Jūrmala continued to offer two visions, one as the backyard respite for Rīga and Soviet Latvia, the other as an attraction for all Soviet citizens. The return of masses of long distance tourists to Rīgas-Jūrmala was, in this sense, a return to the pre-World War One tourist experience of the Strand when a direct railroad route carried tourists from Moscow to the Strand.

The greatest change in tourism in Rīgas-Jūrmala during the Soviet era was the advent of the location as a retirement destination. As a result of these influxes, Rīgas-Jūrmala was recognized as a city, Jūrmala, in 1959. Throughout the many decades of Imperial Russia's and independent Latvia's experience with tourism at Jūrmala, one constant remained; the tourists left after a few days or after the season. During the Soviet era, people from across the Soviet Union settled in Jūrmala and stayed there into retirement. Conspicuous in this influx were retired military officers as well as some notable communist party leaders and functionaries. The growth of Jūrmala was astounding. If in 1935, there were less than 8,000 permanent residents of Rīgas-Jūrmala, by the end of the Soviet period the population peaked at just over 60,000 people. As a result, a new tension developed between developments of the city for its permanent residents as opposed to its well-established tourist legacy. Rīgas-Jūrmala during the Soviet era became a Soviet, socialist city, Jūrmala, and a predominantly ethnically Russian city as well.⁷³

Beyond Jūrmala's growth and transformation several other themes dominated the tourist character of Jūrmala during the Soviet era. The age-old theme of the tourist site as an elite preserve or as a playground for the masses continued to unfold. The presence of summer villas and retirement homes for some of the who's who of the Communist Party of the USSR contrasted with the hotels and resorts of Jūrmala as a reward for workers. Both could coexist, but not always easily. Also, the meaning of a visit to Jūrmala remained contested. The Soviet regime excised the remnants of democratic and Ulmanis Latvia from

72 Diane P. Koenker: The Proletarian Tourist in the 1930s: Between Mass Excursion and Mass Escape, in: Gorsuch, Koenker (eds.), Turizm (see note 6), p. 130. See also the contribution of Christian Noack to this volume.

73 See Rīgas Jūrmala (see note 9), pp. 2160-2163.

the physical geography of the region and attempted to overlay a Soviet socialist message on the landscape. Streets were perfunctorily re-named, socialist monuments unveiled, and plaques commemorating Soviet heroes were bolted to houses and buildings. All of this was to develop an instructional narrative within Soviet tourism that contributed to the development of Soviet man – to make tourism to Jūrmala purposeful. Still, the regime molders of Soviet tourism must have worried as much as the bourgeois nationalist molders of national tourism did, that tourists to Jūrmala discarded all of these trappings and simply went to Jūrmala for the beaches and the relatively hedonistic nightlife. Soviet Jūrmala remained a paradox, particularly as it was both a model of Soviet urban development and transformation and retained a patina of one of the most Western cities of the USSR (even used as a Western city for the sets of Soviet cinema).

Tourism in post-Soviet Jūrmala

The Soviet era was a period of growth and expansion for Jūrmala, often on the same infrastructure and sites as before. The mud baths of Ķemeri, for example, remained a popular and prestigious attraction. The most recent episode from the tourist history of Jūrmala, however, is one of decline. Population has dipped, but more noticeably Jūrmala as a site of mass tourism has declined and struggled to adapt to the market and western-oriented conditions of an independent Latvia in the 1990s and 2000s. Two great obstacles block the continued mass arrival of long distance tourists. Visa requirements and affordability issues have forced many of the tourists from the former Soviet republics to abandon Jūrmala. Conversely, Western tourists have ventured to Jūrmala in relatively small numbers. If Jūrmala is a beach destination, to a western clientele, it must compete with a great many other cities, most of which enjoy a more developed tourist infrastructure, warmer days, nights, and sea temperatures, and longer summers. Riga has transformed itself into an international tourist destination as a European city unseen by many and as a magnet for bachelors' parties, but Jūrmala struggles to compete with the many other beach destinations for western tourists.

The fate of the spa and hotel at Ķemeri exemplifies the tourist experience of Jūrmala over the last twenty years. In the mid 1990s, enthusiasm abounded about the potential privatization of the Ķemeri resort. Officials hoped that privatization would attract foreign direct investment for a massive renovation of the aging hotel, baths, and grounds. Instead, privatization was a shadowy affair that produced little new investment and instead resulted in the dismantling and cannibalization of another of Latvia's treasured symbols of the past. Although there have been successful market ventures in Jūrmala over the past twenty years, overall Jūrmala has struggled with market transformation and the development of tourism in Jūrmala has been unimpressive.

Each of these episodes of tourism in Jūrmala, the Soviet and the contemporary, would, no doubt, yield as many insights into the larger society as tourism and Rīgas-Jūrmala does for an earlier era. Likewise, the constant interplay of the above outlined themes would likely develop commonalities across a long history of the region as opposed to the stark differences of political histories that focus on regimes and rulers. The above outlined short introduction also touches upon great common themes of European history: the development and definition of ethnic identity, conflict between market and state driven development, and

conflicts between masses and elites. A fuller, more comprehensive, account of tourism and Rīgas-Jūrmala over more than two centuries is far beyond the scope of this study. This study, however, with its amusing details of casinos and tourist sites, demonstrates the wealth of material. This study also highlights Jūrmala as a particularly rich vein for the mining of tourism as a portal into the study of states, societies, and citizens.

Zusammenfassung

In dem Beitrag wird das Spannungsfeld zwischen touristischem Nutzen und touristischer Zerstreuung in der lettischen Stadt Jūrmala während des 20. Jahrhunderts untersucht. Es wird ein Überblick über die Anfänge des Tourismus in Jūrmala im 19. Jahrhundert gegeben und dabei der Bedeutung des Casinos in der Ära der parlamentarischen Herrschaft (1920–1934) besondere Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt. Ausgehend davon, dass das Casino als eine Metapher für ein Vergnügen gesehen werden kann, das den Touristen dieser Ära zur Verfügung stand, so ist die fehlende Betonung des Strandtourismus in der nationalen Tourismus-Kampagne des Ulmanis-Regimes nach 1934 als Tourismuspolitik zu werten, die als Herrschafts-Mittel eingesetzt wurde. Eine kurze Diskussion über weitere Veränderungen des Tourismus im Zeitraum der sowjetischen Herrschaft und im heutigen Lettland beendet diese erste Annäherung an noch ausstehende künftige Forschungsarbeiten.