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## Leisure in Russia: 'Free' Time and Its Uses

In his now celebrated memoir of the Russian factory worker's life at the turn of the nineteenth century, Semen Kanatchikov recalls a story that was found to be especially hilarious by his *artel*<sup>1</sup> mates in Moscow. It concerns a lazy worker, living '*some two hundred miles from the place where we fools live*', who is sent out by a priest, apparently his master, to plough a distant field. The worker successfully puts off his departure, asking to be allowed to eat lunch first so that he can work all the day through. On finishing that meal, he reuses the same argument and gains permission from the priest to proceed directly to supper. After stuffing his belly even fuller, he makes his bed and lies down to sleep. When challenged by the priest, he makes an unanswerable reply: '*Work after supper? Why, everyone goes to bed after supper!*' [Kanatchikov 1986: 12–13].

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An audience of peasants-turned-proletarians had obvious reasons for finding this tale amusing.

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<sup>1</sup> An *artel* is a kind of grassroots co-operative society organised by peasants and peasant in-migrants to cities to provide, for example, accommodation and catering facilities, and general support. [Editor].

The figure of the master conflates three disliked embodiments of authority: the priest, the landlord and the factory owner. In addition, the joke can be read as a variation on the eternal theme of what happens when low peasant cunning has the good fortune to encounter rule-bound dull-wittedness. But the precise mechanisms of the deception perpetrated by this idler repay closer scrutiny. The protagonist gets away with a day of well-fed loafing, a luxury that Kanatchikov and his fellows would never have been allowed in either of the work environments with which they were familiar: the village or the factory. In peasant society, labour is governed by customs that no member of the community could ever hope to disregard without incurring disapproval, and where idleness consequently dares not speak its name; where an able-bodied individual could never hope to find a legitimate reason, however ingenious, not to go out with his fellows to work in the morning; and where work takes externalised and verifiable forms (a peasant who is not bending his or her back cannot, by definition, be working). Non-work time — principally the numerous holidays in the peasant calendar — was also tightly bound by custom.<sup>1</sup> The factory worker, by contrast, engages in labour that is driven more by production than by process or custom, and that requires a more finely calibrated sense of time. Formally or informally, he does have opportunities to ‘negotiate’ with authority, but only under certain very serious constraints. Industrial workers would receive little moral censure if they delayed their arrival on the factory floor, even if only to recover from the weekend’s hangover. But economic retribution would be bound to follow: absent workers would subsequently have their pay docked or be forced to make up the time later in the working week. Although they *would* be at liberty to wolf down three meals at breakfast time, they would not then be able to invoke custom so as to end the working day there and then, and they would also be in danger of losing the means to pay for the next day’s meals. The hero of the industrial-era *skazka* retold by Kanatchikov successfully resists the instrumental logics of communal subsistence agriculture and early capitalist exploitation by appealing selectively to both: his rhetoric is driven by the values of rationality and productivity, yet his bottom line is peasant custom. He has his kasha and eats it.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Boris Mironov has shown a steady rise in the number of popular holidays in the second half of the nineteenth century, due largely to the syncretic faith of Russian peasants (who observed both Orthodox and pagan holidays) [Mironov 1994]. The conflict between customary religious holidays and the needs of industry in Russia’s cities is briefly examined in [Zelnik 1994].

<sup>2</sup> The theme of exploitative priest and inventive worker is well known from rural popular culture. See for example ‘Popov rabotnik’ (recorded in Tambov province) [Afanasyev 1985: 21]. An even earlier version is offered in Pushkin’s ‘Skazka o pope i o rabotnike ego Balde’ (1830), which is a reworking of a tale he heard from his nurse Arina Rodionovna in 1824. The story retold by Kanatchikov draws on this traditional material, but gives it a new twist. In the older versions, the worker does not usually set out with the aim of tricking the priest, but is often

This story can serve as a humorous reminder of the grim truth that most nineteenth-century Russians had rather few waking hours free from exhausting toil. But a more interesting conclusion to draw from it would be that the way we work implies a way of dividing up, and categorising, our time. The enthusiastic response of Kanatchikov's *artel* members suggests that they well understood the contrast between the rural and urban-industrial work tempos; that, like other migrant workers of the time, they felt tugged in different directions by old habits and new practices, and in general found much less neat and satisfying ways of resolving the tension than the hero of this story. But it is also worth reflecting on one other, more fundamental, difference between the protagonist and the audience. The former may skive off work, but he does not apparently do anything with his free time except eat and sleep. His life is made up of work and non-work: time away from the fields is mere idling, and has no independent meaning for him. The Kanatchikov collective, by contrast, had a variety of ways of filling up time away from the factory floor (and this even well before Kanatchikov became a 'conscious worker' and started attending meetings). The pages following the story reveal some of these working-man's diversions. During the winter, when the Moscow River froze over, the men would assemble on the ice to have fistfights with workers from another factory, returning home '*with our black eyes and our broken bloody noses*'. But they also had a number of "'cultural" amusements'. The *artel* had taken out a subscription to the boulevard newspaper *Moskovskii listok*, where they read avidly the reports on crime cases, the feuilletons, and even a serialised novel. On Sundays they sometimes called in at the Tretyakov Gallery or the Rumyantsev Museum.<sup>1</sup> Urban civilisation was, however, regularly supplanted by more traditional pursuits. The men were addicted to the spectacle of Moscow fires, and would always '*run at breakneck speed*' to witness a house in flames [Kanatchikov 1986: 13]. Ritual drinking — often to oblivion — was a near-obligatory part of the men's out-of-work activities; it might happen at any time they had money in their pockets, but most habitually after the fortnightly paydays. A more constant, less temporally delimited, recreation was talking and storytelling. The tale with which I opened this essay was delivered on a dismal evening prior to payday when the men prevailed upon the best raconteur in the *artel*, a wayward and heavy-drinking type, to provide them with entertainment free of charge.

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driven to do so by the latter's bad faith. The worker is not an idler; he may well perform his duties in exemplary fashion. In the Kanatchikov version, moreover, the worker appeals directly to an industrial work ethic by speaking of the need not to lose 'precious time', a move that would be inconceivable in the *skazki* written down by Afanasyev and other ethnographers of peasant life.

<sup>1</sup> Both the famous picture gallery and the museum were originally private foundations, nationalised after the Revolution (the library of the latter became the core of the Lenin Library, now Russian State Library, in Moscow).

This list of recreations is striking for its heterogeneity. It includes one activity — art appreciation — that would meet wholehearted approval from intelligentsia proponents of a *mission civilisatrice* (even if one doubts whether the workers' visual sensibility would have matched their ideal). The reading of the boulevard press might be considered a sign of immersion in modern urban living, of accommodation to the fast pace of *faits divers*. Their alcohol consumption makes these men conform to a pattern of working-class life everywhere in Europe at the turn of the nineteenth century, yet one with a rather specific Russian pedigree.<sup>1</sup> Brawling, similarly, was an ancient popular recreation that had made a successful transition to the city, accommodated itself to urban rhythms, and become a stable part of the culture of the subordinate classes. Other forms of amusement hint more unambiguously at these men's recent rural past. Their taste for set-piece storytelling rather than sharper repartee points to their roots in a non-urban culture, and they shared their consuming interest in fires with their friends and relatives back in the village.<sup>2</sup>

Each of these various activities implies not only a kind of cultural engagement with the world, but also its own sense of time. The fist-fights, for example, were synchronised with the passing of the seasons (the coming of winter, which provided a suitable combat arena on the river and also meant that time spent out of doors had to be shorter but correspondingly more intense in the sensations it provided). Newspaper reading was tied to day-to-day happenings that were detached from the workers' immediate environment yet in some way perceived as being part of their common experience in the city. Storytelling was a truly everyday activity that straddled the divide between work and non-work time. Drinking was bound up with the basic rhythms of factory employment (with its paydays and 'Saint Mondays'). Rubbernecking at fires was an activity that could not be planned in advance, but that dominated over all other pleasures for the duration of any conflagration; it had the effect of randomising everyday time.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The idea of a transition from 'traditional' to 'modern' drinking cultures will do well enough as a general characterisation of changes in working-class alcohol consumption in nineteenth-century Europe. Yet it pays to be attentive to the specific content of 'tradition', and to the social and economic conditions that do so much to determine it. In the Russian case, a lot depends on the institution of the *kabak*: its economic logic, its location, the way it was staffed [Christian 1990].

<sup>2</sup> James von Geldern observes a shift in the style of urban lower-class humour in the 1860s. Jokes and anecdotes, formerly the prerogative of educated people poking fun at the upper classes, began to displace 'bawdy wordplay' in popular culture. These new genres became possible largely because they now had a convenient target: the 'bumpkin' migrants from the villages, whose more elaborate stories were baggy monsters by comparison with the biting and punchy humour of longer-established lower-class urbanites [von Geldern 1990: 377–8]. On peasants' horrified fascination with fires, see [Frierson 2002].

<sup>3</sup> To this list of recreations we should add the new people's theatres and carnivals, which broke with the older *gulyanya* and did much to establish a routine work/leisure divide for workers like those in the Kanatchikov artel [Swift 2002].

So, although Kanatchikov and friends differed from the worker in the story in calling time after work their own, and in finding things to do with it other than eating and sleeping, they were far from having a coherent encompassing notion for all the activities they conducted outside the factory. Like many workers in Western Europe at the same time, their fondest desire was to work fewer hours; to be paid better was an important, but secondary, issue. But they did not have a clear idea of what they would do with this extra time. As Kanatchikov commented on the reduction in hours for the three days of the coronation celebrations in 1896, *'After eight hours of work, we still had so much time left over that we didn't even know how to fill our remaining hours'*. Later, with the hindsight of one who has attained political consciousness, he remarked on the emancipatory potential of the subsequent permanent reduction in the working day at his factory from 11.5 to 10 hours: *'Granted, in those years there were few of us who knew how to organise and exploit our free time in a rational manner. Yet it was already a wonderful thing that we were now able merely to rest physically and to think about subjects that were unrelated to our work'* [Kanatchikov 1986: 40].

With the Kanatchikov artel, as with representatives of any other occupational culture, it is worth asking: to what extent did they enjoy time free 'from' work, and to what extent was their time away from the factory 'free' in an absolute sense? What name should we give to this time: recuperation, relaxation, recreation or leisure?

By now it is high time to give an extended gloss of 'leisure', a term that has occasioned much sociological reflection and investigation. Leisure is non-work, but it is much else besides. The lazy worker in the story is emphatically not at leisure when he takes to his bed with a full stomach. By most people's definitions, leisure implies a degree of individual choice and agency in how out-of-work time is used. It represents freedom from livelihood-earning obligations and from psychophysiological imperatives such as eating, sleeping and resting, but also detachment from burdensome and in practice unavoidable non-work duties: housework, child care, council meetings, visits to the dentist, and so on. It may also be thought to exclude certain public, highly ritualised, convention-laden and de facto compulsory forms of entertainment culture: balls, parades and other public festivities. Leisure is thus often made to seem one of the prime attributes of modern Western civilisation. The 'emergence of leisure', as it is explained in the standard scholarly narrative, is driven by three broad socio-economic factors. First, new occupational patterns that draw a much sharper boundary between work, on the one hand, and entertainment, amusement and leisure, on the other. Modernity does not necessarily bring people more non-work time, but it does make them more inclined to treat that time as discrete and valuable. The second factor is urbanisation, along with a large number of concomitant tech-

nological advances such as wristwatches, lighting, sound reproduction, cinema, telegraph, telephone, trains and bicycles.<sup>1</sup> People now find that there is a much greater range of activities they can pursue in their 'free' time, and they also become more conscious of the ways in which they control that time (by, for example, staying out later, going on holiday, travelling further and more frequently, and planning their social lives more flexibly). Third, commercialisation increases people's sense of their own agency, as they are able to feel they exercise choice in how they spend the maximally impersonal commodity of money [Marrus 1974: 8–9].

As well as being underpinned by socio-economic transformations, the rise of leisure in modern Europe (and of course North America) is often treated as confirmation of, and a stimulus to, the development of the individualised 'modern self'. In the words of one historian of late nineteenth-century England, *'Leisure was becoming more than an antidote to work. For some it could even be the major source of emotional and intellectual satisfaction in their lives'* [Meller 1976: 252]. Another scholar, writing of America in the same period, claims that leisure should be seen as *'serious business'*, or even as *'the culture's most vital work'* [Gleason 1999: vii]. If these assertions have some truth for the turn of the nineteenth century, then they are still more valid for the late twentieth, when the cultivation of appropriate leisure habits was the inalienable right, not to say obligation, of the modern citizen and an inescapable part of his or her socialisation. Take for example basic foreign language textbooks, those manuals for Euro-teenagerhood, where conversational drills and vocabulary items relating to 'free time' and its uses invariably had pride of place. As a student of twentieth-century tourism has convincingly argued, *'Leisure is displacing work from the center of modern social arrangements', having profited from the widespread idea that 'life itself is supposed to be fun'. The world of work has failed to resist this assault on its social and cultural prerogatives: 'It responds by shriveling up, offering workers ever increasing freedom from its constraints'* [MacCannell 1999: 5, 35].

Whether one considers this present state of affairs with unqualified enthusiasm or with a certain ambivalence,<sup>2</sup> it provides a useful fixed place in history from which to cast a glance backwards in time. By taking this longer view, historians have posited a shift from 'traditional' habits to 'modern' patterns of leisure, and a move from 'cyclical' to 'linear' time. As Keith Thomas argued in an influential

<sup>1</sup> Note for example that Kanatchikov, on his arrival in Moscow as a sixteen-year-old in 1895, was struck most of all by the street lighting. On the state of Moscow city infrastructure (which was far from impressive by wider European standards), see [Pisarkova 1998: ch. 5]. On the great impression made by early gas lighting in St Petersburg in the 1860s, see [Marina 1914: 689].

<sup>2</sup> A classic example of ambivalence — or, more properly, outright hostility — is [Adorno 1991].

article of 1964, it is possible to draw a general distinction between the work and leisure practices of 'primitive' or 'pre-industrial' societies and those of the modern industrial world. In the former cases, life *follows a pre-determined pattern in which work and non-work are inextricably linked*'. Periods of leisure are not clearly demarcated from economic activities: hunting, market-going and even ploughing can have sociable and recreational aspects. Such societies are characterised by imperviousness to metronomic time: *'work is not regulated by the clock, but by the requirements of the task'* [Thomas 1964: 51–2].

In the industrial revolution, so Thomas extends his argument, the existing 'popular' culture of work collided with the instrumental rationality and intensive work practices of modernity, and in general came off worse. The result was that people could never work in the same way again: initially forced by enclosure and the labour surplus into wage slavery, in the longer run workers internalised the values of industrial capitalism, acquiring a *'new inner compulsion to labour'*. As Thomas concludes: *'In the end ... industrialism triumphed, though not in the form envisaged by its early protagonists. In the place of the legal and economic compulsion to work came the force of habit and even a sense of duty'* [Thomas 1964: 62].

E.P. Thompson was drawn to the same set of questions and offered a much more detailed account of how the industrial revolution affected people's subjective appreciation of time. He too reflects on the 'task-orientation' of peasant societies, but is more interested than Thomas in examining the ways in which it was challenged by new industrial practices. The shift to hired labour, he suggests, institutes a fundamental distinction between the employer's time and the workers' 'own' time. As he summarises: *'Time is now currency: it is not passed but spent.'* He traces the building of church and other public clocks from the fourteenth century onwards, the striking growth of clock-making in England from the late seventeenth century, and the general diffusion of timepieces, and hence 'synchronisation of labour', during the industrial revolution [Thompson 1967].<sup>1</sup>

But Thompson's concern here, as in his famous *The Making of the English Working Class*, is not merely to record the *'pressures towards discipline and order'* and the consequent *'loss of leisure in which to play and the repression of playful impulses'* [Thompson 1991: 442, 448], but also to show how such pressures could be resisted and how susceptibility to them might vary from one work environment to another. For all the attempts made to regiment the workforce, the

<sup>1</sup> A recent study [Dohrn-van Rossum 1996] offers a more nuanced account, pointing out the complexity of the relationship between technological change (the invention and diffusion of time-pieces) and the 'time-ordering' of Western societies.

working day and week remained extremely irregular in most industries, and ‘task orientation’ remained the dominant principle. Local variation means that it is hard to speak of any single type of transition to synchronised work practices (note, for example, that Kanatchikov recalls the Petersburg factories as being much more strictly regimented than the Moscow factories where he started out). As Thompson reminds us, ‘*the historical record is not a simple one of neutral and inevitable technological change, but is also one of exploitation and of resistance to exploitation*’ [Thompson 1967: 93–4].<sup>1</sup>

Switching now from work to leisure, we find ample further evidence to suggest that the ‘tradition-to-modernity’ paradigm is prone to oversimplification and inaccuracy. For one thing, ‘pre-modern’ popular recreations not only survived in the modernising city, but often thrived, drawing where necessary on new technologies. ‘Traditional’ culture was by no means impervious or antipathetic to modernity (as is demonstrated by its ready embracing of leisure entrepreneurship). ‘Popular’ and ‘elite’ recreations do not exist in separate boxes, but can rather interact in significant ways. ‘Traditional’ and ‘modern’ senses of time were also by no means guaranteed to be uncombinable. Change was so gradual, and so little the result of civilising efforts by the educated classes, that the idea of a rupture in leisure habits can seem misguided.<sup>2</sup>

Russian social history offers us many examples of ‘traditional’ uses of, and attitudes to, time persisting in a modern urban setting. Although working-class housing conditions were almost invariably dire, visiting and domestic entertaining went on regardless. This was true even of the overwhelmingly single male milieu inhabited by Kanatchikov, and it may have been the case to an even greater extent after the Revolution, as more worker families settled permanently in the city and alternative sites of popular recreations (notably taverns) were closed down. The most important source of entertainment in the early Soviet city remained street-centred sociability. According to 1920s time-budget surveys, *progulki* and *obshchenie* were comfortably the main free-time activities for men and (especially) for women [Bushnell 1988: 60–1]. More generally, the distinction between work and leisure has been much fuzzier in twentieth-century Russia, right through to the present day, than people are accustomed to in Britain or North America. As countless foreign visitors have found

<sup>1</sup> The persistence of ‘cyclical’ time in modern civilisation is the theme that runs through [Young 1988]. Thompson has himself been accused of exaggerating the extent to which time becomes a commodity under capitalism [Whipp 1987: 216–23].

<sup>2</sup> A useful articulation of these ‘revisionist’ considerations is [Cunningham 1980]. Local variation is stressed in [Walton and Walvin 1983]. Continuity between working-class and earlier popular cultures is a major theme of [Abrams 1992]. As regards Russian studies, a pioneering work is [Kelly 1990]. The question of interaction between tradition and modernity in Russian urban entertainments is given more synthesising treatment in [Kelly and Shepherd 1998].

in their dealings with university professors, shop assistants, librarians, and people in many other occupations, the boundary between work duties and free-time sociability can be unexpectedly friable.<sup>1</sup>

This way of being can be seen as the result of the pressures of Soviet-style modernisation. From the very beginning, the Soviet 'new man' was supposed to include among his sterling qualities the ability to use time effectively and rationally. This would have obvious benefits for the productivity of labour (as with 1920s Taylorism, or the Stakhanovite movement), yet it would also emancipate Soviet people from the wage slavery of the past. In view of this, free time became an important index of the success of the Soviet social transformation. At its more utopian moments, Soviet socialism predicted extravagant reductions in work time for the labouring masses. Lenin, for example, wrote of the possibility of technology reducing work time by a factor of four. In May 1959, Khrushchev similarly looked forward to a time when '*people will work three or four hours a day, and maybe less than that*' [Strumilin 1959: 6–7].<sup>2</sup> What this represents is a combination of the rhetoric of progress-to-affluence with the Marxist myth of an organic society which would integrate all its members into a harmonious and productive community both during and after periods of paid work.

These grand designs brought unanticipated results, for two main reasons. First, they were not articulated or enforced consistently, largely because they contained a fundamental ambiguity (not to say contradiction): were work practices to be improved so that people could work more and better and with greater enjoyment, or so that they could make more creative and cultured use of their time outside work? It was only Lenin and Khrushchev, the principal utopians-in-power, who could unselfconsciously overlook this difficulty: others, with better long-term prospects of holding power, were more circumspect.<sup>3</sup> Second, and more obviously, Soviet promises of super-efficient industrial revolution plus quality of life were, to put it mildly, at variance with reality. They were issued against the backdrop of a society that, even in the major cities, never achieved affluence and was often preoccupied with subsistence. The command economy was also a shortage economy, which meant people

<sup>1</sup> In East European intellectuals state socialism inculcated a relaxed and open-ended attitude to time that many of their Western counterparts have found appealing or even inspiring. See, for example, [Garton Ash 1999: 262]. An alternative view — here expressed with respect to communist Romania — is that state socialism '*generated an arrhythmia of unpunctuated and irregular now-frenetic, now-idle work, a spastically unpredictable time that made all planning by average citizens impossible*' [Verdery 1996: 57].

<sup>2</sup> An interesting study of the early Soviet striving to 'master time', and of the 'synthesis of charisma and rational-legal proceduralism' that resulted, is [Hanson 1997].

<sup>3</sup> The changing policies on the workday in early Soviet Russia are reviewed in [Chase and Siegelbaum 1988].

in practice redrew boundaries between work and private activity that were meant to have been firm and unyielding. The point becomes clearer if we consider a standard economic account of the 'rise of leisure' under conditions of Western 'industrial urbanism': '*Because time has been used efficiently in work we get leisure. We sell time so that time not sold may be used as we like. We find that production and consumption are opposite uses of time and in both kinds of activity time may be measured in money values*' [Anderson 1998: xi]. Or, conversely and more acerbically, '*Consumption eats money, money costs work, work loses time*' [de Grazia 1974: 100]. It is hard to think of many people in Soviet society who were conscious of their time costing money, or of their money costing work: possible examples would be service personnel (such as plumbers and electricians) who straddled the first and second economies, and favoured writers who could count on hefty honoraria directly proportional to the number of words they discharged. Most people, however, lacked a powerful financial stimulus to developing a work ethic, and lacked the concomitant taste (or opportunities) for conspicuous consumption.<sup>1</sup>

This, of course, is where the Soviet regime saw its chance. By tackling the problem of leisure, it was sharing what had been a major public preoccupation across urban Europe in the nineteenth century, but bringing to it the (admittedly mixed) benefits of hindsight and Marxist analysis. As educated Europeans noted from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the modern city was creating a society with more and more 'free time' on its hands, and yet very often it was not equipped to help people make gainful use of that time. As a result, political, social and cultural elites agonised over the ways to turn the masses into a productive and non-disruptive leisure class: by taking repressive measures, by applying religious indoctrination, by carrying out other educational projects, or by making available certain recreational opiates. Be that as it may, the pastimes of the working classes, otherwise known as 'popular culture', were in most places accepted as an inescapable fact of urban life by the last quarter of the nineteenth century [see for example Bailey 1987].

The Soviet order, in contradistinction to the would-be disciplinary regimes of Western Europe, was designed to create its own popular recreations. To that end, leisure (*otdykh*) became the subject of much discussion, from the 1930s especially; it was one of several conceptual tools for building Soviet ideals of 'cultured' life. Its prominence in Soviet discourse was guaranteed by its status as the necessary counterweight to work: its primary rationale (as is suggested by the etymology of *otdykh*) was restorative, yet its function was much broader than that. Leisure had a significant part to play in self-

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<sup>1</sup> As is well known, '*we pretend to work, and they pretend to pay us*' is a better aphoristic approximation of the Soviet work rationale.

cultivation and sociability, and as such was designed to help build Soviet citizens as well as prepare them for their next stint of physical or mental labour. It would of course be grotesque to argue that the public notion of *otdykh* exactly matched what Soviet people were doing with their free time (to assert, in other words, that they 'never had any fun'). People did not rush to engage in the politicised and civilising leisure pursuits foisted upon them. Far from enthusiastically participating in 'rational recreations', the Soviet population retained its taste for the bottle and for 'private' sociability.<sup>1</sup> As John Bushnell has argued, urban leisure culture changed remarkably little between the early twentieth century and the 1960s [Bushnell 1988].

But it would also be wrong to deny that officially promoted *otdykh*, reinforced by the shortage economy, might sometimes have formed a close horizon of expectation for Soviet people. The latter were, for example, more likely than their Western counterparts to be consciously preoccupied with the attainment of 'culture' through free-time pursuits. Much more time (especially in women's lives) was taken up by what sociologists call 'non-work obligations', and many of these were not mere chores but rather made an important contribution to Soviet citizens' identity and sense of individual purpose. A prime example was garden plot cultivation, an activity that often went under the name of *aktivnyi otdykh* (a term that derived originally from exhortatory public discourse, but one that put down roots in everyday culture). In the *dacha* phenomenon, better than anywhere else, we can see how the quasi-modernising impulses of Soviet ideology found common ground with the 'traditional' habits and values of the population. Russians in the 1980s or 1990s may (just about) have had no worse a time than Western Europeans as they toiled in their vegetable plots, but they were less likely to think of themselves as 'having fun'.<sup>2</sup>

So far I have suggested ways in which a history of free time might inform our understanding of Russian working people in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries: how they became aware of a divide between work and non-work activities, how they gradually came to attach meaning to that divide, how various political and social institutions weighed in with the aim of channelling the leisure activities of the subordinate classes in purposeful and virtuous directions, and how the result of all this was a specific kind of hybridisation of 'traditional' and 'modern' senses of time. But the history of leisure can sustain

<sup>1</sup> Note esp. [Phillips 2000]. This book suggests that the major new development of the 1920s was the emergence of a youth drinking culture, but that the overall level of drinking certainly did not fall. Workers often took advantage of new, Soviet public holidays for their unofficial celebrations — without necessarily relinquishing the old holidays.

<sup>2</sup> These conclusions can be drawn from time-budget surveys such as those summarised in Gordon and [Klopov 1975]. In his study of Soviet policy, William Moskoff finds strong evidence of 'a society somewhat at sea about what to do with spare time' [Moskoff 1984: 109].

a very different approach. Instead of looking at people whose habitual condition is to toil, and to see how they come to re-evaluate non-labour activities, we can instead study the section of society that was unused to labour, to hired work, and to formalised demands on its time, and examine how it became aware of work and leisure as distinct ways of being. The social and political import of this question is not hard to see. The success of the English industrial revolution is ascribed not only to the fact that the masses were successfully exploited, but also to the fact that the exploiting classes, the Victorian bourgeoisie, submitted themselves to the same disciplinary pressures as their wage-slaves: 'time-thrift' was inculcated from childhood, and work was seen as every man's duty (and idleness as a sinful natural state into which man was liable to relapse if left unattended). Conversely, the stereotype has it that potentially bourgeois Russians were too busy living off the fat of the land, too guilt-stricken and resentful of state oppression, or too committed to a romanticised notion of the Old Testament work imperative and its place in the Russian soul, to submit themselves to rigorous work discipline and in the process create a strongly articulated middle-class leisure ethos. Whether we speak of England or of Russia, one of the reasons that members of the educated classes spilled so much ink on the subject of leisure was that this issue concerned not only the urban 'masses' but the cultural elite itself. Middle classes — whether or not they subscribed to a Protestant ethic — tended to be less comfortable with the leisure concept than the working class in whose name they often spoke (for the very good reason that they could present less incontrovertible evidence of 'working' at all).

So the question now is: how, if at all, did non-plebeian Russians 'discover' leisure? At what point did they go from reflecting little on the ways they spent their time to being conscious of a surfeit of free time and of having various choices of what to do with it?

Here, as in so many other places, the cultural historian and semi-otician Yury Lotman casts a long shadow. In his *Besedy o russkoi kulture*, Lotman sees the Petrine era as representing a major shift in the experience and the values of the social elite. Amongst many other things, it brought a different sense of time: in Lotman's view, the life of a nobleman was divided neatly into the half of each day that he spent as a servant of the state and the half where he was left to his own devices [Lotman 1999: 22].<sup>1</sup> The Petrine state made fitful

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<sup>1</sup> In pre-Petrine Russia, by contrast, the main issue was whether one was a servitor of the state (or a servant or slave of a servitor). To be a 'freeman' (*gulyashchii* or *volnyi chelovek*) was a dubious privilege: it meant absence of responsibilities, but also absence of material support, and seems to have carried hobo status. Those people who did serve the state certainly had duties to discharge, but these were more ad hoc and less formalised than under Peter, and cannot be said to have created a clear distinction between work and non-work in the daily routine.

attempts to eliminate even this distinction, to create a single policed public sphere. Peter's *assamblei* (instituted in 1718), where Petersburgers of a certain status (from the upper ranks of the nobility down to skilled workers) could gather at times publicly sanctioned, and under the watchful gaze of official observers, for civilised conversation that would cut across otherwise impermeable social boundaries. The main aim was to unite military, state and commercial elites through sober and civil social intercourse [Semenova 1982].

Further on in *Besedy*, Lotman [1999: 91] develops his thought with reference to a later period, arguing that by the late eighteenth century the life of the nobility was conducted in three spheres: first, the personal (that is, the domestic); second, the sphere of service to the state; third, that of public sociability (the *obshchestvennyi*; Lotman's prime example of this is the ball). Conventional, and self-consciously adopted, models of behaviour obtained in all these spheres. In the process, elite and popular entertainments took divergent paths. Popular festivals continued the way they always had done, while the westernised elite took its lead from court life in more 'civilized' countries. Lotman's account draws on a healthy tradition of exposés of appearance-obsessed court life. It also reflects the absence of a 'leisure' concept in Russian culture of the time — a point that is confirmed, for example, by Andreas Schönle's book on travel narratives, which notes that the 'leisurely gaze' was not legitimate for Russia's first proto-tourists [Schönle 2000: 203, 208]. One sometimes wonders whether Lotman is not too quick to draw conclusions regarding the role-boundedness of the Russian elite from the absence of a modern ideology of the self in the sources he reads;<sup>1</sup> but even so, he is surely right to note the lack of a widely disseminated concept of leisure as open-ended, enjoyable and individually fulfilling self-cultivation rather than sociability structured by ritual.<sup>2</sup>

To see whether such a concept did ever take hold, I want to examine the period starting where Lotman generally leaves off (the early nineteenth century) and stopping before the era on which cultural histories of tsarist Russia tend to expend their main analytical energies (the decades from Emancipation to Revolution) [note especially McReynolds 2003]. The place on which I will concentrate is St Pe-

<sup>1</sup> Lotman possibly underestimates the extent to which pleasure untrammelled by social obligations was a legitimate value in the eighteenth-century elite. In Gavriila Derzhavin's 'Felitsa' (1782), for example, opulence and indolence are evoked so beguilingly that one is distracted from the author's professed aim of extolling the Empress's wisdom, modesty and industry. For numerous indications of the extent to which pleasure was sought, and invoked as a virtue, by Catherine and her closest associates, see [Sebag Montefiore 2000].

<sup>2</sup> The point holds good if we consider a study that takes a very different approach from Lotman's and uses a different range of sources: in the first chapter (covering the period 1760–1830) of her history of Russian advice literature, Catriona Kelly is mainly concerned with the theme of 'manners and moral education' [Kelly 2001].

tersburg: a city whose population was growing rapidly in the first third of the nineteenth century and where the number of resident nobles was increasing even faster than the overall population. What this meant was the pool of men entering non-military service careers was expanding; more and more people were experiencing the formalised demands of an office job and thus, potentially, acquiring a need for a satisfying out-of-work life. Moreover, many of these men were bachelors, lived a long distance from their families, and had little in the way of ready-made social networks to sustain them in the big city. How did this category of Petersburgers make sense of time?

If we ask first what work would have meant to these men, there is no easy answer to be given. As Walter Pintner's studies of the bureaucracy make clear, the civil service became much more professionalised in the first half of the nineteenth century. The former army officers who had staffed Catherine's administrative apparatus died out or retired, and were replaced by a class of career bureaucrats. Aspiring administrators with the greatest ambition and prospects were likely to want to spend as much of their career as possible in St Petersburg [Pintner 1970; Pintner 1988]. The amount of energy these men invested in their working lives varied according to their superiors, their means and their personal inclinations [Lincoln 1975: 89–90]. Poor provincial entrants into the service had to slave if they were to make their way in the world [Insarsky 1894; Aleksandrov 1904]. For well-connected young nobles, by contrast, work requirements were not onerous by any means and often left them so much free time that work no longer seemed the defining part of their lives.<sup>1</sup> It was a sign of disadvantage or peculiarity if they did not spend much of their time pursuing some activity separate from the service (such as writing or diligently attending the theatre or visiting the best houses). But they varied in their sense of what they were doing in non-service time: some were engaged in the pursuit of pleasure, while others were busy with what they saw as the main business of their lives (such as writing). Some, although formally employed in the civil service, would have been loath to define themselves as *chinovniki*. Others attached more importance to service rank, yet even for them this rank was not simply a matter of work status, but rather implied a whole way of life: a range of pastimes and habits outside the office as well as activities conducted in and directly around it.

To outline the range of possibilities, let me contrast the experiences of two young nobles, near-contemporaries at the Nobleman's Boarding House (Blagorodnyi pansion) attached to Moscow University,

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed memoir on everyday life in St Petersburg suggests that *chinovniki*, even at the very end of the nineteenth century, did not spend a great deal of time at work by our present standards. Yet they were by now more professionalised and hence more inclined to define themselves, and their time, according to work [Svetlov 1998: 20–1].

who both entered the St Petersburg civil service in the early nineteenth century. The first case is Stepan Petrovich Zhikharev, born in 1788 into an old, wealthy and prominent family (his grandfather, for example, had been a governor-general under Catherine II). After studying at the Boarding House in 1805–6, Zhikharev spent several months pursuing his passion for the theatre and for socialising before finally being assigned to the civil service and moving to St Petersburg in November 1806. Here he threw himself into a constant round of visits, assisted at every turn by his excellent connections and his smooth talking. He was, for example, able to present himself unannounced at the home of Gavril Derzhavin and receive a warm reception by virtue of the poet's recollections of his father and his own well-practised tongue. Although Zhikharev had been palpitating to receive his service appointment when back in Moscow, he was struck by how little was required of him at work. Even for a man of his fun-loving temperament, this could become hard to bear. 'Quite honestly, I'm getting bored and even annoyed: there's no promotion in prospect and I suppose I'll have to get down to poetry again, or else hang about the theatres' [Zhikharev 1934, vol. 2: 133].<sup>1</sup> On the whole, however, Zhikharev bravely put up with this high level of inactivity — to the extent that he was asked by the translator Gnedich why, if he was so underoccupied at work, he was not buckling down to some literary endeavour. Zhikharev aimed to have a good time with actors and senior colleagues alike, and admired those who shared his commitment to enjoyment. But this easy acceptance of all life's good things did not make him a card-carrying sybarite. His diary entries are permeated with a sense that out-and-out idleness (*prazdnost'*) is an evil characteristic above all of an older generation of primarily Moscow-based nobility. This judgement is reached on grounds less moral than pragmatic. The merely idle are shown to be unhappy and socially vulnerable; *sluzhba* is seen not only as a guarantee of social status but as a prophylactic against melancholy and as a sure means of increasing one's material comfort and opportunities to engage in pleasurable pastimes. Zhikharev's conversations with older superiors, and the tales he hears about them, suggest to him, moreover, that a modicum of diligence in youth and middle age will lead to carefree happiness in late maturity.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Promotion' is a translation of '*vysluga let'*, which could be more literally rendered as 'completion of [a set term of] service'. Zhikharev could confidently expect that a certain number of years of service would bring smooth advancement. Little career planning, or assiduity, was required on his part.

<sup>2</sup> Zhikharev did not in fact follow this recipe for success in his own career. After a smooth first ten years of employment, he withdrew from the service in 1818 to marry and spend a few years on his estate. He re-entered the service in 1823 and rose to Senator in 1840. At the same time, however, he was known for his dissipated lifestyle, and rumours circulated concerning financial improprieties (i.e. bribe-taking) on his part. In 1847 he was forced to take retirement without pension, and until his death in 1860 lived in straitened circumstances.

My second subject is Valer'yan Ivanovich Safonovich [Safonovich 1903].<sup>1</sup> He was sent to the Boarding House in 1810, and found his studies there interesting and worthwhile (educational details are, by contrast, all but absent from Zhikharev's diary). After evacuation in 1812 to an estate at a safe distance from the city, and after further study at Moscow University, Safonovich began his Petersburg service career in 1817. Like Zhikharev, he was soon struck by how few hours were required of him at the office, but he could not take pleasure in this surfeit of free time. Rather, it weighed heavily on his hands, as he had neither the money nor the connections to make good use of it. Although a nobleman and enjoying the education to match, he was an orphan and to a much greater extent than Zhikharev was making his own way in life. The few leisure activities he was able to pursue brought him no lasting pleasure. As he commented of card-playing, his main free-time occupation: '*The time was being swallowed up irretrievably*' [Safonovich 1903: 163].<sup>2</sup> For the most part, he was lonely and bored, felt acutely the limitations of the bachelor company he kept, and reflected regretfully on the difficulty of creating social opportunities for himself and making the most of them. His shyness and awkwardness, and his inability to make smooth conversation with the opposite sex, were holding back his social progress. Little by little, his difficulties were alleviated: he received a salary raise to 3000 roubles, found himself a wife, and set up a home, all of which improved his standing and expanded his opportunities for socialising.

Although Safonovich found the bachelor life in St Petersburg frustrating, he did not aspire to the high living and intensive socialising engaged in by Zhikharev. His inclination was to adopt a measured style of life: to have fun from time to time, but in a thoroughly decorous way. Despite their profound differences in outlook, however, these young men had some fundamental common ground. Neither of them could contemplate a life outside service; they both worked on the assumption that 'free' time could only be relished as such if there were other portions of one's time, however minimal, that were 'occupied'.

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<sup>1</sup> Safonovich's account is a memoir written some decades after the event. This fact goes some way to explaining the differences in tone between it and Zhikharev's diary. Yet these texts are both sufficiently detailed, and trustworthy in their details, as to justify the comparisons I make between them. In any case, the formal distinction between the memoir and diary is not entirely clear-cut: it seems certain that Zhikharev reworked his diary when he had it published in the journals *Moskvitianin* (1853–4) and *Otechestvennye zapiski* (1855), using both hindsight and published material to fill the observations of his youth (see the editorial remarks in [Zhikharev 1934, vol. 1: 8–9]).

<sup>2</sup> Card-playing is mentioned in other sources as a pastime for those who lack the means, wit or savoir-faire to find more fulfilling occupations: see [Bashutsky 1834: 106–7] and [Medvedev 2000: 18].

No doubt Safonovich's experience of dissatisfaction was becoming more common, as Petersburg filled up with young men who combined limited social opportunities with high hopes of city life. Such a sense of frustration is often cited as one of the prime causes of the rise of the Russian intelligentsia in the 1830s and 1840s. For example, Belinsky's famed hostility to Russian officialdom was reinforced (perhaps even induced) by his own unhappy experiences of dislocation and alienation. Letters to Botkin and Bakunin in 1840 indicate the pain and discomfort caused him by the lack of a rank in the service. *'Woe betide a person if he remains just a human being without bolstering this lofty and abstract title with the title of merchant, or landowner, or officer, or civil servant, or performer, or teacher. Society will punish him. I can already feel the effects of this punishment on myself'* [Belinsky 1956: 444]. Belinsky's regrets were caused not only by the indignities he suffered as a non-aristocratic member of the free professions, or by the lack of a much-needed source of income, but also because he was caught between his admiration of 'activity' (*deyatelnost*) and his dislike of the forms of social activity open to men of his station. At his more defiant moments (and these became more frequent as Belinsky grew older), he would, however, proclaim the dignity of his own activity (literary journalism), sensing that it combined the best qualities of a profession and a calling.

Other men of letters had more direct experience of service than did Belinsky, and so were more conscious of the claims of writing to be a profession where time counted and could be ascribed a money value. A case in point was Nikolai Gogol, who after only a few months in the service turned down a position with an increased salary of 1000 roubles: he had the self-confidence to value his own time more highly than did the department where he worked (admittedly, he was helped in taking this stand by the continued financial support of his mother). Gogol, like Pushkin, needed his brush with institutionalised service to articulate his strong sense of life as a finite resource that had better be profitably expended.<sup>1</sup>

The mouselike Safonovich and the hardly self-effacing Gogol had one important thing in common: the ability to feel boredom. This, in turn, implied a sense of entitlement: a belief that life could and should have more to occupy it.<sup>2</sup> If time did not have enough

<sup>1</sup> Note the letter Pushkin wrote in Odessa in May 1824 declining a service assignment imposed by the Novorossiisk General-Governor Count Vorontsov (namely, to investigate the measures taken to reduce the locust population in the neighbouring region), and affirming poetry as his 'trade' (*remeslo*). He accepted his stipend of 700 roubles '*not as the salary of a civil servant, but as the allowance of an exiled prisoner*' [Pushkin 1966: 88]. In the end, however, he was not able to escape his pesticidal mission.

<sup>2</sup> The connection between boredom and the perceived right to 'the pursuit of happiness' is one of the main themes of [Spacks 1998]. Reference to boredom as a Petersburg commonplace can be found in [Rastorguev 2002: 158–9].

demarcations, then it could weigh heavy indeed. Only Ilya Oblomov, the most subversive character in nineteenth-century Petersburg literature, could be unconcerned by the fact that his time had no beginning, end, or subdivisions. Conversely, only Akaky Akakievich, the demented copyist of Gogol's 'The Overcoat', could absorbedly devote his every minute to office tasks. Real-life *chinovniki*, however, must sometimes have felt that they were forever switching between these two unwanted roles: at work they were Akakieviches, at home they were, *faute de mieux*, Oblomovs. Young men such as Safonovich and Gogol found that the city aroused in them expectations of entertainment and activity, while at the same time frustrating those expectations. Yet the gap between desire and realisation was not a fixed predicament. Rather, it set up a cycle of gratification and renewed despondency: what in the twentieth century might have been called the dialectic of modern consumerism (or, in the nineteenth, that of bourgeois ambivalence).

Petersburgers varied enormously in the money they had available for attending public entertainments, and in their scope for domestic entertaining. The one leisure site they all shared was the street.<sup>1</sup> Life in the early nineteenth century had daily, seasonal and other non-work rhythms that could be counted on to alleviate the tedium of those without financial resources or invitations to the best houses. Petersburg had a culture of strolling in which many different status groups could participate. It was known as much more of a 'walking city' than Moscow [Belinsky 1955: 399]. The custom of strolling received the highest possible sanction in the early nineteenth century: it was Alexander I, of the tsars, who pioneered the daily public constitutional. The slot in the daily schedule for high-society strolling was from 2 to 4.<sup>2</sup> The hours from midday to two o'clock were given over to 'idlers' (*prazdnoshatayushchiesya*), who took over Nevsky Prospekt while the civil servants were busy in their offices. *Chinovniki* would get their chance later in the day. In summer, their perambulations might last until the small hours. And, judging by a later informative memoir of the everyday life of civil servants, the same remained true in the 1890s. The strollers (by now called *flanyory*) would be out in force by 11.00, while the after-work *gulyanye* would begin around 7.00 in the evening (the main promenading places were in the centre of the city, as even in the late nineteenth century decent street lighting was not by any means found everywhere) [Svetlov 1998: 43–4].

<sup>1</sup> The *promenade* is similarly described by David Garrioch as 'the universal leisure occupation' of eighteenth-century Paris [Garrioch 1986]. Most histories of urban walking have explored varieties of *flânerie*, which is a later, more self-conscious and self-differentiating activity.

<sup>2</sup> As recalled by D.N. Sverbeev, another noble who began his civil service career in the 1810s [Sverbeev 1899: 280]. Note also Zhikharev's first sighting of the Emperor in December 1806 on Dvortsovaia naberezhnaia [Zhikharev 1934, vol. 1: 362].

More striking even than the mere fact of the *progulka* is the extent to which observers of Petersburg, in the 1830s and afterwards, used it to interpret the city and its population. The newspaper press abounds in such descriptions, as does early 'physiological' and realist prose. The social patterns to be observed on the street also formed part of the repertoire of A.P. Bashutsky, perhaps the most ambitious and systematic chronicler of Petersburg daily life in the 1830s. Bashutsky laid out in great detail the daily timetable of Nevsky Prospekt and the occupational and cultural distinctions that it revealed [Bashutsky 1834: 78f.]. This was a strongly Slavophile account: Bashutsky's main aim was to show that Russians, even when transplanted to the urban environment, were content with the status divisions of their society and uncorrupted by the property urge that had led Western Europe astray.

The importance attached to the *progulka* was due in large part to the fact that it coexisted with, and was perceived to be displacing, a more longstanding, and more 'popular', form of recreation: the *gulyanye*, an open-air gathering and/or procession that took place on holidays and traditionally followed different routes on different saint's days. These events are full of difficulties for historical interpretation. There seems to be agreement that, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, they were attended by a maximally broad spectrum of the urban population: from peasants to aristocrats. Up to the 1820s, attendance seems to have been considered good form for members of the elite [Nekrylova 1988: 192–3]. What is much less clear is how this social inclusiveness should be regarded. As a sop to the enslaved populace, an empty gesture towards 'democratism'? As a sign of the organic unity of Russian society despite all the barriers to social mobility? Or did the *gulyanye* actually parade the status distinctions of Russian society, make a spectacle of them? Was it then an opportunity for well-heeled Petersburgers to show off to one another, and for the slightly less well-heeled to make a case for joining their number?

Zhikharev attended his first Moscow *gulyanye* in April 1805. Even as an impressionable seventeen-year-old, he delivered a harsh verdict, claiming to note a general 'desire to shine and to arouse envy in others by showing one's wealth or good taste'. He reported the opinion of a more experienced observer that '*every native Muscovite is obliged to be at certain gulyanya so as to avoid conclusions being drawn about him*' [Zhikharev 1934, vol. 1: 90]. The *gulyanye* at Sokol'niki on 1 May, however, sent him into raptures. The 'popular' section of the crowd was not a threat or an inconvenience but an integral part of the spectacle to be relished alongside more recherché amusements. Zhikharev could observe cockfighting and fistfights while retaining the option of visiting the tents set up specially by the grandees. Some parts of the event could, moreover, be appreciated

by onlookers of all ranks and estates: nobles and *narod* alike could enjoy the spectacle of Count Orlov's cavalcade [Zhikharev 1934, vol. 1: 100–2].

The excitement, however, wore off with the novelty. Zhikharev was less impressed with such entertainments the following year (and subsequently, when he experienced them in Petersburg), which suggests either that he was jaded by the age of eighteen or, more likely, that the attractions of the *gulyanye* were rather limited for a well-connected nobleman who had so many other pleasurable and interesting ways of filling his time. Upper-class observers of *gulyanya* in the early nineteenth century by and large remained attached to the idea that these festivities testified to the harmonious relations between the various estates of Russian society, to a kind of democracy-in-despotism.

Yet the first third of the nineteenth century in general seems to have seen a steady decline in active elite participation and cultural engagement in the *gulyanye*.<sup>1</sup> However, to see this as a simple loss of interest on the part of educated society would be to underestimate the complexities and ambiguities of the shift from one kind of leisure culture to another. The distinction between a mass popular festival and a sedate urban promenade in the company of one's social equals was not always easy to comprehend for those people who remembered the aristocratic entertainments of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

One person who was caught in this time of transition from *gulyanye* to *progulka* was Aleksandr Pushkin. Pushkin spent a good chunk of his twenties in southern exile and then at his Mikhailovskoe estate, and hence well away from the recreations of the capital. In his letters, he often dwells, regretfully or ironically, on the difference between indolent estate time and the exciting social opportunities afforded by the major cities. When he finally returned to Moscow in September 1826, he professed himself to be exhausted after only a week's intensive social activity. He also looked forward with witty patrician condescension — and in French, the language most appropriate for such a sentiment — to an imminent *gulyanye*: *'Aujourd'hui, 15 Septembre nous avons la grande fête populaire; il y aura trois verstes de tables dressées au Devich'e Pole; les pâtés ont été fournis à la sazhen comme si c'était du bois; comme il y a quelques semaines [sic] que ces pâtés sont cuits, on aura de la peine à les avaler et les digérer, mais le respectable public aura des fontaines de vin pour les humecter'*

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<sup>1</sup> And of course, the 'people' seem to have gone through a similar process of disengagement. Far from being recipients of bread-and-circus handouts, they were acquiring a new, commercialised, urban popular culture that stayed smartly in step with lower-class values and tastes. See for example [Kelly 1990].

[Pushkin 1966: 212].<sup>1</sup> He approached the event as a public celebration in the grand old style: a carefully stage-managed affair where the commoners would know their place and contentedly munch their dry *pirogi* while the toffs created their own amusements. Yet later, in Petersburg, Pushkin was drawn into a very different culture of urban public conduct that was centred on the *progulka*, not the *gulyanye*.<sup>2</sup> In the city that Pushkin experienced in the 1830s, social interaction was coming to be governed by a more generally held, and hence more 'democratic', sense of propriety. Propriety, in turn, required resynchronisation. Unlike Pushkin's Onegin, who returns home from the ball as the merchants are rising, many members of Petersburg society had to present themselves at an office the next day. They were also able to assemble their own companies in their flats and socialise on a smaller, more domestic scale, instead of assembling at the grand houses. Yet at the same time, social gatherings in people's homes had to be marked as something distinct from everyday life, on the one hand, and public entertainment, on the other: as cultured recreation requiring a different quality of engagement from participants. As in 'bourgeois' Western Europe, musical performance helped to achieve this end. Nicholas I, a high-profile pioneer of a Petersburg cult of domesticity, himself instigated, and participated in, musical soirées in the Winter Palace. Wider cultural diffusion is suggested by the notable increase in production of pianos and sheet music in the early nineteenth century [Stites 1998]. The salon and the ball were giving way to the drawing-room and the 'circle'.

So the norms of everyday life in the city were changing in ways that redefined 'free' time. Yet the most sustained periods of time away from service responsibilities were generated not by the daily routine but by the cycle of the seasons: in summer, the major cities emptied of everyone who had somewhere else to go. The custom was for noble servitors of the state to repair to their estates (often to generate the income to sustain their next encounter with the city), while especially wealthy members of the elite might travel abroad. Yet these were habitual activities that did not occasion much reflection in their own right. They certainly cannot be defined as periods of 'leisure': partly because there was in many cases no urban 'work' against which they

<sup>1</sup> 'Today, 15 September, we had a big popular festival: there were three versts of laid tables at Devichye Pole; the pies were yards long, like logs of wood; in any case, given that the pies had been baked weeks back, it was hard to cut and eat them, but at least the respectable public had access to wine fountains so they had something to wash them down with.' [Editor].

<sup>2</sup> As is evident, for example, in the detailed accounts of Pushkin's doings to be found in the works of S.L. Abramovich. Sightings of Pushkin at the hour of *progulka* are reported in [Kolmakov 1891: 665]. Faddei Bulgarin, Pushkin's bitter literary foe, is reported in the same source as making daily appearances on Nevsky Prospekt — which just goes to show the strange heterogeneity of the promenading public.

could be offset, and partly because landowners' duties in the country were often much more onerous than any they faced in the city.

In the first half of the nineteenth century the country estate and Western Europe were joined by several other destinations that made Petersburgers more inclined to think of the summer as a period of free time and leisure. One was the spa town. In summer 1805, for example, Zhikharev went to Lipetsk, where he immediately noted the shortage of sick people despite the fact that everyone claimed to be taking the waters for their health. Instead, he found a range of pleasant social opportunities (including several parties de plaisir) along with a number of agreeable outdoor pursuits (such as hunting). The resort at Lipetsk was created in the early nineteenth century as a matter of national prestige: at a time when 'taking the waters' had become one of the most fashionable pastimes for the European aristocracy, Russia badly needed a resort of its own — especially given that access to Western Europe was greatly complicated by the Napoleonic wars and their aftermath. In its early days, as in the case of Zhikharev, Lipetsk was patronised by the elite nobility: in the early 1820s, for each visitor there were on average three or four attendant servants [Istoriko-statisticheskii ocherk: 2]. A visit to the mineral waters was as much an opportunity for free-and-easy socialising with equals as a health cure.

Another option was the seaside resort. As a married man, in 1834, Safonovich took his wife to Revel on doctor's orders. His motives were not purely medical, however. He found that staying in the city over the summer was 'almost unbearable' because of the lack of company or entertainment [Safonovich 1903: 362]. In Revel he hoped to find relaxation and a complete change of scene: not heat and dust but fresh air and sea bathing. In the latter respect, at least, he was not disappointed: he admitted that the setting was splendid and the accommodation not bad at all. The problem with Revel lay in his fellow visitors. Safonovich found that a significant part of wealthy Petersburg society had relocated to Revel for the summer, so he could not escape the obligation to engage in sociability he found oppressive (and expensive). Not only that, he had to put up with the many members of the Revel public who did not belong to the true social elite and were consequently making tiresome efforts to cut an impressive figure.

This negative assessment may well have had something to do with Safonovich's own social insecurities. What is more important for my present purposes is the fact of the emergence of places such as the Revel resort and their role in the emergence of a 'leisure' concept in Russian culture of the time. This is not a concept that catches on anywhere in a wholly unproblematic manner. In its early days, it tends to need bolstering with such virtues as health, social purpose

and respectability. Only later can it be associated unashamedly with pleasure and relaxation. As in the case of Western Europe, the resort in Russia seems to have played a significant pivotal role in the transition from aristocratic summer migration to something approaching a bourgeois summer holiday.<sup>1</sup>

Both inside and outside the city, the creation of a distinct sense of leisure *time* depends on the establishment of new leisure *places*. Spa towns and sea resorts were not the only such venues to appear in the first half of the nineteenth century: there were many new recreational spaces much closer to the city, and hence more accessible to a greater proportion of the urban population. As early as 1801, F.F. Vigel noted that the summer departure for the dacha was becoming a ritual for well-heeled Petersburgers such as his superiors in the civil service [Vigel 1928: 98]. Similar opinions are voiced periodically in memoirs on the 1810s and 1820s, and they form a positive avalanche in the 1830s. The number of nobles resident in Petersburg was increasing during these years, but the dacha was also becoming more socially elastic (so as to include more merchants and *raznochintsy*, and people lower in the hierarchy of service rank).

Parallel with the spread of the dacha habit came the emergence of new public places of recreation. In several cases these were former pleasure gardens of the aristocracy that were put on a commercial footing and made available and appealing to a wider group of Petersburg middling people. A further much-discussed innovation was the concert venue at the station in Pavlovsk (opened in 1837). The result, all commentators agreed, was the creation of a new public entertainment culture in St Petersburg in the 1830s-40s. By far the best single source for studying this phenomenon is the newspaper *Severnaia pchela*, whose regular reports on the Petersburg 'summer season' confirmed — and partially constructed — the presence of something approximating to a middle class with time on its hands, with the freedom to make new choices of what to do with that time, and with the opportunity to create thereby new social allegiances. The newspaper's leading light, Faddei Bulgarin, wrote an article in 1837 which hailed the dacha as evidence of a decisive move from feudalism and backwardness to stability, prosperity, and a civilized 'middle-class' culture [Bulgarin 1837: 703]. In the 1840s, Bulgarin wrote or oversaw near-daily chronicles of the city's widening range of entertainments that all tended to reinforce the same point.

An interesting counterpoint to Bulgarin's journalism in *Severnaya pchela* is the famous 1844 article 'Peterburg i Moskva' [Petersburg and Moscow] by his ideological arch-enemy Belinsky. Here Russia's old capital, with its unhurried, family-centred socialising, was con-

<sup>1</sup> On Western Europe, see [Corbin 1995] and [Mackaman 1998].

trasted with the unrelenting pace of life in the new capital. The difference, Belinsky claimed, was obvious even to the superficial gaze: Moscow's streets were empty by ten at night, while Petersburg remained full of strollers until much later. Petersburg had much more of a public entertainment culture.<sup>1</sup> Cafés, theatres, pleasure gardens and many other recreational venues were all intensively frequented; the Petersburger made it his business to find out what entertainments were on offer, and was able to do so because of the wide availability of newspapers with up-to-date listings and because of the ease of communications in the city (its postal service was, for example, much better than Moscow's). But all this did not make Petersburgers carefree pleasure-seekers. They had a much less open-ended, and more metronomic, sense of time than the Muscovites. As they made their way to the next social engagement or amusement, they did so *'with a preoccupied expression, as if worrying about being late or wasting precious time'*. They *'arrive everywhere on time and they take their pleasure as they work: hurriedly, with frequent glances at their watches, as if afraid that they won't have enough time'* [Belinsky 1955: 408–9].

So here we have two observers — Bulgarin and Belinsky — who might be expected to disagree about everything, yet were agreeing on one important point: that Petersburg had, by the late 1830s or early 1840s, acquired a distinctive leisure culture, that its educated public was conscious of having 'free' time, and chose to use much of this time to (pay to) attend a wide range of public entertainments. Of course, the two men differ in their assessment of these phenomena. For Bulgarin, the emergence of a bourgeois leisure public is welcome confirmation that Russia is finding its own path to civilisation under enlightened and benevolent absolutism. Belinsky is far more ambivalent. Yet the fact that Bulgarin and Belinsky concur in finding public entertainments so worthy of note indicates that Petersburg, because it had given so many of its educated inhabitants a formal occupation, had also brought them free time and leisure.

There are also telling differences on points of detail. Belinsky sets up a polar opposition between Petersburg and Moscow which allows the former no chance to escape its designated categories: coldness, anonymity, rationality, linearity in both space and time. Yet Bulgarin, in the article on dachas, expresses one set of reservations about the out-of-town phenomenon: it takes too many people away from their occupations for too many months of the year, it has the effect

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<sup>1</sup> In a slightly later essay, 'Aleksandrinskii teatr' (1845), Belinsky extended this idea to the theatre. Moscow, he asserted, had no such thing as 'a public': its theatres were filled with *'people of different estates, different levels of education, and different tastes and requirements'*. The public of the Aleksandrinskii, by contrast, was made up of *'service people of a certain order'* and characterised by no such diversity of taste [Belinsky 1955: 534–6].

of slowing down the urban economy, it makes the bureaucracy less efficient, and it runs counter to the work ethic that St Petersburg had done so much to instil in its recently arrived service population. Bulgarin, the greatest journalist of his time, was surely the more acute observer. He understood with great perspicacity that the metronomic beat of modern city life was counterpointed by a number of less relentless rhythms. This has remained the case ever since, in defiance of all bourgeois work ethics, and all modernist fantasies and apprehensions to the contrary.

### **Conclusion: what can free time tell us?**

I now want to ask myself that most terrifying question for academic research into everyday life: so what? If people in early nineteenth-century Petersburg or in Kanatchikov's factory milieu thought about their time in ways we do not easily recognise, what conclusions can we draw about the world they inhabited? Many labour historians, quite understandably, have been mainly exercised by the connection between leisure activity and socio-political consciousness and mobilisation. Very often the available sources invite such an approach, as they betray apprehensions regarding the recreational habits of the lower orders and outline schemes for controlling those habits. Yet there are dangers in giving so much political weight to leisure. Gareth Stedman Jones has been especially trenchant in warning against reading too much from workers' recreations. He especially dislikes the loosely applied notion of recreation as 'social control', observing that there is *'no indication in the phrase of who the agents or instigators of social control may be; no indication of any common mechanism whereby social control is enforced; no constant criterion whereby we may judge whether social control has broken down'* [Jones 1983: 80]. To ask whether leisure is indoctrination or emancipation does not get us to the heart of the matter: the determining causes of political outcomes usually lie elsewhere. A more pressing issue is what free time might have meant to people and how it might help us to analyse and compare the historical development of different societies.

Historically speaking, the emergence of modern leisure can be seen as a social, cultural and economic collision course between two groups of people: those who work by the sweat of their brow and whose normal condition is so to work, and those who do not recognise themselves as working at all. The rise of the modern state forces the non-workers to sell their mental labour or their social capital; industrialisation forces the toilers to sell their physical labour. In the process, both groups gain the opportunity to create distinctions between work time and non-work time, and to change their habits and their values accordingly.

Of course, this broad-brush picture needs to be filled in with countless background details. Neither of these occupational groups makes a clean break with older habits. In the case of the non-toilers, much depends on the relationship between aristocracy, bureaucracy and entrepreneurial class. Equally, peasants do not automatically become workers when they arrive at the factory or in the big city: how fast, and how completely, they make this transition depends enormously on how and when industrialisation takes place. For all the profound differences in their social position and life chances, neither peasants-turned-proletarians nor aristocrats-turned-bureaucrats found leisure an easy concept to master. In the nineteenth-century city both sets of people were confronted with new ways of measuring their time — ways that they could not ignore. When the factory horn sounded at Kanatchikov's factory, the strolling *chinovniki* on Nevsky Prospekt stopped to check their watches.<sup>1</sup> The back-to-front structure of this paper is intended to underscore this point of commonality. The tendency, when discussing leisure, entertainment and amusement, is to set up a structuring opposition between a bourgeoisie convinced of its own rightness and a populace persisting with 'irrational recreations'. Yet values and practices were much more fluid and interactive than this schema allows.<sup>2</sup>

Fluidity, however, does not mean complete indeterminacy. There are still several social groups and identities in Russian history whose boundaries, values and rituals are hardly understood. Particularly ripe for further investigation are white-collar workers (*chinovniki* where referring to officials of the tsarist period, *sluzhashchie* for officials after 1917 and for employees of private companies before then), merchants and professionals. Perhaps, for example, the various degrees of middle-classness in prerevolutionary Petersburg might be analysed in microhistorical terms: people's membership in urban communities might be revealed by the kind of sociability they engaged in, the sorts of non-essential expenditure they welcomed, the artefacts they acquired and displayed, the places they frequented. To make one practical research suggestion, Bolshevik household inventories and confiscation orders might be read not only for what they reveal of the pathologies of early Soviet rule but also for what they tell us about pre-Bolshevik social history.<sup>3</sup>

There is a second, related, reason why I started with Kanatchikov and then moved back in time to office workers in the early nineteenth

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<sup>1</sup> A practice referred to in [Svetlov 1998: 43].

<sup>2</sup> As regards the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie, there is anyway an interesting tension between the work ethic and the urge to consumer gratification. Consider also the many aspects of bourgeois ambivalence explored in the books of Peter Gay.

<sup>3</sup> The former approach is taken in [Lebina 2000]. An interesting application of the latter approach to different historical material is [Auslander 2002].

century. Namely, to suggest that, if you want to understand leisure, you also have to investigate how your historical subjects understood work, recreation and various other activities, and how they divided up their time accordingly. What you find is not smooth switches between work and leisure, but a complex interplay between many different senses of time.

'Leisure', as the term is generally used by historical sociologists, is a normative concept anchored in the social development of Western Europe and North America. It depends on a distinction between work and non-work that became exceptionally meaningful in the period of English industrial urbanism. Clearly, however, it does not fit even Western societies perfectly. If, for example, educated young Russians in the first half of the nineteenth century took their work less seriously than we do our own professional employment, that does not make Russia unique. Sir Charles Trevelyan, introducing his case for reforming the English civil service in the early 1850s, observed that the service was staffed disproportionately with aristocrats of limited abilities and had turned into a refuge for '*the incompetent, the habitually idle, the imperfectly educated & the unhealthy*' [quoted in O'Boyle 1970]. Equally, peasants did not unproblematically become Frenchmen (or Englishmen, or workers) with a strong sense of their right to after-work amusement. And the fact of struggle over the meaning of leisure between educated and working classes is by itself nothing remarkable; it makes Russia no different from England, France or Germany. It should not lead us to reduce the question of leisure to an opposition between killjoy intelligentsia and fun-loving populace.

Even so, leisure is in the first instance a West European and North American preoccupation whose appropriation by the wider world seems to have been delayed and partial.<sup>1</sup> Assessed by this Western measure, Russia does look different in significant ways. If we examine Russia's modernising cities, we find many people who did not have a strong enough sense of their occupation or of the time-money correlation to be able to conceptualise an autonomous sphere of activity outside work. Prominent and vocal sections of the intellectual elite — from religious-conservative to Marxist — were hostile to the institutionalisation of the work/leisure divide. The enormous polarisation — greater than anywhere else in Europe — between the toilers and the non-toilers meant that there were fewer

<sup>1</sup> For an intriguing comparative case, see [Linhart and Frühstück 1998]. In Japan, the resistance to Western notions of leisure seems to have been a nation-defining preoccupation in a much more clear-cut way, and for much longer, than in Russia. There is an interesting mismatch between Japanese traditional categories of time use and imported pursuits such as golf, baseball and domestic hobbies. Yet widespread adaptation of Western free-time norms has occurred from the 1960s onwards.

opportunities for work and leisure ethics to feed off one another. The Revolution brought, amongst many other things, an attempt to overcome the polarisation by creating a synthesis: to make work and leisure a wholesome part of the life of all Soviet people by herding them into a heavily policed middle ground. This promise soon rang very hollow: hierarchies of leisure and consumption instantly reappeared, and time once again started running at different, discriminatory, speeds. Yet, in the longer term, and in unintended ways, a synthesis did indeed come about. The late Soviet white-collar population depended to a much greater extent than Western middle classes on habitual restoratives and ‘non-work obligations’, rather than leisure, to fill its free time and to make sense of its existence. *Otdykh* dominated over *dosug*.<sup>1</sup>

The history of free time in Russia, then, might help to reassess the standard narrative of the ‘emergence of leisure’. It is not enough to gauge whether Russians (especially urban Russians) were becoming more like modern Westerners: consumers demanding fun, choice and free time.<sup>2</sup> They may have understood the passing of their everyday lives in other terms. And everydayness may have played an important part in fostering allegiances, creating identities, and establishing status distinctions. It has convincingly been argued that Soviet Russia, for all that consumer goods were in painfully short supply, was a society where class was defined by one’s relationship to the means of consumption, not of production [Fitzpatrick 1999: ch. 4]. Perhaps we could hazard a similar observation for Soviet time use: this was a society publicly fixated on work, but one where other modes of activity were more productive of social relationships.

The history of the everyday has much to contribute to the study both of social cohesion and of social change. But it also has something to tell us about society in a broader sense, and about politics — and not just because time allocation often becomes a matter of (would-be) social control. The fact is that free time pursuits are rich in

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<sup>1</sup> The distinction between *otdykh* and *dosug* is captured nicely in the following quotation given in the *Slovar’ sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo iazyka*: ‘Wherever a soldier is, if he has work, then he has *otdykh* as well; but between *otdykh* and work there’ll always be a tiny bit of time, the odd hour, when he’s not required to work but doesn’t feel like resting [*otdykhat’*]: now that little bit of time is what you call “dosug”.’ [In other words, *otdykh* is active leisure, absorption in pastimes, while *dosug* is pleurably doing nothing. Cf. *udosuzhivatsya* ‘to find time to do something’.] [Editor].

<sup>2</sup> The agenda of cultural studies was set by people writing on societies where, to return to an earlier quotation, ‘leisure has displaced work from the centre of social arrangements’. Yet Russia has still not become such a society. In this light, cultural-studies variations on the theme of the attenuated triumph of Western values in post-Soviet Russia sometimes seem less than illuminating [e.g. Barker 1999]. It is also worth noting that Kelly and Shepherd’s *Constructing Russian Culture*, for all its intelligent probing of cultural boundaries, does not interrogate the divide between work and play, leaving the reader to assume that ‘culture’ is a province of the latter [Kelly and Shepherd 1998]. More explicit is Louise McReynolds [2003: 4–5], who sees leisure not only as ‘the first foundation of any culture’ but also as a clear window on to politics.

interpretative possibilities. They allow citizens to come together as freely choosing individuals (or, ultimately, as paying customers) and form new communities. Free time can do much to help a society, a polity or a nationality to imagine itself [Koshar 2002].

I would suggest, therefore, that free time is hardly a trivial issue in Russian history. If anything, it has, like literature, been taken too seriously for its own good. Remember the artefacts that were confiscated from the Marquis de Custine at the Petersburg customs house in 1839: books, pistols — and a portable clock.

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