PARKS OF CULTURE AND REST IN THE SOVIET UNION
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MOSCOW, the capital of the Soviet Union, can well be proud of its Central Park of Culture and Rest. This park, named in honor of the Great Russian writer, Maxim Gorky, stretches for four and a half miles along the right bank of the Moscow River. Every day from sixty to seventy thousand people visit its grounds, restaurants, cafes, theaters and other places of recreation and amusement. On free days and holidays the number of visitors increases to 250,000 and even 300,000.

The Gorky Park of Culture and Rest has become a favorite place for rest and rambles. Each year two million flowers are planted in its gardens. Dozens of splendid statues, vases and rippling fountains adorn its spacious grounds. Cozy summer houses, grottoes and bandstands are dotted here and there near the shady avenues and on the banks of its ponds. A wide embankment stretches along the Moscow River, the banks of which are clothed in granite.

Prior to the revolution Moscow had no modern public parks or gardens. The Central Park of Culture and Rest was laid out at the beginning of the First Five-Year Plan period.

The workers of the Moscow factories and mills took the initiative in founding the Park. Tens of thousands of Moscovites participated in the work of laying out the grounds and in the construction of the various park buildings. The best architects, horticulturists and artists designed the decorations for the Park.

The fondness of the Moscow people for the Park they have helped to create and its popularity throughout the whole of the Soviet Union are to be explained not
so much by the natural beauty of its grounds as by the wide choice of facilities for interesting, cultured recreation that it provides to millions of people.

One of the distinguishing features of the Gorky Park of Culture and Rest is that it combines rest in picturesque surroundings with wholesome, rational recreation. The numerous visitors who throng the Park have a wide choice of varied forms of recreation and amusement—concerts of light music, symphony concerts, all sorts of sports, choir circles and opera performances, popular lectures and talks on science, art, literature, technology, etc.

Enclosures for sun bathing and shower baths have been built on the Park's spacious grounds. Today the Park has more sports grounds than there were in the whole of Moscow twenty years ago. Thousands of young men and women come here to play volleyball, basketball, tennis and other outdoor games. Specially equipped grounds for light athletics and gymnastics, water sports facilities, a small stadium, boxing rings, rings for wrestling and acrobatics, shooting galleries, croquet and bowling courses, shuffle boards, etc.—all of these are at the disposal of the visitors.

In the winter the central lawns and avenues of the Park form an excellent skating rink with an ice surface of 100,000 square meters. About 20,000 people skate here every day. Several skiing stations cater to skiing fans, and there are also slopes for ski jumping—from nursery slopes for beginners to steep fifty-meter inclines for the trained and experienced sportsman.

Visitors to the Park can engage in all the available forms of sports under the guidance of experienced instructors. Thousands of people have learned to skate, ski, swim and row in the Central Park of Culture and Rest. The best sportsmen of Moscow and of the Soviet Union regularly appear in contests held in the Park, which is also the scene of international sport tournaments.

Through the medium of its six theaters, its circus, cinema theaters and a score or so of bandstands for its many orchestras, the Park acquaints its visitors with the best productions of classical and contemporary art and music as well as with the art and music of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. Leading theatrical companies from all over the Soviet Union perform on the Park's indoor and open-air stages. Eighteen theaters performed in the Park during the summer of 1938. The Green Theater of the Gorky Central Park of Culture and Rest is the largest open-air theater in the country. Magnificent mass performances in which thousands of people participate are staged here before audiences of 20,000. The Bolshoi Theater of the U.S.S.R., which has been awarded the Order of Lenin for its outstanding merits, presents its best operas and ballets here every year. During the performance of Carmen, the huge stage of the Green Theater represented a replica of the square in Seville and an arena for bullfighting. About 200,000 people saw the picturesque ballet, The Caucasian Prisoner, presented by the Bolshoi Theater.
One of the most interesting aspects of the Park's activities is the development of amateur art. Every evening directors of amateur art activities organize impromptu choruses among the visitors of the Park and coach them in new songs. Thousands of people come to the Park to dance, or to learn folk dancing, music, or drawing. The various competitions and contests in recitation, dancing and music organized in the Park attract hundreds of participants. The best amateur art circles give daily performances and concerts in the Park's theaters.

The Soviet people display a keen interest in all branches of science and knowledge. The Park's special lecture rooms, reference and consultation rooms and laboratories provide its visitors with every facility for acquiring popular knowledge on recent developments in the sphere of science, technology and literature. Prominent scientists, professors and academicians deliver lectures and demonstrate their work and experiments to Park audiences. In addition to attending lectures, viewing exhibitions, films on technology, etc., visitors to the Park are given the opportunity of carrying out various experiments, of studying new technical equipment and applied technology under the guidance of skilled instructors. From ten to twelve exhibitions dealing with various branches of science and technology are held in the Park every year.

Foremost Stakhanov workers demonstrate new methods of work to Park visitors. Contests in skill between workers of various trades (electrical welders, moulders, cable layers) arouse great interest among the people who visit the Park.

The reading rooms of the Park offer a tremendous variety of books, newspapers and magazines. The Lenin Public Library, the largest library in the Soviet Union, has a branch in the Park which contains over forty thousand volumes. The Park lending library issues three thousand books a day.

Writers and poets read their works to Park audiences with whom they also discuss
their new books. "Poet's Day" has become one of the traditional events arranged by the Park. On this day from fifty to sixty of the leading poets of the country recite their verses to Park audiences. Important dates in the history of science, technology and literature are marked by the organization of special exhibitions, lectures and meetings. During the summer of 1938, for example, a session of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. dedicated to the 750th anniversary of the "Lay of Igor," an outstanding work of Russian literature, was held in the Green Theater of the park, at which Academician V. L. Komarov, President of the Academy, delivered a lecture on the subject to a large audience. The intrepid Soviet polar explorers, Panin, Krenkel, Shirshov and Fyodorov, told a large audience in the Green Theater of the results of their work on the drifting icefloes at the North Pole.

The political activity of the population the keen interest displayed in international politics and events at home have made it necessary for the Park administration to devote great attention to educational work in this sphere. Experienced lecturers conduct informal talks and consultations and reply to thousands of questions put by visitors to the Park, illustrating their talks with the help of geographical maps, charts, etc.

All of this work is organized in such a way as to satisfy the requirements of the people who visit the Park. Romain Rolland, that eminent French author, wrote after visiting the Park: "The splendid thing is that rest in this park serves as a source of education in joyous surroundings."

The Park possesses a whole system of highly entertaining and interesting forms of amusement. These include popular outdoor games, indoor pastimes, puzzles and riddles, numerous forms of lively, amusing contests, including a comical steeplechase, harlequinades and many other features, where every visitor can display his or her dexterity, pluck, resourcefulness and ingenuity.

The Park also has many other attractions—merry-go-rounds, a device for looping the loop, a tower for parachute jumping practice from which 330,000 parachute jumps were performed in the last five years, etc.

The great solicitude shown for the growing generation in the U.S.S.R. is reflected in the activities of the Park. Visitors to the park may leave their children at the special "Children's Village" where the youngsters have the use of well-equipped athletic fields, playgrounds, interesting demonstration halls, laboratories of popular science, garden plots for experimenting, miniature zoological gardens, work rooms, etc. The "Hall of the Young Technician" provides the children with all facilities for work with constructor sets, for studying radio, photography, automobiles, cinema apparatus, etc. In the "Hall of Interesting Pastimes" the children can draw or sculpture or embroidery, etc. There are special music rooms and rooms containing a varied collection of toys. Another
attraction is the pond with a motorboat and a whole fleet of canoes and row boats. The "Children’s Village" has a track for automobile and bicycle races, aquariums, a terrarium, etc., as well as its own reading room and library. The "Children’s Village" caters to over ten thousand children daily.

The main form of recreation in the "Children’s Village" are the interesting collective games which enable the children to display their initiative, ingenuity and ability in path finding, etc. The games are so organized as to provide ample scope for the children’s interest in adventure and heroic exploits. On the day of the completion of the Moscow to America non-stop flight, an interesting game called "Following the Route of the Heroes" was organized in the Park. During the winter school recess thousands of children participated in a lively game called "A Journey to the Arctic," staged on the Park’s skating rinks. Large dummy "ice-breakers" took the children on a "trip to the Arctic."

to study the work and equipment of the "Arctic Polar Stations." At these "Arctic Stations," located in the Park of Culture and Rest, the children were met by polar explorers and aviators who participated in the rescue of the Chelyuskin expedition—heroes about whom the children have read so much in books. But this interesting game was not confined to the territory of the Park of Culture and Rest. The winterers of the far-off Arctic and even the crew of the icebreaker Sedin, ice-bound and drifting in the Polar region, established contact with the children over the radio.

Interesting and gay festivals attended by popular heroes, actors and scientists are organized for the children.

For the younger children of pre-school age there is a "Tiny Tots Town" where they are under the constant observation of experienced teachers.

The Park provides entertainment and service to its visitors throughout the entire day. For a small charge, visitors to the park can spend their free day at one of the "One-day Rest Homes," situated in the most picturesque parts of the Park. These rest homes provide meals, sports equipment, arrange visits to the various theaters and amusement centers in the Park. All of this is included in the price of the ticket to the "One-day Rest Home."

The Park is not only a place for rest and cultural recreation; it also serves as the scene of huge mass festivals and mass meetings. The annual Railwaymen’s Festival, at which L. M. Kaganovich, People’s Commissar of Railways, addresses meetings of railway workers, is held in the Park. The Park saw the start and finish of some of the outstanding long-distance races and flights held in the Soviet Union. It is in the Park of Culture and Rest that the people greet their heroes. It was here that Chkalov, Baikov and Belyakov, that Gromov, Yumashev and Danilin were greeted after their renowned Moscow-America non-stop flights. Public festivals are organized on holidays such as May.

The park has introduced a number of new mass festivals, previously unknown in Russia. These include the now traditional "Moscow Carnival," the "Youth Carnival," the "Festival of Music and Song," the fireworks displays, etc.

The fact that the Park is visited by a multitude of people demands a very efficient organization of its work and high quality service. It must be pointed out that all service in the Park is within the financial means of the entire population. The Park's theaters, amusement centers, restaurants, cafes, etc., charge low prices while most of the educational facilities are free of charge. The trade unions and certain other institutions subsidize some of the activities in the Park. It has become possible to organize the varied activities of the Park and bring them within the reach of the entire population only as a result of the gratuitous participation of numerous public organizations in its work. These include museums, libraries, scientific research institutes, sports societies, clubs, etc. In addition to its 5,000 full time employees the Park has a large number of volunteer workers who cooperate in the organization of its cultural activities.

The Park is closely linked up with the Moscow population. Its plans of work are discussed at numerous meetings and in the factories and clubs. The Moscovites who visit the Park view its work with a critical eye and make many suggestions and proposals.

The activities of the Park are directed by a public council under the director of the Park. The council includes prominent scientists, artists, technicians, sportsmen and workers of Moscow.

Activities in the Park will assume still broader scope in the near future. According to the plan of the reconstruction of Moscow the area of the Park will be increased to five times its present size. Many new buildings, including a Palace of Youth, a Children's Palace, a new theater, stadiums, etc., will be erected.

The Gorky Park of Culture and Rest is Moscow's central park. But the capital has ten other parks of culture and rest (not including the gardens and parks in the outskirts of the city) and 28 parks of culture for children. All of these parks provide practically the same facilities as the Gorky Park, only, of course, on a smaller scale.

Based on the model of the Gorky Park of Culture and Rest, the oldest one in the country, over 600 parks of culture and rest have been laid out in various cities of the Soviet Union in the last ten years. There are large parks of culture and rest in Leningrad, Kiev, Kharkov, Baku, in the workers' settlements in the Donetz Coal Basin, the Urals, the Kuzbas and other industrial centers. Parks of culture and rest have been established in Central Asia, in the Far East, and in the Pamirs.

In recent years parks of culture and rest have also been organized in the countryside, in collective farms and state farms.

Many rural parks of culture and rest have been established in the Ukraine, the Caucasus and the Crimea.

The number of parks of culture and rest in the U.S.S.R. increases with every passing year. The Soviet people wish to lead a happy life and rest in cultural surroundings. The right to rest and leisure is inscribed in the Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Soviet state provides the people with all the facilities to exercise this right.