

Title: Aeroplanes and Aerosleds: Automobility in Soviet Children's Book  
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Abstract:

Planes, trains, and automobiles have long formed a universal cornerstone of children's literature. Looming large and small, they quickly became the universal icons of modernity at the start of the twentieth-century. Most essentially for the developing USSR, a country which linked industry and transportation with its own nation building during the First Five-Year plan, the visualization of "automobility" – a fusion of the human, technological, and cultural spheres – took on profound ideological significance. This paper considers the visual language of the Soviet children's book as children are mobilized to fly airplanes over uncharted territories and zoom across the icy expanse between Moscow and Leningrad on an "aero-sled." The aero-sled—part airplane, part snowmobile – is presented in this paper as an innovative and emblematic mode of distinctly Soviet transportation. Following a short history of the transportation technology and its characteristics, we track its progress between 1927-1936, from the pages of the journals *Za rulem* and *30 dnei*, to Sergei Tret'iakov's young readers' ocherk *Polnym skol'zom* (1930) to Roman Karmen's photo-illustrated children's book, *Aerosani* (1931), and finally to the 1936 film *Semero smelykh*. The aerosled is presented as the apogee of empowered movement within a system of Soviet automobility for children – capturing the technology and imaginative spheres of both the airplane and ground transportation, thus also securing its place in Soviet ideology writ-large. In a land blanketed in snow, the Soviet child is empowered to conquer her world with the hybridized propeller of Soviet iconography/ideology – forward and through any impediments that might lie in her path.