# Modernist Architecture and Religion in the Soviet Union: The Case of the Palace of the Soviets and the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour

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## Abstract

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Although the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour and the Palace of Soviets represent two completely different styles and ideologies, they are deeply intertwined in their shared building site, histories, and architecture. These two monuments were produced out of a desire to establish a new Russian architectural style and serve as symbols of power. My thesis will address the architectural competition of the design of the Palace of the Soviets and its place in the broader religious context of the Soviet Union, examining the link between religion and nation-building architecture in twentieth-century Russia. I will be framing this analysis by comparing the architectural components of the original Cathedral and the Palace of the Soviets, arguing that the conception and architectural features of both buildings and the similarities in the religious and secular rites of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and the Communist regime illustrate the lingering presence and influence of religion in the Soviet ethos. I will be positioning the competition for the design of the Palace of the Soviets within the context of style debates that were going on in the first half of the twentieth century and the gradual move away from modernist aesthetics towards socialist realism.

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## Introduction

On December 5, 1931, the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow was destroyed by dynamite on the orders of the Soviet government to make space for the Palace of the Soviets. The new monument was to embody socialist ideals and serve as a symbol of the nascent Communist regime. Although the Cathedral and the Palace represent two completely different styles and ideologies, they are deeply intertwined in their shared building site, histories, and architecture. Both monuments were envisioned from a desire to establish a new Russian architectural style and serve as symbols of power. The ideological shift away from religion towards atheism under the Soviet regime became physically embodied in the destruction of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, designed by architect Konstantin Ton (1794-1881) in 1830 and built between 1839 and 1883 (Figure 1), and the decade-long construction project of the Palace of the Soviets (1931-1941), designed by architect Boris Iofan (1891-1976), in collaboration with Vladimir Gelfreykh (1885-1967) and Vladimir Schuko (1878-1939) for the final design, in 1933 (Figure 2). The undertaking of the design and construction of the Palace of the Soviets, as well as the destruction of religious structures,[1] not only point to the Soviet government's enforcement of anti-religious policies but also to the changing architectural landscape in Russia and the foreign influences from Europe and North America that shaped Soviet modernism. Despite the Soviet government's strict policies regarding religion, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) maintained a strong and vital presence among its citizens during the Soviet regime. The architectural composition of secular structures and the development of secular rites show the ROC's underlying influence. Along with sharing religious elements within their structures, both the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour and

[1] Along with the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow, other destroyed Russian Orthodox Churches included: The Trinity Church in Novocherkassk, St. Michael's Cathedral in Izhevsk, Saint Sophia Church in Nakhchivan-on-Don, and The Assumption Church in St. Petersburg. See: James H. Bater, *The Soviet City: Ideal and Reality* (London: E. Arnold, 1980), 86-133.

the Palace of the Soviets share elements of the grandiose, reflected in their size and the international scale of the competitions.

The first half of the twentieth century in the Soviet Union was dominated by architectural competitions, fostering new styles and techniques. Constructivism, at its peak in the 1920s, became one of the breakout avant-garde styles in Russia, spearheaded by the Vesnin brothers' entry for the design of the Palace of Labour, a predecessor of the Palace of the Soviets (Figure 3).[2] The competition for the creation of the Palace of the Soviets, announced in February 1931, ended in 1933 with the selection of Iofan's design (Figure 4). Ultimately, his design never materialized as construction was halted in 1941 by Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union during the Second World War. From 1958 to 1960, the Palace's foundations were repurposed and turned into an open-air pool (the Moskva Pool) designed by architect Dmitrii Chechulin (1901-1981)[3] (Figure 5). As the twentieth century progressed, the anti-religious policies started to gradually decrease, and the ROC started to regain its prominence in the lives of Soviet citizens.[4] The ROC's return to power is best symbolized in the reconstruction of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, which took place over five years, starting in 1995 and ending in 2000 (Figure 6).

The influence of the ROC did not stop at architecture but also permeated the works of Russian avant-garde artists, such as Kazimir Malevich (1879-1935) and Natalia Goncharova (1881-1962). Influenced by religious icons, they included direct and indirect references to

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2 Selim Khan-Magomedov, *Pioneers of Soviet Architecture: The Search for New Solutions in the 1920s and 1930s*, ed. Catherine Cooke, trans. Alexander Lieven (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 154. Their design for the Palace of Labour, awarded third place, is the direct predecessor of the Palace of the Soviets but only in function, the design itself being quite different. See: Anatole Kopp, *Constructivist Architecture in the USSR* (New York: Academy Editions London/St Martins Press, 1985), 39.

3 The Moskva Pool was once the largest open-air pool in Europe. Heated during the winter, it was open year-round. The pool opened in 1960 and closed in 1993 following the decision to rebuild the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. See: Dmitri Sidorov, "National Monumentalization and the Politics of Scale: The Resurrections of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90, no. 3 (September 2000), 561.

4 Felix Corley, *Religion in the Soviet Union* (London: McMillian Press, 1996), 289.

religious themes and motifs in their works. Both Malevich and Goncharova belonged to the Neoprimitivism movement, seeking inspiration from the everyday life and faith of Russian peasantry.[5] Avant-garde artists were concerned with the preservation of traditional Russian art and turned to Old Believers[6] for inspiration, who held onto medieval Russian art-making traditions.[7] Goncharova was known to collect *lubki*[8] and folk icons. While Goncharova adopted the linear form of the religious icon in her work, Malevich ascribed spiritual significance to his abstract work, delving into Symbolism and later developing the Suprematism art movement.[9] Malevich's famous *Black Square* (1915) (Figure 7) was imagined as a new icon.[10] First exhibited in 1915 at the *Last Futurist Exhibition of Painting 0.10* in St. Petersburg, *Black Square* was strategically placed in the corner of the room, mimicking the set-up of the traditional icon corner.[11] Consciously and subconsciously, people continued to incorporate aspects of religion into their lives through art and architecture, all while navigating the complex ideological landscape shaped by the government's anti-religious decrees.

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5 Malevich's *Prayer* (also known as *Meditation*), 1907. Tempera on wood. 70 x 74.8 cm and Goncharova's St Michael from *Mystical Images of War*, 1914. Lithographs are examples of Neoprimitivist art. See: Myroslava M. Mudrak, "Kazimir Malevich, Symbolism, and Ecclesiastic Orthodoxy," in *Modernism and the Spiritual in Russian Art: New Perspectives* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2017), 91–113 and Nina Gurianova, "Re-Imagining the Old Faith: Goncharova, Larionov, and the Cultural Traditions of Old Believers," in *Modernism and the Spiritual in Russian Art* (2017), 129–48.

6 "Old Believers originated in 1666 when several minor changes in the performance of ritual actions and service books initiated by Patriarch Nikon precipitated a major division in the Russian Orthodox Church. Those opposing these changes became known as Old Believers and […] went into schism." See: Christel Lane, "Old Believers," in *Christian Religion in the Soviet Union: A Sociological Study* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1978), 112.

7 "The years 1905–17, marked by the uniquely productive and intense evolution of Russian modernist and avant-garde movements in art and poetry, were also known in history as a brief 'golden age' of Old Believer culture." See: Gurianova, "Re-Imagining the Old Faith: Goncharova, Larionov, and the Cultural Traditions of Old Believers," 134.

8 *Lubki* (plural), or *lubok*, were inexpensive, hand-coloured prints made from woodcuts. *Lubki* later evolved to be made from engravings, etchings, and lithography. They mostly consisted of religiously themed images; it was an inexpensive way to own artwork in their homes. See: Gurianova, "Re-Imagining the Old Faith: Goncharova, Larionov, and the Cultural Traditions of Old Believers," 5.

9 Mudrak, "Kazimir Malevich, Symbolism, and Ecclesiastic Orthodoxy," 91–113.

10 Oleg Tarasov, "Spirituality and the Semiotics of Russian Culture: From the Icon to Avant-Garde Art," in *Modernism and the Spiritual in Russian Art: New Perspectives* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2017), 115–28.

11 Tarasov, "Spirituality and the Semiotics of Russian Culture," 115–28.

My thesis addresses the architectural competition of the design of the Palace of the Soviets and its significance in the broader religious context of the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin (1878-1953), examining the link between religion and nation-building architecture in twentieth-century Russia. I frame this analysis by comparing the architectural components of the original Cathedral and the Palace of the Soviets, arguing that the conception and architectural components of both buildings, along with the similarities in the rites of the ROC and the secular rites introduced by the Communist regime, illustrate the lingering presence and influence of religion in the Soviet ethos. I position the competition for the design of the Palace of the Soviets within the context of the style debates[12] of the first half of the twentieth century and the gradual move away from modernist aesthetics towards socialist realism.

During my research, I consulted scholarly sources in religious studies and the wider scholarship on modernist architecture in Europe to better understand and adequately frame the comparative analysis I perform. My idea to write a comparative analysis of the Palace of the Soviets and the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour stems from texts I read by sociologists Paul Froese, "Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia: Why an Atheistic Monopoly Failed" (2004), and Christel Lane, *Christian Religion in the Soviet Union: A Sociological Study* (1978). Both authors write about the secular rituals that sought to replace those of the ROC and how these replacements failed with people still practicing ancient religious rites in secret. In their texts, both Froese and Lane point to a kind of fraught translation from the religious to the secular. These cultural shifts, and their demise, are paralleled by the destruction of the Cathedral, the attempted construction of the Palace, and the reconstruction of the original Cathedral. A unique aspect of

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[12] Such styles include Constructivism, Rationalism, Formalism, Functionalism, Utilitarianism, and Stalinism. See: Anatole Kopp, *Constructivist Architecture in the USSR* (New York: Academy Editions London/St Martins Press, 1985), Jean-Louis Cohen, *The Future of Architecture, Since 1889: A Worldwide History* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2017), and Arthur Voyce, *Russian Architecture: Trends in Nationalism and Modernism* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948).

my research centres around the fact that both subjects of my analysis do not physically exist. I relied on photographs, sketches, and descriptions from primary and secondary sources for the visual analysis of both buildings.

In the last twenty or so years, after allowing for some distance from the end of the Soviet regime, scholars have resumed their interest in exploring the Palace of the Soviets and its surrounding architectural and social repercussions. However, recent scholarship does not address the religious component of the Palace, save for mentioning that the structure was to exist on the site of the destroyed Cathedral. In my thesis, I look more specifically at the religious aspects present in the Palace's architecture and how it was to become a kind of temple to socialism.[13] To understand the religious features present in the Palace of the Soviets, the first section of my thesis examines the construction and destruction of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, specifically looking at its architectural attributes and the context of religious persecution in which the destruction occurred. The second section examines the competition for the design of the Palace of the Soviets and looks at Iofan's winning design and its architectural influences. The final section of my thesis provides a comparative analysis of the Cathedral and the Palace, considering their architecture, socio-historical contexts, and the building ground that unites them. Through my analysis, I examine the relationship between church and state in the Soviet Union while also looking at the rebuilding of Russia's religious landscape in the twenty-first century.

[13] S. D. Tougarinova, "Palace of Soviets - 1930s Architectural Competitions," *Bulletin of Slavic Cultures* 41, no. 3 (2016): 179.

## Part 1: The Cathedral of Christ the Saviour (1883-1931)

The Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, ordered to be destroyed on December 5, 1931, was designed by architect Konstantin Ton in 1830. Before his design materialized, another design was considered for the Cathedral. The idea for a Cathedral to be built stemmed from the 1812 French invasion (24 June-14 December 1812) led by Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821), known in Russia as the Patriotic War of 1812, from which Russia emerged victorious, having driven back the onslaught.[14] Some Orthodox Christians saw the invasion as divine punishment for Peter the Great's (1672-1725) Westernization policies and the following victory as an act of divine salvation.[15] Salvation, as a concept, emboldened Slavophilism,[16] which held traditional Slavic customs above all and emphasized the unity of Slavic people. The victory over this invasion inspired Tsar Alexander I (1777-1825) to issue a decree in 1813 to build a "cathedral-monument to Christ, the Savior of Russia,"[17] highlighting Russia's war efforts and faith. Multiple design submissions followed the decree, many based on classic examples.

According to art historian Arthur Voyce, Russia's architectural origins are mainly Byzantine and Northern European, with some Persian and Hindu influences. Foreign art and architecture were absorbed and interwoven with "local Russian traditional art forms,"[18] to create a national art style.[19] Voyce identifies two main distinct architectural streams, with geographical

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[14] This is also when the Fire of Moscow took place, destroying a large part of the city and becoming a turning point that later led Russian troops to the expulsion of French Republican rule of Western Europe, a symbolic victory of Russia over the West. See: Sidorov, "National Monumentalization and the Politics of Scale," 553.

[15] Sidorov, "National Monumentalization and the Politics of Scale," 553.

[16] The desire to be in opposition to the West was not uncommon in the Russian Empire during that time. The early 1800s saw the emergence of Slavophilia, an intellectual movement opposing Western culture and promoting Orthodoxy and Russian values. See: Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *Russian Identities: A Historical Survey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 27.

[17] Sidorov, "National Monumentalization and the Politics of Scale," 554.

[18] Arthur Voyce, *Russian Architecture: Trends in Nationalism and Modernism* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948), 5.

[19] Voyce, *Russian Architecture,* 5.

delineations, at the beginning of the twelfth century: southern and central Russia reflected a more substantial influence of the Byzantine and Western architectural style, while northern Russia did not follow the Byzantine style and instead was influenced by its surrounding regions and their climate.[20]

Russia's flourishing architecture was interrupted by the Mongol invasion, whose rule lasted from 1237 to 1480. During that time, many of the building techniques and craftsmanship disappeared. Tsar Ivan III (1530-1594), upon freeing Russia from Mongol subjugation, turned to Italian architects who introduced refined construction techniques.[21] Their work, however, was restricted by the Byzantine tradition, which by then had become deeply intertwined with Russian architectural identity.[22] The winning design for the Cathedral, displaying this embrace of Byzantine tradition and following Tsar Alexander I's 1813 decree, came from painter Karl Vitberg (1787-1855).

Karl Magnus Vitberg, a painter-turned-architect of Swedish descent, designed a cathedral with three superimposed temples (Figure 8). He intended for the Cathedral to be ecumenical, representing all of Christendom.[23] The lower temple was to be dedicated to Christ's birth, the main temple to the Transfiguration, and the upper temple to the Resurrection.[24] The symbol of the trinity pervaded Vitberg's project and explicitly emphasized the unification of the three main branches of Christianity: Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism. The Cathedral was to be measure over 200 metres high. Tsar Alexander approved the design in 1816,

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20 Voyce, *Russian Architecture,* 6.

21 Voyce, *Russian Architecture,* 9.

22 Voyce, *Russian Architecture,* 9.

23 Konstantin Akinsha, Grigorij Kozlov, and Sylvia Hochfield, *The Holy Place: Architecture, Ideology, and History in Russia* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 15.

24 Sidorov, "National Monumentalization and the Politics of Scale," 554.

and construction began in 1820, only to stop five years later due to a mismanagement of funds. Tsar Alexander eventually succumbed to Vitberg's appeal for help and launched an investigation into the matter. Unfortunately for Vitberg, his patron abruptly died, leaving an unclear future for his project.[25]

Following Tsar Alexander's death and another investigation into the project's viability by the new ruler, Tsar Nicholas I (1796-1855), the construction of Virgberg's Cathedral came to a stop. In 1825, Tsar Nicholas put in motion his own architectural competition for the Cathedral.[26] In 1831, he met and hired architect Konstantin Ton, completely disregarding the other designs submitted to his competition.[27] Instead of building a cathedral looking to unite Russia with the rest of Europe, as was planned with Vitberg's ecumenical design, Tsar Nicholas envisioned this cathedral as an embodiment of Russia's separation from the West.[28] Ton proposed a reintroduction of ancient Russian architectural forms, readopting the onion domes and *kokoshnik* gables[29] which are now synonymous with Russian culture. The building site chosen for Ton's Cathedral would sit directly opposite the Kremlin, signalling a deep connection between church and state. The Cathedral would serve as a memorial for two wars: the 1612 Battle of Moscow and the 1812 Invasion of the French.[30]

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25 Akinsha et al., *The Holy Place*, 41.

26 Akinsha et al., *The Holy Place*, 45.

27 Akinsha et al., *The Holy Place*, 47-48.

28 Akinsha et al., *The Holy Place*, 48.

29 *Kokoshnik* gables are the part of the wall enclosing the end of a pitched roof reminiscent of the shape of the *kokoshnik*, a traditional Russian feminine headdress, popular between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries in Russia. See: Akinsha et al., *The Holy Place,* 13.

30 The 1612 Battle of Moscow was part of the Polish-Muscovite War (1605-1618). The 1812 Invasion of the French refers to the French invasion by Napoleon, also known as the Great Patriotic War of 1812. Russia emerged as victors from both wars. See: Akinsha et al., *The Holy Place*, 51-52.

The site for the construction of the Cathedral was symbolically charged but also occupied by the Convent of St. Alexius the Man of God. Founded in 1360, the Convent moved to the site in question in 1514, later sacrificed to make space for Ton's creation.[31] Who would have known that the same thing would happen to the Cathedral, a mere forty-eight years after its consecration? The destruction of the Convent evoked the public's dismay due to how it represented Moscow as the Third Rome and centre of Orthodoxy. The loss of the Convent was also significant in terms of artistry: its main cathedral, built in 1634, had an impressive three-hipped roof design, a rare and prominent sight for seventeenth-century church architecture (Figure 9).[32] Construction of Ton's Cathedral started a year after the destruction of the Convent, in 1838, and lasted until 1882. It was finally consecrated in 1883. Despite the initial outcry, the public quickly embraced this new symbol of Orthodoxy in Russia. The monumental size of the Cathedral, its impressive interiors, lengthy construction, and hefty construction bill all became justifications for its new supreme status among Russian citizens.

The external view of a typical Russian Orthodox church is rectangular or oval, echoing the shape of Noah's Ark.[33] As building technology developed, stone and brick slowly replaced traditional Russian Orthodox churches, usually built out of wood. In the early days of the ROC, the only distinction between the first wooden churches and peasant huts was a cross on the roof of the church.[34] In our case, we can see that the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour's plan was also rectangular (Figure 10). The Cathedral's interior and exterior followed the Greek cross form,

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31 Sidorov, "National Monumentalization and the Politics of Scale," 556.

32 Sidorov, "National Monumentalization and the Politics of Scale," 556.

33 Tobias Köllner, "Works of Penance: New Churches in Post-Soviet Russia," in *Religious Architecture: Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Oskar Verkaaik (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 86. The form of the Ark is described in the book of Genesis, chapter 6.

34 Samuel Hazzard Cross, *Medieval Russian Churches*, ed. Kenneth John Conant (Cambridge, Mass.: The Medieval Academy of America, 1949), 73.

equal length in all parts, forming a cube. The cubic shape of the Cathedral was accentuated by five cupolas tracing out the cross form. The structure was centred and symmetrical, following a 1:1 ratio: the height of the base of the Cathedral was equal to the height of the central dome with the drum.[35] Religious imagery and iconography decorated the inside of the church.

The choice of iconography and subject matter of the Cathedral's paintings followed a predefined iconographic program, preventing deviation from tradition. The iconographic program standardizes the rules for the construction and decoration of a church. It sometimes allows for compromises to be made, such as the inclusion of narratives, compositions, and colours that corresponded to the contemporary tastes and styles.[36] Monastic institutions primarily contained these deviations.[37] Scholar and priest Gheorghe Gîrbea explains the particularities of the iconographic program, as the theme of the interior paintings of an Orthodox church is specific to each part.[38] Scenes of Jesus' Holy Sacrifice and important figures of hierarchs dominate the iconography of the altar. The iconostasis[39] contains icons illustrating the heavens and the earth, focusing on the theme of "reconciliation between the Divine and the sinful man."[40] The nave[41]

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35 Evgenia Kirichenko, *Russian Architecture 1830-1910s* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1979), 188.

36 Yuliia Igorevna Khlistun, "Culturological Analysis of The Iconographic Program of The Refectory Church of All Russian Saints in The Holy Dormition Nikolo-Vasilievsky Convent," *European Journal of Arts*, no. 1 (2021): 174.

37 Khlistun, "Culturological Analysis of The Iconographic Program of The Refectory Church," 174.

38 Gheorghe Gîrbea, "The Iconographic Canon of Orthodox Churches: History, Evolution, Symbolism," *Proceedings of SOCIOINT 2019 - 6th International Conference on Education, Social Sciences and Humanities*, June 24, 2019, 1091.

39 "The screen which separates the sanctuary or 'bema' from the main body of the church, and on which the icons or sacred pictures are placed." See: "Iconostasis, n.," in *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford University Press, March 2018), https://www-oed-com.lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/view/Entry/90910?redirectedFrom=iconostasis#eid.

40 Gîrbea, "The Iconographic Canon of Orthodox Churches: History, Evolution, Symbolism," 1093.

41 "The main part or body of a church building, intended to accommodate most of the congregation, usually extending from the west door to the chancel and frequently separated from an aisle on each side by pillars." See: "Nave, n2.," in *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford University Press, December 2020), https://www-oed-com.lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/view/Entry/125449?rskey=vuApuT&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid.

contains the Pantocrator,[42] usually painted in the central dome of the church.[43] Surrounding it are depictions of biblical scenes. The narthex[44] contains scenes dedicated to Jesus Christ. The iconographic program aims to create a space that reflects the various teachings of the church. The Cathedral of Christ the Saviour followed the iconographic program while also including historical figures and events to identify the Cathedral as a war monument.[45]

In her book, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, architecture and art historian Evgenia Kirichenko (1931-2021) writes that the construction of the Cathedral marked a critical stage in Russian architecture, identifying it as "post-conflagration architecture and the beginning of the neo-Russian style in central Moscow."[46] The Cathedral combined a synthesis of old Russian and contemporary nineteenth-century architectural styles. The outside of the Cathedral was painted white, topped with gold domes and gold roofing. The four façades of the church were uniform, with five arches, each supported by piers. Sculptures, chosen thematically according to what they faced, adorned each façade. The theme of the reliefs on the western façade, which also included the main entrance, revolved around angels and the heavenly protection (Figure 11); the southern façade included reliefs depicting the battles of 1812 along with sacred figures who led the troops to victory (Figure 12); the eastern façade featured Russian patron saints, protecting the Russian land (Figure 13); and the northern façade depicted saints

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42 "A ruler of all things; (*Christian Church*) (a title given to) God or Christ as the Almighty. Hence: an artistic representation of Christ as ruler of the universe, esp. as an image in Byzantine and Orthodox iconography." See: "Pantocrator, n.," in *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford University Press, December 2020), https://www-oed-com.lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/view/Entry/137023?redirectedFrom=Pantocrator#eid.

43 Mario Baghos, "Christ Pantokrator in the Byzantine Art of Italy," *Phronema* 34 (April 3, 2019): 55.

44 "A vestibule or antechamber stretching across the western end of some (esp. early or Orthodox) Christian churches or basilicas, divided from the nave by a wall, screen, or railing." See: "Narthex, n.," in *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford University Press, March 2019), https://www-oed-com.lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/view/Entry/125178?redirectedFrom=narthex#eid.

45 Evgenia Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior: The History of the Design and Creation of the Cathedral: Pages of Life and Death, 1813-1997.* (Moscow: Planeta, 1997), 145. (translated by Thomas H. Hoisington in 2012).

46 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior,* 94.

who spread Christianity and saints commemorating the Battle of 1812 (Figure 14).[47] A common feature of traditional Orthodox churches was the inclusion of identical façades, creating a uniformity when looking at the Cathedral from any angle.[48]

The Cathedral's inspiration and borrowing from ancient Russian churches could also be seen in its main apse,[49] which contained a threefold window arrangement, referring to the Holy Trinity.[50] The other façades of the Cathedral also included three windows. The windows from the east side, fitted with stained glass, illuminate the altar. Kirichenko notes that Ton planned the initial interior design to be neoclassical with sculptural decorations and classical fine-art motifs. Instead, murals attuned to the décor of old Russian churches decorated the Cathedral's interior walls. Both the interior and exterior of the Cathedral followed the Russian style. As a memorial, the subject matter of the interior décor of the Cathedral was limited and developed by leading church hierarchs according to the iconographic program.[51]

Kirichenko divides the lengthy construction process of the Cathedral into four phases, each focusing on a different aspect of the structure. Phase 1, from 1830 to 1850, was focused on the façades; phase 2, from 1846 to 1863, was dedicated to the reliefs of each façade; phase 3, from 1860 to 1880, was dedicated to the interior murals; and phase 4, from 1870 to 1883, on the furnishing. Ton envisioned the Cathedral to be built exclusively with native Russian building materials to further extend its metaphor as a national church.[52] However, the process of sourcing

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47 Sidorov, "National Monumentalization and the Politics of Scale," 557-8.

48 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 101.

49 "A semi-circular or polygonal recess, arched or dome-roofed, in a building, *esp.* at the end of the choir, aisles, or nave of a church." See: "Apse, n.," in *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford University Press, December 2021), https://www-oed-com.lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/view/Entry/9961?redirectedFrom=apse#eid.

50 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 103.

51 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 132.

52 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 131.

Russian materials proved too time-consuming, so instead, the Cathedral was built with a combination of Russian stone and marble imported from Italy and Belgium.[53] The incredibly intricate and lengthy construction process of the Cathedral was not enough to ensure its survival following the Russian Revolution.

On July 18, 1931, as soon as the competition for the Palace of the Soviets was announced in the newspaper *Izvestia* ("The News"), a committee was created to determine the salvageable components from the Cathedral. [54] The small list included paintings and sculptures, but not everything listed ended up saved. Some twenty objects were transferred to a museum, while many items, some dating back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were deemed not worth the effort to save them.[55] The attention of conservation turned instead to the valuable marble that made up the Cathedral walls and the metals of chandeliers and bells.

A petition document,[56] dated February 24, 1930, described the agreement between multiple governing bodies in the removal and processing of gold from the domes of the Cathedral. The document justified the costs of processing the domes; their gold finish was valued at 328 kg of gold. This document, produced before the Cathedral's destruction, states that the Economic Department of the Unified State Political Directorate (OGPU) recommended removing the domes completely, regardless of the Cathedral's fate, and even offered to pay for the construction of new roofing. Leaving the gold domes on the church was considered an

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53 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior,* 131.

54 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 316-17.

55 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior,* 320.

56 Petition of the Economic Department of the OGPU to the Secretariat of the Chairman of the ACEC for Permission to Remove the Gold from the Cupolas of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, No. 422522, 24 February 1930. See: Corley, *Religion in the Soviet Union,* 94-96.

unnecessary luxury. Another petition document,[57] dated August 19, 1932, about eight months after the destruction of the Cathedral, inquired about the seizure of all church bells in Russia so they could be melted down and used to cast high reliefs on the new public library, named after the Soviet politician Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924). Confiscated bells from eight churches were used as the raw materials to build the Lenin Library, completed in 1939. This petition relates to a ban on the ringing of church bells as an effort to remove the presence of the church in daily life.[58] The Soviet government had a strong utilitarian approach when it came to churches; with the bells now obsolete, they were still valuable in their raw material form.

Moscow residents hear the first explosions on the site of the Cathedral at noon on December 5, 1931.[59] Cameraman Vladislav Mikosha (1909-2004) documented the destruction.[60] His footage shows the tumbling down of domes and bells, as well as members of the demolition crew taking apart pieces of walls. Architect Alexander Leonidovich Pasternak (1893-1982) also documented this event and later published it in his memoirs. He felt the first explosion while he was still in bed: "everything suddenly began shaking and rocking under me."[61] He ended up watching the final blast, of the base of the Cathedral, from the roof of his building and described

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57 Petition of the RSFSR People's Commissariat of Enlightenment to the Presidium of the ACEC for Permission to Use Church Bells for Recasting into High Reliefs Mounted on the USSR Public Library Named After V. I. Lenin, 19 August 1932. See: Corley, *Religion in the Soviet Union,* 101.

58 Corley, *Religion in the Soviet Union,* 100.

59 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 327.

60 Mikosha's footage is included in an anniversary video of the Cathedral, produced by RiaNews in 2013. Ria News. *Christ the Savior Cathedral Marks 130 Years: A Video History*, 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mE3mAhnfdcw&t=22s.

61 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 328. Kirichenko quotes Pasternak from excerpts published by the newspaper *Moskovskii Komsomolets.* (Moscow Komsomolets, meaning member of the Komsomol which was the abbreviation of All-Union Leninist Young Communist League). Pasternak's niece, Ann Pasternak Slater, translated his memoirs into English. In the introduction to the book, she mentions that she did not include her uncle's description of the destruction of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour because the Russian censors ended up cutting that passage. See: Ann Pasternak Slater, "Introduction," in *A Vanished Present: The Memoirs of Alexander Pasternak* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), xxiv.

"a huge reddish-black cloud of dust, [and] cinders, [that rose over the Cathedral] and finely broken brick that obscured everything."[62]

This event was extensively documented in the newspaper *Vechernyaya Moskva* ("Evening Moscow"), which provided details on what parts of the Cathedral were destroyed after each explosion.[63] The article proudly informed its readers that shields protected against debris, resulting in no accidents. The explosions occurred so that parts of the wall material could be salvaged and used in other construction projects. Government bodies, charged with the Cathedral's destruction, scattered the unused materials in museums, along with paintings and other church objects. Their religious affiliation left them unexhibited during the Soviet period.[64]

Books and articles about socialism justified the destruction of the Cathedral.[65] The Soviet journalist and politician Boris Kandidov (1902-1953) described the Cathedral as "a religious ideological fortress for propagandizing patriotism, chauvinism, and militarism."[66] Kandidov produced many anti-religious texts and materials, namely the book of essays *Religious Counter-Revolution 1918-20 and Intervention* (1930), in which he talks about the role religion played in influencing the enemy during the revolutionary war while also calling out the Catholic and Anglican churches and organized religions in the United States who contributed to an anti-Soviet

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62 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 329.

63 *Vechernyaya Moskva*, December 6, 1931. Quoted in Evgenia Kirichenko's *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 327.

64 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 335.

65 Several magazines and newspapers were dedicated to publishing atheist and anti-religious texts, targeting various social groups. Most prominently: *Bezbozhnik u Stanka* (*The Godless at the Workbench*), *Ateist (Atheist), Voinstvuiuschii ateizm (Militant Atheism), Antireligioznik (Opponent of Religion), Yunyye Bezbozhniki* (*Young Atheists), Derevenskiy Bezbozhnik (The Rural Godless),* and *Revolutsia I Tserkov (Revolution and Church).* Iterations of these magazines were also published in Ukrainian, German, English, Polish, Georgian, Lithuanian, Armenian, Yiddish, and Tatar.

66 Boris Kandidov, "Cult of Imperialism in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour," *Bezbozhnik u Stanka*, no. 19 (1931), 7. Quoted in Evgenia Kirichenko's *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 318.

sentiment.[67] This atheistic antagonism towards the ROC became most prominent following the division between church and state, which occurred in 1918 at the issuing of a decree from The Council of People's Commissars.[68] The Soviet Party denounced the ROC as a defender of the monarchy. The fear of the clergy helping the reinstatement of the tsarist autocracy fueled this antagonism. Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality,[69] a triad proposed by Sergey Uvarov (1786-1855), Minister of Education and President of the Russian Academy of Sciences in 1823, was adopted as doctrine by Tsar Nicholas I, further cementing the link between monarchy and Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality were outlined as the basis of education in Russia by Uvarov and became known as the Official Nationality. It included the following law: "The Tsar of all the Russias is an autocratic and absolute monarch. God Himself commands us to obey the Tsar's supreme authority, not from fear alone, but as a point of conscience."[70] The link between the Tsar, God, and the negative outcomes of autocracy on the Russian people further fueled the fire of antagonism towards the ROC during the Soviet regime.

At first glance, the ROC appears to be a martyr at the hands of the Soviet government. Indeed, the Communist Party destroyed a multitude of churches, along with mosques and temples; members of religious groups were subjected to violence, resulting in death or

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67 Boris Kandidov, *Religious Counter-Revolution of 1918-20 and Intervention* (Moscow: Council of the Union of Militant Atheists of the USSR Centre, 1930).

68 The 1918 Decree on the Separation of the Church from the State's aim was to restrict all religious activities and strip the Church of its institutional and economic privileges. The decree's most impactful consequence forbade the ROC from owning any property.

69 "'Orthodoxy' referred to the official Church and its important role in Russia, but also to the ultimate source of ethics and ideals that gave meaning to Russian life and society. 'Autocracy' meant the affirmation and maintenance of the absolute power of the sovereign, which was considered to be the magnificent and indispensable foundation of the Russian state. 'Nationality'—narodnost in Russian—referred to the particular nature of the Russian people, which, so the official doctrine asserted, made this people a mighty and dedicated supporter of its Church, dynasty, and government." See: Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *Russian Identities: A Historical Survey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 133.

70 *Digest of Laws of the Russian Empire* (St. Petersburg, 1832), article 1. Quoted in Riasanovsky, *Russian Identities: A Historical Survey,* 137.

imprisonment.[71] Scholar Zoe Katrina Knox writes that Marxist-Leninist doctrine considered "religion as a corrupting influence that [had] no place in the socialist order."[72] Persecution centred on the ROC, but later included other religious denominations practicing in Russia. The ROC went from 50,000 churches during the Russian Empire to 300 during the Soviet Union.[73] The religious reforms and persecutions greatly impacted the Russian people; practicing religion was now a criminal offence. The destruction of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour embodied these persecutions and forced secularization.

As the Communist Party took power, they waged war on religion and introduced scientific atheism, promoting it as the new universal belief system. By seeking to replace Christianity, scientific atheism created rites that closely resembled those of the ROC. The Soviet population still needed ceremonies to highlight important parts of life even with the active removal of religion from public life. They mostly conducted these ceremonies in private. British scholar Walter Kolarz and scholar Daniel E. Powell write about the secular alternatives to religious rites that the government presented to appease the population. Red Weddings became the alternative to religious weddings, where the head of the factory took on the role of the priest.[74] The alternative to baptism was called *Oktyabrina* (referring to the October Revolution), where the child sometimes received a revolutionary name.[75] During *Oktyabrina* ceremonies, the parents of the newborn would promise to bring up their children as fighters against the

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71 Paul Froese, "Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia: Why an Atheistic Monopoly Failed," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43, no. 1 (2004): 35.

72 Zoe Katrina Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church: Religion in Russia After Communism* (London: Routledge, 2005), 48.

73 Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church*, 45.

74 Walter Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1961), 33.

75 Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, 33.

bourgeoisie.[76] Social godparents replaced religious godparents with essentially the same duties, but with a focus on raising a Communist. The issuance of passports at the age of sixteen became a ceremony highlighting the beginning of adulthood.[77] The ceremony focused on the importance of patriotism and the love of labour.

There was an attempt to replace funerals with the opening of cremation centres to cut ties with the church entirely, but the practice of cremation never became normalized.[78] Red Funerals were developed as the secular counterpart to religious funerals. During the procession, funeral music and speeches were present, making Red Funerals indistinguishable from a funeral administered by the ROC. Before the funeral procession, the deceased was in a special room in a House of Culture.[79] Chapels on gravesites had either been demolished or remodelled, with Soviet objects and symbols replacing religious paraphernalia.[80] The ceremony's focus was on the deceased's contribution to Communism and the work that remained to be done by the living. Along with cremation, Red Funerals were not a satisfying secular substitute. Some funerals remained administered by the ROC but with a few adjustments. The scarcity of priests to administer funerals gave rise to funeral rites conducted by correspondence, which involved the family of the deceased sending earth from the grave by mail to a priest, who would bless it and send it back to be returned to the grave.[81] An ageing population who maintained Orthodox beliefs

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76 David E. Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union: A Study of Mass Persuasion* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: The MIT Press, 1975), 71.

77 Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union,* 73-4.

78 Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union,* 77.

79 Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union,* 77.

80 Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union,* 77.

81 Christel Lane, *Christian Religion in the Soviet Union: A Sociological Study* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1978), 41.

encouraged the persistence of religious funerals.[82] Funerals and baptisms remained the most practiced religious rites during the Soviet Union since they did not require consent from the baptized or the deceased. The older Russian population insisted on performing major religious rites and influenced their children to carry these traditions on. This contributed to the failure of the secularization of Russia.

Although secular in nature, these rites closely resembled the very thing they sought to replace, turning scientific atheism into its own kind of religion.[83] Presented under a different name, each ceremony focussed on Communism instead of the ROC. Scientific atheism served to satisfy the basic human needs for beauty, ritual, and entertainment.[84] However, many still held on to the religious weddings and baptisms, for the sense of tradition and because the secular alternatives were not as ornate and flamboyant.[85]

The small number of male Orthodox leaders allowed women to step into some of these roles, such as serving at the altar and being part of the church council. These women also opened their homes for private religious gatherings, which they often led.[86] To maintain the influence of Orthodoxy, the ROC encouraged these practices, which normally would be forbidden.[87] The circulation of religious *samizdat* (self-published, independent) pamphlets, along with clandestine worship, also contributed to maintaining the presence of the ROC.

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82 Lane, *Christian Religion in the Soviet Union*, 61.

83 Froese, "Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia," 43.

84 Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union*, 67.

85 Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, 33.

86 Lane, *Christian Religion in the Soviet Union*, 42.

87 Lane, *Christian Religion in the Soviet Union*, 43.

Although the presence of religion remained strong, the scientific atheism doctrine quickly became part of everyday Soviet life. Developed as a replacement to the worldview of the ROC and other religious groups, it was taught at schools and in the media and became a subject of widespread propaganda. The League of Militant Atheists, a group funded by the government, was tasked with promoting atheism throughout the country.[88] Membership included ex-Orthodox clergy, who were now preaching atheism.[89] To expand the membership, concentrated in Moscow and St. Petersburg (then known as Leningrad), they planned a missionary approach that involved travelling to rural areas to teach scientific atheism.[90] The League of Militant Atheists aimed to create one million "atheist cells"[91] to reach their goal of total secularization by 1937. They never achieved this goal.

A 1937 census determined that although many people left the ROC and embraced scientific atheism, they did not abandon religion.[92] During the active recruitment of the League of Militant Atheists, other Christian denominations, including Protestants, Baptists, Evangelicals, Mennonites, Old Believers, Pentecostals, Flagellants, and Tolstoyans, all actively recruited members as well.[93] They were accustomed to religious persecution and adapted to operating in such constrained environments. The government was not specifically concerned with the "sectarian growth,"[94] as their focus was on the ROC.

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88 Froese, "Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia," 37.

89 Froese, "Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia," 37.

90 Froese, "Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia," 37.

91 Froese, "Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia," 37.

92 Froese, "Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia," 39.

93 Froese, "Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia," 39.

94 Froese, "Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia," 39.

Following the unsatisfactory results of the 1937 census, the League of Militant Atheists attempted various tactics to dismantle the ROC. One of these included the spread of misinformation about religious objects and activities in hopes that people would abandon them. For example, the League said that the practice of kissing icons contributed to the spread of syphilis in the countryside.[95] Another tactic involved tasking schoolchildren with converting their family members to atheism. Anti-religious propaganda did not stop at schools; most workplaces, including factories and farms, had lectures and seminars promoting scientific atheism.[96]

Religious holidays were another obstacle to secularizing the population. To solve this issue, the state implemented work schedules that conflicted with religious holidays and created state holidays to make scientific atheism more appealing. The secular holidays were not only seen as a replacement but also as a way to "emphasize the values and strengths of the communist system and to stimulate future economic successes."[97] This did not yield the desired results, as people continued celebrating religious festivities.[98]

According to Froese, scientific atheism was unsuccessful because it had to scientific basis. There were no scientific works published on the subject that would establish it as such. Internal criticism also factors into its failure. Some members of the Communist Party went as far as to criticize scientific atheism and the League of Militant Atheists because they had established themselves as a counter-church where "instead of theological training there was to be extensive anti-religious training."[99] Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin's God-like personas contributed to the

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95 Froese, "Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia," 40.

96 Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church*, 50.

97 Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union*, 69.

98 The October Revolution Anniversary (celebrated on November 7th) and May 1's International Workers' Day did become popular celebrations among the population, with May 1st still being celebrated widely in Russia today.

99 Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, 10.

perception of soviet atheism as another iteration of the ROC. Lenin, who was at the head of the Soviet government immediately following the Russian Revolution of 1917 until his death in 1924, was revered as the father of socialism. His writings became quasi-sacred, and even his death was religiously symbolic: his body, embalmed, was publicly displayed just as a saint's body would be in a church or a monastery.[100] The same kind of reverence was accorded to Joseph Stalin, elevating him to a "transcendental status."[101] Scientific atheism merely produced an alternative to the ROC.

During the Second World War, the restrictions on the ROC eased up due to the government's cooperation with the Patriarchate, and by 1947, the number of functioning churches increased to 14,000.[102] Because of this collaboration, the ROC was able to restart the publication of its journal and reopen its theological academies and seminaries, as well as several closed churches.[103] This did not last long as, by 1966, the number of functioning churches had scaled back to 7,466 following the anti-religious reforms by Nikita Khrushchev's (1894-1971) government (in office 1953-1964).[104] The relationship between church and state changed again under the rule of Mikhail Gorbachev (b.1931, in-office 1984-1991), who was more lenient towards the ROC and amended religious policy.[105] This leniency is attributed to the fact that continued religious repression was alienating members of the intelligentsia and the young population of the Soviet Union, who were becoming disillusioned with the socialist cause.[106] The

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100 Froese, "Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia," 43.

101 Froese, "Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia,"43.

102 Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church*, 45.

103 Lane, *Christian Religion in the Soviet Union*, 32.

104 Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church*, 45.

105 Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church*, 59.

106 Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church*, 60.

efficacy and permanence of these anti-religious reforms can be questioned as the number of atheists in Russia dramatically decreased following the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.[107] The Orthodox population of Russia managed to maintain their traditions despite the government's restrictions.[108]

The persecution of the ROC, which involved the seizure and destruction of church property, is embodied in the destruction of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. The Cathedral held the same significance for the ROC as St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican for the Catholic Church. In its attempt to secularize the Soviet population, the government created rites and procedures that closely resembled those of the ROC. The unmistakable resemblance of secular rites to their religious analogues becomes translated through the architecture of the Palace of the Soviets, which borrows several features from the destroyed religious structure.

## Part 2: The Palace of the Soviets

Prior to the 1917 Revolution, Russia experienced rapid industrial growth that brought with it a building boom. Partly constructed through competitions, it was a stepping stone towards international recognition.[109] Specifically, prestigious buildings, instilled with symbolism, were almost always designed through competition processes at this time.[110] Periodicals were the main venue for conversation, discussion, and criticism of these competitions. *Zodchii* ("The

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107 Froese, "Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia," 35.

108 The restrictions are described by Scholar Zoe Katrina Knox in *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church: Religion in Russia After Communism* (2005), in which she examines the social and political hold the ROC had on post-Communist civil society, as well as examples of ROC practices during the Communist regime. Knox defines civil society as a society that accommodates social self-organization independent of the state. In this case, how the ROC continued to exist outside of the Communist regime. Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church*, 2-3.

109 Catherine Cooke, "Mediating Creativity and Politics: Sixty Years of Architectural Competitions in Russia," in *The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde, 1915-1932* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1992), 682.

110 Cooke, "Mediating Creativity and Politics," 682.

Architect") was a periodical founded by the St. Petersburg Society of Architects (POA), which was itself formed in 1871. It provided information on upcoming competitions and their progress, and any relevant critiques. In 1872, *Zodchii* published a series of articles detailing the most pressing issues plaguing the competition process and offered recommendations and conditions to improve the competition system.[111] Architect and design historian Catherine Cooke details these conditions, and the rise of architectural competitions, in her article "Mediating Creativity and Politics: Sixty Years of Architectural Competitions in Russia," written for the 1992 exhibition catalogue of *The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde, 1915–1932* exhibit at the Guggenheim. The first such condition established a minimum number of entries (between 15 and 20) to determine the validity of a given competition. To ensure sufficient submissions, the competition must offer an appealing prize. Specifications such as the required level of details, the allotted budget, and explanatory notes were required to anticipate answers to any questions that might arise. These articles established further regulations, such as the creation of a two-part competition, where only selected designs were developed in detail for the second stage of the competition.

Historian of art and architecture Arthur Voyce outlines the art movements that followed the 1917 Revolution. The growing Soviet Union saw the flourishing of multiple art movements: Realism, Impressionism, Futurism, Cubism, Suprematism, "anything that proclaimed the spirit of revolt was welcomed, as long as it was against tradition, against regimentation."[112] However, as soon as these movements began to grow in Russia, they were rejected as anti-proletarian due to bourgeois corruption.[113] This produced a campaign against bourgeois art and created a trend

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111 Cooke, "Mediating Creativity and Politics," 684.

112 Voyce, *Russian Architecture,* 123-124.

113 Voyce, *Russian Architecture,* 124.

toward proletarian art and culture. The Proletkult group[114] advocated for a review of the old cultural and artistic heritage, rejecting the individualism that came with bourgeois art and culture and instead opting for the principle of socialist collectivism.[115] Some Bolshevik leaders were aware that a pure proletarian culture would not be achievable, while others maintained that it was possible but it would have to first go through a transition period and produce so-called Transition Art.[116] Transition Art made way for Constructivism, which was rooted in Utilitarianism. According to Voyce, Constructivists maintained that "architecture [...] must be stripped of everything that is not rational, not appropriate, and not useful."[117] They meant for every detail of a structure to be utilitarian and inexpensive, aiming to educate and inspire, with art for art's sake being something to avoid.[118] Constructivism slowly fell out of favour as it was too theoretical, and city-building was not progressing at the desired speed; there was an urgency to rebuild what was destroyed by the Russian Civil War (1917-1923).[119]

The search for an architectural style representative of Communist ideology created several architectural associations with differing theories and concepts about what Soviet architecture ought to be. There was the Architectural Sector of Socialist Construction (SASS), founded in 1925, which propounded that architecture was primarily a science, focusing on the engineering of the building's structure.[120] The Association of New Architects (ASNOVA), founded in 1923,

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114 The Proletkult group (Proletarian + Culture) was an artistic group that developed alongside the Russian Revolution of 1917. It was composed of artists, writers, and playwrights, it aimed to radicalize existing art forms by seeking inspiration from the new working-class Russia and its technological advancements. See: Voyce, *Russian Architecture,* 124.

115 Voyce, *Russian Architecture,* 124.

116 Voyce, *Russian Architecture,* 125.

117 Voyce, *Russian Architecture,* 126.

118 Voyce, *Russian Architecture,* 126.

119 Voyce, *Russian Architecture,* 127.

120 Voyce, *Russian Architecture,* 134.

embraced "'aesthetic rationalism' in architecture."[121] The Society of the All-Union Proletarian Architects (VOPRA), founded in 1929, supported proletarian architecture while also emphasizing the role of art in architecture.[122] Architects later established the Federation of Soviet Architects (SSA), uniting various groups and ideologies; it became the official architectural guiding body.[123] Instead of solely focusing on Utilitarianism, there was a newfound openness to beauty and happiness in architectural forms as architects reconciled the role of history and legacy of modernism.[124]

We will later see that, while the Palace of the Soviets intended to represent the proletariat, it did not abide by the rules set forth by Utilitarianism and instead indulged in ornamentation and luxury. Although the early idea of the conception of the Palace was rooted in Constructivism, Iofan did not design it in the Constructivist style. While his Palace never materialized, it greatly influenced Soviet architecture that reshaped the Soviet Union's cultural relationships with the rest of the world.[125] As an impactful concept, it signalled a new age of Soviet architecture.

The Council for Construction of the Palace of the Soviets announced the competition for the Palace in 1931.The competition involved the task of designing a structure big enough for two auditoriums (holding 15,000 and 8,000 people) to accommodate all the members of the First Congress of Soviets, and the creation of a structure "[characterizing their] epoch, as a physical manifestation of the will of the workers for the building of socialism."[126] The idea of the

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121 Voyce, *Russian Architecture,* 135.

122 Voyce, *Russian Architecture,* 135.

123 Voyce, *Russian Architecture,* 137.

124 Zubovich, *Moscow Monumental,* 57.

125 Katherine Zubovich, *Moscow Monumental: Soviet Skyscrapers and Urban Life in Stalin's Capital* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 52.

126 "Utochennoe zadanie," Biulleten' I (September 1931), p.7. Quoted in Cook, "Mediating Creativity and Politics," 707.

construction of the Palace is often attributed to a speech made by politician Sergei Kirov (1886-1934) on December 30, 1922, in which he envisaged a place where workers could gather.[127] On February 7, 1924, *Izvestia* published an article by politician Leonid Krasin (1870-1926), who suggested the construction of a monument memorializing Vladimir Lenin.[128] Papers and journals published numerous articles in response to Krasin's suggestion. A note, written by architect Viktor Balikhin (1893-1953) and later published as an article in the journal *Pravda* ("Truth") on March 15, 1924, proposed using the site of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour to build the monument to Lenin.[129] He argued that "as a historical and artistic monument, this church [the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour] is of no value whatsoever."[130] Stalin later approved this proposal, and the Cathedral was destroyed. Art historian Selim Khan-Magomedov argues that the choice in erecting the Palace on the site of the Cathedral was not solely based on the Soviet government's religious reforms. He supports Balikhin's statement that the Cathedral was not valuable enough to be kept considering the artistic values of the time.[131] Khan-Magomedov writes that architects considered the Cathedral as "an unlawful invasion into the historical centre of Moscow and a distortion of the city's artistic image."[132] The choice of the site was also very symbolic, as the Cathedral was "the personification of tsarist authority in Moscow."[133]

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127 Yuya Suzuki, "Competition for the Palace of Soviets of the 1930s in Moscow and the International Architectural Context" (PhD Dissertation, State Institute of Art, 2014), 60.

128 Maria Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets: The Design Competition and Boris Iofan's Designs for the Palace of the Soviets," in *Boris Iofan: Architect Behind the Palace of the Soviets* (Berlin: DOM publishers, 2019), 34.

129 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 34.

130 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 34.

131 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 35.

132 Selim Khan-Magomedov, "On the History of the Choice of Site for the Palace of the Soviets," *Arkhitectura i Stroitel'stvo Moskvy* no.1 (n.d.): 21-23. Quoted in Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 35.

133 Hoisington, "'Ever Higher,'" 46.

The Palace of the Soviets was initially conceptualized as a project made up of multiple structures, each serving specific functions: a library; assembly halls for congresses; and spaces to host large meetings, entertainment (such as plays and movies), and public demonstrations.[134] Quickly, the desire for function matched a desire to create a Soviet monument, simultaneously serving as a temple to the revolution and its leader, Lenin.

The competition was composed of four stages. The first was a consultation stage, in the spring of 1931, which was later named the Preliminary Closed Competition, where twelve commissioned and three voluntary designs were sent in.[135] This initial competition served to clarify the competition's program based on the designs submitted.[136] Following this closed competition, the Open Competition, also known as the second stage, was announced in the fall of 1931, open to all architects. It was the largest design competition in Soviet history, with both Soviet and international participants.[137] The involvement of international architects served to add prestige to the competition and elevate the Soviet Union as a worthy competitor to the West. The competition did not restrict who could submit; the Construction Council invited workers to submit their designs for a building that embodied their socialist ideal worldview. It was, in fact, a factory worker who conveyed the essence of grandeur that the Palace should embody at a meeting discussing the preliminary designs for the Palace of the Soviets, at the Moscow

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134 Sona Stephan Hoisington, "'Ever Higher': The Evolution of the Project for the Palace of Soviets," *Slavic Review* 62, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 42.

135 Cooke, "Mediating Creativity and Politics," 707.

136 Suzuki, "Competition for the Palace of Soviets of the 1930s," 63.

137 Special invitations were sent out to international architects: Le Corbusier, Auguste Perret, Thomas W. Lamb, Joseph Urban, Erich Mendelsohn, Walter Gropius, Hans Poelzig, Armando Brazini, and Ragnar Östberg. Some international guests received monetary compensation for their work: "Le Corbusier, Gropius, Mendelsohn, and Poelzig each received $3,000; Perret received $2,000." See: Hoisington, "'Ever Higher,'" 43. Uninvited international architects also entered the competition: Naum Gabo, Antoine Pevsner, Berthold Lubetkin, Heinrich Blum, Józef Sigalin, and Hector Hamilton. See: Cooke, "Mediating Creativity and Politics," 707.

Automobile Factory, in 1932.[138] His statement on the grandeur of a building that "[bears] traces of the revolutionary age"[139] corresponded with the vision of the government.[140] The Open Competition received 272 submissions. These submissions included 160 professional proposals and 112 non-professionals, with 24 professional proposals coming from foreign architects. These submissions were part of numerous public exhibitions and were extensively analyzed in the press.[141]

This remains the most historically significant competition in the Soviet Union because of the diverse stylistic range of the entries. Most of the submissions developed a new style, bringing together elements of the avant-garde while also looking back to classical traditions and providing a modernized interpretation.[142] The use of classical elements in the designs was encouraged and favoured by the government.[143] Since the competition concerned a monumental government building, the jury, consisting of the Construction Council, also involved the Communist Party.[144] The extensive competition process, which included the four main stages and multiple redesigns, was justified by the jury and Party's ambition to achieve a "product of the great art of Bolshevism,"[145] consisting of a "truly proletarian architecture."[146]

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138 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 43.

139 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 43.

140 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 43.

141 From December 1931 until June 1932, the Moscow Museum of Fine Arts, now known as the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, featured submissions to the competition. See: Hoisington, "'Ever Higher,'" 44.

142 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 40.

143 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 39.

144 Cooke, "Mediating Creativity and Politics," 708.

145 Cooke, "Mediating Creativity and Politics," 708.

146 Cooke, "Mediating Creativity and Politics," 708.

The Soviet regime allowed for liberation from traditional canons and created a space for architectural experimentations.[147] The brief announcing the Preliminary Closed Competition featured a number of specifications for the desired design while remaining open to the architects' creativity.[148] Specifications dictated reinforced concrete as the material of choice.[149] The design had to embody the "determination of the working masses to build socialism"[150] while also functioning as a place of business, housing conferences and meetings, and ultimately serving as "an architectural and artistic monument."[151] Although announced as somewhat open-ended in terms of the style, the Council for Construction of the Palace of the Soviets had preconceived notions of the features that would make a suitable submission. They found "unacceptable […] [the] direct use of historicism and ultra-modern designs."[152] Along with being the client, the Party was also the co-author of the Palace's design, providing directives "regarding the overall composition, layout, and relation between the main volumes, and [...] the shapes of the auditorium, the positioning of the presidiums and balconies […], and the organization of the space around the building."[153]

Following the announcement of the winners of the second stage of the competition, *Sovetskaia arkhitektura* ("Soviet architecture") and *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy* ("Construction of Moscow") published new design specifications.[154] The new specifications insisted that the design

147 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 35.

148 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 37.

149 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 37.

150 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 37.

151 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 37.

152 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 42.

153 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 43.

154 "Results of the Greatest Architectural Competition: On the Results of Works on the All-Union Opening Competition for Drafting the Palace of Soviets of the USSR in the city of Moscow." *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy* ("Construction of Moscow"), no. 3

be able to accommodate a large number of people for congresses and assemblies. The third stage of the competition, the Closed Competition, was announced in March 1932, aiming to produce a final design of the Palace. The two auditoriums were now required to remain separate from each other, with the larger auditorium facing the Kremlin.[155] These new specifications aimed to guide the design to reinforce the Palace as a monumental structure. The grandeur and monumentality of the Palace were also in part due to the desire to surpass those of the Cathedral.[156] Finally, the last and fourth stage of the competition, the Second Closed Competition, was announced in August of 1932. It included only five commissioned projects. Following the announcement of Boris Iofan's winning design in May 1933, the overall design and construction process for the Palace of the Soviets lasted from 1931 until its interruption by the Second World War.[157]

Boris Iofan, born to a poor Jewish family in Odesa, Ukraine, in 1891, lived in Italy for ten years (1914-1924), where he trained as an architect at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome and worked on architectural projects. Returning to the Soviet Union, he was able to take on commissions without joining any architectural establishment or embracing any specific architectural style.[158] Iofan's design for the Preliminary Closed Competition stage was composed of three parts: a giant sculpture of a worker, with a large and small auditorium surrounding it on each side (Figure 15).[159] The standout composition was the large auditorium, made up of a demi-

(February 28, 1932): 13-16; and "Resolution of the Council for the Construction of the Palace of Soviets under the Presidium of the USSR Central Executive Committee on the Results of the All-Union Open Project for the Drafting of the Palace of Soviets of the USSR in Moscow." *Sovetskaia arkhitektura* ("Soviet Architecture"), no. 2-3 (1932): 116-17. Quoted in Hoisington in "'Ever Higher,'" 45.

155 Hoisington, "'Ever Higher,'" 51.

156 Hoisington, "'Ever Higher,'" 47.

157 Hoisington, "'Ever Higher,'" 54.

158 Hoisington, "'Ever Higher,'" 57.

159 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 38.

sphere surrounded by "rings of low tiers"[160] positioned around the sphere in increasing layers, making it appear tilted.[161] Another version of his design submitted to the Preliminary Closed Competition included a tiered spiral tower, replacing the central monumental sculpture of the Soviet worker (Figure 16).[162] Iofan revisited the tower and the central monumental sculpture in his final design of the Palace.

Maria Kostyuk, chief curator of the Schusev State Museum of Architecture in Moscow, provides a thorough description of the design that earned Iofan first place in the competition: the structure "[combined] the large and small [auditoriums] with a high tower"[163] with porticos linking the auditoriums, creating a square shape. This square was "intended for parades and mass events."[164] The tower, topped with a sculpture of a worker holding a torch, functioned as a library and the structure's focal point. Iofan's design submitted to the fourth round of the competition included the Great Hall (housing the large auditorium) located in the northern part of the building, facing the Kremlin and the Small Hall (housing the small auditorium), located in the southern part.[165]

Soviet architect Yakov Kornfeld (1896-1962) provides a more extensive description of the interiors of the final version of the Palace in the journal *Архитектура СССР* ("Architecture of the USSR").[166] In Iofan's design, there was a focus on interior and exterior forms communicating with each other, with each hall having a specific shape and use. The internal

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160 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 38.

161 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 38.

162 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 38.

163 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 40.

164 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 40.

165 Suzuki, "Competition for the Palace of Soviets of the 1930s," 101.

166 Yakov Abramovich Kornfeld, "Interiors of the Palace of the Soviets," *Architecture of the USSR*, no. 11 (1938): 38–43.

volume of the Great Hall of the Palace consisted of three geometric shapes: a funnel-shaped amphitheatre, a cylinder of portals, and a paraboloid dome. The vast amphitheatre could seat up to 20,000 people with part of its structure dedicated to the speaker's tribune. Strong pylons would hold up the massive dome, its interior divided into four rings. The pylons served to highlight its sizeable but light structure. The large flutes and ribs of the rings would converge to the central light, illuminating the Great Hall from a height of 100 metres. The dome would lose its massiveness and turn into a light sphere, a luminous source capable of changing the atmosphere in the room. An additional component of the amphitheatre was the central tribune, designed for orators, reporters, and diplomats. Symbolizing the union of the people of the Soviet Union, it was to house a monument for the Socialist Revolution within its structure. The tribune was central to the architecture of the amphitheatre and was reminiscent of the platform of a church's sanctuary. The central focus of the Palace was a large dome connected with the Palace's amphitheatre, borrowing from the Cathedral's design but on a much larger scale. The Palace of the Soviets was to be a grandiose structure signalling the power of the Communist regime.

Iofan's project, although awarded first place, was criticized for being too modern and not including enough classical elements.[167] For his design submitted for the final round of the competition, Iofan closely followed the suggestions of the Construction Council, shifting his design into a "single structure with a powerful trapezoidal stylobate (containing the small auditorium) supporting a high, wide tower,"[168] instead of the three-part structure of his initial design. Still, his final design was considered insufficient in satisfying all the requirements established by the Construction Council, so it was accepted on the basis for further development.

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167 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 42.

168 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 46.

The Council was also not confident of Iofan's ability to see this project through until the end, so they invited architects Vladimir Gelfreykh and Vladimir Shchuko to join the final redesign team.[169] Iofan did not like the final design with which he has now become associated. The main structure of the finalized design was enlarged by 100 metres, with the top adorned with a large statue of Lenin.[170] Gelfreykh and Shchuko submitted it as a design alternative against Iofan's wishes; the Construction Council ended up favouring it and selecting it, leaving Iofan no choice but to accept this new design decision or be forced to leave the project.[171] The design alternative was welcomed because it answered the call of a "[dramatically appealing and] highly theatrical" building.[172] Supporting this requirement for dramatic and monumental scales, the immense statue of Lenin placed at the top of the building would have made the Palace of the Soviets the tallest building in the world.[173] This final version was officially approved on February 19, 1934 (Figure 17).

The Palace of the Soviets was an amalgamation of several design philosophies, most notably: Constructivism, Rationalism, Monumentalism, and Art Deco. Constructivism served as the launching point from which architecture in the Soviet Union developed; it moved towards Rationalist and Utilitarian styles, mixed in with Monumentalism (echoing back to neoclassicism) before reaching modern Stalinist architecture, which was inspired in part by Art Deco.[174] The multiple architectural associations that sprung up in the 1920s and 30s in Russia trace this

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169 Suzuki, "Competition for the Palace of Soviets of the 1930s," 178.

170 Hoisington, "'Ever Higher,'" 61. Replacing the sculpture of the worker with a sculpture of Lenin was proposed by Italian architect Armando Brazini (1879-1965), who worked with Iofan during his tenure in Italy. See: Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 41, 42.

171 Hoisington, "'Ever Higher,'" 61.

172 Hoisington, "'Ever Higher,'" 61.

173 Hoisington, "'Ever Higher,'" 61.

174 Voyce, *Russian Architecture,* 125-138.

stylistic evolution. The new ribbed Art Deco style that emerged from this competition was a response to both Constructivism and neoclassicism.[175] Heavily inspired and influenced by American skyscrapers, the ribbed style solved the question of how to build a structure of immense height that was stable enough to hold a massive statue, within a specific time frame.[176] The minimal décor of the Palace's façade was also convenient in designing within the competition's time restraints.[177]

Art Deco is at the height of its international visibility during the 1925 International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris. Paris held the "uncontested [role of] capital of modern art,"[178] serving as inspiration for American and Soviet skyscrapers.[179] Art Deco established itself as the antithesis of Art Nouveau's naturalism.[180] Its architecture was rectilinear, due to the "residual influence of Beaux-Arts axial planning"[181] and the rectilinear frames used to build modern building types.[182] Art Deco also contained residual classicism which was present in its classical sense of order and planning of its modern forms.[183] In American skyscrapers, this is reflected by the 1916 zoning law.[184] The main stylistic divergence of Art Deco architecture was its incorporation of decoration without solely relying on "purity of form,

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175 Andrei Barkhin, "Art Deco and Style Parallelism in 1930s Architecture," *Baikal Project*, no. 62 (2019), 105.

176 Barkhin, "Art Deco and Style Parallelism in 1930s Architecture," 103.

177 Andrei Barkhin, "Ribbed Style of High-Rise Buildings and Neoarchaism in the Architecture of the 1920s and 1930s," *Academia: Architecture and Construction*, no. 3 (2016), 62.

178 John Potvin, *Deco Dandy*, 2.

179 Barkhin, "Art Deco and Style Parallelism in 1930s Architecture," 103.

180 Franco Borsi, *The Monumental Era: European Architecture and Design 1929-1939*, trans. Pamela Marwood (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 157, 159.

181 Owen Hopkins, "Art Deco," in *Architectural Styles: A Visual Guide* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2014).

182 Hopkins, "Art Deco."

183 Hopkins, "Art Deco."

184 Barkhin, "Art Deco and Style Parallelism in 1930s Architecture," 104.

line, and volume,"[185] while also emphasizing aspects of luxury and the senses.[186] Other key features included geometric patterns, curved building forms, low relief sculptural ornamentation, and detailed craftsmanship.[187] With the union of art and industry, the straight line became a source of beauty.[188] Architects embraced metal and glass as materials of choice (steel frames and large windows were also used in skyscrapers). Parallel to industrialization, Art Deco was perceived as a "decorative response to modernity."[189] Its adherents did not follow any rigid constraints, adopting and adapting various styles, but mostly it was rooted in emulating a cosmopolitan aristocratic style, making social mobility and affluence seem more accessible.[190]

The 1930s can also be considered a period of architectural rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States, both inspired by Art Deco.[191] The stylistic evolution from the late 1920s to the early 1930s produced high-rise buildings in North America. They were stylistically diverse but maintained a recognizable style. Common characteristics of this style involved a "combination of the neo-Gothic 'ribbed-style' and neoarchaic ledges."[192] The ribbed style has its roots in the Gothic and Romanesque architectural styles.[193] Art Deco, combined with neoclassicism, shaped Western architecture in the 1920s and 30s.[194]

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185 Bevis Hillier, *Art Deco Style* (London: Phaidon, 1997), 22.

186 John Potvin, *Deco Dandy: Designing Masculinity in 1920s Paris* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 13.

187 Margaret Fletcher and Robbie Polley, "Art Deco," in *Architectural Styles: A Visual Guide* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 170.

188 Alastair Duncan, *Art Deco* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 9.

189 Stephen Escritt quoted in Michael Windover and Rhodri Windsor Liscombe, *Art Deco: A Mode of Mobility* (Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2012), 12.

190 Windover and Liscombe, *Art Deco: A Mode of Mobility,* 12, 11.

191 Barkhin, "Ribbed Style of High-Rise Buildings," 57.

192 Barkhin, "Ribbed Style of High-Rise Buildings," 64.

193 Barkhin, "Ribbed Style of High-Rise Buildings," 61.

194 Barkhin, "Ribbed Style of High-Rise Buildings," 62.

The Palace of the Soviets and its adoption of the ribbed skyscraper form became proof of the Soviet architects developing their own version of Art Deco.[195] The Soviet pavilion at the 1937 International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life in Paris can be considered a miniature version of the Palace of the Soviets. The pavilion was designed by Boris Iofan, with a sculpture of a worker and a female collective-farm worker (*Worker and Kolkhoznitza*) made by sculptor Vera Mukhina adorning the top of the structure. Highly inspired by American Art Deco, the Soviet Union had its own relationship with Paris, dating back to tsarist Russia.[196] Le Corbusier is at the centre of this relationship during the Soviet period with his construction of the Tsentrosoyuz Building in Moscow in 1933, and his rejected submission to the Palace of the Soviets competition.

The Soviet Union under Stalin found its architectural expression in "classicist monumentalism."[197] Monumentalism, as a design philosophy, gives primacy to scale, while also maintaining ancillary details and stylistic markers which "visibly define the structure as a 'monument,'" ascribing it with "prestige and importance."[198] Russia adopted the neoclassicist style from "Western imperial centers"[199] during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to highlight the greatness of the Russian Empire, as they knew it to signify "state power and privilege."[200] The pre-revolutionary neoclassical revival in twentieth-century Russia is attributed

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195 Barkhin, "Art Deco and Style Parallelism in 1930s Architecture," 103.

196 Sergei Shchukin and Ivan Morozov were two notable Russian collectors of French avant-garde art who began collecting at the end of the 19th century. See: Rosamund Bartlett, "The Revolutionary Collector Who Changed the Course of Russian Art," Apollo Magazine, October 17, 2016, https://www.apollo-magazine.com/the-revolutionary-collector-who-changed-the-course-of-russian-art/.

197 William C. Brumfield, "Restating Classicist Monumentalism in Soviet Architecture, 1930s-Early 1950s," in *The Oxford Handbook of Communist Visual Cultures*, 2019, 2.

198 Brumfield, "Restating Classicist Monumentalism in Soviet Architecture," 2.

199 Brumfield, "Restating Classicist Monumentalism in Soviet Architecture," 2.

200 Brumfield, "Restating Classicist Monumentalism in Soviet Architecture," 2.

to a national identity crisis.[201] The monumentality of Soviet architecture that emerged in the 1920s, especially in what would have been the Palace of the Soviets, was classified by historians as totalitarian design, alongside Nazi and Italian fascist architecture.[202]

Stalinist Monumentalist architecture created a space for Soviet architects to engage internationally, most notably with the United States.[203] The monumentality of the Palace is what pushed Soviet architects to develop networks abroad, further cementing their presence and expertise on the world stage. Iofan immediately recognized the need to become acquainted with North American skyscraper building techniques to be able to move forward with the technical design of the Palace.[204] In letters to American colleagues, Iofan asks for information about the Radio City Music Hall and the Empire State Building, used as models.[205] These correspondences culminated in a trip of Soviet architects and engineers to the United States to study skyscrapers, entertainment, and public buildings, such as theatres and train stations.[206]

Iofan's design and the competition for the Palace itself generated a lot of criticism. German art historian and Marxist philosopher Max Raphael considered Iofan's designs as "the expression of an abstract, centralized and dominant bureaucracy."[207] He criticized the objective for monumentality, which overshadowed the competition. Criticism for the construction of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour also applied to the Palace: could the funds used for the grandiose

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201 Brumfield, "Restating Classicist Monumentalism in Soviet Architecture," 3.

202 Zubovich, *Moscow Monumental,* 53.

203 Zubovich, *Moscow Monumental*, 53.

204 Suzuki, "Competition for the Palace of Soviets of the 1930s,"186.

205 Suzuki, "Competition for the Palace of Soviets of the 1930s,"186.

206 Suzuki, "Competition for the Palace of Soviets of the 1930s," 187.

207 Jean-Louis Cohen, "The Palace of Soviets: 'Dramatic Betrayal.,'" in *Le Corbusier and the Mystique of the USSR: Theories and Projects for Moscow, 1928-1936* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 200.

construction project have found better use elsewhere? People were still struggling to find decent living spaces in Moscow and St. Petersburg and had to content themselves with living in *kommunalka* (communal apartments).[208]

Iofan's insider perspective into the competition should not be overlooked: he contributed to developing the concept of the Palace of the Soviets and organizing the competition.[209] He proposed the tiered organization of the competition with a specific timeline, which the Construction Council adopted in 1931.[210] Holding the role of Chief Architect of the Palace of the Soviets since 1931, before the announcement of the design competition, Iofan was privy to the discussions regarding the design requirements of the Palace, giving him an unfair advantage.[211] Another fact which brings into question the authenticity of the whole competition and Iofan's victory was that he submitted the largest number of design sheets to the Open Competition.[212] He was also the only one to submit a model of his design, further pointing to his advantage as a member of the planning committee of the competition.[213]

The success of his career following his return to Russia from Italy, and the selection of his design for the construction of the Palace, largely attributed to his talent as an architect, would have been impossible if not for his relationship with members of the government.[214] Scholar Sona

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208 *Kommunalki* were communal apartments, created in response to the major housing crisis in Soviet Russia, brought on by the revolution, industrialization, and the war. Lenin, who was at the head of the Soviet Union from 1922 to 1924, drafted a decree indicating that private apartments where the number of rooms surpassed the number of residents would become government owned and restructured, with ten square metres assigned per resident. See: Svetlana Boym. "The Archeology of Banality: The Soviet Home." *Public Culture,* 6, no. 2 (1994): 267, 276.

209 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 48.

210 Hoisington, "'Ever Higher,'" 57.

211 Zubovich, *Moscow Monumental*, 61.

212 Alessandro de Magistris, "Boris Iofan and the Arrangements Regarding the Palace of the Soviets," in *Boris Iofan: Architect behind the Palace of the Soviets* (Berlin: DOM Publishers, 2019), 61.

213 de Magistris, "Boris Iofan and the Arrangements Regarding the Palace of the Soviets," 61.

214 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets,"48.

Stephan Hoisington attributes the ease with which he settled back into the Soviet Union following his stay in Italy and his many commissions to his membership of the Italian Communist Party and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which he joined in 1921 and 1926, respectively.[215] His multiple commissions following his achievement with the Palace can also be attributed to his ties to the Communist Party.[216]

Although the Palace of the Soviets was never built, it established a national architecture in the Soviet Union. The government built research labs and factories to investigate and develop new materials and building machinery. The Palace contributed to the development of construction with steel and glass materials.[217] These innovations were also applied to the interiors of the Palace, conceived by a group of leading artists, echoing the style and design of the exterior.[218] The story of the inception of the Palace of the Soviets is similar to the Cathedral's, along with the architectural aspects of both structures and their interpretations of power. In the following section, these similarities and the presence of religion throughout the Soviet Union and its permeation in the Palace's architecture, will be discussed.

## Part 3: The Comparison

There are various instances when the Palace of the Soviets and the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour share similarities. My comparison will focus on their architectural features, specifically how their architectural components translate from religious to secular in terms of their style. The more obvious similarities between these two structures were what first made me consider them as

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215 Hoisington, "'Ever Higher,'" 57.

216 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 48.

217 Zubovich, *Moscow Monumental*, 51.

218 Zubovich, *Moscow Monumental*, 51.

subjects of study for my thesis. These similarities also further support my thesis that the Palace, in its architectural components and overall design process, echoes the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, pointing to the lingering presence and influence of the Russian Orthodox Church in Soviet Russia.

The main feature that unites the Palace and the Cathedral is their location: Moscow's city centre, near the Kremlin. The choice to destroy the Cathedral and build the Palace in its place is highly symbolic. These two buildings, or rather three, the third being the reconstructed Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, can be considered variants of site-specific architecture, with the site holding a lot of significance. The Palace of the Soviets was supposed to replace the Cathedral as an improved version that reflected the current government and overall Soviet collectivist sentiment. As mentioned by Khan-Magomedov, the Cathedral's destruction was a physical embodiment of the proletariat triumph over the monarchy.[219] Other undeniable similarities of both buildings include their monumental size, ascription of monument status, and, most interestingly, the fact that both were designed through large architectural competitions.

Architecture's first use has always been of function, a shelter against the elements. As society developed and new technology emerged, architecture went through significant changes to accommodate the growing desire for beauty and new societal needs beyond simple shelter: churches, governmental buildings, libraries, cultural establishments, restaurants, prisons, etc. Generally, official architectural buildings rely on reflecting "both the underlying purposes and the underlying ideology of the political regime,"[220] encompassing within them signs of "power,

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219 Kostyuk, "The Palace of the Soviets," 35.

220 Michael Minkenberg, "Introduction," in *Power and Architecture: The Construction of Capitals, the Politics of Space, and the Space of Politics* (New York City: Berghahn Books, 2014), 2.

wealth, [and] idealism."[221] Through architecture, a political regime can legitimize the new political reality of a nation, as was the case with the 1935 master plan of Moscow.[222] Public spaces, such as the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour and later the Palace of the Soviets, were designed to establish their nation's architectural identity while also serving as political markers; symbols of authority to both citizens and outsiders.

Russia, never seeming to shake the label of 'the outsider' when it came to the Western world, was highly motivated to catch up to the rest of Europe, first with the industrial revolution and later with architecture. This desire was also fuelled by the rise of skyscrapers in America, projecting power through the built environment. The focus on the politicization of architecture stems from the reality of urbanization, with the city becoming the centre of politics and government.[223] A city's architectural identity is expected to reflect both its national identity[224] and its "political regime type."[225] This particularly applies to capital cities, which seek out monumental architecture to shape their country's national identity.[226] Monuments become historical anchors for interpreting history and identity.[227] Kirk Savage, professor of art history

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221 Minkenberg, "Introduction," 2.

222 Marina Dmitrieva, "Moscow Architecture between Stalinism and Modernism," *International Review of Sociology* 16, no. 2 (2006), 428.

223 Minkenberg, "Introduction," 5.

224 I use the definition of national identity provided by Anthony D. Smith, as applied by Maria Markova to the context of Russian national identity: "[There are] two different types of national identities, civic and ethnic. The former is a Western conception of national identity and emphasises territory and is defined as involving 'some sense of a political community' which implies common institutions, common rights and duties and a bounded territory with which citizens identity with and feel they belong to. Citizens are united 'by common historical memories, myths, symbols and traditions.' In contrast, a non-Western, ethnic national identity emphasises common descent. Both identities are often mentioned in discussions on Russian national identity." See: Maria Markova, "The Political Use of Soviet Nostalgia to Develop a Russian National Identity," *E-International Relations*, July 14, 2020, https://www.e-ir.info/2020/07/14/the-political-use-of-soviet-nostalgia-to-develop-a-russian-national-identity/.

225 Minkenberg, "Introduction," 9.

226 Minkenberg, "Introduction," 6.

227 Ekaterina V. Haskins, "Russia's Postcommunist Past: The Cathedral of Christ the Savior and the Reimagining of National Identity," *History and Memory* 21, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2009), 28.

and architecture, writes: "Public monuments are important precisely because they do in some measure work to impose a permanent memory on the very landscape within which we order our lives,"[228] meaning monuments permeate our collective memory,[229] as done by the Cathedral and the Palace in post-communist Russia. Monuments can simultaneously serve as "aesthetic manifestations of dominant cultural and ideological positions"[230] all the while "[contesting] the past they are intended to cement."[231] As an attempt to re-shape Russia's identity, in 1918, the capital of Russia was moved back to Moscow from St. Petersburg, with Moscow eager to re-establish itself as the most prominent city. The movement of capital cities, paired with the Russian Revolution, opened a space for a new national identity – an opportunity to distance the radical new Russia from the antiquated practices of the previous regime, propelling the project of the Palace of the Soviets.

Although never built, the Palace of the Soviets was a well-known and important project in the collective psyche. There was a massive advertising campaign involving the Palace: it appeared in the children's film *Kosmicheskii Reis* ("Cosmic Voyage") in 1935, sold in chocolate form, and the model of the Palace toured the country.[232] Its image circulated so widely; it seemed already built.[233] It became a familiar figure. The Palace of the Soviets' monument status served

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228 Kirk Savage, "The Politics of Memory: Black emancipation and the Civil War Monument," in Gillis, ed. *Commemorations*, 143. Quoted in Haskins, "Russia's Postcommunist Past," 28.

229 Cultural theorist Svetlana Boym provides a definition of collective memory which corresponds with my own definition and understanding of this term, as applied throughout my thesis: "Collective memory will be understood here as the common landmarks of everyday life. They constitute shared social frameworks of individual recollections. They are folds in the fan of memory, not prescriptions for a model tale. Collective memory, however, is not the same as national memory, even when they share images and quotations. National memory tends to make a single teleological plot out of shared everyday recollections." See: Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 159.

230 Haskins, "Russia's Postcommunist Past," 52.

231 Haskins, "Russia's Postcommunist Past," 52.

232 Zubovich, *Moscow Monumental*, 93.

233 Zubovich, *Moscow Monumental*, 93.

both to establish the Soviet Union on the world stage and strengthen its presence and importance in the eyes of its citizens.

The same monument element concerns the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. Both Tsar Alexander and later Tsar Nicholas I envisioned the Cathedral becoming a powerful symbol that would elevate the Russian Empire. Tsar Alexander wanted the Cathedral, according to Vitberg's ecumenical design, to symbolize a unification of Russia with the rest of Europe, while Tsar Nicholas, with Ton's development of a Russian architectural style, wanted to situate the Russian Empire in opposition to the West.[234] Just like the Palace was to become a monument to the Soviet regime, displaying its power, the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour was a war memorial and the new symbol of Orthodoxy in Russia, showcasing the Russian Empire's power vis-à-vis the West. Although differing significantly in height, the Cathedral standing at 103 metres and the Palace, which was to reach 415 metres, their large and towering size were both meant to signify dominance and ambition.

Both the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour and the Palace of the Soviets had a large dome that centralized their structure and created the monumental aspect ascribed to both buildings. The choice of domes in both structures was highly symbolic. For the Cathedral, the dome held spiritual symbolism: a metaphor for an ascension towards heaven and God. Deeply ingrained in the Byzantine and later Russian church styles, the dome became an indispensable characteristic. In the concluding text to *Visions of Heaven: The Dome in European Architecture,* Victoria Hammond explains that since the dome's initial form as a primitive shelter, it held the symbolism of the celestial realm, a symbolism that permeated across cultures and religions.[235] The Romans

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234 Akinsha et al., *The Holy Place*, 48.

235 Victoria Hammond, "The Dome in European Architecture," in *Visions of Heaven: The Dome in European Architecture* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005), 190.

developed the construction of larger domes, which required concrete, allowing for greater flexibility which resolved any problems of collapse.[236] Roman structural engineering allowed for domes to become a staple of Byzantine architecture. In the tenth century, Russia's adoption of Orthodox Christianity included Byzantine art and architecture. Hammond writes that the dome was replaced by the skyscraper in the early twentieth century, also reaching towards the heavens, coinciding with the Palace replacing the Cathedral. Historian William Seale argues that the dome is a symbol of democracy and legislative power when writing about governmental structures in the United States.[237] In a secular setting, the dome represents power and often occupies a central place in the building, highlighting the importance of the space it covers, as can be seen in the Palace of the Soviets.[238]

As is typical in the Russian Church style, the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour had five onion domes decorating its exterior, with the largest dome at its centre and visible from the inside. Along with the five domes, the Cathedral included four pillars and façade arches, drawing inspiration from traditional Russian cathedrals and Byzantine temples.[239] The large dome had a wide drum, and the four smaller domes, with corresponding smaller drums, housed the bell towers.[240] Additions and changes were made throughout the construction process of the Cathedral, including the addition of ribbing to the domes of the bell towers.[241] The base of the

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236 Hammond, "The Dome in European Architecture," 163.

237 William Seale, "Symbol as Architecture," *Design Quarterly*, no. 94/95 (1975): 14.

238 The dome's first use in architecture was shelter, made from animal skin, wood, or clay, such as in igloos, wigwams, and yurts. See: James H. Mitchell, "The Noble Dome," *The Antioch Review* 43, no. 3 (1985): 261-2.

239 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior,* 98.

240 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior,* 99.

241 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior,* 101.

domes was decorated with "a band of keel-shaped *kokoshniki.*"[242] The large dome had 26 arches, which were needed to support the dome.[243] Other major changes to the Cathedral were added in 1851: Ton "surrounded the windows of the drum of the large central dome with an [analogous arcade] circling the façades."[244] He also added a decorative band of *kokoshniki* around the base of the large dome, which now echoed the four smaller ones.[245] The four domes atop the bell towers housed fourteen bells, all decorated with "bas-reliefs, ornamentation, and inscriptions."[246]

The large dome, octagonal in shape, was the main focal point of the Cathedral in its exterior and interior.[247] The large dome usually forms the main part of a church. The inside height of the dome was 68.16 metres, and the height of each of the arms of the cross was 30.8 metres.[248] Another element inspired by the old Russian church style that Ton included in his Cathedral was a two-tiered gallery.[249] The height of the galleries around the dome was smaller but significant: the lower gallery was 9.11 metres and the upper 12 metres.[250] The large dome was also an important light source: it had 16 windows, each 7.81 x 2.13 metres wide.[251] Above the iconostasis were upward-soaring arches supporting the dome.[252] The dome appeared

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242 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior,* 101-102.

243 M. Mostovsky, *Historical Description of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow* (Moscow: Tipografiia M. N. Lavrova, 1883), 54.

244 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 102.

245 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 102.

246 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 103.

247 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 125.

248 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 125.

249 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 99.

250 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 126.

251 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 126.

252 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 133.

unusually lightweight despite its size.[253] The sourcing and preparation of materials for the domes started in 1851. The assembly of the different parts of the domes began in 1853; work progressed as materials became available. [254] All five domes were finalized in 1864.[255] The Cathedral's dome was one of the greatest feats of modern architecture at that time.[256]

The Palace of the Soviets, too, was to have a large dome overlooking the Great Hall. In Iofan's design, the dome acted as the compositional centre of the structure, enveloping the most important and grandiose space of the Palace, which could seat up to 20,000 people. The Great Hall housed a large amphitheatre, including a space full of amenities such as an orator's tribune and a stage for large political and cultural events. Consideration of several technical aspects was paramount for the construction of the Great Hall's dome. One of the challenges faced when designing it was to achieve complete absorption of sound to avoid the formation of echoes.[257]

The Palace's dome, like the Cathedral's, was celestial-themed. The dome was divided into three belts, with lighting fixtures embedded in them, creating the illusion of an open sky for those sitting in the hall.[258] However, in the case of the Palace, the sky did not allude to heaven but rather to infinite possibilities, adding to the overall grandeur of the Great Hall and the structure as a whole. The dome contributed to creating an image of the Great Hall as the embodiment of ideas of shared nationality and the triumph of the different peoples of the Soviet Union.[259] In addition

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253 Mostovsky, *Historical Description of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior,* 54.

254 Mostovsky, *Historical Description of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior,* 55-56.

255 Mostovsky, *Historical Description of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior,* 56.

256 Mostovsky, *Historical Description of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 54.

257 *Architecture of the Palace of the Soviets: Materials of the Plenum of the Board of the Union of Soviet Architects of the USSR.* Moscow: USSR Architecture Academy, 1939, 25.

258 *Architecture of the Palace of the Soviets: Materials of the Plenum,* 30.

259 *Architecture of the Palace of the Soviets: Materials of the Plenum*, 30.

to being similar through architectural components, both domes held the same centralizing role in each structure and were a focal point of their grandiosity.

The domes of both structures overlooked similar features: the Palace's Great Hall contained the tribune and the Cathedral's nave contained the sanctuary platform. The Palace's tribune was a stand where politicians would give speeches to the wider public and hold government meetings. The sanctuary platform of the Cathedral, right below the iconostasis, served a similar function. The priest would stand on the sanctuary platform and give his sermon to his congregation, which would assemble in the nave. Both served to promulgate messages, political or religious, to large groups of people. The audience of the Palace's auditorium would be seated while that of the church would be standing, as per the ROC rules. Both meeting places provided an assembly space, and the gathering in these spaces reflected a certain sense of duty, whether to God or the government. The Great Hall did include an exception to this sense of duty: when used for cultural events it became a place of leisure.

Another similarity emerges in the number of auditoriums and altars in both structures. The Palace had two auditoriums: the larger one housed in the Great Hall and the smaller auditorium in the Small Hall. Shaped in a semicircle due to the requirements of the façade, the small auditorium could seat up to 6,000 people.[260] It was part of the Small Hall complex, which could function independently from the whole building. It had multiple rooms to house diplomatic corps, council meetings, and the technical and financial departments that ran the Palace.[261] Along with official governmental uses, the Small Hall could also be a place for leisurely events.[262] The Cathedral of Christ the Saviour had a similar structure: the main altar, under the large dome, and

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260 *Architecture of the Palace of the Soviets: Materials of the Plenum*, 32.

261 *Architecture of the Palace of the Soviets: Materials of the Plenum*, 29.

262 *Architecture of the Palace of the Soviets: Materials of the Plenum*, 29.

two smaller altars, on the southern and northern side of the temple. Each smaller altar came with its iconostasis and sanctuary platform, along with space for worshipers to gather. The artists working on the Cathedral created icons representing saints and critical historical events for the main altar, dedicated to Christ, and the two side altars, dedicated to St. Nicholas the Miracle Worker and St. Alexander Nevsky. The addition of a smaller auditorium and smaller altars point to the grandiosity and importance of both structures. Instead of icons, the Palace had reliefs and paintings on its walls, which included themes based on Stalin's constitution and the unity of the people of the republics of the union, the revolution, and their leaders.[263]

Everything about the Palace of the Soviets was carefully thought out, including its interiors. The Schusev State Museum of Architecture produced a video where chief curator Maria Kostyuk showcases some never-before-seen sketches and plans of the interiors of the Palace of the Soviets.[264] These drawings date back to the late 1930s and early 1940s. The Council for Construction of the Palace of the Soviets imagined the Palace as a multifunctional space; many design variants were produced to fit the different uses of the Palace. These included common rooms, a music room for orchestra conductors and musicians, green rooms for artists, and rooms for meetings. A sketch of a meeting room presented by Kostyuk bears some resemblance with today's office conference rooms: it has a large red t-shaped table with a bust of Lenin at the helm of the room (Figure 18). The museum's collection includes illustrations of parquets (Figure 19), a door (Figure 20), a door handle, and wallpaper variants (Figure 21). All the interior illustrations included engineering decisions that considered the acoustics, ventilation, and lighting of the Palace. One of the sketches presented included a figure to give an idea of how a person would

263 Kornfeld, "Interiors of the Palace of the Soviets," 40, 41.

264 Maria Kostyuk. "What the Museum Keeps: Interiors of the Palace of Soviets." *Museum of Architecture*. Moscow. 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wB0FWfCvZ6Y&list=WL&index=18.

move inside the space (Figure 22). Iofan and his team of architects and engineers planned out every single aspect of the Palace of the Soviets in detail.

The Cathedral's interior was composed of multiple parts that were heavy with décor. This included "murals, wall decorations, ornamental décor, architectural elements, furnishings, and light fixtures."[265] The paintings of the Cathedral were difficult to illustrate because their subject matter had to showcase eternity and the power of God while being shown in a way that aligned with the dogma of the ROC.[266] The figure and paints were carefully selected for the paintings to appear proportional on the arched and curved dome when looked at from below. In 1854, Ton decided that the Cathedral would be decorated in the Byzantine style to correspond with the façades.[267] Ton's assistant, Alexander Rezanov (1817-1887), implemented these instructions. Designer Lev Dal' (1834-1878), who had a strong affinity for early Russian architecture, was responsible for the design of the ornamentation of the central part of the Cathedral and the planning of the murals and ornamentation of the upper galleries.[268] Rezanov designed the Cathedral's furniture, icon and book stands, icon cases, candlesticks, and other religious paraphernalia.[269] The interior of the Cathedral was a culmination of the work of a group of architects and artists, most of whom were graduates from the Academy of Arts.[270] They made sure there was a correlation between the murals and the furniture of the church, bringing together European and early Russian artistic traditions.[271] The Cathedral's exterior was designed to be in

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265 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 126.

266 Mostovsky, *Historical Description of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 91.

267 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 127.

268 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 128.

269 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 128.

270 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 129.

271 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 129.

harmony with the Kremlin and its surroundings. Intricate façades of both religious and historical subjects, proper for a war memorial, decorated the exteriors of the Cathedral. Both the Palace and the Cathedral had lavish interiors, which contributed to the image of monumentality each structure exhibited with its façades. These interiors were also signs of affluence, showcasing to the West that the Russian Empire, and later the Soviet Union, were at their level.

The Cathedral of Christ the Saviour and the Palace of the Soviets served as emblems for the current government's ideologies and values. As revealed in the first part of this thesis, the Soviet Government attempted to replace the rites of the ROC by creating secular equivalents, but these attempts did not stick. The secular rites promoted by scientific atheism were almost complete copies of the rites performed by the church, but simply under a different name. Oktyabrinas replaced baptisms, Red Weddings replaced church weddings, and the state ensured the removal of any and all religious aspects from funerals. These ceremonies insisted on highlighting the importance of serving their nation and being righteous workers. These new rites were supposed to remove "excessive drinking, debauchery, hooliganism, crime, and economic waste"[272] associated with religious holidays and ceremonies while satisfying the need for ritual and entertainment.

Both the fact that the Soviet government produced secular rites equivalent to those of the ROC and that part of the population continued to practice religious rites in secret point to the continual presence of the ROC and the hold it had on the Russian people, despite the establishment of the atheistic Soviet doctrine. Behaviour towards the ROC changed during the Second World War due to the need to mobilize the Soviet population for the war effort. Religion also came back because it was a time of uncertainty. The ROC remained a constant presence

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[272] Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union,* 66.

throughout the Soviet regime. Its hold on tradition was solid and inescapable, proved by elements of the Russian church style finding themselves in the Palace of the Soviets and the rites perpetuated by scientific atheism being heavily reliant on those of the ROC. The Palace unwillingly held on to aspects of the Cathedral, translating religious features of monumentalism into the secular realm.

## Conclusion

In 2000, almost seven decades after its destruction, the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour reappeared where it once stood. This reconstruction did not happen without political, religious, and artistic disagreements. The new Cathedral attempted to re-establish a sense of Russian national identity and grapple with the nostalgia present in the post-Communist collective memory.[273] The desire to rebuild was also supported by the re-establishment of the ROC as the dominant religion in Russia, encouraged by the government's repatriation of seized ROC land.[274] Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russian President Boris Yeltsin (1931-2007) turned to the ROC for support, as it "controlled a substantial part of the electorate, especially in rural areas."[275] In return, Yeltsin gave the ROC economic and political privileges.[276] The renewal of this alliance can still be seen today with the presence of the patriarch at the presidential inauguration ceremonies, echoing a coronation, which leads to argue that the presence of the

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273 See: Haskins, "Russia's Postcommunist Past: The Cathedral of Christ the Savior and the Reimagining of National Identity," 25–62, and Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

274 Jeremy W. Lamoreaux and Lincoln Flake, "The Russian Orthodox Church, the Kremlin, and Religious (Il)Liberalism in Russia," *Palgrave Communications* 4, no. 115 (2018), 2.

275 Akinsha et al., *The Holy Place*, 152.

276 Akinsha et al., *The Holy Place*, 153.

ROC may still be needed to legitimize the ruler, or at least to get the religious population on board with the ruling government.

The desire for the reconstruction of the Cathedral was first officially announced in September 1994 by the Public Council for Control of the Reconstruction of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour.[277] President Boris Yeltsin answered their request by promising support for the reconstruction. Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov (1936-2019) was closely involved in this project and made sure it was prioritized by Yeltsin.[278] Workers laid the Cathedral's foundation on January 7, 1995, and its construction was completed by September 1997. Criticism surrounded the government's support of the reconstruction of the Cathedral: how can millions of rubles be spent reconstructing a church when the country had a population living under the poverty line? This echoes a sentiment previously felt during the construction of the original Cathedral and subsequently the Palace of the Soviets. Critics, including art historians and architects, asked why this specific church should be restored and not another, and members of the church argued that the government should allocate the funds to build hospitals, orphanages, and prisons.[279] Members of the clergy also feared that the reconstruction of the Cathedral would instate a precedent for future destruction, signalling that "we can destroy and rebuild as we please."[280] Described as "the most prominent manifestation of Tsarist Chauvinism,"[281] by the *Moscow Times,* this project was motivated by the establishment of " 'religion as a symbol', rather than 'religion as a living

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277 Akinsha et al., *The Holy Place*, 154.

278 Mikhail Ivanov, "1931: Razed - 2000: Raised," *Russian Life* 43, no. 4 (August 2000), 19.

279 Akinsha et al., *The Holy Place*, 154.

280 Mark Deich, "Khram Khrista ili pamiatnik meru?" (Cathedral of Christ or monument to the mayor), *Ogonyok*, no. 48–49 (December 1994): 11. Quoted in Haskins, "Russia's Postcommunist Past," 44.

281 D. Popov, "Christ Cathedral Symbolised Tsarist Chauvinism," *Moscow Times*, July 19, 1994. Quoted in Thanos Pagonis and Andy Thornley, "Urban Development Projects in Moscow: Market/State Relations in the New Russia," *European Planning Studies* 8, no. 6 (2000), 759.

tradition and practice.'"[282] Costs for the reconstruction of the Cathedral are estimated to be between US$ 250 and 500 million.[283]

The Cathedral's reconstruction went underway despite the widespread criticism. A vast donation collection pressured everyone to contribute, especially private and foreign companies in Moscow, promising bureaucratic turmoil to their business if they refused to donate.[284] Another enticement for donations was the inclusion of donors' names on memorial plaques to be installed inside the Cathedral.[285] Besides large donations from businesses, 25 million citizens pitched in for the reconstruction.[286]

Sculptor Zurab Tsereteli (b.1934) oversaw the reconstruction project. He inherited it after the mayor dismissed architect Alexei Denisov (n.d.) for not following his wishes.[287] Denisov argued for an authentic reconstruction of the Cathedral, while Tsereteli had a more practical approach. Undeniably expensive, the reconstruction did not use the same materials as in the original Cathedral and instead opted for cheaper alternatives of durable new technologies.[288] Time pressures requiring the Cathedral to be ready for political events was another factor. [289] For example, acrylic and fluorescent paints replaced oil paint.[290] The ROC was more than happy to accept these scientific innovations so long as they did not contradict the canons nor lower the

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282 Pagonis and Thornley, "Urban Development Projects in Moscow: Market/State Relations in the New Russia," 759.

283 Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church*, 120.

284 Akinsha et al., *The Holy Place*, 156.

285 Akinsha et al., *The Holy Place*, 157.

286 Ivanov, "1931: Razed - 2000: Raised," 19.

287 Ivanov, "1931: Razed - 2000: Raised," 21.

288 Akinsha et al., *The Holy Place*, 159.

289 Akinsha et al., *The Holy Place*, 159.

290 Akinsha et al., *The Holy Place*, 163.

quality of the Cathedral. [291] Another obstacle that caused to stray from the original design was the original façades and paintings of the Cathedral, of which copies were only available through black and white photographs, making exact reconstruction difficult.[292]

This grandiose reconstruction project of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour contains many parts, including the Church of the Transfiguration of Christ, and two small churches dedicated to the Tikhvin Icon of the Virgin Mary and St. Alexis the Man of God, honouring the monastery destroyed to make place for the original cathedral. This large structure also has a museum, a dining room with a 1,500 people capacity, and an auditorium with 1,600 seats.[293] This reconstruction more than surpasses in grandiosity the original Cathedral.

The reconstruction of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour is one of many reconstruction projects following the dissolution of the communist bloc. Countries had to grapple with their "national self-understanding by interpreting anew their historical and cultural heritage."[294] The search for a new identity included the renaming of cities, streets, and destruction of monuments to Communist leaders.[295] Russia had to come to terms with its tsarist and Communist history and the ways it would shape its new national identity. Adherents of Slavophilism considered the destruction of the Cathedral as a "metaphor [for] cultural genocide"[296] by the Communist regime, as it viewed Orthodoxy as an attribute of Russian identity. The destruction was considered by

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291 Akinsha et al., *The Holy Place*, 163.

292 Akinsha et al., *The Holy Place*, 161.

293 Ivanov, "1931: Razed - 2000: Raised," 20.

294 Haskins, "Russia's Postcommunist Past," 25.

295 Haskins, "Russia's Postcommunist Past," 25.

296 Haskins, "Russia's Postcommunist Past," 42.

many "as a symbol of collective suffering."[297] The Russian government later presented this reconstruction project as a symbol of "national atonement and reconciliation."[298]

Monuments shape a country's history and identity.[299] Symbolically ambiguous, the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour becomes a stand-in for the multiple phases of Russian history (tsarist, Communist, or post-communist Russia).[300] It most strongly reflects the reinstatement of the ROC in a post-communist Russia. Architect and historian Dolores Hayden explains the role of urban landscapes vis-à-vis social memories: "when the urban landscape is battered, important collective memories are obliterated. Yet even totally bulldozed places can be marked to restore some shared public meaning, a recognition of the experience of spatial conflict, or bitterness, or despair."[301] Hayden's statement applies to the reconstruction of the Cathedral and Russia's national identity. The rebuilt Cathedral encourages people to look back to its predecessors: the original Cathedral and the never-built Palace of the Soviets, both of which continue to live on in the collective memory of Russians who lived through the Communist period. The Cathedral becomes a monument for the Palace of the Soviets and Ton's Cathedral, while also symbolizing the return to the ROC, Russia's new post-Communist identity.

This thesis only scratches at the surface of the relationship between the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour and the Palace of the Soviets. Western scholarship does not widely discuss their relationship and impact. They can serve as a case study when looking at the physical

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297 Haskins, "Russia's Postcommunist Past," 42.

298 Haskins, "Russia's Postcommunist Past," 42.

299 Haskins, "Russia's Postcommunist Past," 28.

300 Katherine Eady, "The Reconstruction of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour: Public Space and National Identity in Post-Soviet Moscow," *University of Toronto Art Journals* 2 (August 4, 2009), 3.

301 Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 9. Quoted in Eady, "The Reconstruction of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour: Public Space and National Identity in Post-Soviet Moscow," 3.

reconciliation of religious and governmental structures in other countries. The goal of striving to achieve a national architectural style no longer resonates in the twenty-first century, as most new city buildings often follow the skyscraper structure to solve the problem of high-density urban populations. This leads to question whether the reconstruction of the Cathedral was a wasteful architectural attempt since the only innovation presented was in terms of materials and not design. Not to mention the funding, which could have better use in other community-based structures, such as hospitals or schools. Both Palace and Cathedral are stand-ins for unity, vessels bringing a community together. The Palace's adoption of the Cathedral's elements perhaps does not completely stem from religion but simply from a universal need for community and unity, with the similar elements in both structures necessary to showcase the magnitude of each structure.

The sense of community completely shifted across the world in 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic. No longer being able to gather in person, the sense of community became sought after online. This predicament can be telling of the future of grand architectural projects, with grandiose and monumental buildings becoming something of the past, and the design focus shifting to structures catered to the individual. With all these questions considered, there is still research to be done and angles to explore. The Cathedral that stands in Moscow today may no longer reflect the Russian population's values in the same ways as it did in the nineteenth century, due to the changing relationship with the ROC and the wider presence and growing acceptance of other religious denominations. An ambitious reconstruction project, the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour regained its place near the Kremlin – but who knows what architectural revolutions future political changes might bring on, with another structure taking the Cathedral's place someday.

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**Figures**

Figure 1 – Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, designed by architect Konstantin Ton. Photograph by N. A. Naydenov from *Cathedrals, Monasteries and Churches. Part II: White City* (1882). Image source: http://www.temples.ru/show_picture.php?PictureID=1500

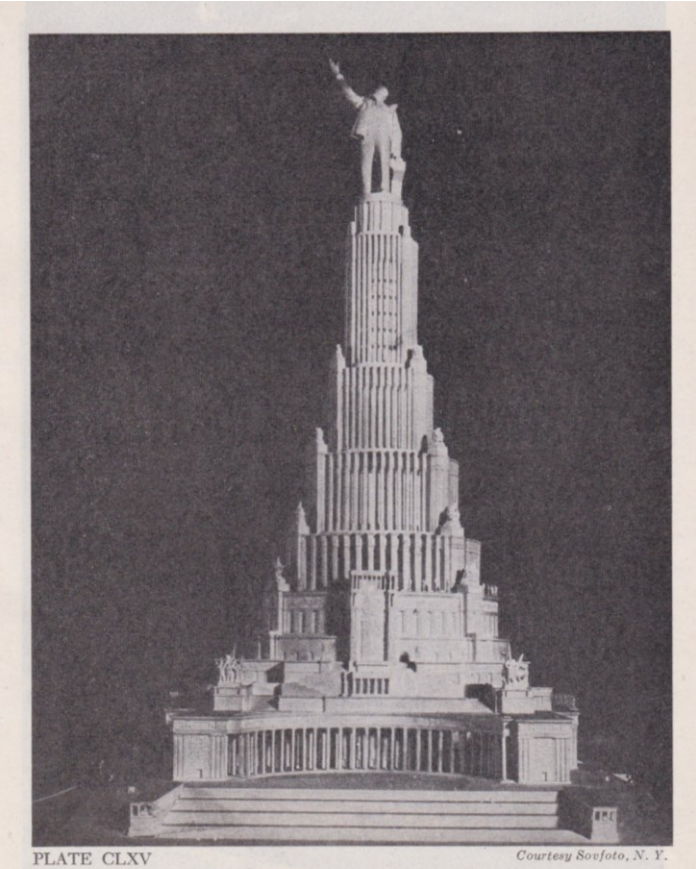


Figure 2 – Palace of the Soviets Model, 1934. Photograph from Arthur Voyce, *Russian Architecture: Trends in Nationalism and Modernism* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948), 268.

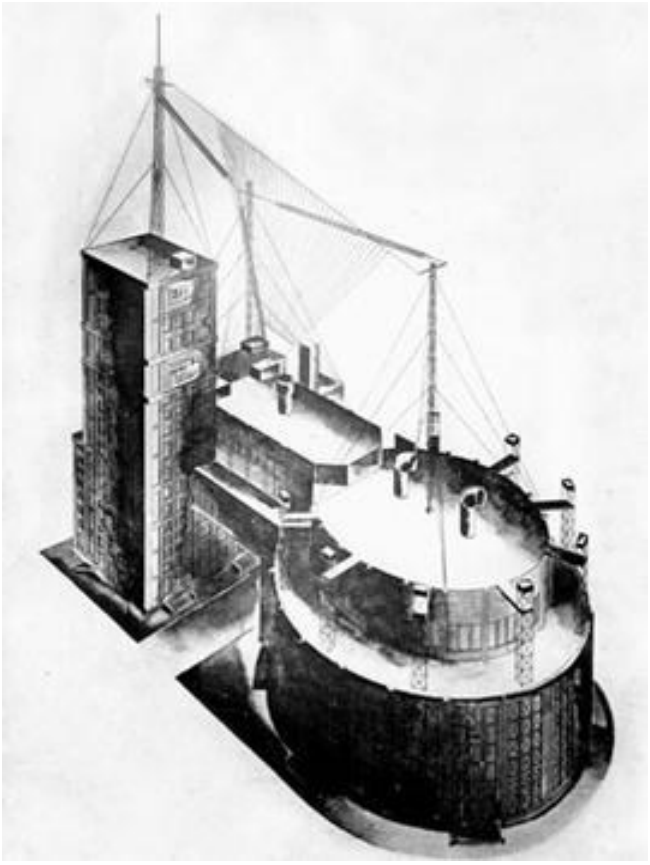

Figure 3 – Vesnin brothers' entry for the design of the Palace of Labour. Photograph from Selim Khan-Magomedov, *Alexander Vesnin and Russian Constructivism* (University of Michigan: Rizzoli, 1986), 219.

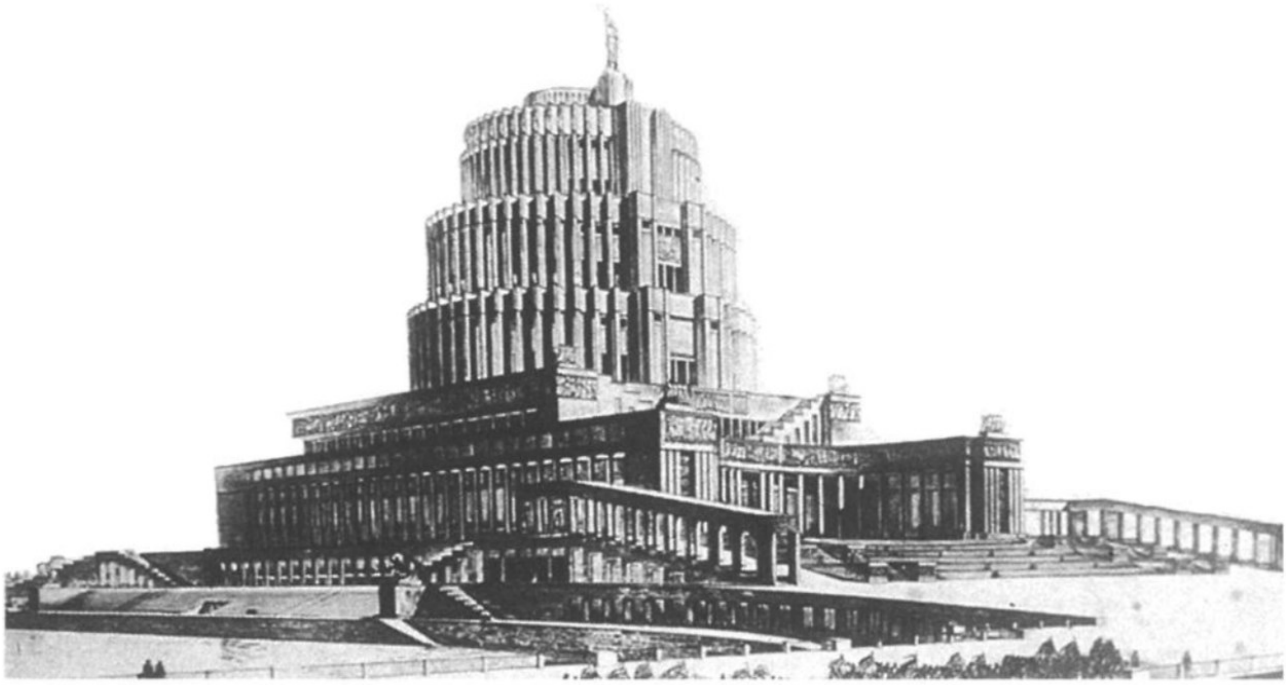

**Figure 11.** ***Winning entry by B. M. Iofan from the Second Closed Competition (Stage Four), 1933.*** **Courtesy of the Shchusev Museum of Architecture, Moscow.**

Figure 4 – Boris Iofan's winning design for the Competition of the Palace of the Soviets, in 1933. Photograph from Sona Stephan Hoisington, "'Ever Higher': The Evolution of the Project for the Palace of Soviets," *Slavic Review* 62, no. 1 (Spring 2003), 56.


Figure 5 – Open-air pool designed by Dmitrii Chechulin, in 1958-1960. Photograph author unknown. Image source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moskva_Pool#/media/File:Schwimmbad_Moskwa.jpg

Figure 6 – Reconstructed Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, 1995-2000. Photograph author unknown. Image source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cathedral_of_Christ_the_Saviour#/media/File:Moscow_July_2011-7a.jpg)

Figure 7 – Malevich, Kazimir. *Black Square* (1915). Oil on linen, 79.5 x 79.5 cm. Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Image source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Square_(painting)#/media/File:Kazimir_Malevich,_1915,_Black_Suprematic_Square,_oil_on_linen_canvas,_79.5_x_79.5_cm,_Tretyakov_Gallery,_Moscow.jpg

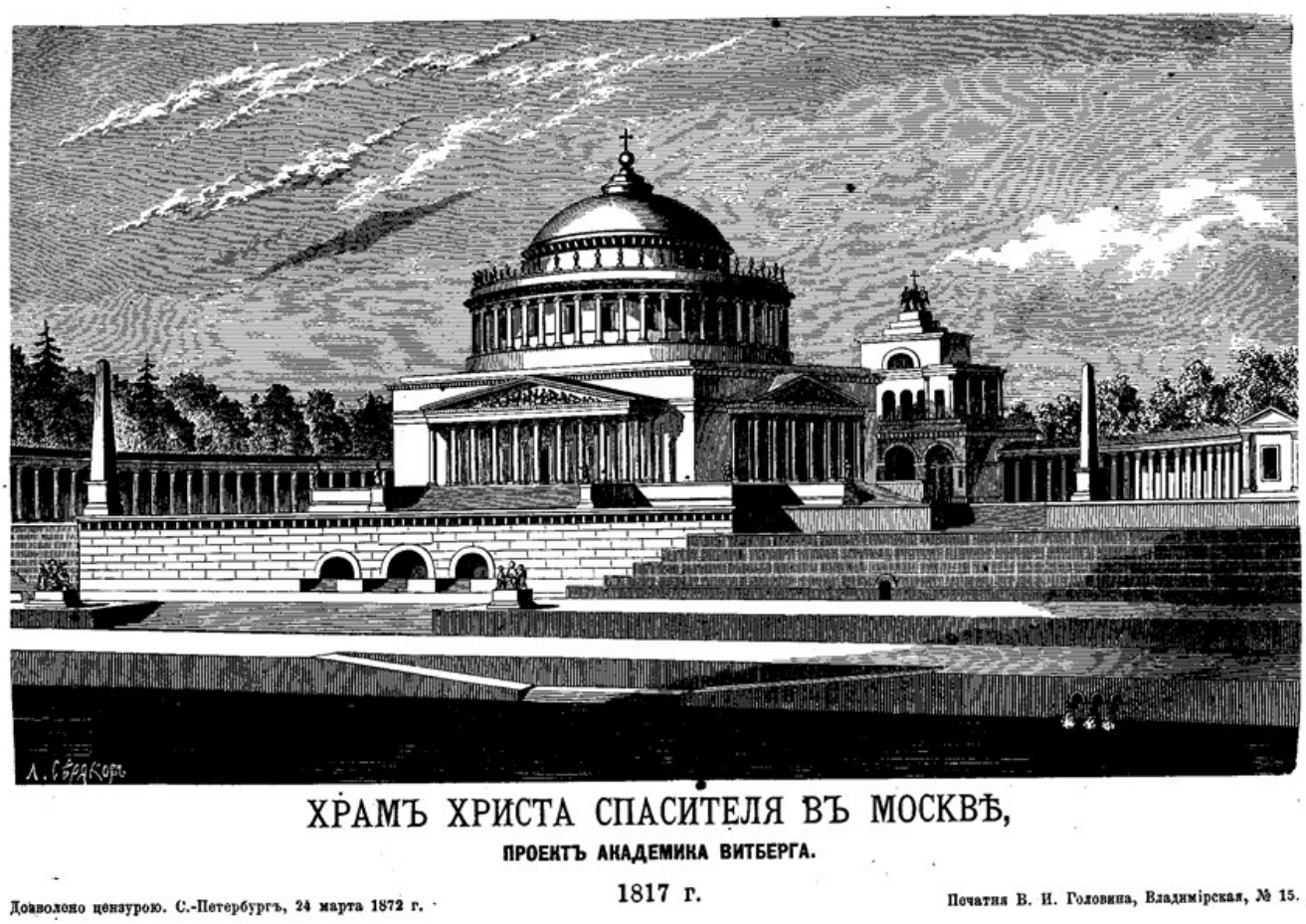


Figure 8 – 1872 engraving of Alexander Vitberg's design for the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow. Image source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vitberg_Cathedral.gif?uselang=ru

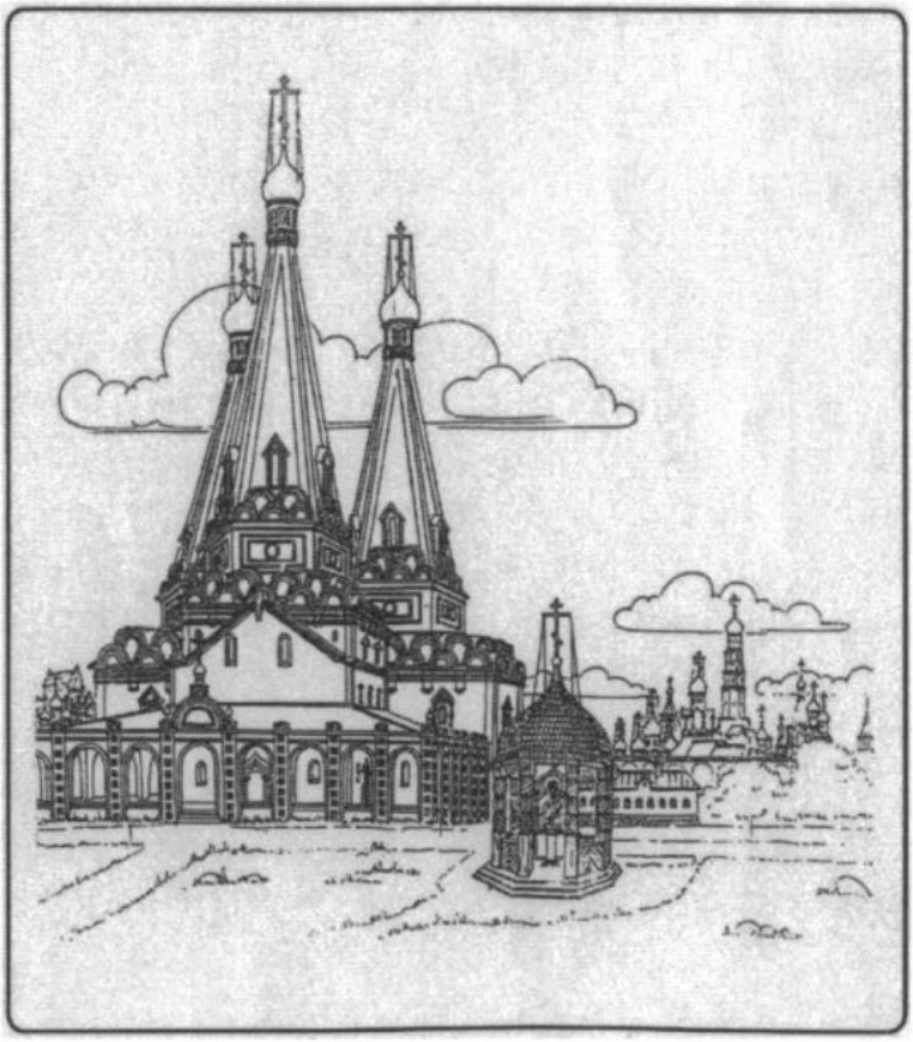

**Figure 5.** The Cathedral of the Transfiguration of the Convent of Alexius the Man of God. Reconstructed image by M. P. Kudriavtsev. Source: Moscow Patriarchate's "Arkhkhram" (1995: 121).

Figure 9 – The Convent of St. Alexius the Man of God, founded in 1360. Photograph from Dmitri Sidorov, "National Monumentalization and the Politics of Scale: The Resurrections of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90, no. 3 (September 2000): 556.

Figure 10 – General plan of the temple with a mosaic floor. Photograph from book *Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow. Moscow*, n.d. Publication information unknown.

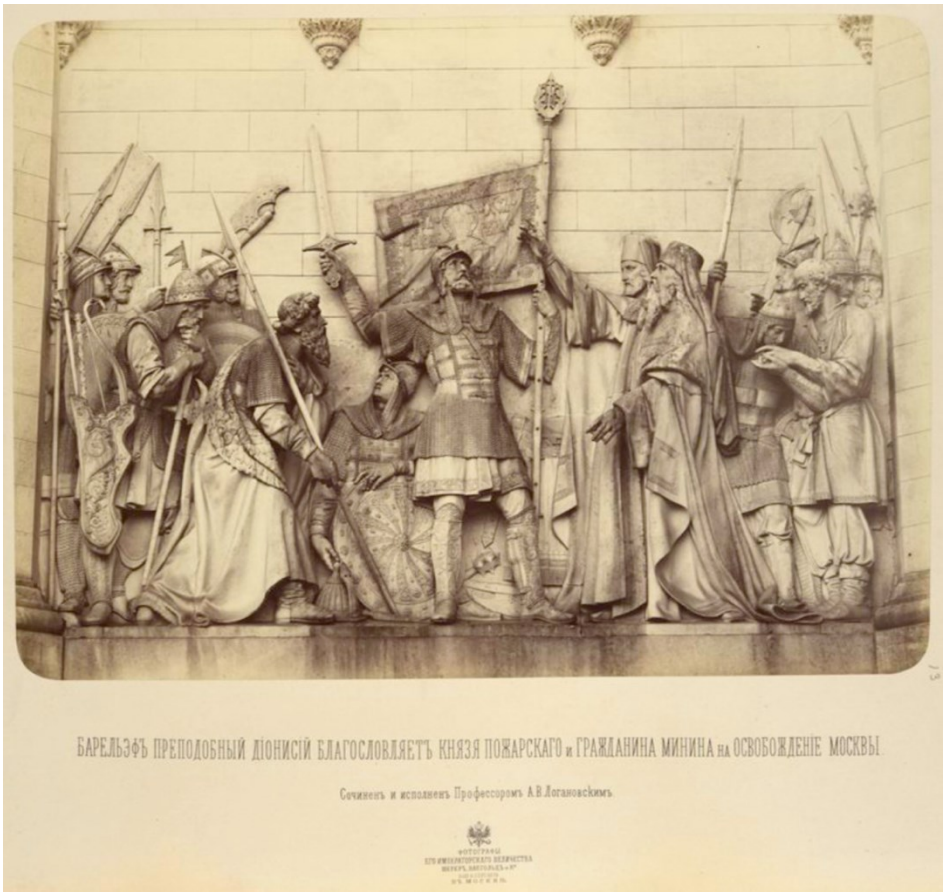


Figure 11 – The western façade of the Cathedral. Photograph from book *Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow. Moscow,* n.d. Publication information unknown.

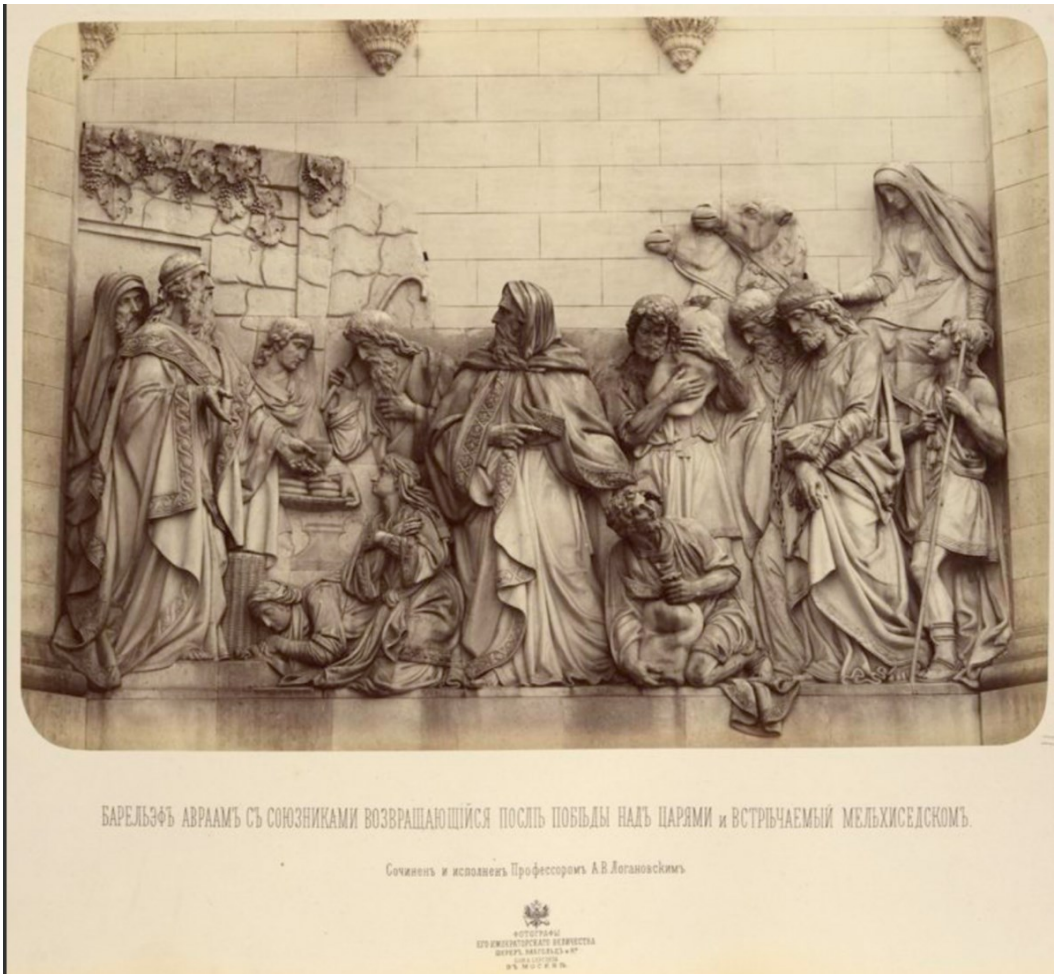


Figure 12 – The southern façade of the Cathedral. Photograph from book *Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow. Moscow,* n.d. Publication information unknown.

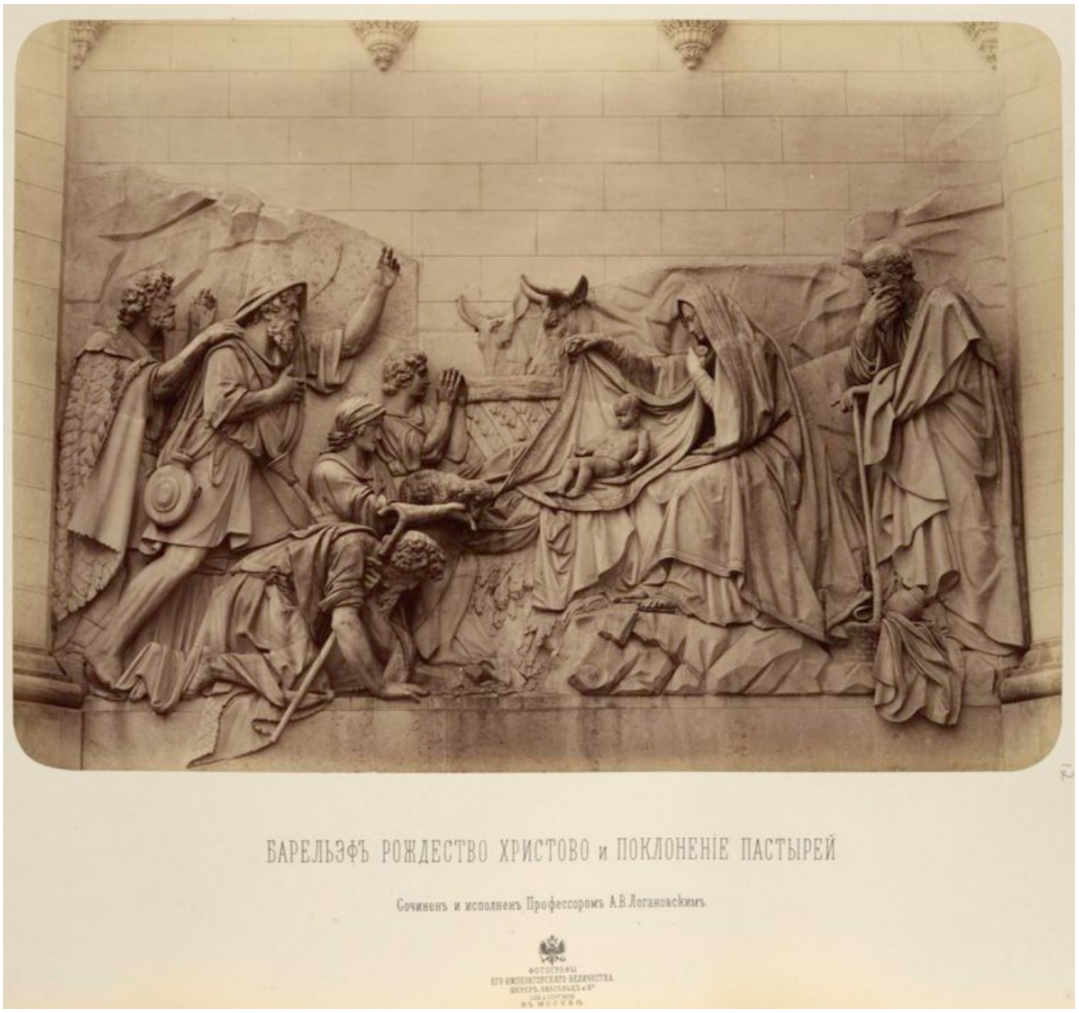


Figure 13 – The eastern façade of the Cathedral. Photograph from book *Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow. Moscow,* n.d. Publication information unknown.


Figure 14 – The northern façade of the Cathedral. Photograph from book *Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow. Moscow,* n.d. Publication information unknown.

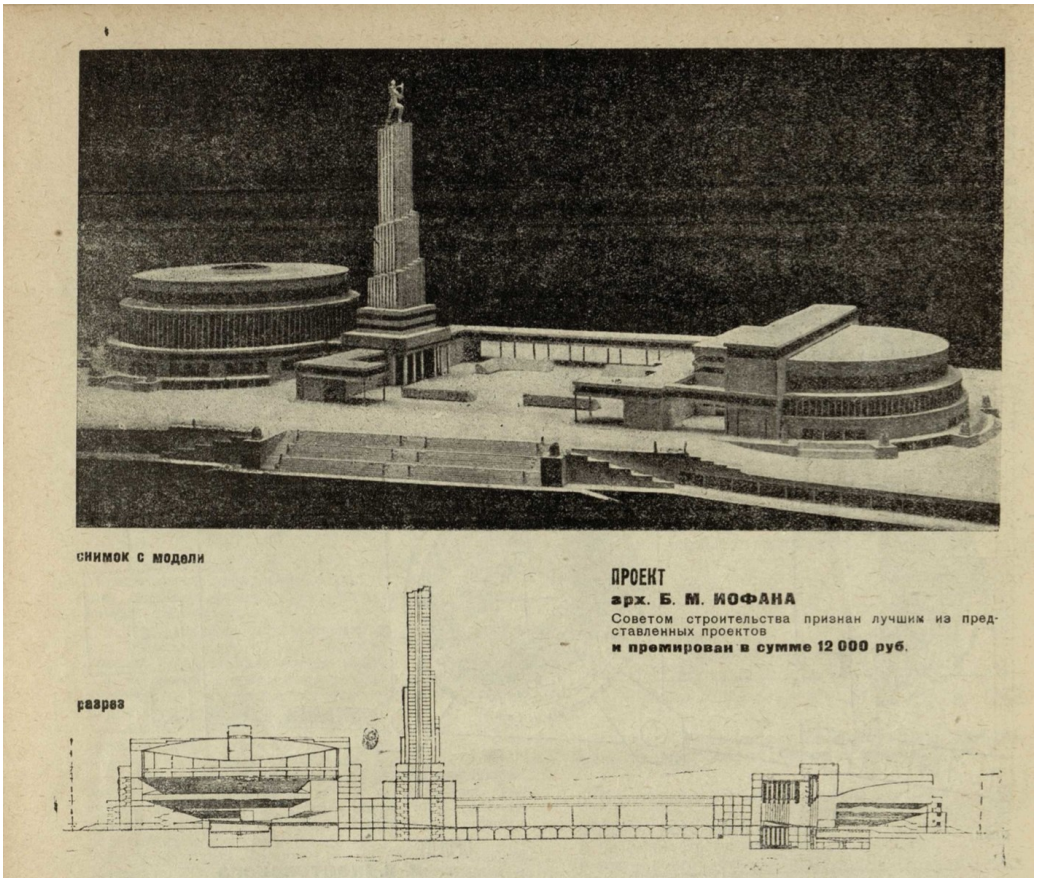


Figure 15 – The design submitted by Boris Iofan for the preliminary closed competition stage. Photograph and sketch from *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy* no. 3 (February 28, 1932), 14.

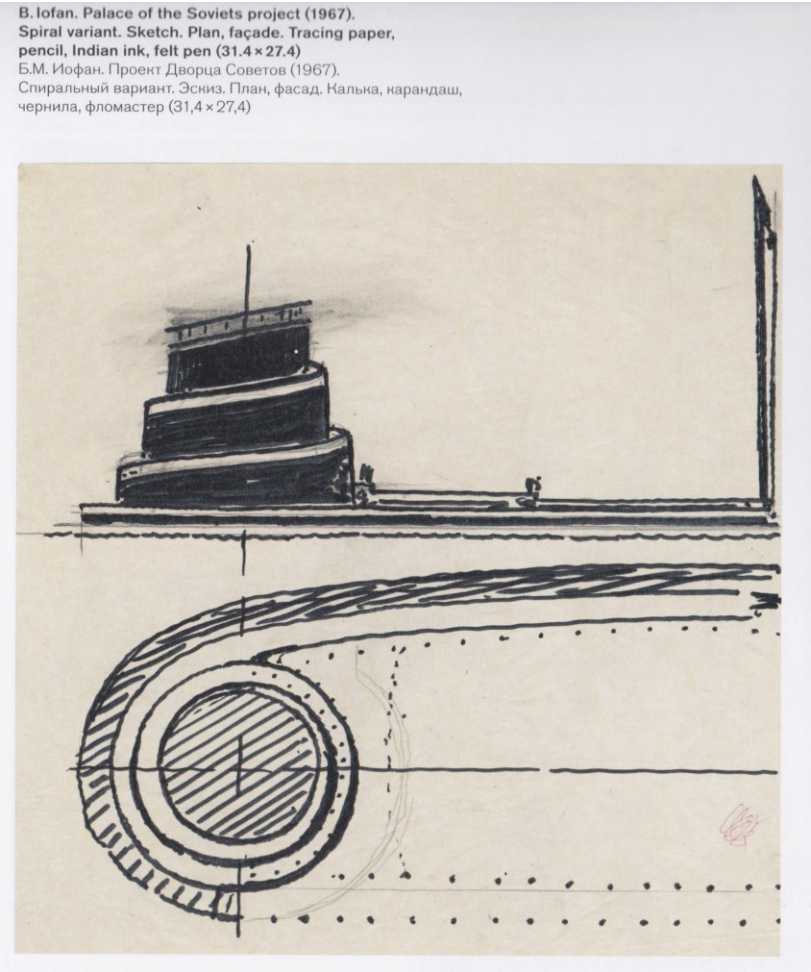


Figure 16 – Another version of his design submitted to the preliminary competition included a tiered spiral tower, replacing the central monumental sculpture of the Soviet worker. Sketch from Maria Kostyuk, *Boris Iofan: Architect behind the Palace of the Soviets* (Berlin: DOM publishers, 2019), 162.


Figure 17 – The Palace of the Soviets by Boris Iofan, Vladimir Shchuko, and Vladimir Gelfreykh. Image from Maria Kostyuk, *Boris Iofan: Architect behind the Palace of the Soviets* (Berlin: DOM publishers, 2019), 140.

Figure 18 – Conference room variation for the Palace of the Soviets. Screenshot from video from Museum of Architecture. *What the Museum Keeps: Interiors of the Palace of Soviets*, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wB0FWfCvZ6Y&list=WL&index=18.

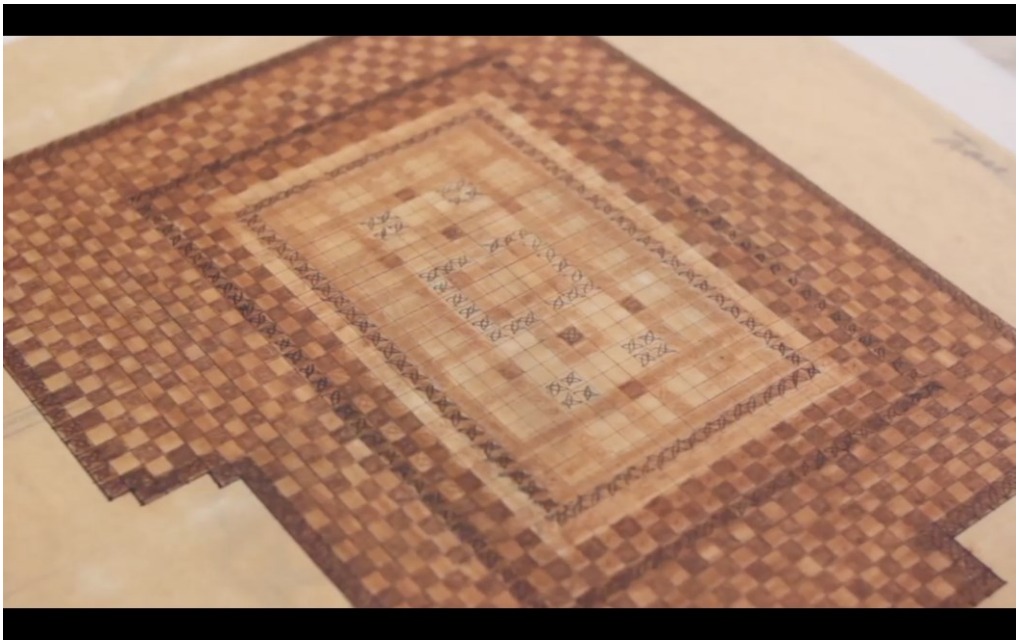

Figure 19 – Parquet variations. Screenshot from video from Museum of Architecture. *What the Museum Keeps: Interiors of the Palace of Soviets*, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wB0FWfCvZ6Y&list=WL&index=18.

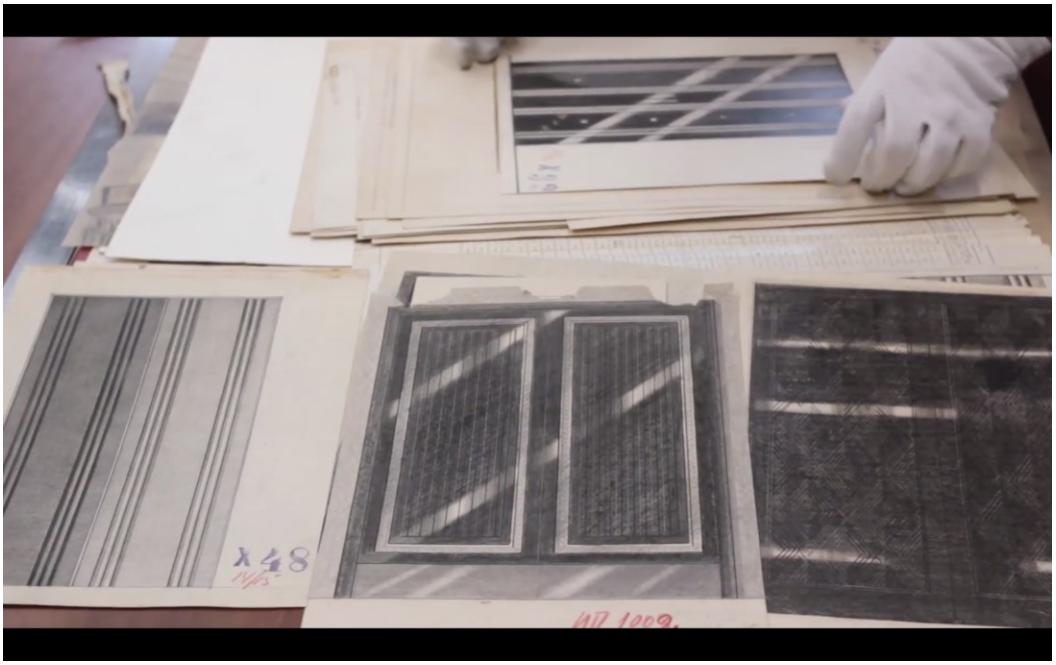

Figure 20 – Door variants for the Palace of the Soviets. Screenshot from video from Museum of Architecture. *What the Museum Keeps: Interiors of the Palace of Soviets*, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wB0FWfCvZ6Y&list=WL&index=18.

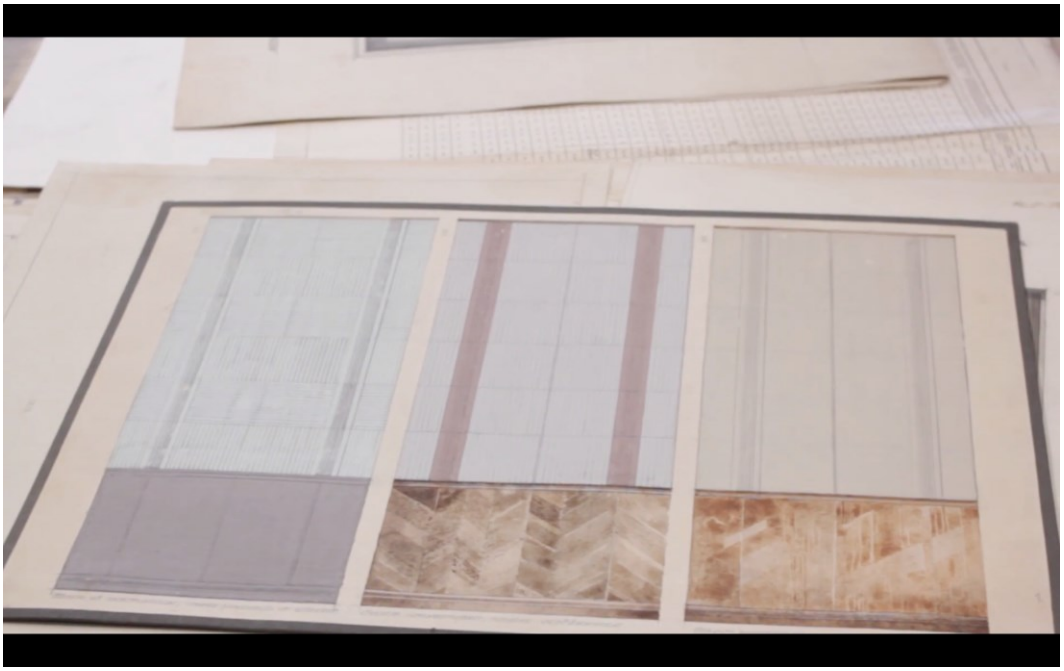

Figure 21 – Wallpaper variants for the Palace of the Soviets. Screenshot from video from Museum of Architecture. *What the Museum Keeps: Interiors of the Palace of Soviets*, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wB0FWfCvZ6Y&list=WL&index=18.

Figure 22 – Illustration of green room. Screenshot from video from Museum of Architecture. *What the Museum Keeps: Interiors of the Palace of Soviets*, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wB0FWfCvZ6Y&list=WL&index=18.