

“Soviet Heritage” from the USSR to Putin’s Russia

Genealogy of a concept

Julie Deschepper

TRANSLATION **Stephen Seizilles de Mazancourt**

IN **VINGTIÈME SIÈCLE. REVUE D’HISTOIRE** 2018/1 No 137 , PAGES 77 TO 98

PUBLISHER **PRESSES DE SCIENCES PO**

ISSN 0294-1759

ISBN 9782724635744

DOI 10.3917/ving.137.0077

Uploaded: 01/25/2018

Article available online at

<https://shs.cairn.info/journal-vingtieme-siecle-revue-d-histoire-2018-1-page-77?lang=en>



Discover the contents of this issue, follow the journal by email, subscribe...
Scan this QR code to access the page for this issue on Cairn.info.



Electronic distribution Cairn.info for Presses de Sciences Po.

You are authorized to reproduce this article within the limits of the terms of use of Cairn.info or, where applicable, the terms and conditions of the license subscribed to by your institution. Details and conditions can be found at cairn.info/copyright.

Unless otherwise provided by law, the digital use of these resources for educational purposes is subject to authorization by the Publisher or, where applicable, by the collective management organization authorized for this purpose. This is particularly the case in France with the CFC, which is the approved organization in this area.

“Soviet Heritage” from the USSR to Putin’s Russia

Genealogy of a concept

Julie Deschepper

The creation of a “Soviet heritage” dates back to the 1930s. Admittedly, the Bolshevik regime that arose from the Revolution put in place a service for the protection of specific monuments as soon as 1918 and brought about the Avant-garde architecture in the 1920s. However, the theory on what can and should be the Soviet heritage was developed in the 1930s—which was also the decade of the great architectural achievements of the USSR, such as the Palace of the Soviets. This article goes back to this founding moment before showing the various ideological and memorial investments of heritage in the USSR until 1991, and in the Russian Federation since 1991, basing itself on examples taken from various cities.

Pyotr Pavlensky, a contemporary Russian artist, is now well-known for his outrageous and controversial political performances, often staging physical abuse¹. On June 8th, 2016, he was prosecuted for setting the doors of the Lubyanka Building on fire. The history held within this building is both heavy and sensitive: a former high authority venue for the political police of Soviet Russia, now the seat of the Russian Intelligence (FSB, the successor

of the KGB). The artist’s aim was to condemn the Federal services with this performance. “The burning door of Lubyanka—a gauntlet thrown down by society in the face of the terrorist threat”, he wrote². As for the authorities who prosecuted him, they seized this opportunity to remind people of the building’s heritage status. Indeed, Pyotr Pavlensky was sentenced for damages done to a historical monument—a decision which *de facto* elevated one of the symbols of the “Soviet civilization³” to the rank of heritage for contemporary Russia. Being referred to as a historical monument rather than an architectural monument⁴, this building was thus classified precisely in the name of what it represented and not for its architectural properties. This recent event may inspire a deeper reflection on the borders, the coherence and the specificity of what is currently identified and referred to as “Soviet heritage” in Russia.

Over twenty-five years after the fall of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the legacy of its civilization—which originated during the October Revolution—remains omnipresent on Russian territory. Those remnants

(1) In 2012, the artist had sewn his lips to protest against the Pussy Riot being arrested. In 2013, he coiled up, naked, in barbed wire in front of the Regional Assembly of Saint Petersburg to condemn homophobia. A few months later, he nailed his scrotum to the cobblestones of the Red Square in a performance he named “Fixation” to condemn the fatalism of the modern Russian society. He has now received asylum in France.

(2) Message published with the video of his performance. See also Isabelle Mandraud, “À Moscou, un artiste enflamme les “portes de l’enfer” de l’ex-KGB”, *Le Monde*, November 9th, 2015.

(3) Jean-Robert Raviot & Taline Ter Minassian, *De l’URSS à la Russie : la civilisation soviétique de 1917 à nos jours. Genèse, évolution, métamorphoses*, Paris, Ellipses, 2006.

(4) The expression to refer to “heritage” in Russian is “monuments of history and culture”, thus implying different categories: historical monuments, artistic monuments, architectural monuments and archeological monuments, etc.

of the past bear history, bring symbolisms to mind, hold an artistic value and hand down traditions, all giving evidence to the need to use a single term to characterize this common legacy in its diversity and specificity: “Soviet Heritage”. The space-time demarcation—the USSR and territory on which it expanded from 1917 to 1991—as well as the ideological framework within which it was produced—Marxism-Leninism—provide a certain coherence to this concept, although covering a multiple reality. In fact, this very multiplicity makes it blurry, controversial, sometimes ineffective, and inevitably leads to nuance and discuss it.

That is why this paper intends to contribute to a long-term genealogy of this concept, although limiting the scope of its study to Russia. More specifically, the idea is to highlight the historical path of the “Soviet Heritage” from the 20th century to our era, from 1917 to 2017, from its creation to its reinvestment.

Following this, my reflection intends to show the way this Soviet heritage is treated and, more precisely, how the built heritage—architecture and monuments –, which is symptomatic of the era, articulates itself around turning points of political and social life in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia and remains a key factor for the assertion and legitimacy of Power. The analysis of the values and the meaning it was progressively attributed, the diversity of actors who took a hold of it, as well as the political uses it has (had) are therefore at the core of my remarks.

In a first instance, the specificity of the Soviet conception of heritage will be examined and emphasized. After being theorized during the Revolution, this specificity indeed immediately saw its application through the heritage decisions taken at the highest State level as soon as November 1917. Then, I will examine the plasticity of the concept and the manifest evolution of what it covers from the second half of the 1960s to the 2000s, especially considering the transition toward a Russian

conception of the Soviet heritage. Finally, at the centennial of the October Revolution, analyzing the latest heritage tendencies in Putin’s Russia will highlight the various reinvestments of the Soviet heritage, and, in this way, its topical importance.

Birth and Creation of a “Soviet heritage”

Soviet Russia quickly established its own heritage, assimilating and reinterpreting the traces of its own past though also looking at its own productions through heritage lenses. Paradoxically, “Soviet heritage” was born during the Soviet era. This specificity should be examined, as much from a factual perspective as from a conceptual perspective.

The “Heritage Revolution”

Heritage awareness emerged prematurely in Russia. Indeed, Anne Kropotkin reminds us that the “notion of heritage develops itself as soon as the 17th and 18th centuries, [when the desire to] protect monuments in the strict sense starts under Nicholas I.” Nevertheless, the first legislative bill only dates back to the early 20th century; and though it was unsuccessful, it already showed a strong desire to organize the protection of heritage.

However, the crucial step in the history of Russian heritage is deeply connected with the 1917 Revolution in Russia. Considering, as Nicolas Werth quite rightly states in his last publication on the Russian Revolutions², that the Revolution that took place in October 1917 should no longer be regarded solely as a rupture but as a turning point set in long-term historical dynamics; the fact remains that in terms of heritage, this Revolution was undeniably a

(1) Anne Kropotkine, “Les ambiguïtés du dégel : que faire du patrimoine culturel ?”, *Cahiers du monde russe*, 47, 2006, p. 269-301, p. 272. Translated from French for this paper.

(2) Nicolas Werth, *Les Révolutions russes*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, Que sais-je ?

defining moment. Beyond this, that event led to a "heritage revolution".

A desire to preserve testimonies of the past oppressors as well as the beauty of Russian culture stems from the intention to annihilate the ancient order. This ambivalent preservation/destruction situation expresses itself in the rejection of prerevolutionary property, and, firstly, of the monuments representing religion and the autocracy; all while encouraging to study, preserve and restore them. Furthermore, knowing that those treasures are a form of wealth¹, Bolsheviks proclaimed on January 20th, 1918 that all Church properties were to be "State properties". Hence a confiscation campaign which started as soon as 1922.

With the same logic, on November 26th—just a few weeks after seizing power in 1917—the Military-Revolutionary Committee of the Congress of Workers' Deputies of Moscow proposed to name a Commissar in charge of preserving the "values of the Kremlin": the artist Konstantin Malevich². Choosing the Kremlin, the embodiment of central power, the heart of Russia, was obviously not a trivial decision. This choice shows their desire to sanction the transfer of sacredness from the tsarist regime to the Bolshevik regime. More than preservation, the stakes here were above all the re-appropriation and reinvestment of power.

Additionally, the violent civil war that raged in Russia coupled with the Red Terror era were valid reasons pushing them to act with urgency in order to contain the wave of destruction of

monuments on the Russian territory. Anatoly Lunacharsky³, first Commissar in charge of the preservation of monuments, wrote on that matter in a text called "Let us preserve the good of the people": "I earnestly appeal all conscientious Russian citizens to proceed with caution regarding the monuments of history and culture, to help protect them for our children and grand-children, and even to repress all forms of destruction or negligence in their regard⁴."

Thus, as soon as Bolshevik Russia came to be, the young State set up a centralized system for the protection of monuments, which was implemented starting March 1918⁵. Heritage conceptualization then started its first phase, to quote a thinking category put forward by Eleazar Baller⁶. This phase consists in the assimilation and the integration of the heritage of previous eras. Lenin indeed wrote: "We can only become communists after having enriched our memory with the knowledge of all the richness ever created by Mankind⁷" and added: "We must seize all culture left to us by capitalism and build socialism on it. We must take all sciences, techniques, all buildings, art. Without it, we cannot build our lives in a communist society⁸." Those sentences, established as references in the field of heritage preservation, acted as a leitmotif to the extent that their author was considered the founder of heritage

(1) On this matter, see also: Anatoly Lunacharsky, *Ob izobrazitel'nom izkustve (On fine arts)*, Moscow, Sovetsky khudozhnik, 1967, p. 52-53.

(2) Nikolaj V. Pereslegin, *Istoria stanovlenia i razvitiia organov arhitekturnovo nasledia Moskvy v kontekste ib vzaimodeistvia s obchestvom v sovetskij period (1917-1991)* [History of the creation and development of protection entities for architectural heritage in Moscow in the context of their interactions with civil society during the Soviet era (1917-1991)], PhD thesis in theory and history of architecture, restoration and reconstruction of cultural architectural heritage, Moscow Institute for Architecture, 2015, p. 18.

(3) On the Narkompros and Lunacharsky's figure, see in particular: Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of enlightenment. Soviet organization of Education and the Arts under Lunacharsky*, Cambridge, Cambridge University press, 1970.

(4) Anatoly Lunacharsky, *Ob iskusstve (On art)*, Moscow, Iskustvo, 1982, t. II, p. 69. Translated from French for this paper.

(5) Within the Commission for artistic and historic goods, a Department for the protection of artistic and ancient heritage was founded, comprising 6 sub-departments (Museums, archives and libraries, paintings, architecture, churches, protection inspection).

(6) E. A. Baller, *Communism and Cultural Heritage...*, *op. cit.*

(7) Quoted by N. V. Pereslegin, *Istoria stanovlenia...*, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

(8) Quoted by David Malinsky, *Muzei i vystavki Moskvy: putevoditel' (Museums and Exhibitions in Moscow: guide)*, Moscow, Moskovskij rabochy, 1947, p. 3.

theories throughout the Soviet era. This being said, those Leninist theories allow us to understand how, in the first instances of Bolshevik Russia, practice and theory were meant to match.

Indeed, ancient monuments were immediately integrated into the heritage of Bolshevik Russia. Beyond that, they were “given back” to the people, who had then become the “absolute master of the country”¹. In 1918, Moscow already counted 628 churches and 687 civil buildings on its heritage lists. This quick and efficient inventory work can be explained in particular by the more-or-less voluntary presence of heritage professionals on the various commissions: they saw this as a unique opportunity to study those buildings². Nevertheless, the number of monuments on those lists progressively decreased, and reached only 296 churches and 438 civil buildings in 1926 and 125 monuments in 1932³. This drastic decrease not only reflects a more precise theoretical framework for the protection of heritage, limiting the possibility of adding monuments,⁴ but also the growing destructions symbolized by the blasting of the Cathedral of the Christ the Savior on December 5th, 1931—a spectacular act for both its physical and its symbolic violence.

Moreover, these prerevolutionary monuments saw their capitalist component taken

away, to be set into a new ideological system: Marxism-Leninism; and into an eponymous interpretation of history. They were given at the same time new values and new meanings, notably that of historical continuity and ideological rupture. A certain number of religious monuments were thus progressively turned into museums, converted into Religion and Atheism museums (Kazan Cathedral, Leningrad, 1932), into Antireligion museums (Saint Isaac Cathedral, Leningrad, 1930)⁵, or even into a stockroom for theater decors and costumes (Lutheran Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Leningrad, 1938). All in all, the heritage policy led as much to valorize and study ancient heritage as it led to its—sometimes violent—annihilation.

This paradox, which puts tension between appropriation and rejection, destruction and protection of the heritage is, *de facto*, a symptom that the Russian Revolution and the French Revolution have in common⁶. Both heritage revolutions led to similar behaviors: vandalism (neologism first used by Abbé Grégoire in 1793⁷), iconoclasm, semioclasm⁸, confiscation, as well as a desire to preserve the heritage. On the other hand, the fundamental difference that can separate those two phenomena resides in Russia’s very strong will to create throughout the entire Soviet era.

(1) Quote by Jean-Michel Palmier, *Lénine, l'art et la révolution*, Paris, Payot, 2006, p. 442. Translated from French for this paper.

(2) Julie Deschepper, “Between Future and Eternity: A Soviet conception of heritage”, *International Journal of heritage studies*, Special issue “Heritage, Revolution and the Enduring Politics of the Past” edited by Pablo Alonso González, Margaret Comer, Tim Crowley and Dacia Viejo-Rose. DOI: 10.1080/13527258.2018.1467949.

(3) Data provided by N. V. Pereslegin, *Istoria stanovlenia...*, *op. cit.*

(4) See for example the decree by the VSTIK and the Congress of People’s Deputies of 7 January 1924 on “The study and protection of monuments of art, antiquity and nature”. See also the following archive groups: Gosudarstvennyy arkhiv Rossiyskoy Federatsii (GARF), f. A-2307, op. 1 et f. A-2306, op. 2, op. 3, op. 28.

(5) Two examples used by Anne Kropotkine, « Les ambiguïtés du dégel... », *op. cit.*, p. 276. For more information on the newly-created museums, see in particular D. L. Malinskiy, *Muzei i vystavki Moskvy...*, *op. cit.*

(6) On the link between heritage and Revolution in France, see in particular: Jean-Yves Andrieux & Fabienne Chevallier, *Le Patrimoine monumental: sources, objets et représentations*, Rennes, Rennes University Press, 2014; Dominique Poulot (dir.), *Une histoire du patrimoine en Occident, XVIII^e-XX^e: du monument aux valeurs*, Paris, PUF, 2006.

(7) Bronislaw Baczo, “Vandalisme”, in Mona Ozouf & François Furet (dir.), *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française*, Paris, Flammarion, “Champs”, 2007, p. 507.

(8) Quote by Emmanuel Fureix inviting us to overcome iconoclasm and to reflect on the meanings invested into monument destructions. Emmanuel Fureix, *Iconoclisme et révolutions de 1789 à nos jours*, Ceyzérieu, Champ Vallon, 2014, p. 17.

The Decree of April 1st, 1918 "On the removal of imperial monuments and on the production of a monument project for the Russian Socialist Revolution" is testimony to this double logic which characterizes the Bolshevik government. A construction program for new monuments was quickly implemented, giving Russia the title of State with Statuomania—to quote the expression used by Maurice Agulhon¹. The statues needed to be erected in the image of revolutionary figures, philosophers or figures of culture (Spartacus, Danton, Lomonosov, Tolstoy, Scriabin, Chopin, etc.)².

The Revolution thus sparked radically new types of expression and generated a "Soviet aestheticism"³. Architecture and monuments from this era were born in a new artistic movement and above all held revolutionary ideals within their creation. Anatoly Lunacharsky did insist on the idea that "The revolution [was] mainly awaiting the development of arts as an ideology⁴." Avant-garde buildings are a good example of these dynamics. Their architects extolled the desire to create new lifestyles (*novyi byt*)⁵, in an experimental aestheticism, echoing the Marxist-Leninist theories which reached their peak in day-to-day life⁶ all while contributing to the construction of socialism in all areas. For example; collective housing, workers' clubs, buildings linked to the country's industrial and technical development, etc.⁷

(1) French: "État statuomane". Maurice Agulhon, *Marianne au combat : l'imagerie et la symbolique républicaines de 1789 à 1880*, Paris, Flammarion, 1979. Translated from French for this paper.

(2) J.-M. Palmier, *Lénine, l'art et la révolution*, op. cit., p. 442.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 9-11.

(4) A. Lunacharsky, *Ob iskusstve...*, op. cit., p. 103.

(5) Claire Thouvenot, "Architecture constructiviste, quotidien et culture révolutionnaire", *Période*, 16 July 2016, <http://revueperiode.net/architecture-constructiviste-quotidien-et-culture-revolutionnaire/>.

(6) For a summary, see Anna Bronovitskaya, "Glimpses of Today in Visions of Russian Avant-Garde Architects", *Modernism: Between Nostalgia and Criticism*, 2013, p. 71-82.

(7) See Nikolay Vassiliev & Elena Ovsianikova (dir.), *Arkhitektura Moskovy perioda NEPA i pervoy pyatiletki, Putivoditel*

This way, architecture was progressively vested with a deep meaning by and for the Soviet regime. As a matter of fact, these monumental and architectural creations must be understood as ideological productions as much as ideology producers.

The Soviet Conception of Heritage

The logic of integration and reinvestment of the past into a clear ideological perspective progressively drifted towards a logic of heritage investment into Revolution monuments. The latter did receive particular attention: their preservation, restoration and development were undoubtedly a strong political stake⁸. This led onto a new phase of the conceptualization of heritage.

This turning point is symbolized by the creation of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for the protection of the monuments of art, culture and of the Revolution, on August 20th, 1932⁹. The endless amendments to heritage lists and institutional changes are an obstacle for anyone trying to obtain set lists, yet legal texts show that the idea was to add monuments, and sculptures in particular, which reflect all the achievements of socialism. This Committee took for granted the idea that any Revolutionary monument could be considered as a part of the national historical heritage of Soviet Russia, therefore showing they were aware of the heritage dimension of the authorities' new creations. For that matter, let us remind that heritage represents a source of legitimacy of the latter since it allows control on the historical and historiographical narrative.

(The Moscow Architecture of the NEP era and the first five-year plan: guide), Moscow, ABCdesign, 2014.

(8) Gilles Mametz, "Une bureaucratie monumentale : analyse du système de gestion des biens de patrimoine culturel immobiliers russes à l'exemple de Saint-Pétersbourg", PhD thesis in political science, University Grenoble Alpes, September 2013, p. 238.

(9) Protocol n°55 of the VTSIK meeting on 20 August 1932, GARF, f. 1235, op. 45, d. 56.

Furthermore, while heritage changes the status of the appointed object, it vests power into the person seizing it¹. In addition, the heritagization phenomenon always reflects the prevailing ideology²; and this seems even truer when the latter is officially elevated as a society project. In this mindset, the construction of socialism—both literally and figuratively—determined the country’s heritage policy, as much as its artistic and cultural policies: heritage was placed at the service of this ideology. In the light of this last remark, we can see the significance of heritage as a political tool for the Bolshevik regime.

The specificity of USSR heritage resides in the radically reduced timeline between the construction of monuments and their heritagization. This is why the idea of a Soviet conception of heritage can be mentioned. This idea was fundamentally connected to the time and space that belonged to the Soviet Union. Resolutely forward-looking, contemplating a beaming future in its desire to build a universal civilization as much as eternal socialism, the Soviet Union set itself in a historicity regime exclusively linked to “futurism”³. The notions of present, past and future were thus blurred, to only let one temporality emerge—seen as a “present in the future”. By suggesting the idea of a Soviet conception of heritage, I am here appropriating the guidelines of *Critical Heritage studies* that extol decentration of the heritage issue compared with the legal norms put in place in the West to better analyses each heritage conception in a given space-time and for its originality.

Monuments built as early as the 1920s were meant to leave a legacy for a future thought

as a communist future. Colossal projects were undertaken during the 1930s, such as the Palace of the Soviets, the construction of which required the destruction of the Cathedral of the Christ Savior. Those projects were so ambitious that they were abandoned. The construction of Stalin’s “Seven Sisters”⁴ drew the new face of a capital raising itself to the sky. These examples illustrate this well. Moreover, the terminology used to refer to the buildings, especially the term “palace” must be seen as the reflection of a desire to represent the greatness of the socialist project, to turn it into a museum, if not a sanctuary. The Soviet conception of heritage thus enables to examine the heritage value of objects without the notion of protection. To use the now famous trio of values put forward by Alois Riegl in his *Modern Cult of Monuments*, this conception would thus base itself on an undeniable superiority of the historical value, that of a history written in the future tense, over the virtue of age, which usually prevails⁵.

Therefore, the start of the 1920s is characterized by a structuration of heritage services and by the first creations that come from the Revolution, whereas the 1930s are placed under the sign of institutional reforms, of a radical change of style in all artistic sectors, and the assertion of a conception of heritage specific to the USSR⁶. The Great Patriotic War (the Second World War, as it is called in Russia) also played a key role since it generated a burst of heritage awareness, forcing the country to make new decisions in terms of reconstruction

(4) The seven buildings are the following: Lomonosov University building (1953), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1953), Tower of the Soviet Ministry for Heavy Industry (1953), Leningrad hotel (1953), Ukraine hotel (1955), housing building on the Kotelnicheskaya river bank (1952), housing building on the Kudrinskaya square (1954).

(5) Alois Riegl, *Le Culte moderne des monuments : son essence, sa genèse*, Paris, Seuil Editions, 1984.

(6) See Marta A. Poljakova, *Obrana kulturnovo nasledia Rossii* (The protection of cultural heritage in Russia), Moscow, Drofa, 2005.

(1) Lucie Morisset Conference, congress of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies, Montréal, 4 June 2016.

(2) Guy Di Méo, “Processus de patrimonialisation et construction des territoires”, p. 12, <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00281934>.

(3) François Hartog, *Régimes d'historicité : présentisme et expérience du temps*, Paris, Seuil Editions, 2003.

of its urban landscape, and, above all, of its ideological project.

Heritage, as a real "raw material" for the construction of socialism, must be (re)considered for its fundamental trait in the society project carried out in USSR¹. The Marxist-Leninist principles dictated the preservation choices made in the past as much as the creation methods for the present and their means of protection for the future. Once this realization was accepted, the uses and duties² of heritage evolved toward an even more solid assertion of the ideological role of heritage: a step to a third moment in the conception of heritage.

"Soviet heritage": actor and reflection of society changes

Even though the tight relation between monuments and propaganda was clearly affirmed as early as the first years of the Bolshevik government; and while monuments were quickly used to give legitimacy to the authorities, the uses and duties of heritage slowly evolved towards an assertion of its ideological role in the 1960s. The transition from USSR to Russian Federation rushed these elements of heritage into a new regime, which unescapably saw the appearance of new stakes.

1960s-1970s: heritage years

The 1960s and 1970s are genuine "heritage years" in the Soviet Union. They concur on the one hand with a desire to improve legislation, especially under the influence of the international community, and, on the other hand, with a new interest for heritage within society. With regards to the Soviet era monuments, those years precisely mark the culmination of their heritagization for ideological purposes.

(1) Pablo Alonso González, "Communism and Cultural Heritage: The Quest for Continuity", *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 2016, DOI: 10.1080/13527258.2016.1184701.

(2) Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, London, Routledge, 2006.

The first social organization dedicated to the defense of heritage, the All-Russian Society for Historic Preservation and Cultural Organization (VOOPIK) was founded in 1965. It greatly contributed to this new trend. The statutes of the organization clearly state that Education and Propaganda are a part of its main missions³. In this mindset, albums dedicated to the "new monuments of history and culture of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic" (250,000 copies) and of guides for touristic walks (5 million copies), monument posters (500,000 copies), and even films on noteworthy historic-revolutionary venues of the RSFSR were to be published⁴. This popularization had echoes within the population and heritage progressively elevated itself *de facto* to the core of society debates.

However, though the citizen heritage movement acted first and foremost for ancient heritage, mainly because of the numerous destructions which took place during this era, the heritage authorities shifted their focus towards Soviet architecture⁵.

Vasily Petrovich Orlov, architect, representative of the Board of Directors of the Union of Architects and member of VOOPIK, wholly expressed this new trend when he declared in June 1966 that:

It is necessary to remind that our architectural heritage should not be only reduced to ancient or pre-revolutionary monuments. The best productions of Soviet creation, which reflect the Socialist culture, ideology and lifestyles, should also be added to the cultural heritage, according to the law; and the law on the protection of monuments of history and culture must be applicable [...]. This particularly concerns the typical

(3) Statuts de VOOPIK, paragraphs 2b & 2v, 6 June 1966, GARF, f. A 639, op. 1.t.1., d. 8.

(4) Proposition 4, order of 24 May 1966 "On the state of and the improvement measures for the protection of monuments, history and culture of the RSFSR", http://www.libussr.ru/doc_ussr/usr_6414.htm.

(5) A. Kropotkine, "Les ambiguïtés du dégel...", *op. cit.*

property of our era, built by our greatest architects: Shchushev, Fomin, the Vesnin brothers, Ginzburg, etc.¹

1967 was therefore a turning point in the perception of Soviet architecture. Indeed, for the fiftieth anniversary of the October Revolution, adding as many socialist constructions as possible to the heritage lists—architecture included—became a necessity. While Marxist-Leninist sculptures had aroused constant interest since the first years of the regime, as still demonstrated by the protection—in 1961—of the granite statue of Karl Marx erected the same year, Soviet buildings seemed to have escaped legislation until then, even though they had been the object of heritage representations².

Thereby, a list of Soviet properties was submitted for review by the members of the Architecture Commission of VOPIK³. The members in attendance seem cautious for this choice and unanimously worry about the lack of method, as shown by the reactions below. The architect Pyotr Baranovski declares, with a dumbstruck tone: “We understand that for the fiftieth anniversary we should select monuments worthy of our era and which reflect our history, but this must be done in a serious and scientific way!” His colleague Leonard Tydman is outraged: “There was a time when we made fun of the *Izvestia* Building [1925-1927, G. Barkhin] on Pushkin square. Now, we are asked to consider whether this monument is heritage. And the 18th-Century houses no longer are heritage?! Where is the logic?” Nikolay Sobolev carries on: “I would like to draw the attention onto the fact that

international agreements only award the heritage status to buildings that are over fifty years old. This list is inexplicable!”⁴

This debate highlights their desire to support all amendments to heritage lists with solid scientific grounds, based on the respect of international norms. Moreover, it reveals deep disagreements, and hence the existence of various conceptions of heritage: a more backward-looking vision of heritage driven by the wish to protect and study the monuments versus an asserted desire to use classified monuments to serve a more ideologized purpose. This list was approved a few years later nonetheless, and eighty-one Soviet-era monuments in Moscow were thus officially added. More were added to the list in the 1970s, in particular with the Order of December 4th, 1974, which included various Soviet buildings throughout the Union, although this phenomenon is more noticeable in Leningrad and Sverdlovk (now Ekaterinburg) where thirteen and sixteen monuments were proposed as additions to the list, respectively. The styles, uses, and construction eras of these buildings vary greatly. Thereby, a Great warehouse/factory-kitchen (1929-1931)⁵, the House of Soviets (1936-1941)⁶ or even housing complexes (1949-1951)⁷ are to be listed in Leningrad. In Sverdlovk, the proposed monuments are the Water Tower (more commonly known as the White Tower) by Moisey Reicher (1929), the Dinamo sports complex (Venyamim Sokolov, 1929), the Grand Ural hotel (Sergey Zakharov, 1930) or even the House of the Chekists (Ivan Antonov and Venyamin Sokolov, 1932-1934). The lists place all monuments from all eras on

(1) GARF, f. A 639, op. 1.t.1, d. 6.

(2) Status of the sculptor Lev Kerbel. Order of 30 November 1961 on the additional list of monuments of art benefitting from protection at a national level, http://www.libussr.ru/doc_ussr/usr_5743.htm.

(3) List suggested by governmental Inspection. See GARF, f. A 639 1.T.1—126, protocol 13 of the meeting of the Architecture Section of VOPIK, 18 September 1967.

(4) “Protocol n°7, Meeting of the section on the question of architectural monuments, visual and popular art, 10 January 1967”, GARF, f. A-639, op. 1.T.1, d. 126.

(5) Architects: Armen Batuchev, Iosif Merzon, Isidor Gil'ter and Jakov Rubanchik.

(6) Architects: Nikolaj Troitsky, Lev Tverskoy, Jakov Svirsky & Ja. Lukin.

(7) Architects: Oleg Gur'ev & Viktor Fromzel'.

the same level, with no discrimination, which backs our previously mentioned ideas on the Soviet conception of heritage. Furthermore, this order still includes historical monuments with a "Marxist-Leninist" aim¹, often with an excessive classification, as proven by the following reasons to add to the list: "House where, at the end of the month of April and during the Fall 1918, Lenin Vladimir Ilich visited an old Bolshevik, one of the founders of the Latvian Social-democrat party"².

1978 finalized this movement, which had started in 1967. Indeed, the Moscow Council project "On adding architectural monuments of the Soviet era onto the lists of constructions protected by the government"³ was adopted in April, and the Plenum of the Scientific and Methodic Council of the Ministry of Culture took place in October. It was dedicated to the "Preservation of urban and architectural monuments of the Soviet era" and gathered dozens of experts from all over the USSR⁴. By then, Soviet architecture had become and been recognized as a heritage to be studied and preserved, as was confirmed by the decisions taken in the 1980s⁵.

1978 was not a meaningless choice: the year marked the 60th anniversary of Lenin's Decree on the protection of monuments of history and culture. The celebration of this Decree, and more generally the systematic reference to Leninist principles for the preservation of heritage in heritage arenas since the second half of the 1960s both contributed to the assertion of a return to the essence of Socialism as embodied

by Lenin during the Brezhnev era. Soviet heritage undeniably remained a political tool.

As for Yekaterina Shorban, she brings up a very interesting line of thought on this new heritage affection for Soviet architecture. Indeed, she points out that "If individual buildings [...] were given state protection as monuments in the lowest category of 'local' importance this was a formal concession made by the state to the international community and international organizations such as ICOMOS and UNESCO"⁶. In this way, she combines the desire to classify Soviet buildings to a political aspiration rather than to a realization by the Russian government: the aspiration to make the codes of the international heritage community theirs to open to the international arena. The USSR had signed the UNESCO charter and was a member of ICOM and ICOMOS. This argument is relevant since it puts forward an interpretation of the heritage decisions with broken-down barriers, but it must nonetheless be nuanced. Even though the eased context of the *Détente* encouraged the USSR to open up to Western countries, and *a fortiori*, on their heritage-management models, the experts who contributed to improve the Soviet protection system wanted to preserve their heritage and not to meet international political demands, while the decisions taken at the highest State level insisted on the propagandist calling of said heritage⁷.

From now on, our reflection will attempt to answer the following question: if there is a specificity of heritage in the USSR, what of the longevity and evolution of this conception of heritage after the Fall of the Soviet Union?

(1) Order of 4 December 1974 "On additions and partial amendment to the Order of the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR from 30 August 1960 'On the improvement of activities linked to the protection of monuments of culture of the RSFSR'", http://www.libussr.ru/doc_ussr/usr_8454.htm.

(2) *Ibid.*

(3) N. V. Pereslegin, *Istoria stanovlenia...*, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

(4) Rossijskij gosudarstvennyj arkhiv literatury i isskustva (RGALD), f. 674, op. 8, d. 1047, d. 1048, d. 1049.

(5) In 1983, a list of Architecture monuments at a local level to which thirty-eight Soviet monuments were added. Quoted by N. V. Pereslegin, *Istoria stanovlenia...*, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

(6) Yekaterina Shorban, "On Preserving 20th Century Architectural Monuments in Russia", in Natalia Dushkina (dir.), *20th Century Preservation of Cultural Heritage*, Moscow, Academy of the Architectural Heritage, 2006, p. 95.

(7) GARF, f. A 639, op. 1.t.1 et 1.t.2, see also VOPIK stenographs.

From USSR to Russia: toward the end of Soviet heritage?

After the fall of the USSR, the heritage protection system remained unchanged from a legal point of view. The fact remains that the symbols attached to the objects that fall under this regulation evolved substantially. The conception of heritage that develops itself in the young Russian Federation is resolutely turned toward building a new future, articulated around democratic and liberal aspirations, but still differs from the Soviet conception of heritage, as it seems to refuse, at first, to take into account the recent past. More than that: the young Russian Federation rejects it, as shown by the unbolting of the statue of Felix Dzerzhinsky on the Lubyanka square¹; an act that Alexandre Etkind analyses as a “founding act for the new Russia”². Given that its main aspiration was to become normal, Yeltsin’s Russia claimed loud and clear that it wanted to break away from its past. This “de-Sovietization” tendency, a vivacious symptom of the identity disarray of the 1990s, expressed in a(n un)conscious sidelining of the Soviet era unavoidably reflects itself in the way the material traces of this era are managed.

The partial “de-Leninization” of public areas, from unbolting statues to changing street names, testifies to the desire to propose a new national narrative as much as to a strong hesitation on the guidelines of the latter³. Apart from the various destructions and relocations, the remaining monuments were, in addition, widely subject to negative representations. Their inclusion into the Russian national

heritage was neither immediate nor obvious, but rather late and complex, and their heritage value was thus questioned if not denied. For this reason, we can wonder whether the first years of Post-Soviet Russia mark the end of a history, that of Soviet heritage.

Beyond a reflection on the connection between heritage and identity and memorial issues, said reflection should be placed in a broader perspective on the destiny of modern heritage which indisputably includes Soviet heritage and is also subject to representations that vary between denial and stigmatization⁴. Indeed, though it shares the same characteristics, Soviet heritage is not like other modern heritages. It stands out first and foremost for its heritage status, which was attributed by a now forgone policies regime, unlike the famous 20th-Century monuments on European or North-American soils, which were classified later on. The stakes would therefore not be to add them on heritage lists, but rather to respect the status of those buildings that have already been classified as monuments. Accordingly, the issue would be closer to the effective enforcement of the law and a reflection on the symbolisms currently associated to this legacy.

In fact, while in European countries, especially France, the “all heritage” phenomenon became of great importance⁵, Post-Soviet Russia handled the issues in a different way, tackling phenomena that should be referred to with terms such as “de-heritagization” or the opposite, “neo-heritagization”. The European abuse of heritage⁶ could be opposed in Russia partly to amnesia, partly to the sudden emergence of heritage. Moreover, while reflections on the heritage question have mostly focused on the ‘heritage-creating’ effects, in the case of

(1) Felix Dzerzhinsky (1877-1926) founded and directed the Cheka, Bolshevik Russia’s political police, created in December 1917.

(2) Alexander Etkind, “Hard and Soft in Cultural Memory: Political Mourning in Russia and Germany”, *Grey Room*, 16, Summer 2004, p. 36-59, p. 48.

(3) Benjamin Forest & Juliet Johnson, “Unraveling the Reads of History: Soviet-Era Monuments and Post-Soviet National Identity in Moscow”, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 92 (3), 2002, p. 524-547.

(4) N. Duskhina (dir.), *20th Century Preservation... op. cit.*, p. 86.

(5) François Hartog, *Régimes d'historicité... op. cit.*, p. 85.

(6) Régis Debray (dir.), *L'Abus monumental ? Entretien du patrimoine*, Paris, Fayard, 1999.



1. VDNH, Central Pavilion.

© Julie Deschêppier

Presses de Sciences Po | Downloaded on 06/06/2026 from https://shs.cairn.info (IP: 216.73.217.08)

Russia it seems relevant to focus on the links between historical transition and anti-heritage effects, between social changes and ‘heritage-avoiding’, ‘heritage-killing’ or even ‘heritage-breaking’ phenomena.

In the 1990s, the monuments of the Soviet era seemed to be partially ‘de-heritaged’ from the point of view of their symbolism, not from a legal point of view. The arrival of Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin marked a time of renewal.

Soviet Heritage in Putin’s Russia

The 2000s are characterized by multiple reinvestments of the Soviet-era heritage, coming from various stakeholders and according to distinct logics. In this sense, we can observe

Moscow authorities paying a new attention to Stalin-era heritage (1932-1955), and at the same time see part of society have a renewed interest for Avant-garde architecture—typical of the 1920s.

Heritage Continuity: between Memory of Politics and Memorial Policy

At the turn of the 2000s, the need to create a united Russia (keyword of Putin’s policy) and, thereby, a linear history, became essential to ensure stability. Thus, the amnesia of the Soviet era is replaced with Vladimir Putin by the opposing peak: underlying rehabilitation and, more recently, obvious revalorization, described by Georges Nivat as



2. Reconstruction of the Soviet Pavilion from the International Exhibition of Paris, 1937 u pavillon soviétique de l'Exposition universelle de 1937.

hypermnesia¹. Indeed, the current tendency seems to be an emphasis on strong and positive symbols from the Soviet Union in public areas, as much as adding value to a visually striking form of architecture, erected as a new symbol for Putin's Russia. Giving the past value again means reimplementing material traces of the "high era" of Stalin in urban spaces. However, this recovery should not be taken as a direct valorization of Stalinism, but rather as a reinvestment of certain symbols that strengthen the general guidelines of the current policy.

Its strongest symbol is the large-scale restoration of the Exhibition of Achievements

of National Economy (VDNKh, formerly VSKhV), carried out since 2014 (document 1)². The center hosted pavilions of the regions and republics of the USSR as soon as 1959; and is a good example of Stalinian architecture—also classified as neoclassical, as socialist classicism or even as socialist realism. These terms all designate a grandiloquent, colossal and gargantuan propagandist architecture (in the image of Stalin's ambitions³), which was deliberately inspired by the great works of art of the past, as diverse as they may be: from the

(2) On this topic see Maria Silina, "Chto stalo s VSHV (What happened to VSHV?)", *Ariguide*, 25 avril 2016.

(3) Vladimir Paperny, *Architecture in the Age of Stalin, Culture Two*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2002.



3. Lomonossov University (MGU), Architect: Lev Rudnev (1953).

Antiquity to the Italian Renaissance. Designed as a new USSR-specific style, this architecture was meant to leave its trace in history, or even to set itself in the universality that the regime extolled. The pinnacle of this logic was reached in 2009, with the reconstruction of the pavilion of the 1937 Universal Exhibition and its famous sculpture of the Worker and Kolkhoz Woman looking at a beaming future; at the entrance of the very same park (document 2)¹. Furthermore, this emblem of positive Stalinism—uniting Soviet symbolism and

gigantism—holds all the aspirations of Putin's Russia within itself: it embodies and gives a monumental aspect to the country's greatness and concurs with a glorified Soviet history set in a victorious national narrative².

Furthermore, though vested with new meaning, this re-built pavilion has been awarded a heritage status on a Federal level. Designed and built to be a part of the national heritage of the Soviet Union, this monument has now been integrated into Russian heritage. This

(1) See the exhibition curated by Julie Deschepper and François Gentili "La naissance d'un patrimoine soviétique en France : une archéologie du pavillon de l'URSS à l'Expo37" ["The birth of Soviet heritage in France: an archeology of the USSR pavilion at the 1937 Expo"], (Inalco & BULAC, 6 October—5 November 2017).

(2) On the question of grandeur, see in particular: Gilles Favarel-Garrigues & Kathy Rousselet, *La Société russe en quête d'ordre : avec Vladimir Poutine ?*, Paris, Autrement Editions, 2004. On Putin's national discours, see in particular Elena Morenkova, "Les Représentations du passé soviétique en Russie : persistance d'un « stalinisme populaire » ?", PhD thesis in Political Science, University Paris-II, June 2014.

“neo-heritagization” precisely sets itself within a “cycle” as defined by Lucie Morisset, allowing us to analyze these heritage reinvestments as solutions for variable ideological priorities in various space-time frameworks¹. In fact, these huge Stalinian buildings now have their own fame in Russia and beyond its borders. This is particularly the case of Stalin’s previously mentioned “Seven Sisters”, which are now an integral part of the Post-Soviet Moscow skyline, officially promoted as a source of pride and an unmissable tourist attraction (document 3).

Nevertheless, those paroxysmal cases—also characteristic of the ‘new heritagization’ phenomenon—should not be considered representative of a uniform view of Soviet architecture in Putin’s Russia. On the contrary, this valorization dynamic is opposed to radically antagonistic logics.

*From Abandonment to Museumification:
Contested “Modernity”*

The symbols and narrative on Soviet architecture show wide differences. In front of a mostly valorized Stalinian architecture, the Avant-garde architecture generated during the October Revolution before Stalin’s era and the Modernism that came after (1955-1991), seem to have been forsaken by public authorities, regardless of the heritage status of most of these buildings². This being said, Avant-garde architecture arouses new interest among a part of the population; and have been elevated to the center of attention of the international heritage community. What does this phenomenon cover?

Since the mid-2000s, the issue of preserving the Soviet Avant-garde heritage in Russia has indeed gotten attention. This movement,

(1) Lucie Morisset, *Des régimes d’authenticité : essai sur la mémoire patrimoniale*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2009, p. 24.

(2) N. Dushkina (dir.), *20th Century Preservation...*, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

which spurs from the assessment of this architecture on Russian soil—deemed in a worrisome state—was materialized by a Declaration signed in 2006 for the yearly conference “Heritage at Risk—Preservation of the 20th Century Architecture and World Heritage” which took place in Moscow³. This short text condemned the blatant shortfall of the policy for the protection of 20th-century property in Russia and in particular of Avant-garde property, calling authorities to act as soon as possible. In fact, Avant-garde architecture is particularly at risk on Russian territory. Its state varies between “destruction without demolition”⁴ and violent destructions, and it is often subject to significantly negative appreciations. The origins of these negative appreciations can be found in the history which these Avant-garde buildings bear as much as in their architectural style and their use. This is not a unique phenomenon and is not specific to Russia. However, the amount produced and the scale of its abandonment, in a unique political context, do provide this situation with specificities.

The paradigmatic example of the complexity of preserving Avant-garde architecture is that of the Dom Narkomfin (1928-1930) by Moisey Ginzburg and Ignaty Milinis, former housing for the employees of the Ministry of Finance (documents 4 and 5). Indeed, though it was classified as heritage on a regional level, this building is in a very advanced state of deterioration which was deemed particularly worrisome by the World Monuments Fund⁵. This case crystallizes stakes that could be expanded

(3) “Moscow Declaration on the Preservation of 20th Century Cultural Heritage”, Icomos, Docomomo, UIA, 2006, http://www.icomos.org/risk/2007/pdf/Soviet_Heritage_02_Moscow_Declaration.pdf.

(4) Anke Zalivako, “2000-2006 : Monitoring Moscow’s Avant-Garde Architecture”, in Jörg Haspel Michael Petzel, Anke Zalivako & John Ziesemer, *The Soviet Heritage and European Modernism*, Heritage at Risk 2006, ICOMOS, Berlin, 2007, p. 63.

(5) John Stubbs, “Mobilizing Support for Conserving 20th Century Architecture”, in *ibid.*, p. 25.



© Julie Deschepper



© Julie Deschepper

4. & 5. Dom Narkomfin, Moisei Ginzburg et Ignaty Milinis (1928-1930). Exterior and interior (2015). ©Julie Deschepper. A restoration of the interior has been done since.



© Julie Deschepper



© Julie Deschepper

6 & 7. Melnikov House, Konstantin Melnikov (1927-1929), View of the Interior and exterior (2017).

to Avant-garde as a whole¹: issues of shared ownership, hard-to-obtain funding, restorations with little regard for the authenticity of monuments and lack of restoration skills and lack of knowledge on this type of architecture². However, a recent decision states that the Narkomfin would be restored.

The recent reconversion of the Rusakov Workers' Club³ into a theater (Konstantin Melnikov, 1927-1929) and the museumification of the Melnikov House-Studio⁴ (documents 6 and 7) by the eponymous architect (1927-1929) enable us, however, to nuance this harsh assessment and encourage raising new lines of thought. Indeed, for years, the Melnikov case engaged the international community and the defenders of Russian heritage, coming from society as well as the political world, including Senator Sergey Gordeev. A renewed interest for Avant-garde can be observed since 2004-2006, coming from part of the Russian society, to such an extent that Marina Khrustaleva, who is engaged in these movements, mentions a "new fad"⁵.

Said phenomenon can be observed most notably in Moscow, but also in some cities such as Saint Petersburg, Novosibirsk or Ekaterinburg. This last case is extremely interesting because Constructivism there partakes to logics of asserting its identity—separate from

the capital. As a matter of fact, it is erected as a new symbol of pride by young residents, while authorities dream of turning it into a touristic attraction and adding it to the UNESCO World Heritage List⁶.

These heritage mobilizations are still fairly unknown today because they vary in terms of performances and unprecedented actions to make this heritage attractive and appealing, and because of their references, mostly taken from international conventions and their actors, who are from intellectual communities and abroad⁷.

The Melnikov House-Studio was recently turned into a Museum under the supervision of the National Museum of Architecture of Moscow. This can be considered a success for these mobilizations, as well as a symbol of Russian authorities' good will in the face of international pressure. In this sense, heritage is an issue of national politics as much as of one of international politics. The same logic can be used to interpret the declaration by the Russian Ministry of Culture on October 15th, 2015, that Avant-garde architecture will be protected throughout the Russian territory. Even so, the former seems not to be implemented yet since two famous buildings have just been razed to the ground in the heart of Moscow⁸; others are at risk of demolition, just

(1) Anke Zalivako & Cramer Johannes (dir.), *Das Narkomfin-Kommunehaus in Moskau (1928-2012)* (The Narkomfin Communal Housing in Moscow (1928-2012)), Petersbert, M. Imhof, 2013.

(2) See also Natalia Dushkina, "Reconstruction and its Interpretation in Russia", Icomos fifteenth general assembly, China, 17-21 October 2005, <http://www.icomos.org/xian2005/papers/2-12.pdf>.

(3) Nikolaj Vasilev & Denis Esakov, "Restavraciya kluba imeni Ruskova (The restoration of the Rusakov Club)", 10 June 2016, <http://archi.ru/russia/69283/restavraciya-kluba-imeni-rusakova>.

(4) Clementine Cecil, "The Melnikov House-Studio", in J. Haspel, M. Petzel, A. Zalivako & J. Ziesemer, *The Soviet Heritage and European Modernism...*, op. cit., p. 73-74.

(5) Marina Khrustaleva, coordinator of Arkhnadzor (Architecture supervision) and of *Sbkola Nasledie* (Heritage School), member of Docomomo Russia. Terms spoken to the writer during an interview (Moscow, 6 March 2015).

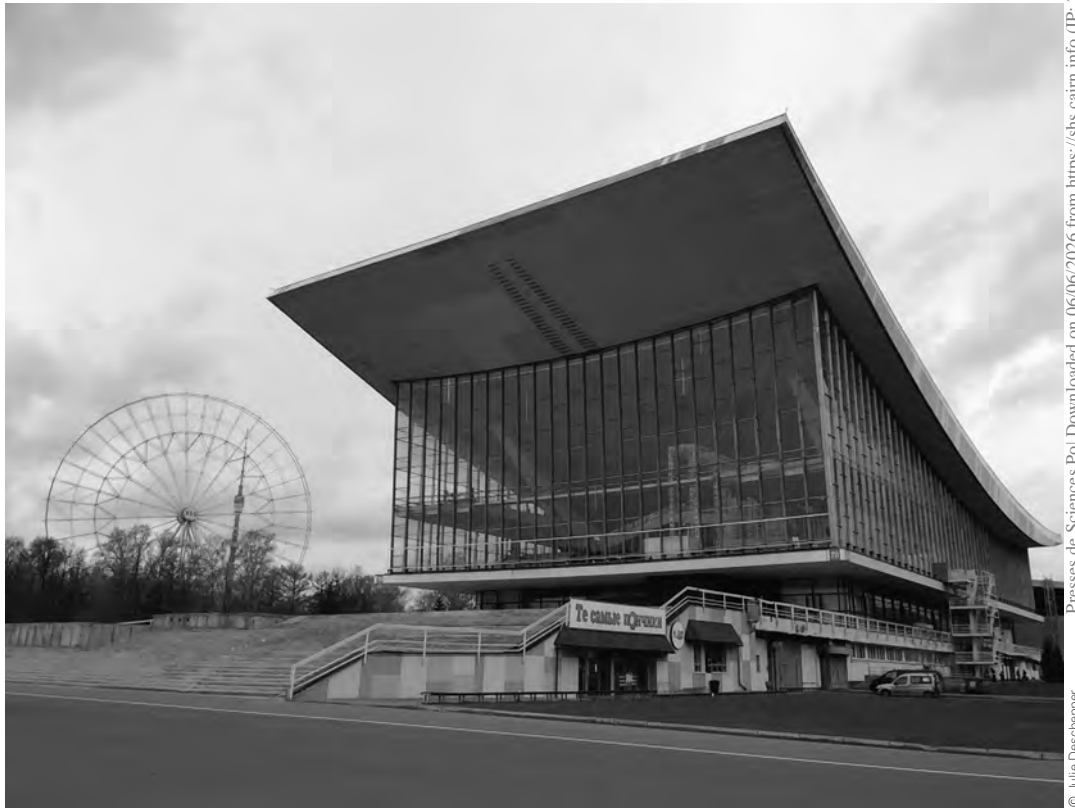
(6) Precisely on the case of Yekaterinbourg, see: Julie Deschepper, "Revolutionary Architecture in Putin's Russia: the Avant-garde as a Disputed Heritage" in *Revolution in Putin's Russia* edited by Megan Swift, Toronto, forthcoming.

(7) See Julie Deschepper, « Mémoires plurielles et patrimoines dissonants : l'héritage architectural soviétique dans la Russie poutiniennne », *Le Mouvement Social*, Special issue « Présences du passé soviétique dans la Russie contemporaine », directed by Laurent Coumel, Benjamin Guichard et Walter Sperking, N°260, July-September 2017, p. 35-52.

(8) The building called Taganskaya ATC, built in 1929 and designed by the architect Basil Martynovich, hosted one of the first automatic telephone terminals in the Russian capital. It was destroyed in April 2016. On this topic in French, see for example: Emmanuel Grynspan, "Moscou démolit un monument du constructivisme russe", *Le Journal des arts*, 17 April 2016.



8. Shukhov tower, Vladimir Shukhov (1919-1922).



9. Soviet Pavillion, Universal Exhibition Montreal 1967. Architects : Mikhail Posokhin, Ashot Mndoyants, Boris Tkhor.

like the Shukhov (radio) tower, an emblem of Constructivism (document 8)¹.

These negative perceptions of Avant-garde and this state which swings between abandonment, rejection and fragmented restoration can be compared in many aspects to the current relation between the Russian society and Modern architecture, also considered as “second Avant-garde” (document 9). The buildings from that era are indeed in a worrisome state; the architecture historian Anna Bronovitskaya explains that: “To the majority of Muscovites

the idea of preserving the architectural heritage of the 1960s and 1970s seems absurd”². Beyond the strictly aesthetic perceptions of an architecture which is as diverse as it is fertile, these buildings suffer from a bad reputation. This reputation is intrinsic to the memory of multiple destructions of the ancient heritage brought about by the creation of their modern buildings.

What those two types of architecture have in common is that they represent a certain idea of modernity and experimentation. Yet those two

(1) Julie Deschepper, « Spectacularisation et patrimonialisation dans la Russie contemporaine : le cas sans précédent de la tour Choukhov (Moscou) », in Guillaume Ethier, *Le Spectacle du patrimoine*, Québec, Quebec University Press, 2017.

(2) Anna Bronovitskaya, “The Second Wave of Modernism”, in Anna Bronovitskaya, Clementine Cecil et Edmund Harris (dir.), *Moscow Heritage at Crisis Point*, Moscou, MAPS, 2009, p. 91.

tendencies are now set aside from the Russian national narrative even though they played a major role in the history of architecture; the aim is to better emphasize the value of the visually striking and imposing successes.

Soviet architecture heritage is a sensitive and eminently political subject which reveals how Russia evolved from 1917 to our time. Today, it is at times rejected, forgotten, destroyed, at times restored, rebuild or turned into museums. These multiple reinvestments undoubtedly depend on the type of monument, the actors, and the venue.

However, this heritage also draws new attention in Europe, especially in France. This recent appeal manifests itself in some artists, such as Frédéric Chaubin, who dedicated a photographic book to these “Cosmic Constructions”¹, as well as in the proliferation of research on the heritage status of Soviet architecture, in particular the publication, in 2013, of the work directed by Taline Ter Minassian, which left open a field of research under construction².

Finally, the fascinating and unexpected discovery, in 2004, of remnants of the Soviet pavilion of the International Exhibition of 1937, found during archeological research³ held in Baillet (Paris area), raises the question of the existence of Soviet heritage in France. The recent symposium “Cent ans après la

révolution d’Octobre 1917 : peut-on écrire une histoire française du patrimoine soviétique ?”⁴ precisely wanted to develop, with a resolutely multidisciplinary approach, the heritage status of the Soviet traces and presences—both material and immaterial—that have been found on French territory: architecture, monuments, works of art, films, photographs, souvenirs, symbols, archives, etc. The idea was to think, in a somewhat provocative way, the “Soviet heritage” out of its instinctive boundaries...

*Julie Deschepper,
Institut national des langues
et civilisations orientales (Inalco),
Paris, France.*

Julie Deschepper is a PhD candidate in History at the National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations (Inalco). Her research studies the historical path of Soviet Heritage in Russia from 1917 to 2017, with an approach set at the crossing of cultural history and critical heritage studies. She recently partook in the organization of the symposium “A French History of Soviet Heritage” and co-curated the exhibition “La naissance d’un patrimoine soviétique en France : une archéologie du pavillon de l’URSS à l’Expo37” [The birth of Soviet heritage in France: an archeology of the USSR Pavilion at the 1937 Expo] (Inalco & BULAC, 6 October—5 November 2017). She co-directs since 2017 the national project “Regards croisés sur les avant-gardes artistiques soviétiques” [Comparative looks on Soviet Artistic Avant-gardes], funded by the Labex Arts-H2H. (julie.deschepper@inalco.fr).

(1) Frédéric Chaubin, *CCCP : Cosmic Communist Constructions Photographed*, Cologne, Taschen, 2011.

(2) Taline Ter Minassian (dir.), *Patrimoine et architecture dans les États post-soviétiques*, *Op. cit.*

(3) See the article by the archeologist who made this discovery: François Gentili, « Les sculptures du pavillon de l’URSS à l’Exposition de 1937 : de l’archéologie soviétique à l’artefact patrimonial », in : Taline Ter Minassian (dir.), *op. cit.*, p. 197-207.

(4) This international symposium was held on 12th, 13th & 14th October 2017 and organized by the Inalco, the Institut d’Histoire sociale de la Métallurgie, the Maison des Métallos and the Musée archéologique du Val d’Oise.