Exhibiting the revolution

THE MUSEUMS OF THE WINTER PALACE IN PETROGRAD AND LENINGRAD, 1917-41

A thesis submitted to the School of History of the University of East Anglia in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The subject of this thesis is the overlooked history of the museum as part of the remodelling of cultural presentation in Petrograd and Leningrad in the years following the October Revolution in 1917. *Exhibiting the revolution: the museums of the Winter Palace in Soviet Petrograd and Leningrad (1917-41)* traces the differing paths faced by the renowned Hermitage, a museum characterized by an air of refined cultural elitism, bourgeois academic practice and tsarist patronage, and the Museum of the Revolution, established in the Winter Palace to attend to the void in the public understanding of revolutionary history. The thesis examines the experiences of both museums through examining their functions in the context of the effort to mythologize revolutionary struggle and the birth of the Soviet state. Whilst the Hermitage offers an obvious arena to better comprehend the societal and cultural schism taking place throughout the 1920's and 1930's, the Museum of the Revolution analyses an 'imposter' museum, tasked with providing proud enlightenment to aid a greater sense of historical consciousness in spite of its decadent surroundings. Both museums are analysed to illuminate their struggle for institutional autonomy, their efforts to expand towards a growing museum audience and of course, with a desire to give some flavour of what those who worked in the Winter Palace experienced during the challenges of Civil War, bureaucratic centralisation and societal purges which greatly affected museum staff. Furthermore, this thesis serves to correct the dearth of studies on cultural institutions and museums in the early Soviet period, despite their often atypical, noteworthy place in a period of extraordinary flux.

Exhibiting the revolution utilises museum archival holdings neglected by researchers outside Russia. In the case of the Museum of the Revolution, many of the archive resources have not been used by western historians until now, whilst the Hermitage's own archives have provided material previously overlooked. Additionally, the thesis draws heavily on the memories, correspondence and diaries of staff that worked in the museums of the Winter Palace. These sources are used to investigate how the Hermitage and Museum of the Revolution adapted to the rapid pace of change which forced them to react to significant cultural heritage developments between 1917 and 1941. This thesis examines how they responded to the liquidation of private collections and estates, swelling museum holdings, before museums were utilised for selling valuables abroad to fund economic demands. It further traces the struggle of each museum to retain autonomy against the changing demands of centralisation, the increasing importance of Moscow over Russia's northern capital and the demand for orthodox display and practice under Stalinism. Finally, the thesis attempts to ascertain how far the museum contributed to a shift in cultural presentation. These museums now aimed to educate

all and change perspectives on the tsarist past: how far were they able to reach visitors and become a central pivot in enlightening the Soviet people?

Acknowledgements

I certainly never imagined at the beginning of my PhD research in October 2016 I would be completing my writing up amidst a global pandemic. The effect of COVID19 on researchers has been entirely evident and it is a profound reminder of the fragile footing upon which our academic institutions are founded upon. Many of my peers have been forced to complete with the strain of financial insecurity and without a realistic pathway to secure, paid work. This problem is certainly not a temporary one and clearly far more help is needed to ensure the welfare of academics, aspiring professionals and researchers. Therefore, I feel a debt of gratitude to the Consortium of the Humanities and the Arts South-east England (CHASE), funded by the Arts and Humanities Council (AHRC). Without their willingness to provide help to dynamic and exciting research proposals, then my thesis and many others besides, would never progress beyond a mere fleeting thought. It was because of them and their staff that I was able to travel to Russia to complete my archival research and to have the circumstances to deliver papers outside of the UK. I would like to thank Clare Hunt, Rob Witts, Steve Colburn and Kate Lacey at CHASE. At UEA itself, for their roles relating to the PGR service and CHASE administration, I would also like to thank Daphne Rayment, Vivien Easson, Matthew Taunton, Lyn Marsh, Ann Nicholls, David Craythorne and Mavis Foster-Nyarko amongst others. CHASE were also able to support placements. In my case, this thesis allowed me to work at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts on their Russia Season marking the centenary of the Russian Revolution of 1917. Being part of the curatorial team was a remarkable experience. Being able to work closely with artefacts by artists like Natalia Gonchorova, Wassily Kandinsky and Kazimir Malevich was an honour. I am especially grateful to Paul Greenhalgh, Director of the SCVA and second supervisor to this thesis, for giving me that opportunity. Working alongside an outstanding curator and author in Ian Collins, who was generous with his time and perspective whilst curating the Faberge element of the exhibition, was a real treat.

I have also been greatly fortunate in completing my thesis amongst a very cordial research environment at the University of East Anglia. Matthew Sillence has worked tirelessly to provide the best training possible for postgraduate researchers and offered pragmatic support. Veronika Bowker introduced me to the Russian Language and has always been generous with her time and patience to a brain that was well past learning an entirely unfamiliar language. Her help with translation and transliteration has been invaluable. The University Library, especially the staff responsible for interlending, were essential to this thesis. In the School of History, I have been fortunate to colleagues who have always been happy to lend their time and friendship. I would specifically like to thank fellow Russianists, Matthias Neumann and Francis King for their good humour and making me

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Contents

Notes on transliteration

Most Russian names have been rendered into the Latin text in accordance with the Library of Congress system of transliteration, except when another spelling has become standardised in English, for example, Trotsky instead of Trotskii and Mayakovsky instead of Maiakovskii. Several other names are also written in their more familiar form, such as Yuri instead of Iurii and Ilya instead of Ilia. Due to the existence of a number of different transliteration systems, when citing passages that do not adhere to the Library of Congress system, the original transliteration of the cited works has been kept in the interest of ease of reference.

Glossary

Antikvariat: A body set up in 1925 for the export and import of antiques as a means of making hard currency. Between 1929-32, it was actively involved in the sale of works of art from Soviet museums.

Glavmuzei (Glavnyi komitet po delam muzeev i okhrane pamiatnikov iskusstva, stariny i prirody pri Narodnom komissariate prosveshcheniia RSFSR): Main committee for museum affairs from 1921 and part of Narkompros.

Glavnauka (Glavnoe upravlenie nauchnymi, nauchno-khudozhestvennymi i muzeinymi uchrezhdeniiami): General Directorate of Scientific, Scientific, Artistic and Museum Institutions. Formed by Narkompros in 1921. It was responsible for the oversight of historical and artistic restoration.

Gokhran (Upravleniia Dragotsennykh Metallov i Gosudarstvennogo Xranilishcha): State Repository of Valuables. Managed by the People's Commissariat of Finance, having been established by Sovnarkom decree in 1920.

Gosmuzeifond (Gosudarstvennyi muzeinyi fond): The State Museum Fund. Created in 1918 to register and store cultural and artistic objects, as well as distribute them among museums.

Gosudarstvennyi muzeia Revoliutsii (GMR): The State Museum of the Revolution. The flagship revolutionary history museum based in the Winter Palace in Petrograd from 1919 until the outbreak of hostilities in 1941.

Gosudarstvennyi Muzei Politicheskoi Istorii Rossii (GMPIR): The State Museum of the Political History of Russia, which was established in 1991. Effectively this retained the same site as GMVOSR (see below) under a change of name as the USSR itself ceased to be and Leningrad itself returned to Saint Petersburg.

Gosudarstvennyi Muzei Velikoi Oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii (GMVOSR): The renamed Museum of the Revolution in Leningrad, which opened in 1956 in buildings on Kronverkskii Prospect across the River Neva and to the north of its original site.

Istpart (Komissiia po istorii Oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii i Rossiiskoi kommunisticheskoi partii): Commission on the History of the October Revolution and the RCP(b). Established in 1920 to document an extensive history of the Communist Party and the revolutionary movement.

Katorga i ssylka: A journal which ran from 1925-35 and published on the experiences of those who suffered by forced labour and emphasised revolutionary struggles under Tsarism.

Narkompros (Narodnyi komissariat prosveshcheniia): People's Commissariat for Education from 1917 until 1946. It was responsible primarily for education, but its remit extended into areas of cultural oversight (museums, visual arts etc.).

Proletkult: An organization drawing together local cultural societies and avant-garde artists who aimed to create a new, revolutionary working-class aesthetic. Its name was created by an amalgamation of proletarian culture (*proletarskaia kultura*).

Sovetskii Muzei: A specialist journal created by Narkompros for the museum profession between 1931-40.

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Chapter One: The Museum and October: The place of the museum in revolutionary Petrograd and beyond

> We are facing events like those the world has not seen since the days of the migration of nations. A culture that has come to our self-denial in futurism…it wants to erase all of the past. Soon everything that we live for will seem unnecessary to the world, a period of barbarism will come that will last for decades.
>
> Baron Wrangel to Count Zubov in May 1914.[1]

> Comrades! The working people are now in full control of the country. The country is poor, financially devastated by the war, but it is only a passing phase, for our country has an inexhaustible potential. It has great natural resources, but apart from them the working people have also inherited a huge cultural wealth, buildings of amazing beauty, museums full of rare and marvellous objects, libraries containing great resources of the spirit… Russian working people, be a careful master! Citizens preserve our common wealth!
>
> Bolshevik poster produced in the first few weeks following their seizure of power. [2]

Introduction

In power, but without secure popular legitimacy, the new Bolshevik administration in 1917 emerged from the October Revolution needing to elevate their 'heroic struggle' into a foundational myth capable of captivating Russia. Despite the relative few involved in the revolutionary events of 1917, the leadership believed it to be a working-class revolution and the realisation of the long historical struggle of the nineteenth century. Over the course of the next decade, efforts were made to answer challenging questions, beginning with the role of the party in the making of the revolution. As Frederick Corney crystalized it, "Telling October was not a description of events, but an argument

[1] V.P. Zubov, *Stradnye gody Rossii: Vospominaniia o revoliutsii (1917-1925),* Moscow: Indrik, 2004, p.42.
[2] Text from a Bolshevik poster, November 1917 in G. Norman, *Hermitage: Biography of a Great Museum*, Pimlico: London, 1999, p.154.

for a particular representation of events".[3] Corney emphasised the importance of perception towards the October Revolution, the event from which the Soviet state derived its legitimacy. Only through the correct retelling of this foundational event would the Bolsheviks be able to eliminate dangerous counter-narratives which challenged their presentation of revolutionary struggle, and which threatened to undermine their tenuous authority. Right from the first formal announcement of the October Revolution, Bolshevik leaders were making a "concerted effort to frame the public understanding of events".[4] This endeavour led to the creation of the Commission on the History of the October Revolution and the History of the CPSU (*Istpart*) in 1920, who were tasked with shaping a cogent historical understanding of the Russian revolution, partly in response to fears that enemies would try "with all their power…to reinterpret the Proletarian Revolution in their own class interests" and intensified towards a new level of centralized orthodoxy under Stalin's leadership.[5]

Yet we should not simply understand the framing of October as a defensive measure. Indeed, it was part of an effort to bring Soviet people out of the darkness and towards their enlightenment. Nicholas Timasheff's groundbreaking *Great Retreat* in 1947 recognised that the 'communist experiment' focused on the importance of fostering ideas in order to bring about the social and economic revolution they craved. Communists had to do their best to "change rapidly the mentality of the men involved in this experiment", who "having abandoned the culture tradition rooted in the past" would be able to become new men, ready to build communism.[6] The "untold resources" devoted to propaganda and indoctrination in the decades following the October Revolution were central to the shaping the Soviet citizen. In 1928, John Dewey recorded that Nadezhda Krupskaia judged the present task of the Soviet regime to "enable every human being to obtain personal cultivation".[7] The econonomic changes that would form the more tangible progression for Soviet society in the 1920s and 1930s were "for the sake of enabling every human being able to share to the full in all the things that gave value to human life". Broadening this further, we can place this interest in the goal to develop Obshchestvennost' (civic agency), with the state forseeing a society that was inspired by the revolution not only to politically support the

[3] F.C. Corney, *Telling October: Memory and the Making of the Bolshevik Revolution*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004, p.8.
[4] Ibid, p. 15
[5] The Head of Istpart, M.S. Ol'minskii gave a speech at the 9th Party Congress confirming the importance of preventing Bolshevik enemies from being able to form their own narratives upon the Russian Revolution, whilst noting "we have nothing in this area". *Deviataia konferentsiia RKP(b)* (Sentiabr' 1920 goda), Protokoly (1972), Moscow, pp.100-102.
[6] N. Timasheff, *The Great Retreat*: *The Growth and Decline of Communism in Russia*, New York: Arno, 1972, p.241.
[7] J. Dewey, 'Impressions of Soviet Russia. VI: The Great Experiment and the Future', *New Republic*, Vol.57 Issue 733, pp.134-137.

regime, but also to actively participate in the drive to reshape society.[8] David Hoffmann is even able to understand the effort to achieve the reshaping of society in the international context, with both surveillance and propaganda to shape the mood increasingly important to modern states which took a concerted interest in the popular morale and the welfare of its citizens.[9]

Kul'tura was firmly rooted in the consciousness of the Bolshevik intelligentsia both prior to and certainly following the October Revolution. As Vadim Volkov explains, the term *kul'tura* had great meaning within discourse over the relative level of personal culture and education for an individual. For Volkov, it was "one of the central spiritual values of Soviet civilization…rooted in the consciousness of the intelligentsia".[10] Vera Dunham developed our understanding of *kul'tura* by examining how the concept of *kul'turnost'* (culturedness) became "a fetish notion of how to be individually civilized" in Soviet society.[11] This thesis develops upon some of the questions raised in the scholarship of Volkov and Dunham when they asked 'What does one have to do to become civilized?' and indeed, 'What did being civilized mean with reference to the Soviet individual and society?'.[12] This study seeks to be able to develop the extent to which the Soviet citizen was able to achieve *kul'turnost'* through engagement with history and specifically through museums. Were the Soviet people willingly attending museums in order to reflect upon their place in history, to develop an appreciation for culture? How far was the state pushing for a level of culturedness to suit desired ends, or was the development of museums part of a more organic approach, accepting of individual and institutional evolution over time?

The Bolshevik leadership believed that "an understanding of their historical experience was fundamental to Soviet citizens formation of a distinctive sense of self".[13] This belief formed a vital motivation in a propaganda state so central to the Soviet project that David Brandenberger asserted it as an equitable achievement to that of the White Sea Canal or the Defence of Stalingrad. Whilst historians have engaged in significant debate over the level of success achieved in genuinely building a strong historical consciousness amongst the Soviet people, it is beyond debate that this became a project of paramount importance. The project to shape an orthodox Soviet interpretation of history

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[8] For a thorough investigation of this concept: Y. Matsui (ed), *Obshchestvennost' and Civic Agency in Late Imperial and Soviet Russia*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
[9] D.L. Hoffmann, *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914–1939*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011, pp.181-182.
[10] V. Volkov, 'The concept of Kul'turnost': Notes on the Stalinist civilizing process' (pp.210-230) in S. Fitzpatrick, *Stalinism: New Directions*, London: Routledge, 1999, p.213.
[11] V. Dunham, *In Stalin's time: Middle class values in Soviet Fiction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, p.22.
[12] Volkov, 'The concept of Kul'turnost', p.213.
[13] D. Brandenberger, *Propaganda state in crisis: Soviet ideology, indoctrination, and terror under Stalin, 1927-1941*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011, p.2.

would receive an extraordinary level of attention from figures at the very top of the party and state hierarchy, not least Stalin himself following his infamous letter to *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia* in 1931, which chastised historians in their failure to capture the essence of the October Revolution and reach the broader masses of Soviet society.[14]

The effort to engage the new Soviet people into a conscious understanding of their place in history was present from the very beginning. Numerous methods of public retelling were employed for the purpose of mythologizing a vision of October, through newspapers, textbooks or agit-prop trains. Both Lenin and Stalin came to refer to the press and mass cultural vehicles (such as literature, theatre and film) as "instruments", "tools" and "transmission belts" that would allow the party to disseminate its vision to throughout society as a whole.[15] With no blueprint or existing framework to determine how men would behave in a socialist society, these instruments formed a significant cultural intervention that became increasingly managed and official in nature. In particular, Stalin's intervention into shaping obshchestvennost' and *kul'turnost'* can be seen within a far more pragmatic light, not shaped by an intentional project by political authority, but in response to pressing concerns.[16] Timasheff argued that the position of state machinery in arts and culture, through bodies such as the State Publishing Office, ensured that individual agents were practically unable to attain influence outside of the prescribed mechanism.[17] Special bodies were created within the context of "fostering culture", offering membership to the producers of cultural goods. Under Stalin, cultural producers had the incentive of royalties, prizes and wages, should they attain outstanding achievements in science and the arts.[18]

The Bolshevik leadership placed a high cache on the *New Soviet Person* identifying personally with the lessons of 1917 and building a familiarity with the struggle that the party had led. In order to do this, party textbooks, memoirs and literature would not be alone. Tangible alternatives were required. Chief amongst these methods included carefully structured exhibitions, and in the broader sense, a reworking of Russia's cultural heritage to support the reframing of the past. Physical objects were curated for this purpose in museums, material was gathered for libraries and archives, while the events of October were showcased and dramatized in processions, festivals and public theatre.[19] Taken collectively, this formed the "basis of an ambitious, routinized

[14] Ibid, p.27.
[15] Ibid, p.11.
[16] M. Lenoe, 'In Defense of Timasheff's Great Retreat' (pp.721-730), *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol.5 No.4, Autumn 2004.
[17] Timasheff, pp.242-243.
[18] Ibid, p.244.
[19] N. Murray, 'Street Theatre as Propaganda: Mass Performances and Spectacles in Petrograd in 1920', *Studies in Theatre & Performance*, Vol.36 No.3, 2016.

storytelling which abstracted the October Revolution in search of a transcendent event".[20] Within this pantheon, a significant place and purpose was afforded to museums.

'Staging Dictatorship and Scenarios of Power'

Corney framed the Bolshevik revolution as a "struggle over memory" and a battle to replace the population's tsarist historical memory with a new revolutionary consciousness and a new chronology of recent decades.[21] Individuals, testing experience and memory by interaction and through measuring and corroborating recollections with others, shaped themselves vis-à-vis the new state and defined their position as historical actors in historic times. Francois Furet's reading of this struggle differs somewhat from Corney, though both dwell noticeably on the creation of 'awe' through the press and public methods of display. For Furet, the Bolshevik reading of the revolution was not credible, given that it defied the course projected by Marxism or when judged within the context of Russian history.[22] In Furet's analysis, this meant that the victors were required to make October a spellbinding invention, with Lenin invoking a religion-substitute, or a 'cult of volition'. In this process, the Bolsheviks singled out elements of the French Revolution which fitted with their illusion (e.g. dictatorship of the Committee, but ignoring tenets relating to individual liberties). Furet argues that the Bolshevik leadership manipulated the past, creating an "imaginary lineage" which placed the Soviet Union at the forefront of human progress.[23] In this vision, Lenin assumed the leadership of a great schism which had remained dormant since the Paris Commune, reducing the prominence of the February Revolution in a reworked history which instead gave centrality to October. It was necessary for the October Revolution to be presented in such a fashion that would universalize October as an idea, demoting the more localized, contextual February Revolution. Lenin would need to be regarded not through his conservatism, but instead presented as a figure channelling the spirit of the French Revolution. Furet's analysis places the Bolshevik attempt to utilize the revolution myth as an attempt to capture revolution as a state of mind; it was a process and it had no consensual end.[24] The Bolshevik 'telling' of October through museums, alongside other forms of public display, met this brief. In the case of the museum, Lenin's view was that the past is either functional or else redundant.

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[20] Corney, p.10.
[21] Ibid, p.11.
[22] The main emphasis in Furet's argument is that Russia had not undergone capitalist development. F. Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999, pp.63-64.
[23] Ibid, p.66.
[24] Ibid, p.70.

Lenin's recognition that mastery over the past and Russia's national heritage was an essential component in embedding the October Revolution was based on a solid understanding of Russian traditions.[25] In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a time of enormous social upheaval, the Tsarist state utilized mass festivals in order to secure an unbreakable bond of communication with its subjects, drawing upon the significance of religious holidays and processions in the Russian calendar. Public demonstrations of its authority had become a prominent method of ensuring the Tsar's visibility in the lives of his Imperial subjects. Elaborate exhibitive public events, characterized by Richard Wortman as *Scenarios of Power*, reached their peak during the Romanov tercentenary.[26] The Bolsheviks would later recognize the potential of the festival in the Soviet creation of the Red Calendar in order to impress a new Bolshevized organization of public space and popular events. In their quest to cement their own legitimacy, the new Bolshevik state would draw upon the importance of established methods of public communication through commemorative and celebratory events, which provided a certain degree of continuity between the late-Tsarist and early Soviet period, despite the urgency with which the Bolsheviks animated their own legitimacy.

Christopher Read suggests that the role of public display through mass spectatorship events proved an essential means of communicating cultural standards during the late Tsarist period through to the 1920's. For Read, Russia had differed from much of Europe in that national religious culture remained bound to autocracy, setting Russia apart from the secularization culture which had formed in Europe by way of the Enlightenment, the Renaissance and anti-monarchical revolution.[27] The central method by which the Tsarist state could assert its importance on the lives of the many was through the constant factor in their lives: the Russian Orthodox Church. Mass festivals and national holidays were built around the religious calendar, whilst the organization of festivals remained the preserve of the Church. This arrangement secured an indivisible presence for the Tsarist state and the Orthodox Church at all major public events. The crisis following the assassination of Alexander II (1881) appeared to instigate a more tangible presence for the monarchy. Greater emphasis was given towards solidifying support for Russian authoritarianism and autocracy. Amidst this muscular stance, the Tsar himself was publicly presented as the moral guardian of the people. One such example of this presentation was in the Canonisation of Serafim in

[25] Malte Rolf's analysis is clear that celebration experts in early Soviet Russia were willing to "learn from the foe", by incorporating aspects of religious traditions into festivities. M. Rolf, *Soviet mass festivals, 1917-1991*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013, pp.41-42.

[26] R. Wortman, *Scenarios of power: myth and ceremony in Russian monarchy: from Peter the Great to the abdication of Nicholas II*, Princeton; Woodstock, 2006, pp.390-391.

[27] C. Read, 'Revolution, Culture and Cultural Policy from Late Tsarism to the Early Soviet Years' in M. Frame et al. (eds.), *Russian Culture in War and Revolution (1914-22): Book 1 – Popular Culture, the Arts and Institutions*, Bloomington: Slavica, 2014, p.2.

1902, which used "high politico-religious theatre" to leave audiences without doubt aware of the union between monarchy, the church and the peasantry.[28] The association of the Tsar with the church was essential if indeed festivals could be used as a communicative device with the Russian people. The church were present at all royal public events as well as a majority of civil celebrations. As Russia entered the twentieth century, one third of its year marked canonical anniversaries. Each region and every social milieu participated in these celebrations.[29]

Richard Wortman argues that this connection between the Tsar and the peasantry became a priority during the reign of Nicholas II. Referring to 1905, Prime Minister Pyotr Stolypin remarked that the Tsar's relaxed approach to greeting the crowds at the two hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Poltava (1909) represented the "end of the revolution".[30] Indeed the same approach was repeated for public events at Khar'kov (1911) and Belovezh (1912). Dominic Lieven's biography of Nicholas II warned of such folly. For Lieven, overconfidence in the "great myth of the union between Tsar and people…the cornerstone of the whole Tsarist political edifice" presented a grave danger in buffering the Tsar from the realities the division present in Russian society during his rule.[31] Nevertheless, seeing the opportunity to extend the Tsar's personal touch beyond his physical presence, the crown was keen to recognise the importance of new media in order to bolster its own status, with mass public events supplemented by the widespread reach of the press. Pamphlet and newspaper circulation reached sizeable audiences. The official *Sel'skii Vestnik* newspaper achieved a circulation of 2.86 million copies when marking the Borodino centenary in 1912, whilst the publishing house I.V. Sytin published 3.8 million books and pamphlets for the Romanov tercentenary in 1913.[32] As well as popularizing anniversaries of famous battles and royal commemorative events, the use of the Tsar's image was relaxed. Evidently, the state was keen to deepen the connection between the Tsar and his people through mass festivals and commemoration, thereby offering an opportunity to express his gratitude for their historical and present-day devotion.

Despite Stolypin's confidence at the time, Malte Rolf argues the Tsar's role in public engagements was largely sentimental and orientated towards the preservation of the village idyll. Such practices ultimately did little to renege the sense that the Tsar was increasingly out of touch with of the massive upheavals associated with industrialization.[33] Despite the best attempts of organisers to plan around Tsar Nicholas II himself, his personal presence at commemorative events

[28] Ibid, p.7.
[29] Rolf, pp.22-24.
[30] Wortman, p.378.
[31] D. Lieven, *Nicholas II: Emperor of all the Russias*, London: Murray, 1993, p.167.
[32] Wortman, p.377.
[33] Rolf, p.20.

did not elevate him to the status of a consensus figure. Social and political tension threatened to undermine the safety of public events. Disturbances preceding the centenary commemoration of Borodino in 1912 highlighted the desire of the monarchy to draw attention away from the traumatic social conditions present. Just months earlier, over two hundred had been killed at the Lena Goldfields strike, news of which had "provoked a great outburst of public protest…and a veritable explosion in the Russian working class".[34] The organisation of such commemorative events even created gulfs at the higher echelons of society, with Moscow events during the tercentenary excluding Duma representatives and industrialists.[35] Indeed, Rolf judges Tsarist mass festivals, contrary to the unifying goals of organizers, to have been a source of social exclusion and separation. Far from succeeding in building social cohesion, Tsarist festival culture was heterogeneous amongst the working classes in the early twentieth century.[36] Furthermore, at the time of the Romanov tercentenary the liberal press regarded the events as part of a course of 'official' celebrations, with little popular resonance.[37]

Mass festivals were of course just one, albeit significant, element of Tsarist cultural policy which utilised a form of 'exhibition' to more deeply project russifying themes into the character of society. Other "schools for citizens" were born in the late Tsarist period, not least the high-cultural initiatives behind theatres (namely the Marinskii and the Bolshoi) and state museums (such as the Russian Museum in St Petersburg), both of which showcased proud Russian artistry.[38] The support of the Tsar himself indicated the clear ambition of the state to place a single cultural vision at the heart of life in the Russian Empire. The desire to put political weight behind the projection of culture would continue to expand in ambition under Soviet leadership after the October Revolution in 1917.

Unlike their Tsarist predecessors, the new Bolshevik administration was unable to draw upon three centuries of rule for their legitimacy. The foundation narrative of October would be the 'universal spell' by which Soviet leaders would seek to bring the rank and file to identify with a conception that they were at the forefront of a great historical shift. For Francois Furet, the dramatization of the singular importance of October, an event towards which history had been building, was an effort to "mythologize its own history".[39]

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[34] L. Haimson, 'The problem of social stability in urban Russia, 1905-17 (Part One)', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 23 No. 4 (December 1964), pp.620-626. Also, Wortman, p.381.
[35] Rolf, p.20.
[36] Rolf, pp.26-27.
[37] Wortman, p.389.
[38] Read, pp.9-10.
[39] Furet, p.144.

The most overtly dramatic method in mythologizing revolutionary values came in the form of spectacular festivals which drew heavily upon the use of theatrical performance, framed by Richard Stites as the "kinaesthetic exercise of revolution".[40] Spectacles offered a forum for collective participation where revolutionary stories could be re-enacted, moulding the "most attractive sides of the Bolshevik uprising and to animate the historical vision that lay at its centre".[41] Such spectacular performances were able to represent a romanticized revolution that contrasted to the emptiness at the heart of counter-narratives present in the years following the October Revolution. Opponents were limited to accusing the Bolsheviks of a cynical power-grab, leaving the Bolsheviks to propagate their 'Bastille' moment to their target audience; the largely uninformed masses.[42] The first outside performances in Petrograd "revealed the heart of the debate about what should be the new proletarian art", with Natalia Murray's research recognizing the great potential for mass engagement and to some extent, plurality within the cultural understanding of the revolution.[43] Yet Stites challenges the significance of spectacles. For him, they may have been "an ingenious form of urban choreography", yet they retained a format which too readily separated artist from audience, therefore "deleting much of the festive from the festival".[44]

Historians have long recognized motivation of festival and spectacle organizers to "fill the vacuum of public debate"; prioritising the silence of counter narratives over genuine interest in winning passionate support.[45] The spectacle functioned as a tool of social manipulation, with organizers able to create a symbolic, visually arresting vision to engineer a reality for the many who were struggling to make sense of the present. Christel Lane's *The Rites of Rulers* understood Soviet festivals to be part of "the arsenal of means to exert social control employed by political elites" and central in the "behavioural dimension of ideology".[46] Certainly as this form progressed from immediate post-revolutionary period and into its Stalinist incarnation, Igor Golomstock's observation that "art performs the function of transforming the raw material of dry ideology into the fuel of images and myths intended for general consumption" became the more realistic assessment.[47]

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[40] Stites, p.94.
[41] J. Von Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals (1917-20),* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, p.3.
[42] Corney, p.48.
[43] Murray, p.232. See also N. Murray, *Art for the Workers: Proletarian Art and Festive Decorations of Petrograd, 1917-1920*, Leiden: Brill, 2018.
[44] R. Stites, *Revolutionary dreams: utopian vision and experimental life in the Russian revolution*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, p.95.
[45] Von Geldern, p.3.
[46] C. Lane, *The rites of rulers: ritual in industrial society: the Soviet case*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, p.27.
[47] I. Golomstock, *Totalitarian Art: in the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy, and the People's Republic of China*, London: Collins Harvill, xii.

Whilst there is certainly a strong case for suggesting that the spectacle was an intellectually driven vehicle for incorporating diverse artistic forms with the cultural ambitions of the new state, they also operated to imprint a conceptual value of some importance: the subordination of self-interest in favour of communitarian values. James Von Geldern and Svetlana Malysheva both recognise the more cynical desire for social harmony, through a dictatorial framing of the past and modelling behaviour for the present society.[48] Malysheva's analysis of mass festivals in the first five years of Soviet rule places the spectacle firmly within the longer term trend of cultural dissemination from above, something clearly present in Russian cultural dynamics in Tsarist period and continually visible into the early stages of Bolshevik leadership.[49] Yet this determination to pursue a representation of the October Revolution with the Bolsheviks as the pioneering force did not go unchallenged. The Bolshevik tendency to see the place of October through the framing of their own place as the vanguard of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' clashed with the intellectual desire to see revolution as part of a democratised, liberalizing mission, which held a far more critical approach to the role of the authoritarian state. Richard Stites' assessment of the curious intellectual atmosphere in the decade following the revolution notes the "hopelessly splintered" state of the intellectual community.[50] The victorious amongst them (i.e. the Bolshevik intelligentsia) were hesitant in the face of a full-blown utopian experiment. Fearful of "unending destruction", they demanded order instead.[51]

The exhibitive nature of the mass festival offered a substantial opportunity for intellectuals looking to reach significant numbers. Chief amongst these aims for both Bolshevik leaders and intellectuals who saw revolution as the foundation for societal betterment was the mythical 'new man', fit for an age beyond servitude and backwardness. Katerina Clark argues that the Bolshevik authorities were more than aware of their potential to influence the public Soviet citizen and therefore regulated them with military zeal, putting them under bureaucratic control from an early stage in their development.[52] To that end, she regards the directorship of mass spectacles such as *Storming of the Winter Palace* (1920) as bearing out 'dictatorship of the theatre' and replacing one set of cultural myths with another, rather than representing the cultural destruction of the old regime.[53] Even if we accept Clark's judgement that the mass spectacle was not a spontaneous event,

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[48] Von Geldern, pp.9-10.
[49] S. Malysheva, 'Mass urban festivals in the era of War and Revolution, 1914-22' in M. Frame et al. (eds.), *Russian Culture in War and Revolution, 1914-22: Book 2 – Political Culture, Identities, Mentalities and Memory,* Bloomington, Indiana: Slavica, 2014, pp.101-103.
[50] Stites, p.7.
[51] Ibid.
[52] K. Clark**,** *Petersburg: Crucible of Cultural Revolution*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995, pp.132-134.
[53] Ibid, p.134.

early festivities did engage, at least initially, a desire bring the crowds into the mind-set that they were actors in historical change, not merely bystanders. In conjunction with *The Mystery of Liberated Labour*, the *Blockade of Russia* and *Toward a world commune* (all in 1920), *Storming the Winter Palace* had sought to create a historical genealogy of the October Revolution.[54] Despite such noble aims, Nikolai Evreinov's hastening of mass spontaneous participation suffered from the enforced micro-planning, lack of free access and the restrictions placed on movement during the spectacles.[55] Even Narkompros, the Commissariat of Education, objected to the participation of the crowds in any creative sense, ultimately reinforcing what Stites dismisses as a "teacher-pupil" format.[56]

Reservations against new and emboldened forms of cultural expression were a feature of the period following the October Revolution. Sheila Fitzpatrick recognises that leftist avant-gardists and Bolshevik intelligentsia held much in common, from their propensity for regarding themselves as an enlightened minority, to their disregard for popular culture.[57] Despite being made up from the social elites, both resisted this label and both groupings jostled for the attentions of the broader population, believing that only they truly represented their best interests. Lenin's own cultural position influenced the didactic nature of early mass festivals, with Lunacharsky's memoirs emphasising Lenin's desire for monumental propaganda to educate the populace into developing a sense of historical and political consciousness. In this regard, Lenin recognised the necessity of employing artists for this task, but it was clear that he was reticent towards alternative creative visions.[58] He despised those keen to create an entirely new proletarian culture in a laboratory setting, favouring instead that "the best achievements of bourgeois culture should become accessible to the masses".[59] For him, Marxism had "assimilated and refashioned everything of value in more than two thousand years of the development of human thought and culture", rather than being an ideology imbued with destruction.[60] This argument stood in clear opposition to the position of groups that Lenin saw as being separationist in their intentions, such as Proletkult.[61] Lenin's

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[54] Stites, p.96.
[55] Corney, pp.77-82. For a thorough documentation of the early Soviet spectacles: I. Arns, S. Sasse and I. Chubarov (eds.), *Nikolai Evreinov & Others: The Storming of the Winter Palace*, Zurich: Diaphanes, 2017.
[56] Stites, p.96.
[57] S. Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992, pp.4-6.
[58] A.V. Lunacharsky, 'On Monumental Propaganda' in Tamara Deutscher, *Not by politics alone: The other Lenin*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1977, pp.200-203.
[59] A.V. Lunacharsky, 'Lenin at an exhibition' in Deutscher, p.195.
[60] A.V. Lunacharksy, 'On Proletarian Culture' in R.C. Tucker, *The Lenin Anthology,* New York: W.W. Norton, 1975, p.676.
[61] Proletkult were an experimental artistic endeavour formed in the period following the October Revolution, aimed at developing *proletarskaia kultura* (proletarian culture). For further reading: L. Mally, *Culture of the Future: The Proletkult Movement in Revolutionary Russia.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990.

stance, influential upon how culture was to be exhibited during the 1920's and beyond, was that groups such as Proletkult were "duty bound" to act under the People's Commissariat of Education and the Soviet Communist Party.[62] The role of the Komsomol, the youth division of the CPSU, during the 1920's perhaps provides one of the most insightful windows into campaigns for cultural transformation at this early stage. Mass campaigns, educational work imbued with a 'revolutionary character' acted as the dominant method by which the Bolsheviks sought to implement their cultural concepts, placing young communist at the centre of the movement to bring about a new way of life (*novyi byt*).[63] With the initiative coming primarily from above, Komsomol were tasked with stimulating mass mobilization and participation during the 1920's. Matthias Neumann suggests that 'campaignism' was a complex dialogue, not fitting into exact dichotomy.[64] A similar, inexact relationship was very much present in the organization of mass festivals and the early management of museums, as will become clear during this thesis.

Malte Rolf's research recognises the degree of tension between the Leninist, centralized leadership of mass festivals and exhibitions and competing, more pluralistic visions. Platon Kerzhentsev, a leading figure in the Proletkult movement wanted the role of the state to be restricted towards offering a helping hand towards the initiative of the people. Kerzhentsev sought to embrace the creation of new traditions and rituals.[65] On the contrary, Lenin was keen that management of festivals be Party led, whilst traditions were to be maintained for the masses. Lenin's cultural conservatism and rejection of futurism came at a time where utopianism in the arts had reached a rich creative peak. Writers dared to engage with 'colourful' futuristic visions of a communist society characterized by civility, science, freedom from religion, war and crime.[66] Richard Stites analysis of cultural trends in the 1920's sees a clash between the ambivalence shown by Bolsheviks towards the utopianism within Marxist thought and the apparent thirst for this element of Marxism by radical intellectuals.[67] In this context, striking a balance by which an effective 'Soviet' projection of values through mass festivals and other forms of cultural expression was clearly a challenge. Ultimately it was the Bolshevik Party that held the foremost opinion in this choir of voices.[68]

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[62] A.V. Lunacharksy, 'On Proletarian Culture' in Tucker, p.676.
[63] M. Neumann, *The Communist Youth League and the transformation of the Soviet Union 1917-32*, London: Routledge, 2011, p.104.
[64] Ibid, p.105.
[65] Rolf, pp.39-40.
[66] Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams,* pp.170-172.
[67] Ibid, p.168.
[68] Rolf, p.37.

Institutionalizing October

In assessing the nature of their society in the years after 1917, the Bolsheviks held a contradictory position. Lenin had held that the labouring classes were fundamentally ready for radical change and were by instinct sympathetic to the revolution.[69] Yet equally he believed that society lacked the class consciousness and organizational ability to be revolutionary on its own. The key was for a revolutionary social consciousness to be channelled via a vanguard of professional revolutionaries that would supply followers with this sense of ideological vision and discipline. They would replace the emotional spontaneity of mass participant 'trade unionism' with a truly resilient and transformative sense of revolutionary consciousness based around the consistency and clarity provided by a vanguard party. For the Bolshevik leadership, social transformation remained incomplete and required such a sweeping quantity of action that ideological inconsistency. Lenin's belief was that the proletariat required state power and centralization for "the purpose of guiding the great mass of the population".[70] Indeed, the "whole task of the communists is to convince the backward elements" of society in the legitimacy of their vision.[71] Nine years after the revolution, in 1926, Stalin's position was little different: "(good leadership consists of) the ability to convince the masses that party policy is correct and [then] to issue and act upon slogans that will bring the masses closer to the party's point of view".[72] Central to this effort was the creation of an orthodox understanding of the October Revolution, and more broadly, to create a shared historical consciousness.

Over the course of their first decade in power, the Bolsheviks sought to 'institutionalise' October, ensuring that the lessons of history were shaped and embedded into the very fabric of Soviet society. At the Eigth Party Congress in 1919, the determination to invest in mass culture was officially endorsed, with a firm emphasis on the indoctrinational process being fundamentally an educational one.[73] Glavpolitprosvet, the non-schools' section of Narkompros, was complimented by

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[69] V. I. Lenin, "O tverdoi revoliutsionnoi vlasti" (1917), in *Sochineniia*, 3rd ed., 30 vols., Moscow: Partizdat, 1935, Vol.20, p.342.
[70] Lenin, "Gosudarstvo i revoliutsiia" (1917), Vol.21, p.386.
[71] Lenin, "Detskaia bolezn' 'levizny' v kommunizme" (1920) p.197.
[72] I. V. Stalin, "K vo-prosam leninizma" (1926), in *Sochineniia*, 13 vols., Moscow: Gos. izd-vo politich-eskoi literatury, 1948, Vol.8, p.52.
[73] Resolution of the Eighth Party Congress of 18-23 March 1919 "O politicheskoi propagande i kul'turno-prosvetitel'noi rabote v derevne," published in KPSS v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK, Moscow: Izd-vo politicheskoi literatury, 1983, pp.111-113.

a department of propaganda known as Agitprop, formed to supervise mass cultural work. The former oversaw schoolhouses, lecture halls and reading rooms, whilst the latter would run party educational activities throughout governmental bureaucracy and trade unions (amongst other organizations).[74] Expectations ran beyond simply that citizens would educate themselves into revolutionary readiness. As Brandenberger surmises:

> Mere academic study of the annals of the revolution…was not enough to guarantee true consciousness on its own, even if Soviet citizens literally immersed themselves in party sponsored textbooks, memoirs, belletristic literature and poetry. Visits to exhibits, museums, and the threatre were likewise necessary but insufficient. Familiarity with 1917 and mastery of its historical lessons had to be complimented by an internalization of the revolutionary parallel itself.[75]

There was an expectation that the *New Soviet Person* needed to identify on a personal level with the history of the party. All upwardly mobile citizens would certainly be required to "align themselves with history" in public in order to demonstrate that their individual sense of selfhood and consciousness was firmly grounded in the larger revolutionary narrative of the party and society as a whole. This would require a far broader institutional indoctrination effort.

After 1917, parallel developments were occurring institutionally throughout the formative Soviet period in order to form a controlled narrative of revolutionary history. During the Russian Civil War, the Bolshevik leadership feared the widening gulf in communication between them and the restless masses. Their fear was that the legitimacy of the October Revolution was at risk, in part, from a failure to deliver a coherent understanding of events to the people. The mass festival, the theatrical performance, even the cinema, might provide a fleeting opportunity to propagate the mythical importance of October to the masses, but a greater degree of permanence was desirable. Lenin recognized that the Civil War had merely masked the rift between the Bolsheviks and the ordinary worker.[76] A resulting effort was made to achieve the "dissemination of a correct understanding of the revolution".[77]

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[74] Brandenberger, *Propaganda State in Crisis,* p.12.
[75] Ibid, p.14.
[76] Corney, p.99.
[77] Ibid, p.118.

The Marx Engels Institute was founded in Moscow during 1919 as an academic research facility, quickly amassing over 400,000 books and pamphlets.[78] Eighty-seven of its 109 staff were historians, committed to maintaining a historical record of the revolution and the Communist Party. A separate Lenin Institute, created in 1923 was even more heavily staffed (158 by 1929), and went about collecting and publishing Lenin's complete works in twenty-five volumes between 1924 and 1933. Yet perhaps the strongest example of a refined project was to collate and retell the revolution came with Istpart, which was created by Narkompros in September 1920, but tellingly placed under Central Committee control a year later.[79] Staffed by people with experience in the Bolshevik press, many of whom had served in military revolutionary committees directly involved in the Winter Palace coup, the organization was built around the motto "our attitude to the documents of the revolution must be as active as our attitude towards the events of the revolution".[80] In practical terms, this meant gathering evidence from both inside and beyond the Soviet Union, organizing publications and working in tandem with archives and regional party bodies. Further still, their remit included the need to aid the visual presentation of the revolution. Istpart assisted museum exhibitions by consulting with them on their pedagogical approach, directing their work towards a more visually striking style with clear themes in order to better acquaint the viewer with the history of the Communist Party.[81] Mass festivals across the Soviet Union were provided with literature. Aside from protecting the documentary evidence of the revolutionary movement, Istpart saw themselves as crucial in the struggle to overcome the "pathetic state of knowledge" that the public had about the party.[82] Leadership figures in Istpart called for a history of the Russian Communist Party as soon as possible to act as a "weapon of ceaseless struggle", but they were faced with significant shortages of legitimate evidence and turning what dry material they had into an "enticing narrative".[83]

Istpart was tasked with collecting the past and shaping it into a coherent yet flexible revolutionary narrative. The expansion of this project was rapid, going from twenty-one bureaus in October 1921 to seventy-two just a year later. These bureaus were required to report on a monthly basis back to their Moscow headquarters in order to aid 'mapping the revolution'. Building on work by Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Corney argues that this process evidences a clear example of institutions

[78] The Marx Engels Institute merged with the larger Lenin Institute in November 1931. J. Barber, *Soviet Historians in Crisis 1928–1932*, London: Macmillan, 1981, pp. 16–17; p.122.
[79] J.D. White, 'Early Soviet Historical Interpretations of the Russian Revolution 1918-24', *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 37 No. 3 (July 1985), pp.349-350.
[80] Corney, p. 97.
[81] Ibid, pp.117-119.
[82] Ibid, p. 106.
[83] Ibid, pp. 109–10.

and archives being central to the process of constructing a chosen narrative, rather than being mere passive collectors. Undeniably the process of fashioning a controlled narrative influenced the growing construction of exhibitions and museums devoted to the October Revolution and the history of the Revolutionary movement. Alongside Istpart and the Marx Engels Lenin Institute, this represented part of a Bolshevik led effort to 'institutionalize October'. Undoubtedly this was a centrally managed exercise, yet one which struggled with the harsh realities of material shortages, unrealistic targets and one which often opened up internal factionalism.

After initial zeal, Istpart efforts to coordinate an integrated history of revolutionary struggle with that of the party would face institutional confusion and rivalry. The failure to bring together a coherent project was still the topic of argument in 1925, five years after their creation. Their conclusion was blunt: "Almost nothing (had been done)…to systematically elucidate the history of the party", while the Moscow bureau derided others for failing to get across the "basic principles of the organization of 1917".[84] There is plenty to say this judgement was harsh on the undeniable efforts made by Istpart. Having assisted in redefining the representation of history in museum settings, Istpart further played a significant supporting role in the 20th anniversary of 1905 in 1925 and the 10th anniversary of the October Revolution in 1927. But by this stage, there was a recognition that 'dry documents' would not create the monumentalism that was desired by a regime increasingly preoccupied by massiveness (*massovost'*).[85] Ultimately, their functions were absorbed into the Marx Engels Institute (after its dissolution in 1928), just one year before the Museum of the Revolution in Leningrad had been forced to concede much of its archival material on revolutionary history to Moscow.[86] Even if we accept that the goals of a realized, satisfactory narrative of recent revolutionary history had not been achieved within the first decade, the lack of counter-narratives assisted multiple opportunities to see and hear an 'October retelling'. Corney concluded that the combined institutional efforts meant that it was "no longer necessary to have been present at the historical events" to recognize their fundamental importance for Soviet citizens.[87]

The lack of alternative narratives in bringing about an orthodox Soviet understanding of ideology and history must be broadened to understand how the propaganda state functioned in the 1920s. Peter Kenez's argument, anticipating Stephen Kotkin's "speaking Bolshevik" paradigm by several years, suggested that multiple layers of institutional propaganda had succeeded in inculcating "a political language and a pattern of behaviour" which meant that allowed for

[84] Corney, pp.142-143.
[85] Rolf, p.102.
[86] Barber, p.16.
[87] Corney, pp.201-202.

behavioural changes which allowed for acquiring a proper consciousness.[88] Kenez's argument was that the 1920s saw a hybridization of persuasion and coercion. Whether or not the Soviet people sympathized with the central tenets of party ideology and the official historical line they were forced to accept and internalize these views due to a lack of alternatives.

The reality was that Soviet society during the 1920s retained a relative degree of heterogeneity, preventing the monopolizing of public life through historical, artistic or literary forms. The effort to impress a standardization of the historical struggle must be placed within this context. Istpart and IMEL, like Glavpolitprosvet and Agitprop, were working within a limited reach and were themselves not yet in agreement as to how they would convey the ideological tenets or history of Marxism-Leninism to the wider public. Whilst a diverse array of organizations, both artistic and literary, tussled for the right to frame the revolution, it was not possible to shape a uniform understanding of it. Despite this conflicting state of affairs, "it did at least ensure that discussion of the historical, ideological, ethical, and aesthetic significance of 1917 loomed large in the Soviet press and mass culture".[89]

Exhibiting revolution

Previously we have concentrated on the historiography of mass festival, and to some extent commemorative practices and rituals. Undoubtedly the focus of this thesis, the function of the museum, requires a central place to assess curatorial and exhibition practices in museums and galleries. The nature of the pedagogical, curated exhibition of artistic or historical objects in order to understand the use of museums must be considered related, but clear distinction is also necessary. Exhibiting 'indoors' necessarily differs in scale and setting, with mass festivals occupying vast public spaces. Spectacles such as Nikolai Evreinov's *Storming of the Winter Palace* took up dramatic positions amongst sites crucial to the retelling of the October Revolution. Whilst not all mass festivals could engage the spectator with the same resonant spatial or collective memory cues as *Storming of the Winter Palace*, such methods undoubtedly had a stronger reach in terms of a collective experience. Secondly, museum exhibitions differed greatly in how they employed curatorial methods. Whilst the mass festival assumed the mould of engaging dramatic, interpretative performance; museum visitors are given to recognizing a more understated pedagogical expertise.

[88] P. Kenez, *The birth of the propaganda state: Soviet methods of mass mobilization, 1917-1929*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp.250-255.
[89] Brandenberger, *Propaganda State in Crisis,* p.15.

The museum offers a visitor experience clearly built around historical artefacts as tangible evidence of a past they have cause to represent. A third point of departure involves the relationship between the curator (or director) and the viewer-participant, and the dissimilar methods of communicating and receiving information. The mass festival is given to the large scale manipulation of space, buildings and people; even lights and sound being central to this non-verbal form of engagement. Conversely the museum adopts a more literate, contemplative and studious arena for exhibiting the past.[90]

Of course, exhibitions in Soviet museums and galleries must be adjudged in relation to the political and cultural context prior to and following the October Revolution. The role and status of the museum must be considered in relation to the numerous concerns of the age. One such concern was the increasing demand for the preservation of national heritage, which had started to emerge as a source of social anxiety during the reign of Nicholas II. Susan Smith in particular recognises the growth in consensus towards the State as the body most befitting the responsibility of preserving cultural heritage during the early decades of the twentieth century.[91] Smith's argument is that grave concerns for the preservation of national heritage arose from the catastrophic events of the First World War and the fledgling professionalization of museums initiated the thirst for an inter-connected, expanding museum network under state jurisdiction.[92] With the Bolshevik leadership fearing iconoclastic radicalism and Lenin's recognition of bourgeois specialism, Smith's research argues that the new regime approached museum academics with a spirit of pragmatism. Their knowledge was essential for preservation and the presentation of material culture, but moreover, they were irreplaceable given the necessity of the State's approach to appropriation and expropriation.[93]

Collections for museum display swelled as the great redistribution of wealth and property began during the tide of nationalisation decrees during 1918. Scores of palace museums were created out of formerly private collections, whilst the overall number of museums in Russia doubled between 1918 and 1920.[94] Such was the scale of change in this field that Narkompros, the so-called 'Commissariat of the Enlightenment', formed a department specific to managing the complex

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[90] An examination of the spaces whereby the past can be assimilated (including through the museum) is developed in R. Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*, London: Verso, 2012.
[91] S. Smith, 'Cultural Heritage and "the People's Property": Museums in Russia, 1914-21' in Frame et al. (eds.), *Cultural History of Russia in the Great War and Revolution, 1914-22 (Book 2)*, p.404.
[92] Ibid, p. 405-408.
[93] Ibid, p. 413.
[94] The total number of registered museums by 1920 was 457. N. Semenova, 'A Soviet Museum experiment', *Canadian American Slavic Studies*, Vol. 43 No.1-4 (Spring-Winter 2009), p.83.

reorganization and expansion of the museum network – *Glavmuzei*.[95] As Narkompros was given the responsibility for state owned properties in April 1918, Narkompros strove to turn palaces into public museums and to ensure the protection of historical artefacts and monuments from vandalism or unlawful export.

The bulk of literature produced by historians on early Soviet policy on artistic and historical artefacts focuses on the appropriation and expropriation of artefacts. Both formerly private and existing museum collections were under significant threat of being broken up, especially during the disorderly beginnings of the Soviet state into Civil War, but also during the harsh economic priorities under Stalin's leadership. Natalia Semenova and Elena Solomakha evidence the confines in Soviet cultural management during the 1920's and into the 1930's, not least the extent of extreme resource limitations.[96] Cultural historians have focused heavily on revealing the resulting widespread expropriation of nationalized artistic and historical treasures into foreign ownership. Such issues had enormous implications for Soviet museums and galleries. After the First Museum Congress in February 1919, all Russian museums were subject to items being distributed at a moment's notice; the guiding logic being that they were part of a single reserve fund (Gosmuzeifond) and that no institution should pursue a separate economy.[97] The measure was a significant challenge to institutional independence, strengthening the role of the state in museum management. Between 1921 and 1925, the Leningrad Gosmuzeifond held 61,200 artefacts, redistributing around a third (20,710) of its holdings, including a substantial number to Moscow. Smith substantiates the impact of political machinations on museum affairs, recognising that the ability to catalogue or restore items in the years after the revolution became close to impossible, as was protection from artefact theft.[98]

Much less scholarship has been dedicated to directly understanding the Bolshevik hand in organizing or directing museums. A sufficient picture requires a thorough assessment of their broader cultural agenda, alongside an understanding of the artistic movements present in the years preceding the Soviet reorganization of museums. Visions from within the Bolshevik leadership necessarily start with Lenin. A cultural conservative who saw more immediate benefits in the mobilization of other cultural weapons. Krupskaia herself had confirmed that Lenin was "no lover of

[95] Ibid.
[96] E. Solomakha, 'Soviet Museums and the First Five Year Plan: The Hermitage, Gosmuzeifond, and Antikvariat' (pp.131-160), *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, Vol. 43 No.1-4 (Spring-Winter 2009), pp.131-160.
[97] Solomakha, pp.133-134.
[98] Smith, 'Cultural Heritage and "the People's Property"', p.418-421.

museums".[99] He had been bored by the unsystematic displays of "useless accoutrements of the ruling classes", whilst he loathed any exhibition where the viewer dispensed with thought.[100] According to Krupskaia's record, Lenin would have been more welcoming to a practical application of revolutionary history in museums, having been once been transfixed by an exhibition of the Paris Commune (1871).

Despite his obvious reservations, Lenin had recognized the educational potential of the museum. Lenin had advocated the role of the museum as a tool in the struggle to enlighten the worker, favouring the 'polytechnic' museum, essentially a form tailored to display in workplace environments such as factories. The greatest wealth of material on the Bolshevik plan for museums amongst their broader cultural policy comes from Anatoly Lunacharsky, in charge of Narkompros and initially a man who spoke for Lenin on issues of culture. Lunacharsky's reflections of culture during the Lenin-era leadership make it clear that museum exhibiting was a definite pillar of the project to bring the majority of Russian society up to a cultural and educational standard which would make them achieve 'revolutionary readiness'.[101] It was further true that this did not mean paving way for a new culture divorced from the past, but it was expected that museums should play an educative role in highlighting the rightful progression of history towards communism.

Chief amongst Lunacharsky's tasks in the early stages of Bolshevik rule was to utilize artists and cultural figures supportive of the new Soviet government, perhaps most famously displayed at the first anniversary of the October Revolution and Natan Al'tman's radical vision for Winter Palace Square. In his speech to the Petrograd Free Art Society in October 1918, Lunacharsky's vision was all encompassing. It was to be "a great period of construction and the greatest era ever" in relation to art.[102] Even acknowledging the reality of short term poverty as the challenges of Civil War continued, even the poorest Russians would experience a society "more generous in art than if they were millionaires or kings".[103] Even Lenin is portrayed as a progressive figure, supporting bringing art to the streets and a vision of monumental propaganda: "even as an unartistic man".[104] At this stage, Lunacharsky's efforts were broadly welcomed. Nikolai Punin, the Left Art theorist and art critic, who shared the bill and delivered his own speech, recognized the remarkable fortune for modern artists. Despite challenging Lunacharsky's assertion that the proletariat 'does not have ideals' ("they were

[99] N. Krupskaia, 'Lenin's attitudes towards museums' (1931) in A. Zhilyaev (ed.), *Avant-garde museology*, New York: E-flux, 2015, p.316.
[100] Ibid.
[101] A.V. Lunacharsky, 'Lenin on the younger generation' in Deutscher p.131.
[102] A.V. Lunacharsky, *Rech', proiznesennaia na otkrytii Petrogradskikh Gosudarstvennykh Svobodnykh Xudozhestvenno-Uchebnykh Masterskikh 10 oktiabria 1918 goda*, Petrograd, 1918, p.27.
[103] Ibid, p.31.
[104] Ibid, p.30.

raised on ideals…because she knew the crimes her reality was burdened with"), Punin lauded the new state: "No government in the world has discovered such sensitivity and understanding with contemporary art".[105]

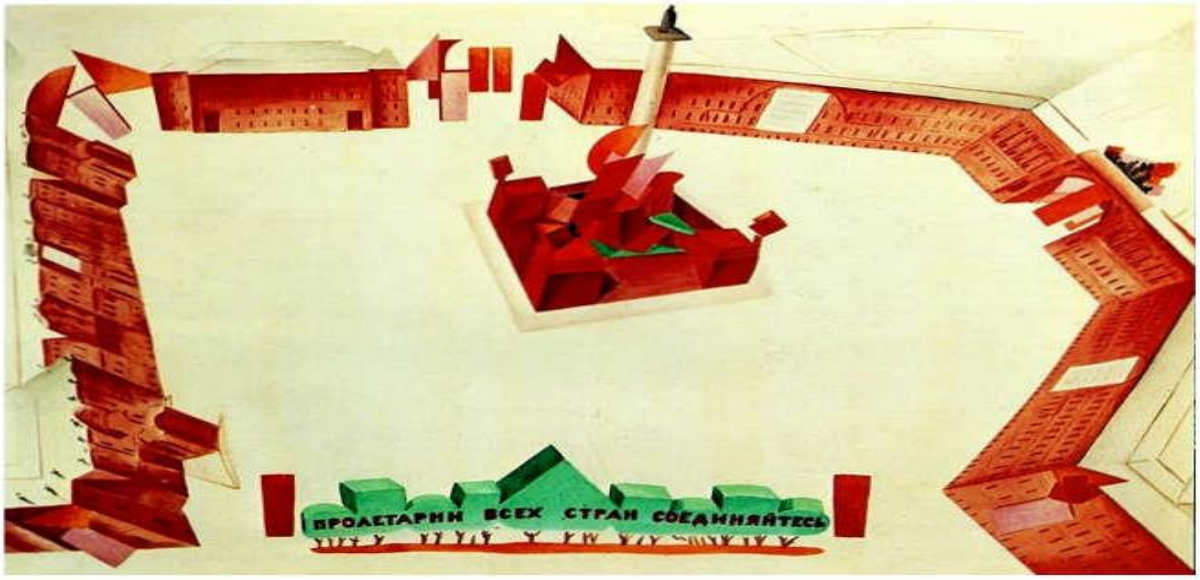

Fig.2: One of the designs created by Natan Al'tman for 'Red' palace square.[106]

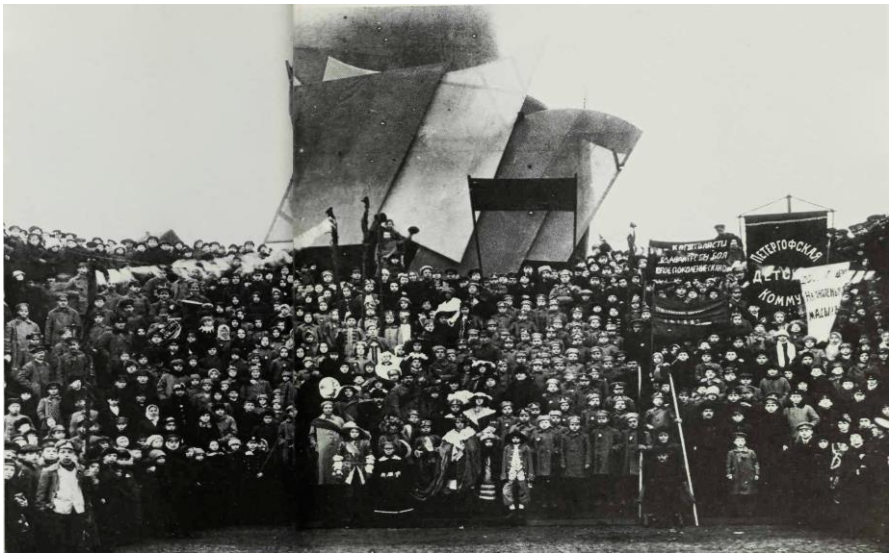

Fig.3: Participants of the first anniversary celebrations on palace square pose for a photograph in front of a futurist set.[107]

[105] Punin, 'Predislovie'. Ibid, p.4.
[106] 'Natan Al'tman's proletarian futurism', *Charnel House*: https://thecharnelhouse.org/2015/01/23/natan-altmans-proletarian-futurism/
[107] Ibid.

Fig.4: The Alexander Column is redesigned to celebrate the Red Army's first anniversary, Petrograd, 1919.[108]

Lunacharsky's broader cultural statements from the first five years of government do as much to pour water on radical cultural overhaul as they do to give a clear agenda for reform. Instantaneous cultural overhaul, or 'destroying the temple to erect a new one', was dismissed.[109] As early as June 1917, Lunacharsky had rejected the conception of 'proletarian culture', believing it to be an unhelpful debate encouraging factionalism.[110] Lunacharsky was far more positive in asserting his celebration of the proletarian ability to organize and supported the self-education of the proletariat. Where other activists were more focused in making a concentrated effort to pursue the potential of the proletariat, namely Proletkult, Lunacharsky acted to reject efforts to merge them with Narkompros, citing the need to find the best relations between civic organizations and government.[111] The same article in *Izvestiia* in April 1919 also reiterated his warning that rejecting previous cultures would be a mistake, desiring instead that the proletariat be armed with the full education of human culture. Indeed, his article 'Still a question of culture' in 1922 would reveal the

[108] S. Barron and M. Tuchman (eds.), *The Avant-Garde in Russia, 1910-1930: New Perspectives*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1980.
[109] *Novaia Zhizn'* (July 1917).
[110] *Novaia Zhizn'* (June 1917).
[111] *Izvestiia* (April 1919).

direction of travel away from coalescence with Proletkult and similar movements.[112] Here, Lunacharsky paraphrased Marx in asserting that only an idiot would understand the importance of ancient culture for the construction of the proletariat. His aim, glibly put, was for 'some culture, before proletarian culture', hitting out at "opportunists and charlatans who offer cheap goods" rather than a genuine path to improvement.

Quite clearly Lunacharsky and Lenin alike had underlined the importance of history and heritage in their cultural policy, a position that would seem to secure a platform for the place of museums in Soviet Russia. Yet as Lunacharsky's barbed attack against 'charlatans' suggests, there was widespread rejection of the museum in its current form within futurism in particular. Arseny Zhilyaev's analysis of avant-garde museology recognizes the defiance shown by avant-garde artists towards the museum in broad terms, citing institutional barriers.[113] Kazimir Malevich was unequivocal in his belief that the museum was simply a relic of a dusty past. In *On the museum*, Malevich argued that innovators must create a new epoch and attacked the 'baggage of antiquity', judging preservation to be entirely a waste of time: "Enough of crawling about the corridors of time past, enough squandering time in drawing up lists of possessions".[114] Like Punin, he held the belief that if the museum was to have a place in the post-revolutionary future, it needed to adapt to the transformation of reality – including the need to be mobile.[115] Punin rejected efforts to form a modern European art museum "out of a cabinet of curiosities", arguing that this vision would create museums "directly out of the feudal order".[116] Both Punin and Osip Brik favoured a museum serving the needs of the 'living artist'. They sought development and learning over passive storehouses of artefacts. Purchasing would instead aim towards genuinely innovative art. No longer would artistic creation be driven by a capitalist understanding of production, as it would be eradicated. Artistic creation would move from the museum to genuine social production.[117]

In the immediate period both prior to and following the October Revolution, a significant thrust of innovation was underway within the fledgling field of museology. Perhaps the greatest influence on Soviet innovation from an earlier period came from the work of Nikolai Fedorov, who believed that museums should be part of what he described as a 'common task' of humankind to

[112] A.V. Lunacharsky, 'Eshche k voprosu o kul'ture' in Izvestia, No. 249 (3 November 1922).
[113] Zhilyaev, p.54.
[114] K. Malevich, *On the Museum* (1919) in Zhilyaev, p.270.
[115] Ibid, p.34.
[116] O. Brik, 'Speech at the meeting of the First Soviet Museum Commission' (1919) (pp.289-292) in Zhilyaev, p.34.
[117] Zhilyaev, p.35.

conquer death and allow the spirit of man to be resurrected in display.[118] Certainly such a task was literally taken up during the Stalinist period within the ideas of Bekhterev and his *Pantheon of the USSR* museum which sought to exhibit brain specimens amongst other artefacts in an attempt to recreate Soviet minds of the age in 1927.[119] Similarly an earlier conception in 1918-19 by Rybnikov's *Biographical Institute* aimed to store information of a biographical nature on all Soviet people, but of course he lacked resources for such a project. Bekhterev did at least go some way towards the goal, accumulating the brains of Gorky, Vygotskii and Bogdanov amongst other Soviet minds. Fedorov's ambitions in his own time were not attempted on a grand scale until the 1920's, when Vasilii Chekygrin, a founder of the Makovets movement, adopted Fedorov's resurrecting museum philosophy, even corresponding with Nikolai Punin before an early death in 1922 prevented his progress.[120] Fedorov's influence could also be seen in Andrei Platonov's novel *Chevengur* in which a small town in Civil War era Russia is transformed into an open air museum whereby a collection of things is replaced by a collective action and recreation. For Platonov, this was an allegory on communism, with the project to preserve revolutionary communism appearing doomed, instead it would be those that seek to live in its spirit that would thrive. The museum supplants, rather than sustains life. A further influential, yet fictional account of the museum in a developed communist society came in Bogdanov's novel *Red Star* (1908), which explored whether the museum had a place in the communist future.[121] Highly influential within the Proletkult movement, who formulated the conception of the 'avalanche exhibition' – organized by workers and displayed in factories as a variant upon Punin's 'museum of moving parts'.[122] The vision shared by Bogdanov and Proletkult was an art integrated into everyday life, rebuffing the distant professionalism of the past and liberating artistic formation. These ideas influenced the Museum of Painterly Culture in Moscow (1919), which aimed to demonstrate the "chief preoccupations of new Russian painting".[123]

Fedorov's influence upon later futurists is notably clear. His challenge towards the functional organization of the museum as a 'dead archive' over his own desired radical reconsideration of man's creative life was echoed in the ideas of Malevich and Brik. Brik in particular had a passionate determination to unshackle cultural enlightenment from museum jurisdiction in an effort to radically

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[118] Fedorov (1828–1903) was a teacher and librarian who spent much of his career at the Rumiantsev Museum in Moscow and in time has become known for his philosophical writing shaped by Orthodox Christianity and Hegelian thought. Ibid, p.23.
[119] Ibid, p.32.
[120] Makovets (also known as 'Art Life') was a society of artists founded in 1922, with a defining interest in spiritual values. J.E. Bowlt, *Russian Art, 1875-1975: A Collection of Essays*, New York: Ardent, 1976, p.158.
[121] A. Bogdanov, *Red Star: The First Communist Utopia*, Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1984.
[122] Avalanche exhibitions were travelling exhibitions which collected work from worker-artists, increasing as the exhibition moved from place to place. Zhilyaev, pp.279-80.
[123] Zhilyaev, p.38

reform all aspects of cultural life.[124] Brik's vision for museums even foreshadowed the proposal to create a 'united state fund' of museum artefacts, which later found the form of the 'museum fund'. Brik argued to reduce museum agency, suggesting that they simply "cannot conduct their own housekeeping within the larger state economy". Fedorov's influence equally appealed to Marxist curatorial dynamics, resenting contemporary display for its "glorification of unbridled capitalist construction".[125] His belief had been that the museum of the past and present had been too often used to enshrine mankind's poverty, rather than allow a place for reconciliation.

Semenova's research suggests that the will was already present for forcing Marxist didacticism into museum curatorship and exhibition design in order to serve Bolshevik ambitions.[126] The function of the museum as a vehicle for stirring class consciousness in the Soviet people did begin to form a more deliberate policy during the 1920's, albeit on a limited scale.[127] Ekaterina Teryukova argues that the League of the Militant Godless' (*Soyuz voinstvuyushchikh bezbozhnikov*) anti-religious campaigns were central to the creation of around 600 museums by 1928 which despite struggling against closures and underqualified staff, presented the socio-political roots of religion and therefore its place in bringing about the revolutionary cause.[128] On a smaller scale, proletarian museums were created to reflect the October Revolution as "the culmination of an organic revolutionary movement within the Russian Empire, directed by a conscious revolutionary agent – the coherent and inspired Bolshevik Party".[129] Rather than celebrate the object, the purpose was to glorify the fighters of the revolution and to propagandize the correct understanding of history. Semenova's contribution on the value of Proletarian Museums as an avenue into understanding the Communist purpose for museums and is a step towards understanding the complex relationship between the authorities, grass roots activism and voluntary initiatives, but this aspect of existing scholarship remains under-researched.[130] Despite the limited numbers of such museums (before their imminent demise) and poor resources, these museums, like mass festivals, made a brief passionate attempt to bring art to the masses and prioritise interest alongside political goals. Hence, there is clear demand for knowledge of early Soviet era initiatives to form museums aimed at stimulating a proletarian culture, akin to Andy Willimott's study of the practice of utopian communal

[124] Brik in Zhilyaev, pp.290-292.
[125] Zhilyaev, p.25.
[126] Semenova, p.86.
[127] Smith, 'Cultural Heritage and the People's Property', pp.417-421.
[128] E. Teryukova, 'Display of religious objects in a museum space: Russian museum experience in the 1920's and 1930's', *Material Religion*, Vol. 10 Issue 2 (June 2014), p.2.
[129] Smith, 'Cultural Heritage and "the People's Property"', p.422.
[130] Semenova, p.89-90.

living in Russian cities after the Revolution.[131] Much is known about the centralisation of authority over cultural institutions and practices, but much less is known about the initial zeal of activists and civic organizations. The challenge for those determined enough to take on, or exploit, the vacuum created in aspects of cultural heritage and cultural presentation is evident and little is known of the evolving relationship between groups pressing for influence. This is particularly the case in respect to museum and gallery institutions and hence this thesis attempts to close some of the evident gaps in our historical knowledge.

Museums under Stalin

The place of the museum under Stalin's leadership underwent change on an extraordinary scale and therefore requires placement amongst the wider cultural policy of the Soviet regime. To achieve this context, let us begin with the major assessment of cultural work at an all-union conference on agitation, propaganda, andcultural work which took place in Moscow in May and June in 1928. The conclusions drawn were damning with the leadership giving a "scathing evaluation of mobilizational efforts during the first decade of Soviet power – resources had been wasted, opportunities for party-state cooperation squandered and little real indoctrinational progress achieved".[132] The belief followed that unprecedented coordination was needed: propagandists and agitators in schools, the press and the workplace. There was a change in emphasis for mass agitational work: "the task is not merely to convince the masses of the correctness of the party line, but also to organize them to verify their fulfilment of this line and struggle with any shortcomings encountered along the way".[133] Furthermore, these forums should be brought to bear on the widest breath of society and utilized in the struggle for a new cultural outlook and a new way of life. The unapologetic conclusion was that "no mass cultural work can be apolitical, nor should it be", rather it be explicitly tied to incorporating the masses into the work of socialist construction.[134]

This mobilizational crisis would reverberate throughout the core cultural policies and would in time affect both the purpose and working of the museum under Stalin. But at the widest angle, the roots of any impact for museums can be found, once again, in the battle for October. As much as

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[131] A. Willimott, *Living the revolution: urban communes & Soviet socialism, 1917-1932*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
[132] Brandenberger, *Propaganda State in Crisis*, p.21.
[133] 'Iz materialov Vsesoiuznogo soveshchaniia po voprosam agitatsii, propagandy i kul'turnogo stroitel'stva' in *Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika*, Issue 7, Moscow: Gosizdat, 1930, p.415.
[134] Ibid, p.414.

it should have been an inspirational event, but "the party's schematic slogans, cariacatured heroes and arcane philosophical referencences in the years since had failed to win hearts and minds".[135]

From 1928, a targeted effort was made to politicize professional historians, with non-Marxist approaches being ultimately eliminated.[136] Stalin's infamous letter to *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia* in 1931 beamoaned party historians for failing to keep up with changing priorities. The tone was vituperative enough to leave to real doubt as to his demands. How dare they undermine the party hierarchy in public? How could members of the ideological establishment question the mobilizational agenda? Historians like party loyalists like Yaroslavsky were defamed as "archival rats".[137] Mihail Pokrovskii, a leading Soviet historian, was instrumental in silencing challenges to Marxist orthodoxy, before himself being denounced by Stalin.[138] Those who were associated with Pokrovskii's school were publicly shamed by Bukharin and Radek for vindicating Trotskyism and "scientific backwardness".[139] The intensity of the reaction illustrates the centrality of the past to the party's construction of a mass sense of Soviet identity. Even the "most cautious of party historians" were press ganged "into the service of the state". As Enteen put it, the "writing of history had turned into an instrument of state building".[140]

Stalin's intervention in *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia* in 1931 virtually ended critical historical debate on major issues relating to Russia's historical development. Scholarship laboured within a state of "pathetic servitude" until Stalin's death.[141] Stalin's intervention was the culmination of an institutional process that had been in the course of formalisation since December 1921, when Bolshevik leaders had moved Istpart under Central Committee jurisdiction. Historical writing contrary to Soviet state objectives was already being suppressed. Karen Petrone evidenced the creation of a remembrance narrative whereby there was initially an 'active forgetting' of the First World War, whilst the state went to comparatively great lengths to honour 'red heroes' of the Russian Civil War.[142] Powerful critiques of the First World War were prevented, with censorship employed to protect the image of the soldier, reacting to concerns within the Red Army staff that

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[135] Brandenberger, *Propaganda State in Crisis*, p.25.
[136] G.M. Enteen, *Soviet historians and the study of Russian imperialism*, Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979, pp.14-15.
[137] I. V. Stalin, 'O nekotorykh voprosakh istorii bol'shevizma', *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia*, Issue 6 (1931), pp.3-21.
[138] G.M. Enteen, 'Soviet Historians Review Their Own Past: The Rehabilitation of M. N. Pokrovsky', *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 20 No. 3 (January 1969).
[139] Bukharin and Radek were themselves labelled as traitors a year later. Timasheff, p.253.
[140] G.M. Enteen, 'Intellekual'nye predposylki utverzhdeniia stalinizma v sovetskoi istoriografii' (p149-p155), *Voprosy Istorii,* 1995, pp.151– 52
[141] Enteen, *Soviet historians and the study of Russian imperialism*, p.23.
[142] K. Petrone, 'The Great War and Civil War in Russian Memory' in Frame et al. (eds.), *Russian Culture in War and Revolution, 1914-22: Book* 1, pp.262-263.

the population maintained the view that they were incapable of beating a powerful German foe.[143] During the early 1930's, long delayed document collections were released, revealing successful Russian military participation during the First World War. By the time of the Second World War, the experience of fighting in the first had come to be an "essential part of war propaganda".[144]

Despite the efforts made in the 1920s by Istpart and others, there was still a distance between the masses and any degree of historical consciousness. *Pravda* had found that even a rudimentary understanding of party history to be lacking, even in the main cities. Workers in factories were unable to recall the date of the revolution, whilst a basic grasp of policy was not strong even amongst members. Following the *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia* episode, the party formed a commission to write a new official history of the party. At the same time, *Kultprop* was mobilized to identify errors in books on party history, class struggle, the October Revolution, Comintern and political literacy more generally.[145] The thinking from the top was all the information essential for basic political literacy was to be distilled into "a handful of almanacs that were to be accessible to even the most poorly educated".[146] An IMEL commission was formed in 1932 to form a multi-volume series of books on the subject, supervised by luminaries such as Kaganovich, Molotov and Stalin himself, with the aim of the work being reach as broad an audience as possible. Progress on this venture and for historians more broadly, was slow.[147] Politically suspect material and organizations were targeted in purges, with societies such as the Society for Former Political Prisoners or the Society of Old Bolsheviks publications removed from circulation.[148] Accusations in the press ran abound about 'wreckers' and publishing houses supposedly complicit in Anti Soviet activities amidst an atmosphere of hypersensitivity in comparison to the relatively heterodox 1920s.

Finally, in order to understand the context of museums under Stalin, we must also recognise the wider fears that there was a dangerous disconnect between the Soviet people and the party under Stalin. When plans were being devised for the textbook which would become the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course* in 1935, *Pravda* blamed "widespread apathy in the ranks" to a poor grasp of the party's history and its heroes. A local party newspaper editor in Belarus was quoted as saying "I don't need to know the history of the party for my work. I can get by without it and therefore skip going to class".[149] This sentiment, not

[143] Petrone, pp.267.
[144] Ibid, p.268.
[145] Brandenberger, *The Propaganda State,* p.28.
[146] Ibid, p.29.
[147] The only 'success' in the following years being V.G. Knorin's IKP brigade of veteran historians who managed a modest one volume history in 1932.
[148] Brandenberger, *The Propaganda State,* p.48.
[149] RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d.174, ll. 116, 78, 140; d. 176, l.28; d.174, l.17.

uncommon, is important in the context of understanding the situation for cultural-educational institutions like museums which were at the heart of the discourse relating to culture and consciousness. The period between 1934 and 1937 saw a transformation in the dynamic of *kul'turnost'*.[150] The enemy of this vision transitioned from an illiterate, dirty and bad-mannered figure, towards one which encouraged antipathy towards aspects of culturedness which were previously well regarded. Personal discipline and inner reflection were now prioritised as higher qualities and this remained the case during the remainder of the pre-war years.

Firstly, we should note the sense that a more practical connection between party ideology or indeed history and the everyday activitity of the Soviet people needed strengthening. As Vadim Volkov explains, the cultivation of an understanding of *kul'turnost'* which promoted a more private interest in political self-education and Bolshevik consciousness, put the *Short Course* as the major ideological instrument. The biography of Stakhanovite Aleksei Busygin presents a scenario far closer to the desired result: "I am working with the history of the VKP(b) (the *Short Course*). Slowly, in nocturnal silence I read it line by line, paragraph by paragraph…When you work with the book yourself, when you think over every line, you feel that you are learning the Bolshevik way of thinking".[151]

Secondly, that under Stalin, there was a greater urgency to ensure that 'intellectual institutions' were populated with party loyalists in order to prevent further disconnect. The newly promoted workers (*vydvizhentsy*), largely technical graduates who were both fiercely loyal to the regime and often poorly trained, were eager to gain experience in the field and carry out the cultural agenda of their superiors.[152] Michael David-Fox's study, *Revolution of the Mind* portrays the effort to proletarianize higher and technical education via case studies such as the *Institute of Red Professors*, which sought to create 'red specialists' in the social sciences.[153] In these institutions, the Bolshevik intellectuals had equated the humanities as the highest form of Marxism, yet paradoxically embraced the 'cult of practicality' in the service of the revolution.

The Great Break between 1928-32 swept away the dualistic order in organized intellectual life that had allowed non-party groups or half-altered institutions. Instead, a general assault on the non-party intelligentsia was unleashed, ushering in a frenzy of institutional and sectoral reorganization. Communist intellectuals engaged in a new 'socialist offensive' for hegemony. This

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[150] V. Volkov, pp.226-227.
[151] A. Busygin, *Zhizn' moia i moikh druzei*, Moscow: Profizdat, 1939, p.70 in Ibid, p.228.
[152] Fitzpatrick, *Cultural Front*, pp.12-13.
[153] M. David-Fox, *Revolution of the Mind: Higher Learning among the Bolsheviks, 1918-1929,* Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2016.

aggressive opposition to deviationism recalled war communism in its militant character. It would ultimately change the content of learned institutions throughout the Soviet Union and of course, museums were no exception. The period of the Great Break saw sweeping changes in terms of bringing proletarianization to academia for example. This came right from the top, though quite clearly a level of voluntarism was engaged in order to achieve the ends. The Central Committee set goals to hold a majority of positions within 'scientific cadres', whilst 'soft' purges of teaching staff took place to essentially remove non-party groups from academic and cultural professions by requiring them to be re-elected into their posts during this period.[154] Meanwhile, worker-peasant *studenchestvo* were encouraged to root out professors who could not be trusted as teachers at research institutes.[155]

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Before we turn expressly towards the changing context of cultural policy through the museum, the years after Lenin's death witnessed a number of other microcosms which perfectly the capture the turning tide towards the party led control of the popular relationship with history. To truly capture the flux of cultural heritage policy in the mid to late 1920's, a rich methodological gateway has been explored through the attitudes towards preservation in Leningrad. Scholarly enquiries in this field portray the diminishing diversity with which the past was treated. In Leningrad, this manifested itself in the physical landscape of the city, where shifting attitudes towards the past at an official level had a distinct impact on the buildings of the old capital. Catriona Kelly's study of churches in the city established that earlier efforts to preserve them under monuments legislation in 1924 became threatened as cultural and political priorities were reoriented during the First Five Year Plan.[156] As early as 1928, scores of buildings were being closed or demolished under the instruction of the Communal Management Department (*Otkomkhoz*), reaching a peak of 88 enforced closures in 1929-30.[157] Kelly concludes that this trend was part of a wider lack of recognition given towards the existence of 'Petersburg heritage' and a desire to progress towards a "uniform and harmonious future, rather than giving testimony to the chaos and disorder of years gone by".[158] Moreover this was not, in Kelly's view, restricted to the elites, but it was an attitude which by the 1930's had permeated throughout the bureaucracy. The picture in assessing the attitude towards preservation

[154] Ibid, p.258. Timasheff's *Great Retreat* also details how the Academy of Sciences held internal elections affected by government pressure, promoting party loyalties over scholarship, p.245.
[155] I. K. Luppol, 'Rekon struktivnyi period i nauchnyi front', *Nauchnyi rabotnik*, No. 11 (1929): pp.3-8.
[156] C. Kelly, *Socialist churches: radical secularization and the preservation of the past in Petrograd and Leningrad*, 1918-1988, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2016, pp.803-806.
[157] Ibid, pp.806-807.
[158] Ibid, pp.814-823.

in the 1930's is one characterized by inconsistency and arbitrariness.[159] The cycle of preservation and destruction evident in Kelly's Leningrad study gives a clear indication that the past was viewed centrally as somewhat burdensome, requiring realities to be manipulated towards a more orthodox narrative in order to support present-day concerns. Even with this in mind, Kelly saw Soviet culture beyond 1934, as "an attempt to amalgamate the traits of the historical and national culture of Russia with the communist cycle of ideas", regardless of the contradiction with the emergent policies of rapid industrialisation and religious iconoclasm.[160]

Under Stalin's leadership, mass spectacles returned to the cities after a period of reduced importance during the mid-1920s, whilst film was utilised as a powerful storytelling method capable of evoking significant emotional reactions and encouraging loyalty.[161] Sergei Eisenstein's portrayal of *October* was created using extensive shots of both the Winter Palace's interiors and façade to great effect. Stills from the film would even famously be utilised in museum display as though they were capturing the true events of the revolution. Yet as a method of exhibiting the October Revolution, films were divisive. They achieved a dramatic symbolism of revolutionary permanence whilst simultaneously undercutting the kind of clear, transparent narrative that the Party sought for observers.[162]

[159] Ibid, pp.236-237.
[160] C. Kelly, 'Introduction: Iconoclasm and Commemorating the Past' in C. Kelly and D. Shepherd (eds.), *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution: 1881-1940*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p.233.
[161] Corney, p.183.
[162] Ibid, pp.195-198.

Fig.5: The crew on Eisenstein's film set for *October* prepare for a scene on Palace square.[163]

By this stage, the Communist Party, rather than institutions of government, controlled every aspect of the celebratory process. Festival planning and execution now followed an established pattern, with the regions pursuing a Moscow blueprint.[164] Regional exhibitions of Sovietism became an opportunity to display loyalty and ties to Moscow, as well as an opportunity to reflect progress to attendees. Malte Rolf's case study of Novosibirsk is a portrayal of a city desperately trying to complete building projects and project concrete achievements in time for celebrations, whilst jubilee literature often faced similar challenges.[165] Furthermore, Rolf judges mass celebrations to have taken a far more explicit role in the process of 'inner-sovietization' after a decade of the Red Calendar.[166] For Rolf, mass festivals were "one of the most important tools of sovietisation because it presented cultural norms publicly and simultaneously nationwide, allowing people to live out a piece of standard culture all together".[167] Therefore by the 1930's, mass-festivals, by exhibiting Soviet values with the mobilization of millions of people, achieved the platform to project a sense of national unity. They also had a functional role in reflecting the consent of the masses towards leadership. Corney also emphasises the importance of the formal recognition given in celebratory parades; "Mass parades and rallies, often a first point of contact with the new regime, were bringing the masses face to face with themselves".[168] By bringing about a massive scale of participation in public rituals, festival strategy "attested to the successful sovietisation of people's lives" and justified their command strategy.[169] Dangerous counter-narratives which had aimed to smear October as a mere act of banditry without popular support, were now almost entirely silenced. By the middle of the decade, museums played an evidential role in justifying the status of the existing leadership. In the Museum of the Revolution in Leningrad alone, thousands of Civil War era documents and photographs, recognizing the role played by now 'absent' Bolsheviks, or acknowledging criticism of the October Revolution, were destroyed.[170]

The first systematic attempts to embed sociological theory into curatorial approaches in museums, on a practical level, were not felt until the leadership of Joseph Stalin in the 1920's and early 1930's. State museums under Stalinism were the subject of intense scrutiny, especially from

[163] Oktiabr' ("Desiat' dnei, kotorye potriasli mir"), *Muzei Kino*: http://www.museikino.ru/
[164] Rolf, pp.56-58.
[165] Ibid, pp.100-101.
[166] Ibid, p.147-148.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Corney, p.203.
[169] Rolf, p.142.
[170] GMPIR (Gosudarstvennyi muzei politicheskoi istorii Rossii). '*Akty i perepiska o vyvoze eksponatov*; strakhovanie i poluchenie eksponatov dlia postoiannogo i vremennogo ispol'zovaniia; peredacha dokumentov v arkhiv i zavershenie rabot po proverke nalichiia muzeinykh fondov' (June 1936 – December 1951).

the radical left during the years of the First Five Year Plan (1928-32).[171] Museum function was brought into line with the cultural goals of the Communist Party. Evidently the approach towards museums, their collections and their staff fitted the mood of antipathy towards the skilled cultural worker. It was now the overriding belief that it was the industrial worker who felt the rhythm of socialist construction more closely than his cultural counterpart, who became consigned to a devalued state of obdurate individualism.[172]

After the Museum Workers Congress of 1930, the new generation of radical Marxists condemned the old generation of preservationists, believing that they had let down their audience. The replacement of Anatoly Lunacharsky as People's Commissar for Enlightenment in 1929 was a critical moment, hastening the departure of museums from a preservationist, object led approach towards narrative Marxism. Andrei Bubnov had been a pioneer in the development of political education in the Red Army and editor of the Red Army newspaper, Red Star (*Krasnaia Zvezda*).[173] Importantly he arrived at the post with far less tolerance for obstacles and a greater appetite to bring about mass education. Bubnov was unapologetically hostile towards those resisting a class conflict model of museum display, even leading a campaign to remove curators attached to the western, object centred model of exhibition.[174] Unsurprisingly, curators working within former palaces were particular targets on account of their 'object fetishism'. Indeed many palace museums, such as the Stroganov Palace museum in 1929, were simply closed to the public, reneging on earlier plans for Soviet museums.[175] The consequence of this approach led to the removal of many of the cultural intelligentsia, and facilitated the sale of many objects abroad which had been deemed surplus to the political goals of museum reform (via *Gostorg*).[176] Museums were now discussed as part of a planned economy, with their funding centralized and their autonomy lost. Even the Hermitage's collections were open to visits from Narkompros shock brigades to cover costs if necessary.[177] Under Bubnov, exhibition curatorship first explored the approach that the observer

[171] K. Akinsha and A. Jolles, 'On the third front: The Soviet Museum and its public during the Cultural Revolution', *Canadian American Slavic Studies*, Vol.43 No.1-4 (Spring Winter 2009), p.198.
[172] Clark, p.262.
[173] Y. Snegova, 'A.S. Bubnov, Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation Encyclopaedia'. https://encyclopedia.mil.ru/encyclopedia/history/more.htm?id=12224225@cmsArticle
[174] Akinsha and Jolles, p.208.
[175] Upon being shut down, many of the Stroganov's priceless works were taken into the Hermitage's collection. It once again became a site for museum collections, under the wing of the Russian Museum, in 1988. Akinsha and Jolles, p.198.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Solomakha, pp.145-146.

should be “educated in a direction desirable for the state without noticing it”, before a period of more transparent ideological aims took hold into the mid 1930’s.[178]

With Bubnov installed and readily overturning Lunacharsky’s more progressive educational and experimental cultural reforms, Narkompros adopted a more didactic, restrictive approach in their museums policy. *Sovetskii Muzei*, the newly created journal of the Museum Department, conveyed the correct theory and practice to embed a more professional (and orthodox) approach in Soviet museums.[179] The new guiding principles for museum activity concentrated on political engagement, partisanship, and direct participation in the industrial process. Moreover, they were expected to provide a critical presence against ideological superstitions (including religion) and to critique fetishism. In the spirit of building communism, natural and social history alike were tasked with curatorship to support a world view sustaining man’s conscious effort, not processes alien to man. It was in this spirit that the doors opened towards a new empowerment of the curator and experimental ideas. The first Museums Congress in 1930 was an important milestone on the road towards this new museology. Here, Ivan Luppol argued for the division of museums into institutions with an economic focus, and those which concentrated on daily life and visual arts.[180] At the same Congress, Aleksei Fedorov-Davydov, a young Marxist sociologist, argued in support of ‘sociological aesthetics’, justifying the importance of the origin of the artist and the role of dialectical materialism in organizing expositions.[181] For Fedorov-Davydov, the progression of artistic production could be said to fit a ‘single straight line of evolution’: “we know that this single line exists because every piece of the historical process is a complex intersection, a dialectical struggle between competing forces and heterogenous tendencies”.[182] Davydov-Fedorov was appointed Director of the Department of Contemporary Art at the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, where he would implement curatorship built upon dialectical materialism in the visual arts and display recognizing the importance of class struggle. Previously overlooked works in fields from folk art to street design were recognized, even political banners were given a place, whilst economic information and eyewitness statements were given a supportive role.[183] His principles would be adopted by many existing and new museums in the years following the First Museums Congress.

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[178] Ibid, p.200-201.
[179] E.A. Shulepova (ed.), *Muzeevedcheskaia mysl’ v Rossii: sbornik dokumentov i materialov,* Moscow: Eterna, 2010, p.671.
[180] Zhilyaev, p.44
[181] Ibid.
[182] A.A. Fedorov-Davydov, ‘Printsipy stroitel’stva khudozhestvennykh muzeev’, *Pechat i revoliutsiia,* No.4 (April 1929) in C. Lodder, M. Kokkori and M. Mileeva (eds.), *Utopian reality: reconstructing culture in revolutionary Russia and beyond*, Leiden: Brill, 2013, p.135.
[183] Zhilyaev, p.45.

The Soviet museum under Stalin was expected to transcend its own boundaries and enter into everyday life. This meant the proliferation of agit-trucks and mobile museums designed to travel beyond the limitations of a static museum, in some cases by being built into vehicles directly contributing to the modernization present in the First Five Year Plan (1928-1932). Mobile laboratory vans would contain exhibitions in order to persuade farmers to adopt certain crops or farming techniques. Other experimental approaches included the exhibiting of living plants, or workplace museums where factory displays acted as research centres. A significant advocate of this approach was V. Karpov, a major contributor to *Sovetskii Muzei* on issues of museum theory and practice. Like Punin and Brik before him, attacked 'cabinets of curiosities' in favour of museums with an explicit educational function.[184] For Karpov, "undeniably this picture must be ideologically relevant".[185] Furthermore, his view was that museums must act as a newspaper to reflect the most significant moments of the day, avoid being dragged down by text heavy display and stay adaptable in their use. The museologist Valentin Kholtsov, reporting on an exhibition on the 'Everyday Life of the Working Class' in 1931 surmised the position of Soviet curatorship theory for 'historical museums'.[186] Their aim was to focus on the historical challenges of the working class (e.g. the development of strike action, the challenges of war) in order to lead towards the justification of progressive action today (e.g. 7 hour working day, increased pay). The reconstruction of life based on socialist principles, for Kholtsov, would build the 'new man' in the Soviet mould. Even institutions with lengthy associations to the Tsarist past were developing 'current political campaigns' by 1932. The Hermitage's annual reports note the implementation of socialist construction within the museum. Their compliance ensured unequivocal praise in the contemporary press as "one of the best museums in the world" where "every tourist, whether foreigner or a Soviet citizen considers it his duty to see this treasury in Leningrad first of all".[187]

The Hermitage, amongst other elite museums in Soviet Russia, also provided the foundation for achieving a greater degree of public engagement. Isidore Zolotarevskii led Leningrad Glavnauka's *Artistic Reproduction Workshop*, engaging in techniques to reproduce artefacts (predominantly sculptures) in the service of public education. Zolotarevskii's initiative, to reproduce the collections of Russia's greatest museums for dozens of museums across the Soviet Union, had been given

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[184] Despite his contribution to *Sovetskii Muzei* and a minor return to scholarly awareness through Zhilyaev's work, almost nothing is known of Karpov in biographical terms.
[185] V. Karpov, 'The Museum Newspaper: Suggestions for Regional Museums and Community Centres" (1931) in Zhilyaev, p.277.
[186] V. Kholtsov, 'Everyday life of the Working Class from 1900 to 1930: History and Everyday Life Department of the State Russian Museum' (1931) in Zhilyaev, pp.385-386.
[187] V.I. Matveev, *Ermitazh "Uedinennyi", ili vystavochnaia mozaika Ermitazh: materialy k istorii vystavochnoi deiatel'nosti muzeia: vystavki v Ermitazhe i v tsentrakh Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha: nauchno-spravochnoe izdanie*, St. Petersburg: Slavia, 2014, pp.173-177.

personal support from Anatoly Lunacharsky, in order to support to expanding demand for mass culture under Stalin. In Zolotarevskii's words, he believed "we need a tractor for ploughing human brains", whilst recognising the greater focus would remain in economic reconstruction.[188] His techniques were heralded, with no false modesty, as enabling far greater volume. The workshop's reproduction of reliefs served "3 million people per year across 1000 institutions".[189] Furthermore, Zolotarevskii claimed that his workshop's emphasis on life-like 'three-dimensional exhibit spaces' provided the strongest methods for conveying meaning and "enabling a Marxist explanation". More and more, he argued, everyday objects were being used to provide a "powerful arsenal of means" to assist arrangements which formed a "colossal magnifying glass of time" until the past could be assimilated by the viewer.[190] The present-day museum could no longer satisfy the needs of the present, with Zolotarevskii presenting his curation in terms of 'fixing the attention' of the viewer – against the sense of turmoil and objects that "compete with each other" present in too many museums of the day. Not short of ambition, Zolotarevskii's solutions are offered with explicit militarism (e.g. "the scattered cultural army will draw the necessary weapons"). For him, it was necessary to wage war on the static nature of the museum and to utilize the museum to challenge the educational limitations present in the USSR. Museums could be made into "factories of knowledge" capable of resolving many of the issues present in the demands of the five-year plans. Schools and workers would be allowed far greater access to museums. The only sacrifice, which is not problematic for Zolotarevskii, was the "insignificant material properties" of original objects.[191] The ability to move collections with ease, to cover "millions of viewers at a time" and to get displays into 'red corners' and working clubs far outweighed such bourgeois concerns. His own contribution to the All Union Museum for example, had allowed the museum to provided understanding of how man's struggle with nature could be resolved by the plan for a "rapid conquest by higher technology".[192] Other contributions had allowed for progress in campaigns against alcoholism and religion, alongside historical displays (ancestral culture, cave drawings, witchcraft).[193]

Other practitioners under Stalinism were able to bridge the potential divide between increasing curatorial orthodoxy and the experimental demands of rapid change during the Five-Year Plans. Two examples came from museologists, Natan Schneerson and Boris Zavadovskii who published works in *Sovetskii Muzei*, the professional journal and reference point for every museum

[188] I.S. Zolotarevskii, *10 let khudozhestvenno-reproduktsionnykh masterskikh Glavnauki: Vtoraia otchetnaia vystavka*, Moscow, 1930, p.6.
[189] Ibid, pp.8-10.
[190] Ibid, p.12.
[191] Ibid, pp.17-19.
[192] Ibid p.20.
[193] Ibid, pp.37-66.

worker. Despite its relatively small circulation of around 3000 copies, it was published frequently (up to twelve issues per year) and it did not hold back in dictating clear criticism towards outdated methodology.[194] Schneerson, who spoke at the first Museums Congress, utilised dialectical materialism and criticised methods of historical museums as he sought to arrange material displays methodologically to "cause hatred for the past".[195] Of a similar mind, Zavadovskii, the innovator behind the design of a 'biological museum', aimed to create a museum which "constantly develops with the development of scientific knowledge and ongoing expositions on the streets and squares of the city". His work, *Targeted Installations and Main Indicators for the creation of the Central Biological Museum* offers a truly dynamic but largely unrealized path to museum reform.[196] Zavadovskii called for mass-construction to aid the implementation of scientifically focused displays to support the implementation of "mass anti-religious…technical propaganda" and the removal of the "old archives inherited from the past".

The atheist museum, a variant upon those influenced by 'dialectical materialism', also contributed towards the new breed of museums aiming to reshape sociological behaviour and change attitudes. Religion was presented as the camouflage for exploitation and social inequality, driven by campaigns by organizations such as the Union of Militant Atheists. In the 1920's and early 1930's the Soviet citizen was bombarded on the streets, in the workplace and throughout the public sphere, with the "hooliganism" of Komsomol activists to the "soft" intellectual atheism of Bolshevik journals towards the ends of the 1920's.[197] Display areas in local history museums were claimed for use, whilst churches (such as St Isaac's Cathedral in Leningrad) were expropriated for antireligious museum spaces.[198] This meant overcoming the challenge to "transcend the effect of the typical church ritual" whilst "estranging it by providing typical information that lay bare the inner workings of its mechanisms".[199]

Ultimately the 'dialectical materialist' museum would not be able to carry an avant-garde form for long. A Stalinist interpretation of this theory would take exclusive prominence alongside an intensive political crackdown on museum workers in the 1930's. There was no possibility of a polemic against the highest authorities. Despite an absence of an official change, the impact was a transition of the revolutionary method towards a "dogmatic semblance of a philosophical

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[194] Shulepova, p.671.
[195] N. Schneerson (1932) in Shulepova, pp.700-704.
[196] B.M. Zavadovskii, 'Tselevye ustanovki i osnovnye pokazateli k sozdaniiu Tsentral'nogo biologicheskogo muzeia' (1936) in Shulepova, pp.673-680.
[197] D. Peris, *Storming the Heavens: the Soviet League of the Militant Godless*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998, p.69.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Zhilyaev, p.49.

religion".[200] The Soviet version of dialectical materialism resembled an abstract science and avant-garde museologists were amongst the most targeted for virulent criticism for their erroneous interpretation of the theory, ending many careers and closing numerous museums – even the flagship Museum of the Revolution in Leningrad, for a short time.

Exhibiting *Prazdnik* outside the Soviet Union

The predominant focus of this thesis is heavily oriented towards analysing the functions of exhibitions and museums within the broader context of Soviet cultural presentation. Yet this objective cannot be disassociated from the wider situation of the Soviet Union in an international context. Facing international condemnation and lacking in diplomatic recognition after the October Revolution, the new Bolshevik state sought to strengthen its representation abroad. *Vsesoiuznoe obshchestvo kul'turnoi Sviazi s zagranitsei* (VOKS), the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, was created in 1925 to organize and strengthen foreign groups most supportive to the Soviet cause. VOKS became the foremost organization responsible for the promotion of cultural contact between artists and intellectuals, working in collaboration with the Soviet press and security forces to sustain "a controlled, positive image of Soviet life".[201] Alternative channels of cultural diplomacy offered a route to encourage friendship with the USSR, including the creation of the Friends of the Soviet Union (FSU) network which coordinated with VOKS and supportive foreign organizations.[202] Within this context, the exhibition became an integral cultural tool in foreign diplomacy throughout the interwar period, after which it played a central role in "the struggle for the minds of the people", as an unprecedented investment of intellectual effort was given to cultural self-representation during the Cold War.[203]

Nevertheless, the bulk of recent historiography on the role of Soviet cultural policy within international relations has tended to concentrate on the sales of nationalized cultural artefacts into Europe and North America. This process began in an organized fashion after the Council of People's Commissars (*Sovnarkom*) issued nationalization decrees on 19 September 1918 ("On Prohibiting the Export of Works of Art and Antiques") and 10 October 1918 ("On Inventorying Works of Art and

[200] Ibid, pp.50-54.
[201] M. David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union (1921-41)*, New York: Oxford University Press Global, 2011, pp.9-10.
[202] L. Nemzer, 'Soviet Friendship Societies', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Edition 13, No. 2 (Summer 1949).
[203] A. Iriye and P.Y. Saunier (eds.), *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*, London: Macmillan, 2009, pp.175-179.

Antiques"), which led enforced the registration of works of art, including entire collections and individual works of artistic or historical value. Following surveys of now nationalized property, the State Museum Reserve (*Gosmuzeifond*), a repository of nationalized art, was created. The reserve had been the product of Ivan Grabar, a conservative art critic at the forefront of shaping "an institutional apparatus for heritage preservation – a network of museums" in the years following the October Revolution, especially in terms of management over requisitions (particularly religious artefacts).[204] Whilst Gosmuzeifond acted as the source for selling artefacts abroad in 1921, Grabar had seen the creation of a state monopoly over art expropriation as absolutely necessary to fend off the many dealers seeking to profit from expropriation in stolen art property.[205] The situation worsened in the late 1920's, with major art sales abroad used to fill the shortfall in funding. Not even the most prestigious of museums could claim exemption. Elena Solomakha's research charted the desperate situation facing the Hermitage at this time, with sales of artworks effectively paying for electricity and employee wages.[206] In February 1928, the Hermitage had been ordered to provide a selection of paintings worth at least two million roubles for export, with a special agency *Antikvariat* created by Narkompros to oversee the process. In response, the Hermitage director, Iosif Orbeli had to take extreme measures to ensure that the very best of their collections were kept from the grasp of the Antiquariat.[207] Sales abroad did generate significant interest, whilst the press also became intrigued by the controversial nature of the expropriations. Yet attempts to build foreign currency reserves, or even to fund Russian museums by such auctions faced numerous obstacles. Émigré lawsuits affected auctions in Paris in 1928, whilst buyers were left frustrated that the best quality items remained in the USSR itself.[208] With this disappointment, coupled with the use of intermediaries, takings from sales fell well below expectation. Revenue would indeed fall further still amidst the context of the worldwide economic depression which followed the Wall Street Crash in October 1929.

Despite such obstacles, Igor Grabar's concerted effort to use Russian art as a means of building diplomatic relations did achieve some public recognition. Grabar was successful in orchestrating a travelling exhibition of Russian art to America in 1925, though without necessarily achieving serious political or economic relief.[209] Russian artists were sold to the American observer

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[204] I. Sandomirskaia**, '**Catastrophe, Restoration and Kunstwollen: Igor Grabar, Cultural Heritage, and Soviet Reuses of the Past' (pp.339-361), *Ab Imperio*, Vol.2 (September 2015), p.344.
[205] R.R. Gafifullin, 'Leningradskii Gosudarstvennyi muzeinyi fond, 1917-1929' in *Sud'by muzeinykh kollektsii. Materialy: Tsarskosel'skoi konferentsii*, St. Petersburg: Gos. Ermitazha, 2000, pp. 314-26. Sandomirskaia, p.351.
[206] Solomakha, p.139.
[207] Norman, pp.199-200.
[208] Solomakha, p.143.
[209] Sandomirskaia, p.355.

as creating throughout the adversity and suffering of their circumstances. Grabar's touring exhibition – with a catalogue of 914 artworks from over 90 artists from Nesterov to Gonchorova - was a pioneering, but ultimately flawed exercise. Once again, only limited sales were achieved (only 10% of works were sold), revealing the Soviet ignorance of the international art market (or indeed, American tastes). Nevertheless, Grabar did 'mastermind' the commodification of something uniquely Russian and eminently saleable; the Russian icon. Sandomirskaia's study of Grabar's campaign to use the icon as the embodiment of beautiful aesthetic art enabled the reputation of the Soviet regime to improve as a foremost artistic patron, genuinely concerned for restoration and even spiritual values.[210] An international tour, including Berlin, London (the Victoria and Albert Museum) and the Metropolitan Museum in New York, acted in tandem with public lectures, as Grabar met with eminent politicians, museum experts and gallerists to promote Russian art, and it is fair to say, himself.[211] The assistance given by senior museums to Narkompros in exhibitions abroad continued to expand, and the State Hermitage in particular played a significant role. In 1935 alone, they participated in enabling exhibitions of renaissance masters in Venice and Paris, whilst strengthening relations with Britain in an international exposition of Chinese art.[212]

Sandomirskaia recognized that the Soviet State was able to reposition itself behind the re-use of the icon for its own cultural purposes. The state under Stalin's leadership was now able to take an object of tremendous cultural and religious significance to the Russian people and present it as a relic of aesthetic beauty, forming a new set of 'ahistorical' values upon the object which can be seen more broadly when analysing the Bolshevik museumification of Russian Orthodox objects. The Icon was transformed from a "cult relic to an object of museum fetishism against a background of extreme terror and violence" in what Sandomirskaia called "deliberate monumentalization".[213] Quite correctly, she mourns the historiographical emphasis upon Bolshevik destruction of the past and its culture, rather than the "power of restoration and preservation as a window into its legitimacy".[214]

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In terms of influence on the international perception of the Soviet Union during the 1920's and 1930's, World's Fairs and the Soviet contribution to them can surely considered as amongst the most potent and politicised examples of exhibitions. The Paris Fair (1925) offered an "unprecedented

[210] Ibid, pp.358-359.
[211] Ibid, p.357.
[212] V.I. Matveev (ed.), *Ermitazh «vsemirnyi», ili planeta Ermitazh. Vystavochnaia deiatel'nost' muzeia za rubezhom i proizvedeniia iz zarubezhnykh sobranii na vystavkakh v Gosudarstvennom Ermitazhe: Nauchno-spravochnoe izdanie,* St. Petersburg: Slavia, 2012*,* pp.72-73.
[213] Sandomirskaia, p.346.
[214] Ibid, p.361.

opportunity to represent the new socialist state to a wide audience on the world stage", coming at a time when Western powers, including Great Britain and France, were just beginning to resume trading and diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.[215] Anthony Swift adjudges the motives to be closer to developing a market for artistic exports, though it would be churlish to think that the nature of display was not a projection of official Soviet political and cultural values. The exhibition carried a clear sense of intent in messaging: for the USSR to be seen as advanced in the quest to build an entirely modern culture. Artistically this revolutionary modernism was critically well received, contrasting with other, more ornate designs from other countries and ultimately winning a gold medal.[216] The bold, austere pavilion of Konstantin Melnikov was reviewed in the western press as a "constructivist integration of industrial, structural and aesthetic practice in architecture".[217]

In the World Exhibition in Paris in 1937, once again it was the USSR who made the most striking contribution, albeit in a very different international atmosphere. The ambitions differed sharply from those of 1925. Organizers sought to represent the USSR as a wealthy, modernizing force under the banner 'Art and Technology in Modern Life', whilst distinguishing themselves as the bulwark against fascism.[218] The very best talent was employed, with staff and resources from the Hermitage forming an important supporting role.[219] The gold medal winning Soviet and German efforts were "self-aggrandizing monuments to their nationalistic spirits" in an unmatched display of ideological confrontation.[220] This was a display of supreme confidence as a result of industrial success, but it did not mask the wholly defensive tone in their celebration of progress. Loud celebration of improving welfare provision and great project successes (such as the Moscow Metro) were underpinned by a "very didactic style of presentation".[221] Two years later in New York, the lavish and monumental scale came at the very peak of Soviet gigantism, with their contribution twice the size of their recent Paris contribution. Once again, the Hermitage contributed expertise – with excursions clearly demonstrating the collective, even peaceful credentials of the museum by acknowledging that soldiers and foreign visitors alike – were the true "owners of the Hermitage".[222] The World Exhibition in New York was once again recognised as a persuasive success, winning over public perception and justifying the efforts made to use the exhibitions as cultural propaganda, attracting more visitors than any other display. Both 1937 and 1939 had gone some way towards

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[215] A. Swift, *The Soviet Union at the 20th-Century World's Fairs*: http://worldhistoryconnected.press.illinois.edu/13.3/forum_01_swift.html.
[216] Ibid.
[217] J.E. Findling and K.D. Pelle, *Encyclopedia of World's Fairs and Exhibitions*, Jefferson: McFarland, 2008, p.240.
[218] Matveev (ed.), *Ermitazh «vsemirnyi», ili planeta Ermitazh,* p.76.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Findling and Pelle, p.295.
[221] Swift.
[222] Matveev (ed.), *Ermitazh «vsemirnyi», ili planeta Ermitazh*, p.80.

impressing visitors with the Soviet model of modernism, but both were invariably overshadowed by the dark course of international events, not least in the case of 1939 as international opinion was coloured by the Nazi-Soviet Pact and the invasion of Finland. Nevertheless, the contribution of the USSR to World's Fairs and International displays during this period proved the importance it attributed to having a clear, ideological reflection of its ambitions projected to the rest of the world. The exhibition in this guise was an opportunity to carry a variety of policy objectives, from building the foundation for trade and diplomatic relations to resisting the challenging counter-narratives that inevitably emerged as news trickled into the West regarding Stalinist purges, as was the case in 1937.

The role of the exhibition in shaping memory and identity

In order to understand the function of the museum, whether in the context of Petrograd following the October Revolution or otherwise, we must attempt to frame the place of the museum as a site for evoking an emotional and intellectual relationship with a tangible past.[223] The importance of the museum to Bolshevik cultural heritage and presentation in the period after 1917 was a clear recognition that memory is neither passive nor static, neither mortal, nor reliable.[224] Instead it is incumbent on museums to provoke "memory experiences", whereby museums offer a site by which preserved artefacts can interact with memory.[225] In the case studies chosen for emphasis in this thesis, the Bolshevik leadership would face contrasting challenges in the memory experiences generated within the Winter Palace. The Hermitage, with its origins as the elitist hideaway of Catherine the Great, and the great fineries of artistic and historical artefacts gathered by Tsarist patronage, had the potential to draw upon a deeply held sentiments for the Russian monarchy. Galleries of lavish paintings and sculpture could provoke awe, or alienated distance, given the ossified settings. The grandeur of the Jordan Staircase and the sheer magnificence of Palace Square had the ability to impose a sense of imposter syndrome upon visitors from all walks of life. The

[223] Scholarship on the relationship between museums and memory in recent decades has been summarised perhaps most effectively by Susan Crane. Also S.A. Crane, 'Memory, History and Distortion in the Museum', *History and Theory*, Vol. 36 No. 4 (December 1997). Further contributions of great significance with emphasis on case studies include; E.T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2001; and N. Harris, 'Museums and Controversy', *Journal of American History*, Vol. 82 (December 1995).

[224] An analysis of the way in which memory functions within the brain and its relationship with visual cues is explained within D. Schachter, *Searching for Memory*: *The Brain, the Mind and the Past*, New York: Basic Books, 1996.

[225] S.A. Crane, 'Introduction: Of Museums and Memory' in S.A. Crane (ed.), *Museums and memory*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000, p.1.

historical rooms, living quarters for the Tsars, heightened this sense yet further; allowing the ordinary rank and file into private, even humble apartments. The Museum of Revolution, opened in the west of the palace, presented a very different emotional reaction. Displayed during the height of a Civil War, the museum staff quickly gathered materials from battlefields before going straight into displays. To longstanding staff and visitors of the Hermitage prior to the October Revolution, this must have felt like an insurgency. A cultural civil war, one fighting for memory, was at work in the Winter Palace.

The validity of the exhibition and the museum setting for the conversation that was taking place in the period between 1917 and 1941 needs careful consideration. Whilst a broader understanding of the exhibition might have created experiences with the potential to shape collective memory and behaviour, was the museum able to contribute towards concerns of contemporary Soviet life? This in turn raises the question how far the museum was a legitimate place whereby exhibitions could assist in embedding shared values and contribute towards achieving social and political goals. Furthermore, an understanding of how the museum communicated with its visitors requires careful consideration – whether it placed the creators in total control, or whether participation and plurality were possible.

A consistent constituent in understanding why the museum was a place of pivotal importance relates back to the wider project to 'mythologize' or even monumentalize October.[226] Whilst this did not occur alone through the museum, it involved the convergence of institutional means to impress a societal consensus that the Russian people were living through a monumental stage of history, with the October Revolution as the beginning of a new stage in the revolutionary process which would ultimately lead to communism. In order for the Soviet people to acknowledge the revolution of 1917 in these terms, the creation of a widespread historical consciousness was required. Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the Past* recognises that the majority of individuals do not attain historical consciousness or knowledge from academic writing, but as individuals in constant exchange with history as a social process. For him, history achieves a relationship with society through a number of determinant factors. These relate to who occupies structural positions, which individuals recognise their own vocality and how individuals in society interface with dominant historical narratives (e.g. their relationship with the media).[227] Such an approach is of undeniable relevance to the study of early Soviet museums and exhibitions, given that the October

[226] Earlier references to Frederick Corney's *Telling October* and Francois Furet's *The passing of an illusion* are pivotal in untangling the mythologizing of October: the former in the more practical sense, the latter in the theoretical sense. Further examining is given in: F.C. Corney, 'Rethinking a Great Event: The October Revolution as Memory Project', *Social Science History*, Vol. 22 No. 4 (Winter 1998).
[227] M-R. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History,* Boston: Beacon Press, 1995, p.23.

Revolution overhauled the occupation of powerful roles in state institutions and civic organizations, not to mention the absence of effective, organized opposition for much of the 1920's and 1930's. The nature of the revolution in Russia manifested a new mentality, one which saw a newly empowered urban proletariat achieve greater status, replacing the outgoing elite.[228] The pace and scale of this change suggests the precedence of the social process of history.

The early Soviet period saw the emergence of the first explicit intervention of the state into museum management on a mass scale, which formed one aspect of a wider effort to shape a coherent historical narrative. Trouillot's analysis of historical production is explicit in recognizing the role of historical silences generated by state institution building via archives, museums and even non-academic historical intervention.[229] In this endeavour, Trouillot's belief is that we must track power and analyse when and how it can intervene to determine the relationship between what happened and what narratives are created. In the Soviet Union this was evidenced by the role of Istpart in sourcing artefacts and consulting with museum exhibitions; or the performative theatrical spectaculars such as *Storming of the Winter Palace*. It also meant silencing alternative narratives, by controlling and embedding a uniform narrative by institutional means, including the role of the Marx-Lenin Institute and Istpart in shaping the historical literature towards the preference of the CPSU, or by the increased bureaucratic control over mass festivals after some relative plurality in the early years following 1917. In this context, the role of museum artefacts and the monumentalization of public space, holds power for Trouillot because of the tangible, material trace that it can offer. This was understandably of great importance to the Soviet people experiencing great uncertainty in the 1920's for example.

This thesis underlines the importance of materiality within the museum as a factor in shaping historical memory and consciousness. In the Museum of the Revolution in particular, the selection of physical traces of struggle, whether banners reflecting collective protest or evidence of violations committed by White Forces during the Russian Civil War, provided validity to the revolutionary cause. For Paul Connerton, the importance of the tangible, material world and its spatial dimension constitute an imperative visual and experimental trigger to memory and perception. In *How Societies Remember*, Connerton's original contribution is founded on the role of *bodily social memory* and the relationship that is built between the individual, the group and their

[228] Whilst difficult to quantify, there are some excellent studies of empowerment in the immediate period following 1917 both in contemporary accounts and historical analysis. See E. Winter, *Red Virtue: Human Relationships in the New Russia*, London: Gollancz, 1933, pp.144–146; Also, A. Willimott, 'Everyday Revolution: The Making of the Soviet Urban Communes' in A. Lindenmeyr, C. Read, and P. Waldron (eds.), *Russia's Home Front, 1914–1922: The Experience of War and Revolution*, Bloomington: Slavica, 2016.
[229] Trouillot, pp.25-30.

history by physical participation in rituals and commemorations. Significant weight is placed on the impact of performative participation, as opposed to the 'fixed' nature of written history, something that was necessary within the semi-literate context of early Soviet society.[230] This mentality, understanding the importance of dramatization and reducing the stagnant nature of pedagogical, academic history not only took its place in Soviet mass festivals and open air performances or demonstrations, but it would increasingly influence curatorial approaches within the museum as the demand to reach greater number of visitors grew under Stalin's leadership. David Lowenthal's assessment of the way in which societies 'replace the past' through commemoration and re-enactment builds on Connerton's position. For Lowenthal, the seemingly impossible act of replaying the past enables us to invest in finding meaning from history and to take part in making the past our own.[231] In relation to the importance of Soviet mass festivals, this is certainly prevalent, with each observer or participant investing in the quest to take the essence of the past and forming meaning.

The process of re-enacting was also notable in Istpart's curation of participants in the October Revolution when recording and share their reminiscences.[232] They oversaw a variety of venues and methods at which individual or group memories of October could be elicited from the often semiliterate or illiterate population, most notably the questionnaire (*anketa*) and the evenings of reminiscences (*vechera vospominanii*). Here, the Bolsheviks and other revolutionaries told their story of October, allowing "individuals and groups to write themselves into this history".[233] The role of former revolutionaries in the Petrograd Museum of the Revolution, and the Peter and Paul and Shlissel'burg Fortresses gave a ritual retelling in the form of detailed excursions, whereby men of action could mythologize their part in the revolution. In his reflections upon memory and experience, John Toews recognized that even within totalitarian or closed homogenous cultures, the general population is never passively adopting the narrative, rather: "Meanings are never simply inscribed on the minds and bodies of those to whom they are directed or on whom they are 'imposed' but are always re-inscribed in the act of reception".[234]

Deriving meaning from past experience, whether through participation in group excursions, ritual commemorations or shared reminiscence of revolution, is strengthened within a group dynamic. In his work on collective memory, Maurice Halbwachs argues that the group format provides a network whereby memories can be more tightly interwoven through interaction and

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[230] P. Connerton, *How Society Remembers*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p.76.
[231] D. Lowenthal*, The Past is a Foreign Country,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp.477-493.
[232] Corney, 'Rethinking a Great Event', pp.401-408.
[233] Ibid, p.401.
[234] J.E. Toews, 'Intellectual history after the linguistic turn: The autonomy of meaning and the irreducibility of experience', *American Historical Review*, Vol.4, 1987.

external stimuli.[235] The role of different forms of exhibition, whether in the museum setting or the mass festival, offered arenas for reawakening memory and maintaining politicised consciousness of both the present and the past. Participation and attendance of exhibitions helped to reinforce a selective perception of history by creating new experiences of that past.

Mass festivals enabled repetition of rituals in order to achieve newly revived collective experiences of the past, whilst museums offered a contained space by which the past could be assimilated in order to qualify memory.[236] In her judgement of memory, the museologist Susan Crane suggests that the museum provides a place where the personal and the public, the individual and the institutional collide. As time passes and reinforcement continues, the museum narrows the boundaries, making memory less 'random access' and more attuned to the ordered formation of meaning.[237] Crane is joined by Katharine Hodgkin, Susannah Radstone and John Gillis in supporting the notion that memory is highly changeable and subject to reformation to suit current identities. Hodgkin and Radstone, like Halbwachs and Durkheim, place strong weight on the impact of social surroundings and group memory in shaping identity. In particular, they acknowledge that memory is clearly political and it is the prize sought by competing political ideologies to justify their position.[238] Viewing memory not in abstract terms, Hodgkin and Radstone cite the importance of considering the impact of modernity, most notably the continuing influence of the media and the increasing pressure upon the individual to absorb information. For them, the museum is specifically important in enabling a physical location through which narratives can be transmitted about the past which shapes us.[239] Likewise, John Gillis suggests modernity has left the memory of the individual subject to rapid and constant change, meaning that as individuals, we are forced to "constantly revise our memories to suit our current identities", something highly prevalent to the sharp ideological realities present in the period immediately before and after 1917.[240] Gillis argues that identity and memory are overtly political concepts that do not exist outside of our societies and our histories. The battle over the political use of memory developed strongly during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a process which placed greater expectation upon the individual to remember important details of the past. Yet they are reliant upon mechanisms that trigger that memory (such as days of commemoration, public monuments, museum artefacts). Early Soviet museums functioned to

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[235] A. Whitehead*, Memory: A new critical idiom,* Abingdon: Routledge, 2009, p.126. For further examination of the development of historical memory in a group context: R. Bastide, 'Memoire collective et sociologie du bricolage', *L'Ann'ee sociologique*, Vol. 3 No. 21, 1970 in Corney, 'Rethinking a Great Event', p.409.
[236] K. Hodgkin and S. Radstone, *Contested pasts: the politics of memory*, London: Routledge, 2002.
[237] Crane, pp.3-4.
[238] Hodgkin and Radstone, pp.10-11.
[239] Ibid, pp.12-13.
[240] J. Gillis, *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, p.3.

support these ends. They provided what Pierre Nora calls "materiality of trace", as part of an urgent effort to establish and archive the recorded history of the revolutionary movement.[241] Modernity and the pace of change meant that the individual was lacking clear assurances of what happened and what collective memory was. To succeed in building lasting unity, Bolshevik cultural policy clearly regarded the generation of secure collective memory as their responsibility in order to ensure the survival of the Revolution.

A consistent focus for cultural exposition in the early Soviet period was the acknowledgement of marking time and space in a fashion to best shape collective experience. The popular conception of time was shaped in part by the Red Calendar's effective replacement of the ecclesiastical notion of time which bound Soviet society with a State ordained annual rhythm.[242] Rolf, Connerton and Von Geldern all share the view that the control of time and space played a significant factor in the power of exhibitions – with the emphasis predominantly on exhibitive events and their impact on collective memory. In terms of shaping the popular conception of time, the Red Calendar's effective replacement of the ecclesiastical notion of time which bound Soviet society with a State ordained annual rhythm.[243] Von Geldern emphasised the importance of mass festivals in 'marking the centre' of towns and cities, and using the space as sources of Soviet ritual.[244] Paul Connerton and Katerina Clark attribute great meaning to the impact of renaming streets, creating new heroic figures in statue and of course, by using public buildings and sites to stress shared investment in the revolution. The mass festivals and spectacles of the early Stalinist period in particular were renowned for their "flattening out of time".[245] Control of time and space, at least in urban centres, was a method by which collective experiences could be built around shared contribution to the communist ideal and the theoretical allegiance to October.

Lenin's own ambition in the creation of monumental propaganda in Russia's cities underscores the importance of this element of Bolshevik cultural policy.[246] Anatoly Lunacharsky spoke of Lenin's desire to put Tommaso Campanella's *Civitas Solis* into practical application, with frescos acting as a visual lesson in history to stir the social conscience. Artists would assist the state in a plan to use appropriate sites, with sculptors shaping the torchbearers of socialist thought in memorial form, and poets educating through condensed use of Marxist principles. The stress would be on balancing propaganda with festivity, with great unveilings planned for new memorials.

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[241] P. Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire', *Representations*, No. 26, 1989, p.13.
[242] Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, pp.73-74.
[243] Ibid.
[244] Von Geldern, pp.175-178.
[245] Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, p.28. K. Clark, p.250.
[246] A.V. Lunacharsky, 'On Monumental Propaganda' in Deutscher, pp.200-201.

Lunacharsky had been dazzled by these plans to give the masses clear access to propaganda, but monumental propaganda failed to achieve the desired effect, with Lenin himself furious at the quality of statues and busts placed on display.[247]

The control of public space and the festival calendar is an approach emphasised by Connerton as a method for structuring the celebration of memory. Together, this method afforded the early Soviet State an opportunity to dictate the replacement the past with a new set of rules and rituals, evoking Hobsbawm's *Invented traditions,* a concept referring to the growth of States invoking the practice of often mythologized rituals in order to promote continuity, authority and obedience regardless of rapid social change.[248] Clearly a further parallel comes in Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, with the combination of ritual, participation and curated history shaping the sense of "horizontal comradeship" regardless of the potential for variance in an individual experience of the October Revolution.[249]

The Soviet manifestation of 'invented traditions' or created rituals at least, allowed for the mass festival to promote commemoration or celebration as a 'rule governed' activity, whereby the emphasis or repetition of stories, actions and rituals are shown to be of great importance and are ultimately decided from authority.[250] For Connerton, these rites and rituals bear striking similarity to the observance towards religious ceremony and practice, something that would have been deeply embedded into the Russian consciousness, albeit from a different time and a different master. Christel Lane's analysis of Soviet rituals emphasises the association between religious practice and communist ritual. Revolutionary traditions are described as the "living spring from which we may draw life giving strength and emotional health".[251] Hero worship akin to sainthood was based around slogans such as "Lenin lived, Lenin lives, Lenin shall live!" alongside 'pilgrimages' to Lenin's mausoleum, Smol'nyi or Finland Station to further strengthen this parallel.

Commemorative and celebratory rituals, a deeply embedded behaviour in Russian society well before the influence of Bolshevism, also aided the reinforcement of hierarchy within the Soviet Union.[252] For Connerton, the control of exhibitive practices rely on an observance and an acceptance

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[247] Ibid, p.203.
[248] E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (ed.), *The Invention of Tradition,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp.2-3.
[249] B. Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, London: Verso, 1991, pp.6-7.
[250] Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, p.44.
[251] Lane, pp.36-37.
[252] Christel Lane's study of ritual in Soviet society is especially prescient on the depth of connection between the Soviet ritual system during Stalinism and Orthodox Church rituals. Contemporary sources describe "rituals…conducted at important turning points of a man's life" making him "particularly receptive to external influences", which could be utilized in the interests of communist education and social control. Lane, pp.25-27.

of a 'master narrative' which enabled the Communist Party to maintain their place as the vanguard of socialist progress.[253] Malte Rolf demonstrates the observance of hierarchy and master narrative during the Stalinist period. Festivals of the 1930's went to explicit lengths to create a recognition of authority which created a respectful distance between the leaders and the led, most notably in how parade routes and platforms were established in urban centres.[254] Similar to totalitarian methods of demonstration in Italy under fascism, the leadership sees celebration in lockstep, achieving a degree of uniformity which further distanced the regime from any remaining vestiges of plurality and spontaneity.[255]

The scale of what was being attempted in order to mythologize October and to bring orthodoxy towards conceptions of the past, invoked something akin to national memory. Yet significant doubts have been established regarding the validity of these methods. Halbwachs clearly rejects whether it is really possible to invoke shared memories on a societal or national basis, judging it to be "too remote from the individual to consider the history of his country as anything else than a very large framework with which his history makes contact at only a few points".[256] In part, this thesis questions whether indeed it was possible for the pedagogical atmosphere of the museum to affect memory on a personal level. Halbwachs and Durkheim cite the strength of interpersonal networks – often families or religious communities in their studies – that are necessary to incubate shared memory. The pre-Soviet period, given the depth of religious participation, carried this potential for the transmission of memory. Jan Assman has argued that the transmission of cultural memory occurs with the use of commemorative ceremonies, whilst Connerton sees their continuous use as vital to the continuance of shared memories.[257] The early Soviet period, notable for the pace at which civic organizations were dismantled, and the liquidation of organized religions, would of course preclude this method of shared cultural memory in the straightforward sense.

The project to mythologize and monumentalize October through museums meant an effort to 'historicize the human condition' and this forms a further area of enquiry within the thesis.[258] Trouillot's argument emphasises the dangerous perpetuation of influential historical narratives from above. This has the effect of preventing a 'clean slate' and distracting authentic struggles in the present. Whilst his argument is without doubt levied as a critique upon authoritarianism and the

[253] Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, pp.70-71.
[254] Rolf, pp.142-144.
[255] Ibid, p.155.
[256] Whitehead, p.138.
[257] J. Assmann, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', *New German Critique*, Vol. 65, 1995.
[258] Trouillot, p.150.

manipulation of information, his point has a clear bearing on the use of the exhibition and museum curatorship as we see it. Does the enforcement of a historical narrative in order to saturate counter-narratives and free thinking help the Soviet cause in the inter-war period? Or does it merely prolong the reliance on the past, specifically with regards to the October Revolution? Of course, efforts were made under Stalin to emphasise present day concerns and ambitions and the extent to which it created obstacles for museum curation during this period will be an important aspect of scrutiny.[259] Furthermore, some ethical consideration will be necessary to assess how valid it was for the Soviet regime to attempt to build collective unity through the construction of a shared historical narrative through cultural institutions and practices, with the museum as a key part of that process. How far was this justified in the quest for social cohesion and shaping behaviour which would inspire the building of communism?[260]

The acute political and social upheaval that followed the October revolution provides the context for a discussion of the Hermitage and the Museum of the Revolution. The extent to which a group of relative outsiders were thrown into considerable influence overnight, whilst others fell into disfavour without great warning, was unprecedented within Russian history. The complex relationship between remembering and forgetting, of great importance in modernity, must be examined as part of this study. Paul Connerton's *How Modernity Forgets* outlines the challenges faced by modern societies which have shared and forgotten core aspects of their past. Whilst his theory is most relevant to the second half of the twentieth century, Connerton's argument is that the rootlessness that comes from rapid social change (such as migration) and the absence of stability (especially in terms of localities and human surroundings) leads to a form of 'cultural amnesia'.[261] Similarly John Gillis analyses the range of problems caused by the state of the individual during modernity, where the memory suffers from multiphrenia (the struggle of adapting to multiple and changing demands upon memory) and an absence of secure parameters within which an identity can develop.[262] Within this state, constructions of reality change rapidly and are quickly forgotten should the reality change. The fear of forgetting (or cultural amnesia) is certainly something central to the understanding of the place of the museum within the project to mythologize October, as a functional aspect of building a consensus towards a Marxist interpretation of history and culture.

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[259] Of the many studies which examine the struggle between the concerns of cultural institutions and the policy objectives of the Stalinist regime, especially during the late 1920's and early 1930's, the following are amongst those that offer great insight: S. Fitzpatrick, *Cultural Front*, pp.1-16; R. Stites, *Russian popular culture: entertainment and society since 1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp.64-97; Clark, *Petersburg*, pp.261-283. A broader assessment of Stalinist cultural objectives is provided in D. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity 1917-41*, London: Cornell University Press, pp.1-14.
[260] Hobsbawm, pp.12-13.
[261] P. Connerton, *How Modernity Forgets,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp.2-5.
[262] Gillis, p.4.

Laying the foundation for a narrative which reinforced history as a progression towards the Soviet present would need to be remembered: this was the preserve of the Soviet museum.

Notes on methodology

This thesis aims to analyse the place of the museum in cultural presentation in the years following the October Revolution. This aim required case studies which would demonstrate the acute cultural tensions present in 1917 and after. More specifically this required a prism through which to see the conflict between futurists eager to press ahead with a dynamic vision of modernity, and preservationists committed to protecting the best of Russia's past. The importance of representing the past through a Bolshevik lens also required confronting the most challenging and immoveable aspects of Russia's historical wealth, as well as providing firm evidence of how far Bolsheviks were willing to go in their plan to install monumental propaganda at the heart of their new state. The Winter Palace, which already housed the most prestigious art museum in the country, would be the site for the more distinct act of insurgency in post-revolutionary Russia when the flagship State Museum of the Revolution (*Gosudarstvennyi muzei revoliutsii*) was founded in the western rooms of the palace in 1919.[263]

The choice of the Winter Palace as a study to assess the function of the museum in the post-revolutionary period brings with it a number of distinct advantages. The Hermitage presented perhaps the most serious of challenges to the new state regarding their intended strategy for cultural heritage and preservation. For those more intent on the need for cultural rebirth, the Hermitage was perhaps the most elevated example of irrelevant decadence. Its destruction would surely be a powerful symbolic statement that Russia was entering a new age. Conversely, maintaining the Hermitage as a national treasure would require restraint. It would necessitate working closely with a cultural intelligentsia largely alien to the world view espoused by the Bolshevik leadership, but instilled with knowledge that the Bolsheviks simply did not have. It would also be a position recognizing that it stored the most significant collection of cultural wealth in the country. This status not only cynically made it an extraordinary asset, but it also placed the Hermitage as the most recognizable authority in evaluating the astonishing private collections from

[263] This will be predominantly referred to by its acronym, GMR, which was used from 1918-55 before the opening of the State Museum of the Great October Socialist Revolution (GMVOSR) in 1956. The same museum would take the acronym GMPIR, referring to the State Museum of the Political History of Russia (*Gosudarstvennyi muzei politicheskoi istorii Rossii*) from 1992, which is also the named archival reference.

the scores of palaces in Russia's north-west. The Hermitage was perfectly positioned to observe a further challenge to cultural continuity: the ongoing struggle between the site of the October revolution (Petrograd) against the seat of Soviet power from 1918 (Moscow). The former had been tarnished by its longstanding association with cultural tsarism, whilst in more recent times it was home to the front wave of Russia's avant-garde movements. Petrograd may have had its own claim to being Russia's industrial and therefore proletarian centre, which supported drives to make it the national centre for mass festivals and proletarian art, but the movement to strengthen the 'cult of Moscow' or 'other Russia' was growing.[264] The less tainted Moscow offered the Bolsheviks a capital for a "new, transitional, imperial formation…a kind of 'Rome'".[265] The Hermitage and to a lesser extent, the Museum of the Revolution, would both wrestle with the increasing drive to place Moscow as the unparalleled cultural capital of the Soviet Union.

Furthermore, the Hermitage, certainly amongst museums, presents us with a unique insight into wider social affairs. As will be discussed, the Winter Palace site was home to a great cross-section of Petrograd society. Domestic staff still retained their quarters on site during the early years of this period, whilst high ranking officers returning from war sought sanctuary in a respectable posts within the palace or museum staff. The Hermitage's own archival records retain considerable depth in this regard, maintaining thorough biographical details of former employees. Their reach has been of extraordinary utility when analysing the fate of many 'former persons' and their changing fortunes; or those who fell victim to purges of both the formative years of the Hermitage under Soviet jurisdiction, and more numerous cases during the 1930's. To some degree, the study of the Museum of Revolution also gives an assessment of the differing fortunes of those who were part of the effort to mythologize October through the museum. Initially theirs was a conception that derived from a base of activists facing grave challenges. From the origins of the GMR, they had a lack of experienced museum professionals without established communist credentials, subject to inconsistent support from the Petrograd authorities. In theory, the construction of the museum offered a clear opportunity for upward mobility for those wishing to press ahead with cultural presentation which took a favourable line on Bolshevism in a field which had previously remained

[264] The agonising process of Petrograd losing its status, relative to Moscow, is vividly described in S. Volkov, *St. Petersburg: A cultural history*, London: Stephenson and Sinclair, 1996, pp.208-243; whilst a fuller examination of the nature of the city, whereby the 'rivalry' with Moscow forms an underlying aspect, is given in C. Kelly, *St Petersburg: Shadows of the Past*, London: Yale University Press, 2014. Also, Clark, *St. Petersburg: Crucible of the revolution*, pp.263-264.

[265] Katerina Clark, *Moscow: The Fourth Rome: Stalinism, cosmopolitanism, and the evolution of Soviet culture, 1931-1941*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011, p.12.

out of reach. Hence, both the Hermitage and the Museum of the Revolution are exceptional case studies for assessing the plight of cultural workers of varying levels through a tumultuous period.

The two case studies in question also proffer ample evidence of a wider avenue by which to understand the place of museum in the early Soviet period: institutional autonomy. Throughout the selected research framed here, both the Hermitage and the Museum of the Revolution were state museums. In terms of their institutional authority, the two museums initially differed quite sharply. The Hermitage maintained a leadership (the Hermitage Council) quite distinct from the preference of the Bolshevik government, whilst the Museum of the Revolution was established very much upon its command, and therefore retained a more pliable leadership. They experienced varying degrees of government support during the period between 1917 and 1941 and adopted different positions towards maintaining a position of institutional independence. This methodological avenue yields an assessment of how both museums reacted to the ongoing structural changes commanded by Narkompros. Therefore in depth analysis is essential to assess how direct the impact of museum reorganization was, not least the way in which nationalization gave the Hermitage an influx of collections from former palaces and additional oversight in areas such as restoration. Another product of reorganization meant that both museums were afforded the opportunity to expand with new branches, including the Stieglitz and the Peter and Paul Fortress in Leningrad. The pressures to bend to orthodoxy in the 1930's would also reorient both museums on the issue of institutional autonomy, leading to an overhaul in curatorial methods and purges of key figures.

Both the Hermitage and the Museum of the Revolution were also selected in part for the richness of their own archival material. The former has stimulated publications outside of Russia, but they have been limited towards analysis of the Hermitage's artistic wealth, or sweeping biographical studies.[266] The Hermitage itself produces a remarkable depth of academic material, much of which formed the basis for the secondary analysis here.[267] Importantly the Hermitage has retained institutional records that were not subsumed by state archives and taken by the Ministry of Culture. Document collections of their own materials have been painstakingly compiled by professional

[266] The most established works on the Hermitage in recent years have come through the aforementioned Geraldine Norman, *Hermitage: Biography of a great museum*; and her biography of its present day Director, M. Piotrovsky: G. Norman, *Dynastic Rule: Mikhail Piotrovsky and the Hermitage*, London: Unicorn, 2016.
[267] Anna Konivets' history of the Winter Palace, with extensive material on both the Hermitage and GMR, should be regarded as essential reading for those wishing to extend further into the history of the Winter Palace site. A.V. Konivets, *Zimnii dvorets: Ot imperatorskoi rezidentsii do Kavshkoly Osoaviakhima, St. Petersburg: State Hermitage Press, 2014*. The most recent extensive history of the Winter Palace and the Hermitage: A. Dombrovskii, *Zimnii dvorets, Dvortsovaia naberezhnaia i Ermitazh,* St. Petersburg: Tsentrpoligraf, 2019.

historians, predominantly for internal use by its research staff.[268] The breadth of these materials stretches from exhibitions within the USSR and contributions to international exhibitions, to verbatim records of the meetings of the Hermitage council. The archival collection at the Hermitage evidently has a wealth of material that would obviously provide extraordinary value to art or architectural historians, but this would be failing to recognize the potential for such institutional archives to go beyond such parameters. The staff records, press archive and the records of the events held here (most notably via contributions through lecture and arts programmes) are just some of the areas that historians could and should examine. The value of their archive is known well by cultural historians in Russia itself, but it has rarely been utilized by foreign researchers. The Hermitage has valued its own history with a pride that has allowed for a thorough assessment of its place in the wider development of museums more broadly in the early Soviet period.

The archival records for the Museum of the Revolution are understandably more limited in scope, but an admirable effort has been made to document its own history. Unusually, significant holdings for both museums have been maintained on their own premises, though the GMR has withstood various changes in name and site. On 5 November 1957, the State Museum of the Great October Socialist Revolution (GMVOSR) was reopened under its new title, some sixteen years after the closure of the GMR.[269] It now occupied two mansions, one formerly owned by ballerina Mathilda Kshesinskaia, on the Petrograd side of the River Neva to the north of the Winter Palace. Access to either museum archive for researchers from outside the Russian Federation is rare and must be granted by the respective directors. Hence few scholars have made use of these rich archives. In the case of the GMR, this author has no knowledge of a western historian making use of its archives for detailed historical research.

Finally, it is important to establish that this thesis has been constructed with the intention of contributing to a base of literature which is notably unbalanced. There is no great need to make further analysis of the Hermitage's unparalleled artistic treasures, whilst significant scholarship has

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[268] The collections most significant in the context of this thesis are the works carried out by the historian and compiler Vladimir Matveev. They include: V.I. Matveev (ed.), *Ermitazh "provintsial'nyi", ili Imperiia Ermitazh. Vystavochnaia deiatel'nost' muzeia v regionakh SSSR i Rossiiskoi Federatsii: nauchnoe izdanie*, St. Petersburg: Slavia, 2011. Matveev (ed.), *Ermitazh "Uedinennyi", ili vystavochnaia mozaika Ermitazh*; Matveev (ed.), *Ermitazh «vsemirnyi», ili planeta Ermitazh*.

[269] The State Museum of the Great October Socialist Revolution (GMVOSR) became the State Museum of the Political History of Russia (GMPIR) in 1991. Prior to 1957, the buildings (at different times) had been home to a museum devoted to Sergei Kirov; the Society of Old Bolsheviks; the Institute of Catering and the offices of the Petrograd Soviet. In Encyclopaedia of St Petersburg: http://www.encspb.ru/object/2855752181?lc=en; and the Museum of Political History: http://www.polithistory.ru/ . For a broad understanding of the Museum of the Revolution: E.G. Artemov (ed.), *Iz'iatiiu ne podlezhit... Xranit' vechno. K 100-letiiu kollektsii Gosudarstvennogo muzeia politicheskoi istorii Rossii,* St.Petersburg: Slavia*,* 2007, pp.7-23.

been devoted to the sales of artefacts outside of the USSR. Exceptional depth of research, especially in Russia itself, is already in place to provide historical accounts of the Winter Palace, and to a degree, the Museum of the Revolution throughout its various guises. The intention is to analyse the museums of the Winter Palace as a microcosm to better understand the function of the museum in early Soviet Petrograd, assess how effectively they maintained institutional autonomy and how far they fitted into a wider programme for cultural presentation. Furthermore, this thesis will identify how the museums responded to policies from nationalization of collections following the revolution, to the greater degree of intervention from above on curatorship in the 1930's. The museums selected present an opportunity to move beyond abstraction and to assess change over a relatively short period, with the further hope that the stories of recurring individuals and their selected case studies might better add colour and humanity to this history.

Fig. 6: The Winter Palace and Palace Square in 1910.[270]

[270] A.V. Konivets, 'Zimnii dvorets i Ermitazh v 1917 g.: ot Chrezvychainoi sledstvennoi komissii do bol'shevistskogo shturma', *Izvestiia Ural'skogo federal'nogo universiteta: Gumanitarnye nauki*, Vol.20 No.2, 2018, p.141.

Chapter Two: The Hermitage (1917-1941)

The Hermitage was created, as its name would suggest, not with the intention of being a public museum, but as a haven defined by its exclusivity. Catherine the Great's bourgeoning collection of art, primarily born out of a large purchase of works from Berlin merchant Johann Ernst Gotzkowskii in 1764, was housed in an extension to the east of the Winter Palace.[1] With the northern part of the Small Hermitage under construction, Catherine had decided in March 1768 that a new gallery was to be built along the sides of the hanging garden to house her growing art collection.[2]

Fig. 7: Frans Snyder's painting *A concert of birds* (c.1630's). Purchased from Robert Walpole in 1779.[3]

With a narrow array of Western European paintings and sculptures, Catherine created a sanctuary of French culture. It was a "private place where she could entertain her friends without ceremony", usually in the form of dinner soirées for selected guests.[4] Between 1764 and 1785, 2658 paintings

[1] Over time, additional extensions were added. The Old Hermitage to house the now extensive art treasures, followed by the *Hermitage Theatre* and a museum (the New Hermitage) was built, forming the 'Hermitage Complex'. After 1917, the State Hermitage Museum would be spread throughout the former palace buildings. 'Hermitage History', *State Hermitage*: www.hermitagemuseum.org.
[2] S. Dixon, *Catherine the Great*, London: Profile, 2009, pp.192-193.
[3] 'Ptichii kontsert, Frans Sneiders', *Muzei Mira*: https://muzei-mira.com/kartini_gollandia/447-ptichiy-koncert-frans-sneyders.html
[4] G. Norman, *Hermitage: Biography of a Great Museum*, London: Pimlico, 1999, pp.3-6.

were brought for Catherine.[5] Such was her determination to civilize and educate her court that no expense was spared in acquiring major collections from across Europe.[6] Catherine appeared to "have revelled in a kind of inverted snobbery that oscillated between dependence on expert opinion and a determination to defy it".[7] Collecting for Catherine was also a mark of her interests in developing the upper hand in international diplomacy. By acquiring at the expense of weakened rivals, paintings were as symbolic as territory in being able to confer international prestige. Before her death, she had built a collection which surpassed any monarch of her day, which she quantified to friends: "my museum in the Hermitage contains 38,000 books…10,000 engraved gems, roughly 10,000 drawings and a natural history collection that fills two large galleries".[8]

Catherine's intended museum audience was solely aristocratic. In contrast, the ruler she perhaps most admired (Peter the Great) had recognised the museum as a means for broader education.[9] Barring a brief period of access to foreigners, travellers and occasionally whereby "all the public, even the simple people" could enter in the 1760s, the Hermitage remained a restricted private museum.[10] A palace marshal wrote in 1827 that the "Hermitage is not a public museum, but a continuation of the imperial palace".[11] When placed in the wider context of Russia's modernisation, this restricted approach to enlightenment is hardly surprising. At this point, Russia was not a modern state: "nowhere did the workings of the world remain so mysterious to so many".[12]

> Beneath the level of the cosmopolitan nobility, the Russian empire remained a peasant society ruled by autocrats who never relinquished their personal grip on the impersonal authority they were so anxious to develop.[13]

Present in its preference for historical and religious painting since the sixteenth century, the original Hermitage collection was firm evidence of a willingness to turn Russia's orientation towards the

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[5] The first major purchase from Gotzkowskii, between 225 and 317 paintings, included 13 works by Rembrandt and 11 by Rubens. B.B. Piotrovsky et al., *Ermitazh: Istoriia i sovremermost*, Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1990, p.83.

[6] S.A. Kasparinskaia, 'Muzei Rossii i vliianie gosudarstvennoi politiki na ikh razvitie' in S.A. Kasparinskaia (ed.), *Muzei i Vlast (Chast' 1): Gosudarstvennaia politika v oblasti muzeĭnogo dela,* Moscow: NII Kul'tury, 1991, pp.15-16.

[7] Dixon, *Catherine the Great*, p.194.

[8] This was in addition to roughly 16,000 coins and medals, and of course, 4,000 Old Masters. Norman, p.23.

[9] Peter opened a museum collection to the public in 1718 in the Kikin Mansion, though the buildings were not completed until 1725, ahead of when Peter's private collections were added in 1734. Norman, pp.10-12.

[10] It is also worth noting that despite commissions formed to investigate education in Europe, Catherine's reign did not lead to the development of widespread schooling in Russia. I. de Madariaga, 'The Foundation of the Russian Educational System by Catherine II', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 1979, pp.379-383.

[11] Kasparinskaia, p.18.

[12] S. Dixon, *The modernisation of Russia, 1676-1825*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p.256.

[13] Ibid.

West and a determination to push Russia towards the forefront of cultural sophistication. This must undoubtedly be traced to Peter, the founder of Saint Petersburg, who had travelled the capitals of Western and Central Europe and imposed his vision of a European Court upon his return to Russia. The Hermitage also owed its conception to Peter's determination to move Russia's capital from Moscow and to populate the city by decree. He created Russia's first museum, the *Kunstkammer*, on the opposing banks of the River Neva on Vasilevskii Island.[14] Thanks to Peter's inquisitive nature, a significant collection of items was compiled there, ranging from scientific instruments to applied art. In regards to the Hermitage, his greatest impact was in setting a clear precedent for the Northern capital as the cultural superior to its Southern rival.

Whilst the great cities of Europe had long since created important public museums, including the British Museum (1759) and the Louvre in Paris (1793), Russia remained several steps behind. In reaction, Nicholas I proposed to build a museum extension in order to share his art treasures with the public. The New Hermitage was therefore created in 1851, and opened a year later, to house the overcrowded collection for public display even when the court was in residence. However, the Hermitage remained the property of the imperial family and the court ministry long after the museum's reorganization in 1863. Far from being an autonomous institution, Hermitage acquisitions were subject to the whims of the Tsar and the wishes of court officials, whilst academic specialists would not gain influence in the museum until later in the century. The museum was not immune to the artistic ferment which spread across St Petersburg, with great art publications growing in popularity and illuminating readers about great private art collections, subsequently connecting the Hermitage to collectors. World of Art (*Mir Iskusstva*) was launched in 1899 by the future Hermitage Council member, Alexander Benois, to promote Russian art into the international mainstream and sit as the equal of the great art of Western Europe.[15] Yet to portray the Hermitage as the shining beacon at the heart of a bourgeois cultural renaissance would also give a false impression of the capital. It was true that in the pre-war years one could purchase oysters from Paris on Nevskii Prospect or hear Mahler take the city by storm.[16] Yet Alexander Blok recognized the divide between his countrymen. In St. Petersburg, the Hermitage and the Winter Palace were very

[14] The exact foundation date for the Kunstkamera is unknown according to the museum itself, but they cite the contemporary academic J.D. Schumacher's use of 1714. *Kunstkamera*: http://www.kunstkamera.ru/en/museum/kunst_hist.

[15] One of the major publishing houses creating art journals in the early twentieth century, Sirius Press, was led (in artistic affairs) by Sergei Troinitskii, a future Hermitage director between 1918 and 1927. Norman, pp.110-112. Alexandre Benois (also transliterated Benua) (1870-1960) was an art critic, artist, preservationist and historian. Importantly for this thesis, he sat on the Hermitage Council and his thorough, perceptive and well-humoured diaries form a fascinating contemporary source for Russian cultural affairs in Petrograd between 1916 and 1924. See A.N. Benois, *Moi Dnevnik 1916-1917-1918*, Moscow: Russkii put', 2003.

[16] S. Volkov, *St Petersburg: A cultural history*, London, 1996, p.147.

much at the epicentre of a civilized façade which was surrounded by densely populated districts inhabited by the 'dark masses' of workers. Blok recognised the precarious balance between the intelligentsia, numbering perhaps a few hundred thousand, and one hundred and fifty million workers and peasants. By his own observation on the respective classes: "neither understands the other at the most fundamental level".[17]

Yet culture was reaching a broader audience than ever before. Attendance at cinemas was rapidly increasing despite its limitations in reaching a rural audience.[18] Huge spikes were seen in the circulation of both regional and national newspapers, whilst art journals achieved a place of genuine cultural influence.[19] Across the Empire, the level of interest in art and museums had resulted in the opening of art departments in major museums in Khar'kov, Kazan, Nizhny Novgorod, Odessa and Kiev towards the end of the nineteenth century. Museums and galleries had a definite place in affirming Russian cultural nationalism. St Petersburg's museums aided the ability of the state to develop cultural presentation from the top. Tsarist patronage was able to shape museums and galleries as 'schools for citizens' in the quest to 'Russify' citizens and strengthen the associations between cultural elitism and Russian nationalism.[20] The Hermitage's neighbour, the Russian Museum, specializing in fine Russian painting and sculpture, regularly received purchases by the Tsar, whilst displaying artefacts gained from successful exploration and scientific expeditions by Russians.[21] The Hermitage's role was more complex. On one hand their specialism in Western art and cultural exoticism made them a difficult home for the purest strains of Russian Nationalism. On the other, the Hermitage was unable to offer any of the dynamic modernism present in the city following the turn of the century and thus it had little appeal to the culturally progressive or radically minded.

If the Hermitage had some difficulties dealing with such challenges prior to the outbreak of war in 1914, then they, and museums in Russia more broadly, were left completely unprepared in terms of what was expected of them after the revolution removed the Tsarist government in February 1917. During wartime its functions and interiors had changed radically, with state rooms used to house a military hospital for the remainder of the war, and much of the museum contents

[17] Alexander Blok (13 November 1908) in Volkov, p.151.
[18] Cinema was quite understandably a priority in the Soviet 1920's, given the Bolshevik attachment to modernisation and the potential reach of this medium. Ultimately Stites concludes that the USSR was not yet a "movie society", with numbers below Western standards. Stites, *Russian Popular Culture,* p.60.
[19] Art magazines like *Ogonyok* had reached 150,000 copy circulations in 1910, peaking at 700,000 in 1914. Volkov, pp.153-156.
[20] Read, pp.8-9.
[21] Ibid., p. 10.

sent to Moscow for safety.[22] Though Tsar Nicholas II had long since reduced the Winter Palace to a more ceremonial seat of power, the role of the 'Hermitage Complex' was symbolically central to the demise of the Tsarist order and the foundation of its successors in a way that no other buildings or spaces in the capital were.[23] The state of uncertainty following February was further magnified when the October Revolution brought an end to the Provisional Government before it had outlined a comprehensive approach to culture or heritage policy, despite broadly having the support of the museum.

Following October 1917, a sudden proliferation of public museums, and a new museum public, undermined previous expectations of the museum's function.[24] When once the Hermitage had been created to exist as an escapist idyll, it was now told to "build a bridge from the world of children of the sun to the world of moles, and show the masses that the museum is essential to them".[25] Over the course of the following decade, the priority of preservation gave way to their role "as a propagandistic and pedagogical vehicle" during the 'cultural revolution' of the early Stalin period.[26] The museum visitor, perhaps characteristically particular and peculiar to Russia, became increasingly evident: uneducated and attracted only to the material aspects of the museum, tending to perceive museums as opulent repositories of unimaginable decadence.[27] The Hermitage, the grandest museum in perhaps the most elaborate, symbolic setting one could imagine, was filled with the abundant treasures of a forcibly vanquished elite and staffed by people quite obviously removed from the new creed of museum visitor. Superficially it appeared that the Hermitage fulfilled little of the requirements for the incoming vision for Russia and its people and its mere presence within a post-revolutionary context was at best divisive, and arguably controversial. Its function in this new world was not clear.

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[22] 'Hermitage History', www.hermitagemuseum.org

[23] Tsar Nicholas II lived primarily at Tsarskoe Selo from 1904, some twenty miles away from the Winter Palace. Ibid.

[24] Understandably figures vary, but Susan Smith places the number at 246 new museums in Russia between 1918 and 1920. This more than doubled the count at the time of the October Revolution (from 213 to 457). Smith, 'Cultural Heritage and "the People's Property"', p.404.

[25] Anatoly Lunacharsky speaking at the All-Russian Museum Conference in February 1919 in N. Semenova, 'A Soviet Museum experiment', p.81.

[26] Akinsha and Jolles, pp.195-212, p.198.

[27] In the novel *Twelve Chairs,* Il'f and Petrov were willing to humorously put this down to provincialism. Yet art world contemporaries, and political authority thereafter (discussed later), placed intensively scrutiny upon museums upon what they saw was a failure to educate their public properly. Ibid, p.196.

'The museum can't get away from life': The Hermitage in 1917

> There is a stereotype that the museum is a quiet place, extremely remote from the current policy. There was at one time a joke about an old professor who - to a question in the questionnaire "where were you during the October revolution?" - answered that he was in the library. The stereotype is deeply wrong. From various points of view, the museum can't get away from life.[28]

In light of widespread unrest in what was now Petrograd in February 1917, the mood in the Hermitage was favourable towards regime change, if only to see an end to a hugely unpopular war. Keepers at the museum had longed for a change in attitude towards German art, whilst museum workers were not estranged to the problems of the day and had clear grievances over working conditions.[29] At an institutional level, the possibility of the nationalization of the Winter Palace, whilst an idea in its infancy, offered the prospect of the use of the buildings on Palace Square. Steps towards professionalization of museums, which had been increasingly debated prior to the war, might now be continued. Improvements might be made to the Hermitage collection which had no significant additions during the reign of Nicholas II. Nevertheless, during 1917, the priority was quite clearly pointed towards securing the safety of the museum and its responsibility to cultural heritage.

Count Dmitriy Tolstoy's memoirs from 1 March at the height of unrest, provide a revealing microcosm of the responsibilities of the Hermitage Director during the February Revolution. A representative of the "only popular and recognized power" (the State Duma) had arrived to survey the protection of the "national wealth".[30] Despite some reservations, the "ferment in the city" meant that Tolstoy would "gladly accept any help". The appearance of a power vacuum had given rise to "various criminal elements" who were already looting similar institutions such as the Tsarskoe Selo Lyceum and the Pushkin Museum.[31] Amidst the confusion, it was claimed that Tolstoy had "no right to let in unauthorized persons to protect the Hermitage" without the legitimate authority which in this case was the palace police master Colonel Ratiev. Overhearing these negotiations, a

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[28] O. Edelman in V. Tol'ts et al., '1917: revoliutsionnoe vorovstvo v muzeiakh', *Radio Svoboda*: https://www.svoboda.org/a/403566.html

[29] E. Solomakha, 'Hermitage and Revolution' (Conference paper), *Museums after the Revolution*, Calvert 22 Foundation, London, 29 April 2017.

[30] D.I. Tolstoy, 'Revoliutsionnoe vremia v Russkom Muzee i v Ermitazhe' in S.G. Blinov et al. (ed.). *Rossiiskii Arkhiv: Istoriia Otechestva v svidetel'stvakh i dokumentakh XVIII—XX vv. (Tom II & III)*. Moscow: Ros. Arkhiv, 1992, p.334.

[31] Tol'ts et al., '1917: revoliutsionnoe vorovstvo v muzeiakh'.

nearby Juncker refused to carry out his guard service, preferring to be arrested rather than take up his post under the orders of the Colonel. A new messenger arrived questioning whether a military unit was needed in the Hermitage to protect them from "mob attack".[32] Before long, a false alarm over a potential fire at the Hermitage raised the question of ownership of the buildings. Tolstoy replied that until now "it was the possession of the reigning Emperor", before being told that the Hermitage would henceforth become the property of the city. Now admitting his confusion, Tolstoy's final memory of the day recalled when twenty "armed, excited and very drunk soldiers broke into our lobby".[33] They mocked the protests of staff: "You think your things are more expensive than a soldier's life!" and barged upstairs to look for suspected machine gun positions after Tolstoy had intervened in an altercation between Yakov Smirnov (a keeper in the Medieval Department) and a soldier.[34] Soon afterwards, Tolstoy gave a short speech to try and clarify the duty of those guarding the treasures, in which he reminded the gathering how important it was to "save the valuables accumulated over centuries for the common benefit of the state and the people".[35] But the situation was such that it was the "uneducated gallery attendants" who advised Tolstoy and Smirnov to leave, and let them talk to the soldiers. They were more likely to listen to their 'brothers'.

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The situation in Petrograd beyond Tolstoy's Hermitage was highly unstable. The revolution had taken the character of a chaotic popular movement without defined leadership or direction. The initial protests had forged out of a strike by Petrograd's largest industrial plant, the Putilov Factory on 18 February. Continuing strikes followed, with anger exacerbated by the extreme shortages of bread and fuel, as the city ground to a halt in heavy snowstorms. The Putilov workers were soon emboldened by the support of those celebrating International Women's Day and protests against the government implementation of food rationing. The following day, despite street gatherings being forbidden, nearly 200,000 protestors took to the streets to demand an end to war and the replacement of Tsarist autocracy with a more progressive government. The mood turned to open defiance. Whilst soldiers and workers increasingly fraternized, the police were a clear object of hatred. By the 25th, virtually all industrial enterprises were now shut down, with 250,000 on strike.[36]

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[32] Tolstoy, p.335.
[33] Ibid, p.337.
[34] Norman, p.134.
[35] Tolstoy, p.337.
[36] For a thorough account of the realities of the February Revolution in Petrograd, see T. Hasegawa, *The February Revolution, Petrograd, 1917: The End of the Tsarist Regime and the Birth of Dual Power*, Leiden: Brill, 2018. Also, S. Lyandres, *The Fall of Tsarism: Untold Stories of the February 1917 Revolution*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

The reaction by the Tsar and his ministers was chaotic, with the Chairman of the Council of Minister, Nikolai Golitsyn, first asked to resign by the Duma President Rodzianko, and then himself issuing a *ukaz* to interrupt the Duma's sitting. The Tsar himself had issued the order to disperse the crowds with rifle fire, whilst the police set up machine guns on roofs in fear of violence. General Khabalov, Commander of the Petrograd District, tasked with using any means to prevent demonstrations, opened fire on the striking workers. Children were "trampled on", drivers from automobiles were seen to be "thrown into the air and killed".[37] The crowds fought back, setting fire to police stations, tearing down symbols of Tsarist power and releasing thousands of political prisoners. Disgust at the use of force initiated a surge of mutinies in barracks across the city in open defiance at their officers, with 66,000 men from the Petrograd garrison joining striking workers by nightfall on the 27th.

Just before midnight on 27 February, a new political order was born at the Tauride Palace, the seat of the elected Duma. The Tsar had refused repeated warnings from Mikhail Rodzianko to abate the chaos, including the following on the 26th:

> The situation is serious. The capital is in a state of anarchy. The Government is paralyzed. Transport service and the supply of food and fuel have become completely disrupted. General discontent is growing ... There must be no delay. Any procrastination is tantamount to death.[38]

Following the Tsar's refusal to accept a power sharing arrangement with a Prime Minister, the Duma created a Provisional Committee composed of cross-party representatives, in order to restore order. They asserted to assume power until democratic elections could be organized to install a Constituent Assembly. Meanwhile, representatives from the main workers organizations had formed of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Deputies and they immediately move to forbid their members from joining the new government. Certainly in Petrograd, whilst the former held the formal authority, the Soviet arguably held stronger practical power, a majority of popular support, and could reasonably claim to represent proletarian interests in the face of the bourgeois-liberal compromise that the Provisional Government represented.[39]

Unable to accept a manifesto proposed by the Provisional Committee for establishing a constitutional government, Tsar Nicholas abdicated on behalf of himself and his son. Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich's refusal to accept the throne ended any possibility of the monarchy

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[37] Bertie Stopford in Norman, p.135.
[38] 'Rodzianko's first telegram to Nicholas II' in R.P. Browder and A.F. Kerensky (ed.), *The Russian Provisional Government (1917)*: *Documents*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, p.40.
[39] S.A. Smith, *Russia in Revolution: An Empire in Crisis, 1890 to 1928,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, pp.104-106.

continuing in power. Shortly after the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II, a Provisional Government was formally established on 4 March. It based itself within the Winter Palace, holding its chief council meetings in the Malachite Room. The new government took authority over the former Ministry of the Imperial Court, taking charge of both the Hermitage and the Russian Museum. Compared to the latter, the Hermitage was able to continue in a "comparatively calm" manner, with scientific work continuing despite the museum being closed to the public.[40] The February Revolution was furthermore "accepted calmly" and the Hermitage swore in at the new government immediately on 4 March.[41]

Ten days after the Provisional Government took power, the Winter Palace and its contents were declared national property, with all palaces and artworks formerly under ministry control now assigned to the Council of Ministers. In aspiring to be the predominant voice in cultural preservation, it was the intelligentsia who acted quickest and with the greatest sense of proactivity. Two days after the collapse of the Tsarist government, a group of fifty 'preservationists' gathered at the apartment of Maxim Gorky, then Russia's most famous writer, "to discuss the new political situation and its implications for the arts".[42] Everyone who mattered in Russian cultural life was a member. Their number included Alexandre Benois and Igor Grabar, both artists and art historians who subsequently became chief activists in the Petrograd and Moscow respectively, and Count Valentin Zubov, who founded St. Petersburg's first Institute of Art History, and of course, Count Tolstoy. Their explicit intention, "given the risk of looting and riots", was that measures be urgently taken to protect the imperial palaces around the capital and other vulnerable local monuments. They voted to create a Commission on Artistic Affairs with the aim of bringing their concerns and expertise to the attention of the new authorities. Being that a dual power emerged out of the February Revolution, they negotiated with both the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Deputies, offering their assistance in "designing and implementing an effective cultural policy".[43] Both rival organs of government voted to grant the group official mandates and whilst they were effectively the same body, both approved their own separate titles: the Commission on Artistic Issues (*Komissiia po voprosam iskusstva*) in the case of the Petrograd Soviet, and the Special Advisory Board on Artistic Affairs (*Osoboe soveshchanie po delam iskusstva*) in relation to the Provisional Government. Both were referred to in practicality as the Gorky Commission, under the name of its chairman. With the powers invested in them by the new

[40] Tolstoy, p.342.
[41] Y. Kantor in Tol'ts et al., '1917: revoliutsionnoe vorovstvo v muzeiakh'.
[42] E.D. Johnson, *How Petersburg learned to study itself*, Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006, p.73.
[43] Johnson, p.74.

authorities, they were able to access buildings closed to the public, conduct inspections and make direct recommendations to local officials. The Prime Minister, Georgiy L'vov, even bestowed the "right to form a special militia to protect art and museums".[44] To the members of this commission, it appeared as though progress was being made from the days of 'occasional assistance' from the Tsarist regime and the Commission even dared to speak with enthusiasm about what might be accomplished as they fought from the centre.[45]

The need for action in the area of cultural preservation was quickly becoming acute. The debate over museum collections and heritage was being brought to a wider audience with an *Izvestiia* article from the executive committee of the Petrograd Soviet, which called for the population to save their cultural heritage. The old palaces of the city were being turned to alternative uses, with one such example being the Old Hermitage, where rooms were being used for the Extraordinary Investigating Commission on the Former Imperial Ministers and Employees and thereby providing the irony of reversing the interrogation of Decembrists in the same rooms a century earlier.[46] Underlining where authority lay at this point, a request for their return to use as galleries had recently been denied to allow for the Preobrazhenskii guards to have a clearer path from their barracks to guard duty in the Winter Palace.

Through the action of Benois on 17 April 1917, a request was sent to the Provisional Government that a "special circular be issued" to "avoid destruction" and attain the protection of artefacts by local scientific and archival commissions.[47] In the following days, the leaflet (below) was distributed throughout Petrograd in response to the concerns of the Council for the safety of facades and monuments:

> Citizens of the police!
>
> We invite you to carefully guard the old buildings and the decorations on them. In particular, if anyone tries to destroy or remove state emblems located on some buildings, we kindly ask you to vigorously stop such actions and explain that these emblems are often an integral decoration associated with the architecture.[48]

[44] Norman, p.138.
[45] Johnson, p.74.
[46] Norman, p.139.
[47] 'Ot Osobogo Soveshchaniia po delam iskusstv Alexander Benois - komissaru Golovinu' (17 April 1917) in Tol'ts (et al.), '1917: revoliutsionnoe vorovstvo v muzeiakh'.
[48] 'Vypiska iz listovki spetsial'noi konferentsii po iskusstvu' in Tol'ts et al., '1917: revoliutsionnoe vorovstvo v muzeiakh'.

Further advice is given on how to consider the buildings and symbols for preservation – perhaps in order to persuade others away from desecration:

> Having nothing to do with the emblem of the overthrown Romanov dynasty and pointing to the time of buildings, which characterise the style and mark the epoch – these signs are the emblems of the Russian State – they contain part of our history.[49]

On top of trying to persuade officials of their protective duties, Tolstoy recalled the difficult attempts to persuade now 'empowered' low-level officials that the Hermitage and Winter Palace leadership were not corrupt by their noble status. They faced accusations that they were concealing money or embezzling property. Senior colleagues like P. Scheffer had quickly lost previously held respect in the 'revolutionary mood': "The feeling of indignation against the old regime was mainly directed at him and cruel criticism fell upon that for a man of such justice and kindness".[50] Affairs at the Russian Museum appeared to be even more difficult. "Zealous revolutionaries who immediately made all sorts of demands" sought "to interfere in management and financial control".[51] This particular scene in Tolstoy's diary captures the fears held by the elite for the crowd in 1917 which sustained their concerns over not only preservation of cultural heritage in Petrograd, but for their safety more broadly.[52]

Tolstoy recognized the direction of travel: the growing demand for democratization of museum management, and the representation of different types of employees in proportion to their number.[53] During the evacuation effort, new and palpably awkward exchanges between the Hermitage leadership and politicised workers reflect the challenge upon their authority. The Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Deputies defended two workers who had been accused of slander towards more established Hermitage employees, forcing the Hermitage leadership to renege on their original move to dismiss the accusers.[54] Hermitage accounts from the Provisional Government period have numerous clues to suggest that the leadership were not removed from the growing political unease, with Tolstoy able to recall a journey with a driver when transporting coin collections out of Petrograd. The driver exclaimed his disbelief, from his professional annoyance ("Soon it will be impossible to drive!") to the wider anger at disorder ("Everywhere there is destruction…sometime

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[49] Ibid.
[50] Tolstoy, 'Revoliutsionnoe vremia v Russkom Muzee i v Ermitazhe', p.343.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Whilst there are numerous broad historical works which capture this genuine unease during 1917, perhaps the most effective capture of this mood came with Project 1917's use of eloquent diary entries by cultural figures such as the poet Zainada Gippius. See Project 1917 website, https://project1917.com/.
[53] Tolstoy, 'Revoliutsionnoe vremia v Russkom Muzee i v Ermitazhe', p.344.
[54] Ibid, p.347.

order will come again!"). Tolstoy admitted that other drivers who he spoke with turned out to be "usually more Bolshevik minded".[55]

Meanwhile, the Hermitage leadership and the intelligentsia charged with defending cultural heritage feared for the integrity of their positions and the security of the palace as the Summer turned to Autumn. Records from the acting head of former Imperial Libraries show a stream of letters to the Commissar of the former Ministry of the Imperial Court for the Provisional Government (Fedor Golovin) with concerns over artefacts from the Winter Palace. One account, referencing stolen items from the collection of Emperor Alexander II recalls an incident on June when "persons (dressed) in soldier's uniform" adopting "a defiant, often threatening tone…behaving in a largely mischievousness manner" made repeat visits to survey the premises.[56] They sat on the furniture, "resulting in chair breakages" in the small library. Despite their best intentions, the staff complained of the "impossibility of monitoring the safety of things" and worried about the challenges of preserving the rooms in their residential state. Concerns over material artefacts turned sharply towards the end of the summer towards the threat of violence. Tolstoy's letter to Golovin, written in an admittedly understated tone, raised grave fears about the nature of the guard provided to the Hermitage:

> Although there were still no particular misunderstandings between the Hermitage administration and the guard, this Battalion (6th Reserve Saperny) is one of the most undisciplined parts of the Petrograd garrison, and the attitude of many soldiers here guarding the treasures…is obviously of a Bolshevik character.
>
> I had assumed that perhaps it would be found more appropriate to entrust the service to the neighbouring Preobrazhenskii regiment, which was apparently not considered expedient and the 6th Battalion continues to carry out guard duty. Colonel Annenkov, acting commander of the Winter Palace, has introduced greater order into the guard service, the squad was strengthened, and three external posts were set up… Instructions were issued on the admission of persons serving and outsiders. Nevertheless, the composition of the guard of the soldiers of the 6th Battalion, known for their Bolshevik inclination, cannot but disturb me. In conversations with ministers, it appears they treat the Hermitage's treasures extremely unconsciously.
>
> I must add for information that the guard consists of 19 people with the officer. The officers, I must admit, were intelligent and decent people. I do not know whether you will find it possible

[55] Ibid, p.348.
[56] 'Vremenno ispolniaiushchii obiazannosti zaveduiushchego byvshimi imperatorskimi bibliotekami - komissaru Vremennogo Pravitel'stva' (8 June 1917) in Tol'ts et al., '1917: revoliutsionnoe vorovstvo v muzeiakh'.

> to talk with the new commandant of the palace or with the commander of the troops, but it seems to me that with the present threat, both possible Bolshevik speeches and constant looting, special attention should be paid to the protection of our Treasury.[57]

For a time at least, Tolstoy's fears were allayed. The Commissioner responded by issuing an urgent instruction:

> Agreeing fully with the arguments and considerations expressed by the Hermitage director in the letter enclosed with this copy, I urge you to order daily and possibly urgent assignment of junkers to guard duty at the Hermitage, instead of carrying the currently designated guard of the 6th Reserve Saperny Battalion.

It was unsurprising that cultural guardians were concerned by the charged atmosphere in Petrograd. Lenin's return from exile on 3 April after being provided with a sealed train and safe passage from German territory, alongside other revolutionaries from Switzerland, further fanned the flames of discontent in the city via popular promises of a democratic peace, the abolition of landlords' ownership of land, workers control over production and the creation of a Soviet Government.[58] An attempted Bolshevik coup failed during the 'July Days', a period of spontaneous armed and industrial strikes against the government. Several barracks, including the Peter and Paul Fortress, had gone over to their side, whilst rioting increased on the streets.

A significant turning point in the fortune of the Hermitage and the Winter Palace, was the appointment of Alexander Kerensky as Prime Minister in July. He had been both a justice minister in the earlier government and a leader within the Soviet, thus ideally placed perhaps to take the post. Kerensky made the Winter Palace the new seat of government, occupying the same rooms on the first floor as the imperial family had once used, situated on the western side which overlooked both the Admiralty and the gardens. Kerensky made use the library for his office and Alexander III's study for his bedroom. Meanwhile the state rooms were repurposed for military protection – the first floor became the barracks for guards – who were drawn from ever decreasing loyalist circles as soldiers flocked to the Bolshevik cause. The protection of palace treasures within Petrograd became an immediate priority, with Fedor Golovin reacting to a series of break-ins at the palaces around Petrograd by creating a new agency which would seek to fulfil one of the central ambitions of the Gorky Commission: to "catalogue the contents of the Imperial palaces of the capital, writing up

[57] Ibid.
[58] V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works in Two Volumes* (Vol.2), Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1952, pp. 3-17.

accurate scholarly descriptions of any artistic or historical significance".[59] Under the leadership of art historian Vasilii Vereshchagin, the Artistic-Historical Commission for Inventorying the Moveable Property of the Petrograd Palaces of the Former Palace Administration was established in July 1917.[60] Their work was obstructed by soldiers moving in, with their report identifying straw upon the parquet floors and wet towels hung upon the marble statues. Nevertheless, the Commission achieved significant progress towards an inventory of the Winter Palace before the end of the Summer by completing a list of items that appeared to have been stolen during the Spring and early Summer.[61] Its results were strong enough to see similar projects launched at Gatchina, Peterhof and Tsarskoe Selo.

In June, the Provisional Government had started to give more serious consideration to evacuating the capital of valuable palace and museum treasures. With the German offensive in the Baltic and the occupation of Riga in early September, this anxiety became a practical necessity. Tolstoy feared the risk of Hermitage property from both the Germans and their probable requisitioning of artistic treasures, and the even greater threat of popular unrest and looting, evidenced by his grave uncertainty about the strength of the railway service and security. The Russian Museum objected, but they failed to speak out, whilst the "Hermitage administration also did not dare to take the responsibility of a categorical protest".[62] On 9 September, a keepers meeting agreed to recommend the evacuation of treasures to Moscow, initializing a flurry of activity, including the production of 833 crates. The most valuable works were organized for evacuation first, including paintings by Titian, Raphael and Velasquez. Perhaps the greatest source of Tolstoy's personal apprehension was for a group of paintings purchased by Alexander I from the heirs of the Empress Josephine in 1814, in which she had received the spoils of war from the collection of the Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel.[63] A century later, it was feared that the descendants would wish to reclaim the paintings which included Rembrandt's *Descent from the Cross* amongst other masterpieces. Tolstoy describes the experience of preparing artefacts for export as though "burying someone very dear", as he wondered when these treasures might see the light of day again.[64] The first train load of crates left for Moscow on the night of 16-17 September, and upon arrival were stored in the Kremlin Palace, the Armoury and the History Museum. A second train load sent on 6-7 October of predominantly medieval works of art and coin collections also included items from the

[59] Johnson, p.74.
[60] Not to be confused with the renowned painter of the same name (1842-1904). Ibid, p.78.
[61] Ibid, p.78.
[62] Tolstoy, 'Revoliutsionnoe vremia v Russkom Muzee i v Ermitazhe', p.345.
[63] Norman, pp.141-142.
[64] Tolstoy, 'Revoliutsionnoe vremia v Russkom Muzee i v Ermitazhe', p.346.

Winter Palace wine cellar, which whilst disguised, still attracted attention from those who recognized the smell of fine vintage wines and cognacs. A third train was due to leave on 25 October, but was prevented by the Bolshevik coup, timed in part to take hold prior to the assembly of the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, made up primarily of more moderate parties, which would have been theoretically been well placed to dissolve the Provisional Government themselves. Bolshevik revolutionaries had seized power in the name of the Congress, just hours prior to its opening. Around noon, Bolshevik supporters had surrounded the Winter Palace where the Provisional Government were meeting, and the Bolsheviks' Military Revolutionary Council demanded the unconditional surrender of the palace. They received no reply.

October and the Hermitage

> Against the background of rifle fire, several fragmentary, more booming and heavy blows sounded, and behind the last of them there was a sound of something falling down. Aurora, anchored in the middle of the Neva, between the fortress and the palace, fired at the palace. My heart sank. Let the last minutes of winter time come, yet the Hermitage with all the main treasures of the Russian state, are personally dearer than anything in the world!
>
> Alexandre Benois reacts to the seizure of the Winter Palace in October 1917 [65]

> Tell the civilized world, Russia no longer has the Hermitage.
>
> Count Tolstoy in an interview with *Le Petit Parisien* in November 1917. [66]

From 20 October, the turbulent situation in the city had reached a state of tangible suspense. Though outwardly, it was possible to see normality in circumstances, the Bolsheviks awaited the right moment to strike. Even hours before the coup eyewitnesses observed that "everything is ordinary on the streets…crowded trams go, shops trade, cab drivers quarrel…nowhere is there an accumulation of troops, nowhere in the frosty air is there the smell of gunpowder. Only the palace

[65] Konivets, *Zimnii dvorets: Ot imperatorskoi rezidentsii do Kavshkoly Osoaviakhima*, p.165.
[66] Count Tolstoy speaking to *Le Petit Parisien* in Norman, p.151.

itself is visibly stirring".[67] Kerensky's movements are tracked in his memoirs, describing his order to close Bolshevik newspapers and call reinforcements to the capital from the front, noting that the awaited troops were "supposed to be in Petrograd on the morning of the 25th", but instead he had received word confirming blockades and sabotage on railway lines.[68] Colonel Korenev, part of the Emergency Commission defending the Winter Palace noted that "Bolshevik horns and hooves began to be come from behind the scenes. We had already heard their threats to spread out and surround the Palace".[69] In response Korenev ordered "the guards in our commission… (to be) tripled" and the non-commissioned officers supplied with live ammunition, whilst machine gun and cannon positions were "hiding" in the passages of the Palace Building.[70] The 1st Women's Battalion came to the city, ordered away from their journey to the front. The 2nd Company, 137 in total, were ordered to protect the Provisional Government inside the Winter Palace, taking up a defensive position on the first floor to the right of the main gate. Three hundred Cossacks and a battery of the Mikhailovskii Artillery were amongst the two and a half thousand who were also charged with defending the Palace – not to mention 40 disabled volunteers from the St George Cavaliers – who with the aforementioned women, were those willing to stand to the death, according to participants in the revolution.

Inside the Hermitage, quite separate from the Winter Palace at that time, Count Tolstoy recognized that "things were not looking good on the morning" of 25 October. During the day Tolstoy received a phone call to confirm that new guards were replacing the junkers who had been placed in charge of the museum. The senior soldier assigned to Tolstoy, after conversing with the head of the watch in the Winter Palace, confirmed that they would not leave their posts and instead would "defend to the last the institution they had been asked to protect".[71] The keeper on duty that night had been prevented from taking his place due to shooting on the streets and Tolstoy took his place, only for the Preobrazhenskii Guard to enter several hours later and demand that the junkers surrender their weapons. The junkers apologized to Tolstoy, accepting that "they could not defend the Hermitage against this larger group of soldiers", while Tolstoy confessed to believing "a peaceful conclusion was best".[72] Rather than returning peacefully to their college, the young men on guard were arrested as prisoners of war at the Pavlovsk Barracks. Tolstoy witnessed military posts being established at the main entrance and in galleries overlooking Millionnaia Street and the Winter

[67] S.A. Korenev, *Extraordinary Commission on the Affairs of former Ministers: Archive of the Russian revolution*, Vol. 7, Berlin, 1922, p.29.
[68] A.F. Kerensky, *The Kerensky Memoirs: Russia and History's Turning Point*, London: Cassell, 1966, p.309.
[69] Korenev, p.27.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Tolstoy, 'Revoliutsionnoe vremia v Russkom Muzee i v Ermitazhe', p.346.
[72] Ibid.

Canal. Inside, heavy boxes and furniture were used to barricade the entrance to the Hermitage and passages that adjoined to the Winter Palace. Whilst Tolstoy somehow slept despite the cannons of the Aurora battleship, which were shooting at the Palace, he was awoken early by an attendant who said had seen lights on in his apartment. Tolstoy managed gather that men "were robbing my flat", having broken in via the Romanov Gallery and the internal staircase from the Winter Palace, and since 6am had "been carrying out as much as they could".[73] By the time Tolstoy could get a pass from the night watch, he found "the state of the flat was terrible, the furniture overturned and mess everywhere", noting that "clothes and shoes that the thieves had been thrown off, replacing them with clothes from our cupboards".[74] The only remaining soldier was a man "waving an antique sabre which he had requisitioned".

Most of the keepers had stayed at the Hermitage that night through a combination of loyalty to the treasures they were passionately defending, and the very real dangers on the streets. They had spent part of the previous day planning further evacuations to Moscow, which never took place. One of them, Sergei Troinitskii, had left the Hermitage and returned to tell others that anti-government forces had virtually secured Palace Square, with the Palace at real risk of seizure. As machine gun fire continued after dark, Troinitskii, Smirnov, Waldhauer and other senior keepers stayed at the museum and even helped make up the barricades. They were awoken from their rest to be informed of the capture of the palace. Whilst the Hermitage treasures remained unscathed, the Winter Palace and indeed its own collection of artworks, did not have such fortune.

The fate which befell the Winter Palace is very well known, primarily through John Reed's account, *Ten Days that Shook the World*, written by an American journalist who sympathized with the Bolshevik cause. His description is particularly important given the significance of the Winter Palace in terms of the great cultural heritage debate which took place during 1917 and beyond:

> Carried along by an eager wave of men we were swept into the right-hand entrance, opening into a great bare vaulted room, the cellar of the east wing, from which issued a maze of corridors and staircases. A number of huge packing cases stood about, and upon these the Red Guards and soldiers fell furiously, battering them open with the butts of their rifles, and pulling out carpets, curtains, linen, porcelain, plates, glassware…One man went strutting around with a bronze clock perched upon his shoulder, another found the plume of ostrich feathers, which he stuck in his hat. The looting was just beginning when somebody cried, "Comrades! Don't take anything! Property of the People! Many hands dragged the soldiers down…Roughly and hastily

[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.

> the things were crammed back into their cases, and self-appointed sentinels stood guard. It was all utterly spontaneous. Through corridors and up staircases, the cry could be heard growing fainter and fainter in the distance, "Revolutionary discipline! Property of the People!" [75]

Reed's account goes on to clarify that the men were encouraged to behave by a Red Guard: "Come comrades let's show that we're not thieves and bandits".[76] A process then ensued whereby each soldier was inspected upon leaving and "everything plainly not his property was taken away".[77] A man was given responsibility for recording and storing the confiscated objects, which stretched from "statuettes, bottles of ink, desk blotters" to "cakes of soap" and "gold handled swords".

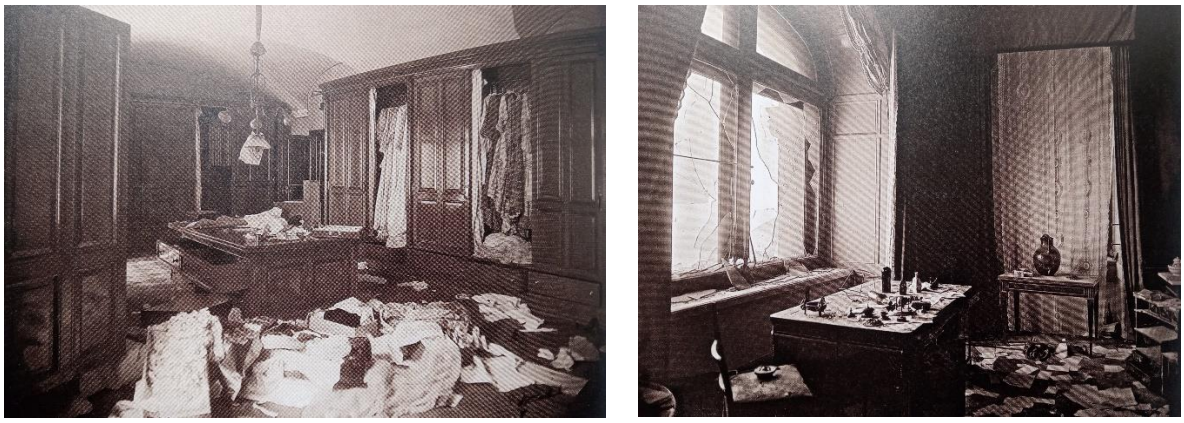

Fig. 8 & 9: (Left) Wardrobe of the Empress Alexandra Fedorovna, and (right) her maid's quarters after the storming of the Winter Palace, 1917.[78]

A far more formal account is offered by Nikolai Dement'ev, the caretaker of the Winter Palace estate. This is one of a variety of other staff reports which informed the broader work of Vasilii Vereshchagin's Inventory Commission, who continued the arduous (and interrupted) task of formulating a palace inventories in the months following October. As a longstanding member of staff, largely politically disinterested, his assessment is far more damning of the lack of order in the immediate aftermath of the coup, especially concerning the "public organizations admitted to the Winter Palace" in the days and nights following the seizure of the Palace. Vereshchagin praised Dement'ev as the "most honest" of persons, lauding his sincere "decency". Dement'ev's report was filed several months after the October seizure (28 December), alluding to the extent of work he undertook in assessing the damage to the palace estate. His account suggests that during the

[75] J. Reed, *Ten Days that Shook the World,* Penguin: London, 1977, p.149.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid, pp.149-150.
[78] Konivets, *Zimnii dvorets: Ot imperatorskoĭ rezidentsii do Kavshkoly Osoaviakhima*, p.152.

Revolution, the palace was being robbed for two days (between the night of the 25th until the afternoon of the 27th): certainly more than Reed suggests. Dement'ev's description of the "armed robbery" details property being removed without passes and is keen to qualify that he guards not be held responsible and instead those who enacted the damage be held accountable. His report explains the many crimes committed to the Winter Palace, from the "various kinds of room furniture robbed" to the damage inflicted by "simple mischief, machine guns and rifle shots".[79] A further selection below details the wreckage witnessed:

> Not a small number of furnishings have been rendered unusable and cannot be restored because they have lost their original appearance… (In reference to clocks) there are mechanisms from clocks, but no cases for them, or if there were cases, there is no mechanism to be found. Small pieces of broken vases were present, parts of bronze candelabrums were scattered on piles of rubbish in different rooms of the palace.
>
> With rare exceptions, all the rooms of the Palace were used to steal curtains and draperies from the windows and doors… On some, only scraps of fabrics from curtains and draperies are left… In several rooms, silk cloths that upholstered the walls were cut off, in other rooms, lace and various ribbons which had served as decorations for tables… Covers from furniture, walls and floors (rugs) were stolen in large numbers.

The theft and destruction broadly suggest that the nature of the disrepair caused by the soldiers focused on 'useful things', with the suggestion being that Kerensky's entourage were blamed for 'taking souvenirs'.[80] The report went on to show particular regret for items that were personally used by former members of the Tsarist royal family, with some of the rooms described as being the victim of 'absolute plunder':

> From the billiard room of Nicholas II, billiard balls were stolen, and a lot of furniture, fabrics and other items were ruined… The Great Ladies Corridor, where there are things that personally belong to Their Imperial Majesties, underwent a robbery and deliberate damage. Along the corridor, near the rooms of Emperor Alexander III, there were large numbers of things that His Majesty brought from his journey to the East whilst he was Heir to the Crown Prince, as well as items given to their majesties by different people.

[79] Dement'ev in Konivets, *Zimnii dvorets: Ot imperatorskoi rezidentsii do Kavshkoly Osoaviakhima*, p.182.
[80] Ibid, pp.173-174.

> At present, some of these items have been completely destroyed, and some have been damaged to such an extent that they can hardly be repaired, as everything has been damaged by a shell that exploded inside the Secretarial rooms.

Further solicitude followed regarding the integrity of the imperial stores of food and wine, which was well documented in the report by Dement'ev, but overlooked by Reed's well known account. The imperial pantry had registered the loss of "100 cans of peas, 50 cans of truffles, 100 cans of sardines, 140 cans of asparagus, 400 bottles of apricots…" amongst wider thefts from their collection, which included gold, silver and porcelain.[81] But it was the imperial wine cellar that caused particular consternation. The finest liquors had already been sent to Moscow, but the eagerness to get to the imperial cellar meant that blockades of wood, or walling in the bottles and barrels, did little good. Holes continually appeared for people to "suck out, lick out and draw everything they could".[82] Tolstoy's memoirs accounted for the tens of thousands of bottles held there. An offer of eighteen million roubles from foreign firms had to be turned down because it was impossible to release the cache safely. He also witnessed the Hermitage surrounded by armed sailors and a scene in which one individual was carried out having been "drowned in spilled wine".[83] During the previous evening, the Preobrazhenskii Guards had broken down the doors of the wine cellar, taking bottles onto the street before breaking them there. "The wine spilt in the cellar was more than two feet deep…All night long they drank on the embankment, firing in the air. When it was possible to surround them, they lowered pipes from fire engines to pump it out into the river".[84]

In terms of the need to protect the heritage and valuables of the palace, realisation of the need for order by the Bolsheviks themselves was not as spontaneous as the account Reed suggests. The uprising was being directed by the Military Revolutionary Committee in the Smol'nyi, and the Preobrazhenskii Guards being sent to protect the Hermitage ahead of the palace seizure. The following day Lenin announced a government which included Anatoly Lunacharsky, who was well acquainted with many of the leading cultural figures in the country, including Alexandre Benois. Lunacharsky, who had studied philosophy in Switzerland and lived in the cultural centres of Florence and Paris, combined culture and education within his remit as 'Commissar for Enlightenment' in the People's Commissariat for Education (*Narkompros*).[85] Two special Commissars were appointed for

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[81] Ibid, p.176.
[82] Larisa Reisner, who would subsequently held a post at Narkompros, and acted as a useful conduit between the cultural intelligentsia and the state, before cataloguing artistic treasures at the Smol'nyi Institute. Norman, p.152.
[83] Tolstoy, 'Revoliutsionnoe vremia v Russkom Muzee i v Ermitazhe', p.354.
[84] Ibid, p.353.
[85] Norman, p.148.

the protection of museums and palaces, Grigorii Yatmanov and Berngard Mandelbaum, with a third figure, Larisa Reisner, who helped Lunacharsky by winning support for the regime from Petrograd's cultural elites, holding some influence over the Hermitage initially.[86] On the advice of Lunacharsky, the first visit from the new government to the Hermitage took place only a day after the revolution, but the response from Benois was not at all positive. His first contact with Yatmanov was described as a failed attempt to "hammer into the wooden headed representative of Lunacharsky (Yatmanov) my ideas and elementary demands", going on to describe Yatmanov's rudeness as an odious by-product of his "stupidity and lack of education".[87]

Yet his attempts did ultimately bear fruit, with the former head of the Inventory Commission, Vasilii Vereshchagin, authorized to create a list of any missing items from the palace for the reconstituted Commission of Art History, just two days after the Revolution. Prevented from conducting an inspection the day before, Vereshchagin refused to try again under Bolshevik authority and had to be persuaded by Benois as to the need for the task. On the 10 November, accompanied by Yatmanov, Mandelbaum and Benois, he inspected roughly one hundred rooms. The report contrasted somewhat with Reed's account:

> There are traces of fierce battle in all the state rooms, which housed the guards of the Provisional Government. The windows are shattered by bullets, scattered on the floor are dozens of mattresses where the guards slept, some of which were torn, and straw is scattered about. Furniture has been turned topsy-turvy in piles having clearly served as barricades… In the reception room of Emperor Alexander II, used as the private chancellery of A.F. Kerensky, the drawers have been pulled out of the desks, the cupboards of paperwork have all been smashed, all the papers thrown all over the place… In the personal apartments of Empress Alexandra Fedorovna, used by the Provisional Government, the tables and cupboards have been smashed, the floor covered with torn up and crumpled files of the Provisional Government. In the reception room, a painting depicting the coronation of Alexander III has been defaced. A bayonet has been used to tear a portrait of the parents of the Empress…[88]

Once Lunacharsky had absorbed the report, a decree on the protection and use of the palace was issued six days after the Revolution. The decree stated that:

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[86] V. Woroszylski, *The Life of Mayakovsky*, New York: Orion Press, 1970, pp. 186–187. Also, C. Porter, *Larissa Reisner*, London: Virago, 1988, pp.45-46.
[87] 10 November 1917. Benois, *Moi Dnevnik 1916-1917-1918*, pp.224-230.
[88] Ibid.

1. The rooms of the Winter Palace of no serious artistic significance shall be given over to social needs with regard to which an order shall be given in due time. *The rest of the Winter Palace is declared a State Museum on equal footing with the Hermitage.*
2. The Palace Administration is to continue to carry out its duties.
3. The military command is given to Cornet Pokrovskii and the general oversight of the Palace is entrusted to Colonel Ratiev (the former administrator), *whose orders must be countersigned by the government commissar attached to the Winter Palace for the protection of its artistic treasures.*
4. The Artistic-Historical Commission, under the chairmanship of VA Vereshchagin, is invited to continue its work on receiving and inventorying the property of the former palace administration.
5. The regimental committees are requested to help to search for and *return objects which disappeared from the palace during the disorder of the night when the palace was taken*.
6. It is to be explained through publications that those individuals who voluntarily return such objects to the People, their sole owner and master, should have no fear of being held responsible for having stolen objects in their possession.[89]

These treasures did not simply return of their own accord. Subsequently, Vereshchagin's commission was given the additional power to conduct searches, and the responsibility for this was passed to soldiers who worked from a list produced by the Commission with descriptions which included identifying features. Around a thousand soldiers went to the Alexandrovskii market, a good bet for somewhere that you might find stolen goods on sale. Around half of the objects were recovered through searches at the Market and from the baggage of foreigners leaving Russia.[90] Protection concerns returned to fears for the artefacts that had been taken to Moscow, with the battle for ascendency in Moscow much more fiercely contested than in Petrograd, costing around a thousand lives. The intensity of fighting close to the Kremlin Palace was such that it raised fears that the Hermitage treasures stored there had been destroyed, inspiring an instant resignation from Lunacharsky:

> I have just been informed by people arriving in Moscow what has happened there…The Kremlin, where are now gathered the most important art treasures of Petrograd and Moscow, is under artillery fire.

[89] Italics added for emphasis, in Konivets, *Zimnii dvorets: Ot imperatorskoi rezidentsii do Kavshkoly Osoaviakhima*, pp.139-144.
[90] Norman, p.150.

> I cannot bear this. My cup is full. I am unable to endure these horrors. It is impossible for me to work under the pressure of thoughts which drive me mad! That is why I am leaving the Council of People's Commissars.[91]

It took Lenin to persuade Lunacharsky to rescind his resignation, but similar fears had set in within the Hermitage with a despondent Tolstoy admitting in an interview to *Le Petit Parisien* that he thought that Russia had lost the Hermitage. The conflicting reports led the Hermitage to send a senior staff member (Yakov Smirnov) to Moscow. Once there, his visit to the History Museum found that numerous bullets had simply ricocheted off the ceiling, through the window, and thankfully not hit the boxes of treasures.[92] Meanwhile the items inside the Kremlin had also escaped damage, as had the items in the armoury, though he required a colleague to confirm this because of being denied a pass. His telegram of reassurance was never sent, meaning that it took his return to end a ten-day dramatic episode.

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Some two weeks after the seizure of the Winter Palace, the Hermitage began the support of a boycott of the Bolshevik authorities which had originally been established within the civil service and government offices. Officially the Hermitage never recognized the Revolution and a majority of the conservators rejected the legitimacy of the October coup.[93] In his dealings with the Hermitage, Lunacharsky's patient approach paid dividends. None of the existing staff were sacked and, for all their reservations, within weeks the Hermitage began to work with the authorities.[94] Yet the challenge of how to formulate the correct balance of power between attendants (representatives of the proletariat) and bourgeois, scholarly keepers would continue to vex minds throughout the year from the February Revolution onwards. Grigorii Yatmanov urged the attendants to take over the museum, aligning himself firmly to the Bolshevik platform of 'workers control' that had begun to take over the running of private enterprise across Russia. Yet Lunacharsky was persuaded by a more approach of consolidation. The Hermitage had sent a delegation headed by Tolstoy, and supported by the Russian Museum, to establish the argument that museums were simply "not conventional administrative institutions" on the basis that they "deal with things of a scholarly and artistic interest which demand very special training and a certain level of cultural development".[95] Interestingly

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[91] S. Fitzpatrick, *Commissar of the Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and the Arts under Lunacharsky*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p.14.
[92] Norman, p.151.
[93] Tolstoy, 'Revoliutsionnoe vremia v Russkom Muzee i v Ermitazhe', p.354. Solomakha, *Hermitage and Revolution*.
[94] Norman, p.153.
[95] Ibid.

Lunacharsky appeared to be in favour of an elected citizens assembly or 'artistic parliament' created out of an equal weighting from scholars and representatives from the proletariat. Whilst nothing quite so radical emerged, three new bodies were created. The Council, which comprised of keepers and the director; a General Meeting, effectively the Council and the rest of the 'scholarly museum staff' and representatives from the 'young attendants'; and an Executive Committee, formed with the director, two representatives from the senior staff, and three from the younger.[96] By all accounts, this worked well. Further internal reorganization, specifically leading to democratic accountability, would be further rooted following the end of Tolstoy's directorship.

Beyond the immediate relations with the Hermitage and into the Winter Palace, acceptance of new authority continued to be disputed. Alexandre Benois diary is testament to the strain and resentment that continued into the first months of 1918, with the aforementioned caretaker Dement'ev bemoaning the "drop in discipline among the lower clerks (watchmen, lackeys, janitors etc.)" whilst himself not giving "recognition to the bosses which are recognized by his subordinates!"[97] Divided loyalties clearly remain present in the correspondence that exists in palace official business, with Dement'ev's written report on the revolutionary thefts and damages to the palace interiors continuing not only to use the now defunct title "Your Excellency" when addressing Komorov on 28 December, but his report also retains the deep rooted resentment of the "mayhem" which had befallen the palace several months earlier.[98] Both Dement'ev and Komorov had been similarly disheartened by the change in circumstance and use faced by the palace earlier in the year when Kerensky brought the new government and many soldiers into the Winter Palace in the months preceding October. For them, the palace and their world, had been turned upside down. A fascinating insight into their thinking is given in Komorov's resolution to Dement'ev's report, adding a note to the clerk to provide a copy to the cabinet – the institution that had been in charge of the property of the Imperial family – and notably abolished for the best part of a year (since February 1917).[99] They had no confidence (or wish) that the October Revolution would last.

By his own hand, Tolstoy's eventual decision to resign and leave Russia was not made as a clear product of Hermitage restructuring or internal matters. Instead, an absence granted to him by Yatmanov in June 1918 was meant to be followed by a return in the autumn: "I was not planning to resign. I could not hand my resignation to powers that I did not recognise".[100] The death of the Imperial family reached him whilst on leave and this "shocked me so much that I found that I did not

[96] Ibid.
[97] 14 November 1917. Benois, *Moi Dnevnik 1916-1917-1918*, p. 242.
[98] Konivets, *Zimnii dvorets: Ot imperatorskoi rezidentsii do Kavshkoly Osoaviakhima*, p.174.
[99] Ibid, p.169.
[100] Tolstoy, 'Revoliutsionnoe vremia v Russkom Muzee i v Ermitazhe', p.359.

have the strength to have anything to do with the people responsible. Under the influence of these terrible events, I wrote to say that I would not return".[101]

'Comrades': Trouble finding common ground

> Comrades. The working people are now in full control of the country. The country is poor, financially devastated by the war, but it is only a passing phase, for our country has an inexhaustible potential. It has great natural resources, but apart from them the working people have also inherited a huge cultural wealth, buildings of amazing beauty, museums full of rare and marvellous objects, libraries containing great resources of the spirit… Russian working people, be a careful master! Citizens preserve our common wealth!
>
> Bolshevik poster produced following their seizure of power. [102]

Understandably, the expectations of cultural preservationists in the immediate aftermath of the October Revolution were checked by great anxieties. Whilst they had been criticized, the Provisional Government had made strides beyond those by late Tsarist governments in cultural policy, in outlook if not in action. Yet any expectation of Communist desecration at the Hermitage never materialized. It was known predominantly for its "elitist collection of art treasures put together by a hated imperial royal family" that had just been overthrown, but within weeks, it was clear that the Hermitage was to be regarded as a "precious repository of national culture" which should be preserved for the enlightenment of the proletariat.[103] Benois diary, full of clear criticism for the incoming government, shows how he was taken aback by the 'unexpected' turn when the Bolsheviks "revealed, if not genuine appreciation, then something like awe which saved our treasures".[104]

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In Emily Johnson's *How Petersburg loved to study itself* she asks several important questions about the men of cultural influence in Petrograd during the transitionary period following the downfall of

[101] Ibid.
[102] Exact date unknown, but likely from early November 1917. Norman, p.154.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.

the Provisional Government and the subsequent restructuring. Her primary query was 'Why did they not boycott the Bolshevik regime like so many other government officials and members of the intelligentsia?'[105] Whilst the thrust of her enquiry aims at those who were members of the Golovin Commissions set up during the Provisional Government, the question is equally applicable to the leadership of the Hermitage, being primarily from "wealthy or aristocratic families" who "held relatively conservative political views".[106] This gave them no natural reason to sympathize with the Bolsheviks, leaving many to be surprised by their willingness to work with the authorities. In June 1918, the art historian Petr Weiner attempted to summarise the reasoning felt by those in positions of cultural authority after the Revolution: "When, right after the October coup, we started to work to preserve monuments of art and antiquity, we didn't hesitate at all to enter into cooperation with a party that was alien to us. We believed that our tasks in this affair lay outside of the realm of politics and knew, on the other hand… that no later action of any kind, not even the most intensive labour, would return what was lost".[107]

Weiner's basic position, "a willingness to collaborate with an unsympathetic political regime in the interests of short-term preservation goals" is a helpful window into the mindset not just of preservationists, or the intelligentsia's own precarious role, but also for institutions such as the Hermitage, who knew that their situation and autonomy were in highly unpredictable circumstances that would demand sleight of hand. Following her flight from the USSR in the 1930's, a curator from the paintings department, Tatiana Tchernavin, produced an account of museum life in the 1920's which further elaborated on Weiner's reasoning:

> "To understand what it meant to work in a museum in the USSR… it must be remembered that on one hand, the museums were so rich in art treasures and so interesting that it was impossible not to be enthusiastic about the wealth of new material and new avenues of work opening up before one at every step".[108]

Political resistance, and determination to remain 'apolitical' was not a new concern for preservationists amongst the Petrograd cultural elite and certainly those within the Hermitage broadly fitted this model. Pre-revolutionary era preservationists had "often put aside their distaste for the tsarist government and accepted official posts, committee appointments and material aid when they felt it to be in the interest of their cause".[109] By in large, whilst preservationists were

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[105] Johnson, p.80.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.
[108] T. Tchernavin, *Escaping the Soviets*, Hamilton: London, 1933, p.21.
[109] Johnson, p.80.

more sympathetic to the Provisional Government, there was a continuation of such an approach in the fallout following the Tsar's abdication, with a willingness to work sensitively with the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Following the October Revolution, the situation was expedited by the clear desperation for qualified specialists. With great numbers lost to the war or emigration, the men who had served on the Golovin/Gorky Commissions quickly rose to positions of influence. Sergei Troinitskii would become Hermitage Director, whilst Alexandre Benois curated the Old Masters in the Hermitage.[110] As with Weiner, both of these men served on a variety of commissions at Narkompros and assisted in the running of major cultural institutions during the Civil War (1917-21).

Fig. 10 & 11: (Left) Sergei Troinitskii and (right) Alexandre Benois.[111] [112]

Alexandre Benois was placed at the centre of the effort to form a coherent approach towards protecting and presenting the past. He worked inside the Hermitage Council and as a member of committees to raise standards in urban planning, restoration and museum curatorship. Benois and his colleagues had earlier raised the same issues in publications such as the *World of Art* and *Bygone Years*.[113] Similarly, his influence continued in association with the Commissariat of Enlightenment, by attempting to protect individual monuments and historic districts from destruction, whilst attending to improvements in housing and sanitation. His diaries provide a fascinating window into intellectual and personal frustration, which mostly centres around an emerging bureaucracy in which

[110] Meeting No.114, 31 December 1919. L.E. Nemchinova and M. Piotrovsky (ed.), *Zhurnaly Zasedanii Soveta Ermitazha, (Chast' 1) 1917-1919,* St. Petersburg: State Hermitage, 2001, pp.554-558.
[111] Photograph of Troinitskii in Konivets, *Zimnii dvorets: Ot imperatorskoĭ rezidentsii do Kavshkoly Osoaviakhima*, p.317.
[112] Photograph of Benois in *KPRF Moskva*: https://msk.kprf.ru/2017/11/16/33753/
[113] Johnson, p.81.

increasingly the individuals or institutions which carry weight fall outside of his network of alliances. A diary entry from 30 January 1918 captures this exasperation perfectly, with Benois part of a preservationist committee which continued to inspect Petrograd Palaces. In this case, the Stroganov Palace is the focus of discussion.

> Finally a 'preliminary' conference took place. Larisa (Reisner), without any sense, invited a bunch of completely unnecessary people: the whole Hermitage, the whole Alexander III Museum people, the Academy, all palace commissions… some proletarians… [114]

Benois pays particular tribute to the special guest of the meeting: Anatoly Lunacharsky. He is first forced to endure "an hour-long speech in 'ordinary colours'", by which he denotes Lunacharsky's unflattering attempts to show association with proletarian interests, before feeling excruciated by calls by a 'comrade' of Nikolai Punin, who calls to "open museums and palaces wide open, so that the people could take what they needed from there".[115]

For Benois, the experience of a sudden inversion of power and authority represented a clear trial of conscience, especially as he considered the implications of being complicit. In a 'small commission' dealing with the protection of the Stroganov Palace, Lunacharsky had given "outrageous apprenticeship" to a group of sailors, who Lunacharsky considered the best "bearers of proletarian culture". These men, according to Benois' account consider that the "whole past is only miserable nonsense", appear to a committed preservationist to be very much aligned to the destructive impulse of futurism.[116] Part of Benois' role in this episode was to persuade them to relent on destruction: "we managed to get these wild people to come to a decision to wait… to some extent we have deferred the ruin of the palace" having convinced them that they would need "more spacious premises for their proletarian culture". Despite success, Benois cannot fully contain his anger at the reckless treatment of the Stroganov Palace and his sympathy lies with its pre-revolutionary owners after inspecting the premises and being "convinced of what barbarians its current owners are". Benois reflections on the meetings suggest a sense of existential horror at what had befallen the city's cultural heritage: "For me personally, these two meetings were the last examination on the question of whether I can take an active part in current state affairs, and can I be in closer contact with the proletariat. Alas, I failed". His self-proclaimed failure was evidenced by the "convulsive silence" he took when in the meetings, which were only broken by excessive overreactions to a speech by Nikolai Punin, who he accuses of "pure demagoguery", and another

[114] 30 January 1918. A.N. Benois, *Dnevnik 1918-1924*, Moscow: Zakharov, 2010, pp.16-21.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.

outburst towards a 'threatening' individual who had told the committee that they would have to "reckon" with the sailors incumbent at the Stroganov Palace. Nevertheless, for all his dismay at futurists and louche proletarians, it is unquestionable where Benois apportions blame:

> I pay tribute to Lunacharsky, he is an intelligent, clever person and moreover, he is benevolent, he manoeuvred and dodged well today, for he like no other knows how to flatter and deceive, but what it is done for is worse than any monarchical regime and capitalist system. This is done in the name of the triumph of vulgarity, herd instinct… wild instincts are taken a priori as the genuine true will of the people. And he himself is weak… weak willed and worst of all, neurotic. Instead of a real knowledge of art, he has one directive, built on the most superficial assimilation of textbooks and feuilletons. The very things he talks about, he does not wish to know. It is curious that on his first visit to the Stroganov Palace (without us) he was not interested in examining it, and even today I dragged him through the halls. [117]

These comments by Benois offer an excellent distillation of working relationships which were quite clearly troubled from the start. His diaries draw a thin veil over a desire to apportion culpability for the precarious state of preservation. To him (and broadly those within the Hermitage Council), men like Punin and Lunacharsky were paying lip service to their responsibilities and failing to realise the importance of the culture they were managing.

Working with outsiders

> You asked me to indicate the current state of museums. Suffice to say that the main museum of the Russian state – the Hermitage – is still in a state of exile; boarded up in boxes, exposed every hour to the threat of defeat and plundering. It is absolutely necessary to save the Hermitage.
>
> The situation is even worse with private palaces nationalized so that everywhere there is no idea of leadership in this area…the apparatus has now turned into one huge awkward office in which it solely rules, commands and manages the most stupid and disorderly creature...[118]

[117] Ibid.
[118] 12 January 1919. Ibid, p.211.

A characteristic theme from the Benois diaries in 1918 is the apparent deterioration in what was already a precarious relationship between Hermitage leadership and key figures from the Bolshevik government. The day after the 'Stroganov Palace' meetings, Benois was already elaborating on his discontent to such an extent that he felt that he describes himself becoming "naïve to the hatred and contempt towards Nicholas II", whilst turning grievances instead at the new breed of functionary bureaucrats that had profited from the revolution. Grigorii Yatmanov, the chief beneficiary of Lunacharsky's patronage, was singled out for particular criticism. A series of diary reflections in mid-March 1918 capture the mood amidst several significant structural developments, the first being Yatmanov's announcement on 25 March that the whole of the Winter Palace would be formally handed over to the Hermitage, which as it would turn out would take a further forty years to implement. The second, was the establishment of Lunacharsky's new Collegium for the Preservation of Monuments and Museum Affairs (18 March) which would effectively replace the role of the Gorky Commission (and Benois) had under the Provisional Government. Troinitskii was recruited and both Vereshchagin and Benois were asked to join its board. Nevertheless, the reflections from March illustrate the unworkable compromise that lay before men like Benois at this time.

> (In a letter to Vereshchagin, 12 March 1918) "Common cause" has "become impossible". "Mr Yatmanov convinced me that we are people of two different cultures… who cannot sing in harmony".
>
> (A few days later, Benois attempts reconciliation, 14 March 1918) "I offered to work it out together with Yatmanov, so as not to create an irreconcilable enemy out of him with whom I would have to live in the same house"
>
> (After a disagreement, both Yatmanov and Benois have different approaches to reconciliation, 15 March 1918) Yatmanov dismisses the disagreement ("an unfortunate event") as due to "subtleties in humour", leaving Benois to admit to himself (16 March 1918) that he had been "too honest", before plotting "if I cannot break the prison walls of the companion Yatmanov, then at least such conversations can leave the huge pits for the planting of mines".

The challenge posed by Bolshevik restructuring, and having new faces in positions of influence, was an unwanted phenomena within the Hermitage. Prior to the Revolution, the Ministry of the Imperial Court had survived largely untouched throughout the Provisional Government's time in power. The same Ministry also oversaw the Academy of the Arts, the Archaeological Commission, the palace

theatres and orchestras, the stables, the library and of course, the Winter Palace.[119] Lunacharsky immediately had sent a twenty-two-year-old Bolshevik Commissar, Yuri Flaksermann, to take over and he was received by being ignored.[120] They simply carried on as usual.

Reluctance to embrace change had been a criticism of the pre-war Hermitage and the group of keepers who emerged in the post-October museum were also characteristically conservative. Recruitment was one such area lacking dynamism. Alexandre Benois had not yet been invited to join the staff despite having created a catalogue of the museum, whilst many other scholars had continued to work for the museum for free. Able young scholars like Oscar Waldhauer, a keeper in Classical antiquities, had to restrict himself to working in the evenings because he needed to supplement his income by teaching University classes during the day. Waldhauer would arguably be one of the strongest examples of challenging conservatism within the museum as the first proponent of a populist educational programme, which included a series of lectures for schoolchildren and workers after the Revolution. In Geraldine Norman's character studies of Hermitage leaders from the time, the disposition of the figures who held senior rank were scholarly, of predominantly senior years and eccentric in their wit. A choice example was the keeper of the picture gallery, Ernst Liphart. He was a man of seventy, a highly respected scholar who was fluent in German, Italian, French, English and Spanish, and his party trick was a humorous character mimicry of an international congress.[121] These men were not well paced to allow for evolution in the Hermitage, let alone develop a thirst for revolutionary change.

In reality, the situation demanded at least some cursory reform at management level. Three significant changes were made to the membership of the Hermitage Council in June 1918. Alexandre Benois was joined by Mikhail Rostovsev and Sergey Zhebelev, both eminent archaeologists in being elected to the Council. Yet these deliberate and gradual changes were followed by a shock. Tolstoy first left the country, promoting the then deputy Eduard Lenz to the directorship, before the futurist art historian and avowed enemy of Alexandre Benois, Nikolai Punin, took the post of Commissar of the Hermitage on 1 August 1918. The very next day when the Collegium on Museum Affairs called for a radical reform of the Hermitage, and just two weeks later, a telegram was received confirming the intention of Natal'ia Trotskaia, newly appointed (by Lunacharsky) as Head of the Museums Department in Moscow, to give the Hermitage collections to Moscow's Museum of Fine Arts. Failing

[119] Norman, p.157.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid, p.158.

in an attempt to carry the Council with him in a mass walk-out in protest, Lenz failed, and promptly resigned as director on 23 August, due to the "painful state of his health".[122]

Nikolai Punin's brief period of influence at the Hermitage is a fascinating rupture from the resolute conservatism of the museum's recent past. Within a few months of Punin's appointment, the first professional debate was held on the theme, *A sanctuary or a factory?* which focussed on the role of new art, but increasingly centred on the importance of engagement with the 'broad masses of the working people'.[123] Punin was joined by a renegade mix of men whose principles felt diametrically opposed to those of the Hermitage. David Schterenberg (the government commissioner for Visual Arts), Natan Al'tman (who designed the first anniversary celebrations for the October Revolution in Palace Square), as well as luminaries of the futurist art world, including poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, avant-garde writer Osip Brik and theatre director Vsevolod Meierhold.[124] Punin gave a speech which must have left his Hermitage colleagues very uneasy. His attitude to the museum and its staff was not at all sympathetic, appearing to believe that the artist and the museologist were in conflict, labelling the former as a creative and nurturing force, whilst the other was merely a custodian. Museum workers were more broadly lambasted for "aesthetic dilettantism".[125] Osip Brik did not lag behind in this swathe of insults, proposing to "instil in these 'bourgeois apartments'… not only new people, but a new spirit". Vladimir Mayakovsky, hardly a friend of conservative museums, performed or rather shouted, declaring "Art should not be concentrated in dead temples", instead preferring its place "on streets, on trams and in factories".[126] He longed for an end to the ambiguity in which the vestiges of the past were kindly preserved and the Hermitage was clearly seen as a chief example of this obstructive compromise. Progress towards a new, untainted culture could only be achieved by a bold approach characterized by conflict:

> When you find a White Guardsman, you put him up against the wall.
>
> But have you forgotten Raphael? Have you forgotten Rastrelli?
>
> It's high time for bullets to tinkle across museum walls.
>
> Fire on the old order with the hundred-inch guns of your gullets!
>
> Sow death in the enemy's camp. Don't let us catch you, hirelings of capital.

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[122] Meeting No.36, 23 August 1918. *Zhurnaly Zasedanii Soveta Ermitazha, (Chast' 1) 1917-1919*, pp.101-105.
[123] Meeting held at the Winter Palace (*Sanctuary or Factory?*), 24 November 1918. *Zhurnaly Zasedanii Soveta Ermitazha, (Chast' 1) 1917-1919,* pp.188-203. *Petrogradskaia Pravda*, No.257, 24 November 1918.
[124] Konivets, *Zimnii dvorets: Ot imperatorskoi rezidentsii do Kavshkoly Osoaviakhima*, p.215.
[125] *Izobrazitel'noye iskusstvo*, No. 1. 1919. p. 86.
[126] V. Mayakovsky and J.H. McGavran, *Selected Poems*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2013.

> Is that Tsar Alexander standing on Insurrection Square? Send dynamite!
>
> We lined up cannons at the edge of the forest, deaf to the White Guard's caresses.
>
> But why has Pushkin not been attacked? And the other generals of classicism?
>
> We protect the old order in the name of art. Or has the Revolution's tooth gone dull chewing on crowns?
>
> Hurry up! Spew smoke over the Winter Palace— from a macaroni factory! [127]

Mayakovsky's assertion, that preservationists were effectively siding with the White forces and therefore would have the revolution overturned, entrenched the dividing lines between 'preservationist' institutions like the Hermitage and the forces of Left Art and Futurism. His words draw upon a mythical revolutionary justice that were previously written by Bakunin, who glorified the act of destruction, and the nineteenth century intelligentsia whose ideas demanded a "complete remaking of the psyche".[128] Ultimately there was no great unification across the avant-garde for nihilism. Even in the meeting (*A Sanctuary or a Factory?*), he certainly did not face a wall of appreciation for his iconoclastic leanings. Alexander Blok argued against the poem: "Not so comrade! I hate the Winter Palace no less than you, but destruction is as old as construction. The root of history is much more poisonous than you think, the curses of time will not be abundant".[129] Mayakovsky's outburst may have been uniquely inflammatory, but it did not generate support for iconoclasm. The state would ultimately side with the forces of 'anti-iconoclasm'.

Punin represented a set of values that could never have found common ground with others in the Hermitage Council in 1918. Yet he did have a significant impact during his brief interlude at the museum, something made apparent in the ordinarily dry records of Hermitage Council meetings. Five days into his appointment, Punin attended his first meeting. It was to last over twelve hours and captured, when set against the often-pedestrian minutes of other meetings, an extraordinary level of tension. Eduard Lenz began by explaining to the Hermitage Council that the decision on 2 August by the Board on Art Affairs and the Protection of Art and Antiquities was "to carry out a fundamental reform of the entire structure of the Hermitage, to abolish the Council and deprive it of its main functions".[130] Furthermore, the reforms meant "cancelling the election of assistants and ordering

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[127] V. Mayakovsky, 'It's too early to rejoice' (1918). Ibid.
[128] Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams*, p.68.
[129] Alexander Blok in Y. Annenkov, *Dnevnik moikh vstrech*, Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1991, p.67.
[130] Meeting No.33, 6 August 1918. *Zhurnaly Zasedanii Soveta Ermitazha, (Chast' 1) 1917-1919,* pp.90-94.

new elections", hence invariably challenging the existing configuration of the Council. Lenz was appalled that "all appointments to the Hermitage passed into the hands of the Collegium" despite having been promised by Lunacharsky himself that he would "not interfere with the internal life of the Hermitage".[131] In fact, he was livid enough to openly suggest that the Council "respond to such a violation of the Hermitage's autonomy" by staging a mass resignation.[132] Punin on the other hand, was unrepentant in announcing himself to the Council. He believed that it was quite correct that the authorities may have promised to interfere, but this ceased to be their position upon finding that they found "the Hermitage's work to be inadequate and inappropriate". In effect, after assessing their response to the necessary reforms, the "Hermitage itself is to blame for the fact that it worked too little".[133] The Hermitage Council, despite Smirnov's intervention to cast doubt on the value of Lunacharsky's words given the pace of change since January, were aghast at the threat towards their integrity.

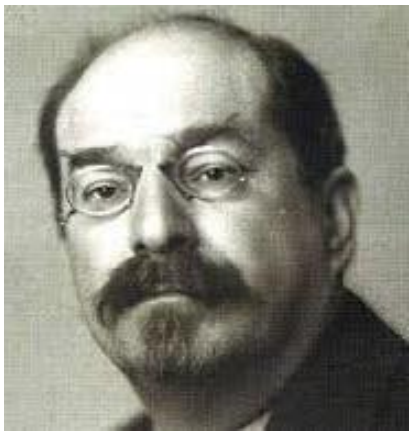

Fig. 12 & 13: (Left) Anatoly Lunacharsky and (right) Nikolai Punin.[134] [135]

Over the course of the following month, Punin pushed ahead with reformist zeal. The following week an impatient Punin propose to proceed without waiting for the completion of a Hermitage Commission which had been established specifically for this purpose.[136] He was particularly adamant that the Council needed to be replenished with new members. In his fourth meeting with the Council, Punin even went as far as to suggest an outside secretary to the Council who would take the responsibilities vacated by the outgoing Eduard Lenz, another significant challenge to what had always felt like a closed group.[137] In the strained meeting of almost thirteen hours, the Council were

[131] Eduard Lenz, Ibid.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Nikolai Punin, Ibid.
[134] Photograph of Anatoly Lunacharsky, *Kievskii Telegraf*: http://telegrafua.com/social/12915/
[135] Photograph of Nikolai Punin, *Muzei Anny Akhmatovoi v Fontannom Dome*: https://akhmatova.spb.ru/
[136] Meeting No.34, 13 August 1918. *Zhurnaly Zasedanii Soveta Ermitazha, (Chast' 1) 1917-1919,* p.95-96.
[137] Meeting No.36, 23 August 1918. Ibid*,* pp.101-105.

understandably eager to push for the promotion of an existing assistant to provide continuity. A strong candidate emerged in Sergei Troinitskii, despite his own insistence that he was limited by his "inexperience".[138]

Whilst Punin was supportive of the Council's position on the desirability of the return of items from Moscow, the atmosphere in these meetings is tangible from the recorded minutes. As Commissar of the Hermitage, Nikolai Punin had one of the most challenging jobs in 'the new Russia' – lacking security, support and immediately at risk of losing vast collections to Moscow. He may have been Lunacharsky's chosen conduit to the intelligentsia at the Hermitage, but his role placed him in a precarious position between what was seen as the creeping dogmatism of the state, and the intelligentsia desperately trying to retain autonomy. Foma Railyan in the *Novaya Petrogradskaia Gazeta* argued that the emphasis on workers and peasants meant that "not only members of the bourgeoisie but also the working intelligentsia are deprived of political trust".[139] In Lenin's Russia, Railyan argued, the intelligentsia were simply not included in the political programme of the new government.[140]

On the contrary, Punin's biographer Natalya Murray saw him as the "perfect candidate" due to his "enthusiasm, determination and adherence to principle", despite his dangerous tendencies as a clear outsider to the Museum and his frank criticism of their curators.[141] Despite resistance from the council, they needed Punin to defend their interests during the early stages of the Hermitage becoming a Museum of Western European Art and by aiding efforts to incorporate the works of other summer palaces into its collection. When Lunacharsky appointed Punin on 31 July 1918, he had told him "The Republic is relying on you!" and indeed one can quite plausibly see why he had been convinced of Punin's necessary intervention to achieve more satisfactory results. Tolstoy's Hermitage had continued their weekly meetings, "discussing new acquisitions and demanding more money, but by August 1918 most of the floors were still closed to the public".[142] Whilst uncompromising to a degree of bloody-mindedness, Punin was assiduous on priorities such as the inventory of the Hermitage. In fact, so keen was Punin to achieve this end that his displeasure at failure was ruthless. On 21 September, he was livid with the "extremely careless attitude to the conduct of works on the inventory of the Hermitage Collections" and promptly announced that "I declare the Head of Department of Prints and Drawings, B.K. Veselovskii, and the Keeper of the Art

[138] Ibid.
[139] N. Murray, *The Unsung Hero of the Russian Avant-Garde: The Life and Times of Nikolay Punin*, Leiden: Brill: 2012, p.97.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid, p.96.
[142] Ibid.

Department, S.K. Isakarsko, expelled from office".[143] It was far from the only instance of Punin ruffling feathers in this way. On 4 December, he attempted to prevent admission to the ballot box anyone who he considered "persons who have proved unsuitable for fruitful work" in reference to M.D. Filosofov. In the very same meeting he filed for a dismissal, taking time in the meeting to argue against the continuation of paying a salary to N.K. Shilyenko, who meanwhile worked at another institution.[144] Alexander Benois saw "something vindictive and petty" in the affair.

To the Hermitage leadership, Punin's reorganization drive felt characteristic of an increasing tendency by the new government to chastise their sovereignty, often by prioritising or imposing political motives over any respect for the Hermitage as a place of unparalleled cultural significance. Despite receiving all of the rooms of the 'Small Hermitage' and part of the Winter Palace, the use of the palace was prioritised for use as a hostel, a cinema, a canteen, a venue for political meetings and accommodation for returning soldiers.[145] In September 1918, Lunacharsky envisioned the palace's future, as a "haven of entertainment, food and educational recreation for the children of the Petrograd proletariat".[146] The Winter Palace was strongly considered to become a Palace of Pioneers, before a Petrograd Soviet decree (in October 1919) announced that a museum depicting the history of the revolutionary movement would be established in the palace. When Troinitskii became aware of Commissar Yatmanov's plans to install a flagship Museum of the Revolution in the Winter Palace, to open in 1920, it seemed that a permanent obstacle to Hermitage expansion had been created. This further drove a clear wedge between the Hermitage Council and the new museum would begin a precarious and antagonistic relationship until beyond the Great Patriotic War.

Further to this trend of challenges to Hermitage autonomy was the requirement for appropriations to be signed off by Punin himself (a power which passed to Yatmanov), retracting Hermitage's independence on purchases. Worse still, reorganization and a greater restriction over Council powers converged during the fight to prevent the use of Hermitage artefacts for display in Moscow. During December 1918 and January 1919, the meetings of the Hermitage Council debate directly the issue of Hermitage autonomy. On 18 December, Troinitskii argued that the Hermitage Council was the only "competent authority" who knew what the Hermitage needed, undermining

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[143] Meeting No.42, 21 September 1918. *Zhurnaly Zasedanii Soveta Ermitazha, (Chast' 1) 1917-1919,* pp.140-144.
[144] Meeting No.54, 4 December 1918. Ibid*,* pp.210-221.
[145] Meeting No.45, 9 October 1918. Ibid, pp.155-159. Matveev (ed.), *Ermitazh «vsemirnyi», ili planeta Ermitazh,* p.119.
[146] *Petrogradskaia Pravda*, No.207, 22 September 1918. *Krasnaia Gazeta*, Evening edition, No.189, 23 September 1918.

the authority of the Board of the Property Department of the Republic, whilst Zhebelev challenged the punitive controls over acquisitions imposed on them to be "unlawful".[147] Benois summarised the stoic approach of the Council best in a resolution he drafted for delegates in Moscow to consider:

> The composition of the Hermitage's employees is not a random recruitment of more or less knowledgeable specialists, in general, the composition of the Hermitage employees is a living and cohesive body with its own skills and its own specific culture. This is one of the most important centres of artistic and historical life of the state. And because of these considerations, any invasion, even scientifically prepared, but unauthorized, would be presented as a series and gross vandalism into what is truly a vital task of the Hermitage scientific team. Arranging the exhibition of such protected treasures of all mankind, such as the Hermitage's collections, outside of its walls, while eliminating the entire established and deeply committed composition of the museum curators, would not only expose those treasures to new risks, the mere thought of which in such a terrible light seems to be the greatest catastrophe, but would undoubtedly cause a strong demoralization among the responsible employees, because from the moment outsiders deal with things to be managed, their responsibility would be transferred to other people. Complexities, moreover, would be brought about by this disorder, which will be close to chaos.[148]

Of course, Nikolai Punin's prominent place in Russian Futurism placed him in an apparently paradoxical position. He was the Commissar responsible for the affairs of palaces and museums, stationed within perhaps the most conservative museum in Russia, and yet his Futurist agenda was based on the eradication of old art and the closure of museums. Punin's belief was that proletarian artists should study the classic works of art, but they should not copy them, and certainly avoid being directly influenced by them. His actions bore out this philosophy. In 1918, Punin had ordered that all plaster casts from the Academy of Arts, which since its very foundation had been a central part of the academic approach there, should be removed to the yard of the Academy.[149]

At a meeting specifically organized to discuss the return of Hermitage treasures from Moscow, Grigorii Yatmanov enquired to Punin as to how he thought young artists might respond to this 'historic event'. Typically uncompromising, Punin left no doubt as to whether his responsibility had shifted his outlook.

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[147] Meeting No.58, 18 December 1918. *Zhurnaly Zasedanii Soveta Ermitazha, (Chast' 1) 1917-1919,* pp.237-246.
[148] 6 December 1918. Benois*, Dnevnik 1918-1924*, pp.203-205.
[149] Murray, p.99.

> I will take up the gauntlet thrown down to me… Our positions are as strong as before, and we sincerely wish for young artists to attend the Hermitage as rarely as possible, listening to the internal voice of their creativity instead. We reject all the old art in order to build the bright new future.[150]

Punin's promotion of Futurism at the Hermitage itself was predictably unwelcome. An exhibition of contemporary art was organized, the first new major exhibition in the Soviet period, which drew from across many artistic movements. It proved to be a significant undertaking, with nineteen rooms required in the Palace of the Arts (the name for the Winter Palace at the time of exhibiting). The Council did not take the exercise seriously and tried every method possible to prevent its success. Firstly, Benois voiced concerns over how the exhibition would be funded.[151] Secondly, the Hermitage themselves organized an exhibition of the *Funeral Cult of Ancient Egypt*, timed to have maximum effect, beginning just ten days after Punin's *First Exhibition of Artworks* (April 1919). A third and continuing theme in the Council meetings appeared to be the rejection of the proposed Punin exhibition out of fear regarding their sole right to utilise the premises of the Hermitage, which given the continuing insecurities over their collections in Moscow, was understandably genuine. Such worries only intensified when "unknown persons came (on 10 February) to the Romanov Gallery and began to build wooden shields for the New Art exhibition organized by the Department of Visual Arts" (IZO-Narkompros). Yatmanov and Punin had made these arrangements "on behalf" of the Director of the Hermitage. The Council responded thus:

> The Hermitage cannot be responsible for the premises and the objects stored in them, since it can no longer dispose of these premises.[152]

Therefore, they resolved that:

> The premises of the Hermitage can be used only by themselves and for purposes related to its scientific activities. In view of this, we will contact the Collegium for Museums and the Protection of Monuments of Art and Antiquities and Commissioner Yatmanov for the purpose of formally entering into the possession of the Lamot Pavilion and receiving the keys to all its premises.[153]

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[150] Nikolai Punin at the Festive Meeting dedicated to the return of the Hermitage Collection, which took place at the Pavilion Room of the Winter Palace, 22 November 1920 in M.O. Dedinkin, *Tovarishchestvo proletarskogo iskusstva Fridrikha Brassa: kollektsiia nemetskogo avangarda v sovetskoi Rossii*, St. Petersburg: State Hermitage Publishers, 2009, p.50.
[151] Meeting No.61, 9 January 1919, *Zhurnaly Zasedanii Soveta Ermitazha, (Chast' 1) 1917-1919,* pp.266-272.
[152] Meeting No.66, 19 February 1919. Ibid, pp.306-313.
[153] Ibid.

The objections of the Council were only part of an array of hindrances. The exhibition halls took months to prepare, canvasses were in short supply and falling temperatures in mid-winter (up to minus 12 degrees Centigrade inside), without access to heating, delayed the opening.[154]

The ambition of the exhibition, given the obvious limitations and opposition, was remarkable. From the beginning of preparations in November 1918, the exhibition was to be designed around democratic principles: anyone considering themselves as an artist or a worker could take part. Participation and entry were free. The absence of material burden was central to the "purpose of the exhibition" with the Department of Visual Arts incurring the costs.[155] Petrograd newspapers advertised to encourage wide encouragement and participation offers were "sent to members of all the trade unions and workers organizations", though in truth responses were limited. When it opened on 13 April 1919, a catalogue of 359 artists and 1826 works decorated the Georgievskii, Apollo and Second Floor Halls facing the Square. The range of works displayed reflected the incredible richness of the age, spanning from the Wanderers (*Peredvizhniki*) including Ilya Repin's *Barge Haulers on the Volga*, through to avant-garde and futurist exhibits, including many works by Pavel Filonov and Marc Chagall.[156] Many of the paintings seized the historical moment in a way at odds with the Hermitage's collection: Ivan Vladimirov's *Down with the Eagle!* and *Fight at the Winter Palace* are two such examples. They were displayed in tandem with portraits of Lenin by Rundaltsov, known for his royal portraiture, with non-patriotic and even counter-revolutionary works, like Anton Vasiutinskii's *Christ in a crown of thorns*. Sculptural works included Henry Manizer and his son, Matvei, who became a corner stone of Stalinist era socialist realism.

[154] 'Katalog: Pervaia Gosudarstvennaia svobodnaia vystavka proizvedenii iskusstva', Petrograd, 1918, p.5.
[155] Konivets, *Zimnii dvorets: Ot imperatorskoi rezidentsii do Kavshkoly Osoaviakhima*, p.225.
[156] 'Katalog: Pervaia Gosudarstvennaia svobodnaia vystavka proizvedenii iskusstva', Petrograd, 1918.

Fig. 14 & 15: (Right) Exhibition catalogue for the *First Exhibition of Artworks* (1919), which featured (left) Ivan Vladimirov's *Down with the Eagle!* (*Doloi orla!*) [157]

The exhibition was an exercise in the tension regarding the Hermitage's place in the new Russia, with the displays of landscapes and 'still-life' confounding Futurists and Left Artists alike. Schterenberg was livid, arguing that "this artistic direction cannot be encouraged", in part because he believed that the art of the working class should be free from the past, but more to the point, they hated it. Historians of the Winter Palace argued otherwise, with Anna Konivets recognizing that newspapers claimed that the working classes were studying these artworks carefully and even trembled as they heard Mozart being played from the gilded Armorial Halls.[158] This was not the only disappointment. Despite the exhibition being a vehicle for the rallies on proletarian art, and articles in *Iskusstvo kommuny*, their extent of their great recruitment of worker artists achieved the sum total of a single worker-artist from the listings in the catalogue, M.P. Kacharovskii, a self-taught artist.[159]

Framing October

[157] Konivets, *Zimnii dvorets: Ot imperatorskoi rezidentsii do Kavshkoly Osoaviakhima*, p.224 and p.227.
[158] Ibid.
[159] 'Katalog: Pervaia Gosudarstvennaia svobodnaia vystavka proizvedenii iskusstva', Petrograd, 1918.

Amidst a stage of significant cultural instability, Punin's time as Commissar coincided with a brief, yet wildly eventful period for the Winter Palace and the Hermitage. Whilst many in the cultural intelligentsia failed to cooperate fully with the new government, including those at the Hermitage, the Futurists took the opportunity to extend their influence. Punin had recognized that there were "few people who knew and felt the loneliness of the Bolsheviks in the first few months", and Lunacharsky promptly rewarded them with the charge of the Visual Arts Section (IZO) at Narkompros.[160] Their impact was both immediate and spectacular. On 1 May 1918, they painted the city in celebration of Labour Day, decorating bridges, buildings and embankments with red banners and flags, formed proclamations in many colours and painted giant posters with depictions of soldiers and peasants. Aeroplanes circled overhead, directing the crowds a more hopeful future where perhaps technology could provide a more central role. A 7,000 strong audience enjoyed a performance of Mozart's *Requiem* in front of the Winter Palace to defy any sense that the Bolsheviks could not be cultured masters. Lunacharsky could not help but to congratulate himself, noting that "It's easy to celebrate when everything is going swimmingly and fortune pats us on the head. But the fact that we hungry Petrograders, besieged with enemies within, bearing such a burden of unemployment and suffering on our shoulders, still are celebrating proudly and solemnly – this is our real achievement".[161]

Indeed the Hermitage Council showed hostility towards the preparations for the anniversary celebrations, with Benois, a fierce opponent of anything Punin touched, describing Lunacharsky as an "infinitely naïve barbarian" after reading of the plans in New Life (*Novaya Zhizn'*) to decorate the square of the Winter Palace.[162] A few days later Benois had the displeasure to inspect the halls where panels were being painted for the May festivities:

> God what a profanation, what insane nonsense! God knows what beauty is – the official cold halls of the palace, how they seem magnificent next to the miserable 'splashing' painting that is going on at the foot of their columns. Some tired futuristic looking work is being created for projects by (Ivan) Puni, Schterenberg… A factory of whores! Madmen with crazy illusion, have taken possession of our lives.[163]
>
> The work in the palace is heating up for tomorrow, some preparations are going on in front of the palace, some poles are being dragged and ropes are being tied. In general, the impression is one of home decoration and embarrassment. They are unlikely to ripen. When I went out into

[160] Norman, p.163.
[161] Ibid, p.162.
[162] 21 April 1918. Benois, *Dnevnik 1918-1924*, pp.134-137.
[163] 25 April 1918. Ibid, pp.143-145.

> the courtyard between the kindergarten and the palace to see the collection of works for the procession, but it turned out they have a completely shapeless appearance and seem very miserable next to the giant palace. In another collection, only the throne is ready – just a big chair upholstered in red. Immediately the three proletarian artists smeared something, while the other two were fixing something – it was sluggish and dull. I fortunately didn't meet the leaders themselves.[164]

The worst criticism came with Benois reactions to the finished product.

> The artists have distinguished themselves. God, what doodles! …The leftists dug in the building of the Singing Corps: some trampish type with the banner "All power to the Red Army!" And some motley crew carried a clownish statement, "We will die, but we will not surrender our revolutionary Petrograd! The amusing group of workers joined hands with the slogan "All power to the Soviets!" hung around the Winter Palace. This daub dangled in the wind, flapped and threatened to collapse on a bunch of people crowding at the main entrance waiting to get into a free concert. On the pediment of the Maly Theatre, three small plaques carried the signature: 'Down with world slaughter', 'Long live the Third International', 'All power to the Red Army' and on an idealistic note: 'We need to establish the national economy!' …Worst of all, the most stupid and vilest thing is what Yatmanov's rascal allowed himself to do with the statue of Nicholas I. The upper part was covered by boards from which stretched red and yellow tapes. What this means and how it should be understood – it remains a mystery. This painfully tried to unravel a bunch of very excited and dissatisfied people, all the time alternating at the foot of the desecrated monument.[165]

Despite the reservations of Benois, the influence of Futurists in May continued into the first anniversary of the October Revolution (in November). Natan Al'tman transformed Palace Square by decorating the central column with huge abstract sculptures. Over 15,000 yards of canvas were used to cover the Winter Palace and other buildings with Cubist and Futurist designs. Given that only shortly after the festivities Punin and Mayakovsky would host their conference, *A sanctuary or a factory?* in the Palace of the Arts and concluded that such palaces and museums needed to be swept away, the Hermitage leadership could not be certain of their futures. Having also been irritated at the dressing up of the two capitals for festivities, Lenin himself soon saw a copy of *Art of the Commune* (*Iskusstvo kommuny*) and "immediately urged Lunacharsky to tone things down", before

[164] 26 April 1918. Ibid, pp.145-147.
[165] 27 April 1918. Ibid, pp.147-151.

Lunacharsky himself began to lose heart with the Futurists.[166] It was clear that they had "proved unacceptable to the masses", though they had showed "much initiative during popular festivals, good humour and capacity for work which the old artists would have been absolutely incapable".

Despite this own clear reservations regarding Futurism, it was clear to Lenin himself that central spaces in cities were necessarily important for projecting the Bolshevik cultural vision. The centre of Petrograd and the Winter Palace were pivotal to this task. A man of definite and conservative tastes, Lenin was clear that pillars of culture (such as theatres and museums) should not be allowed to disintegrate. His vision, insomuch as there was a defined plan, concentrated around visual lessons in history and to organize artistic resources to act in the public good. Amongst others, it would be sculptors that would act to educate through retelling Marxist principles, with monuments his priority.[167] The unveiling of memorials would involve speeches, invited scholars and comrades. This plan, monumental propaganda, appealed to Lunacharsky and naturally Petrograd would be a place of central importance given Lenin's clear intention that the stress for monuments should be on connections to the revolution and the aims of the Bolsheviks.[168]

Following the decree on 13 April 1918, *On monuments of the Republic*, monuments to the Tsar were withdrawn, including two to Peter I on Admiralty Embankment. 'Crowns' were cut from the Kronversky Canal and numerous two-headed eagles removed.[169] By 15 June, Lunacharsky had come under direct criticism from Lenin for inactivity on the decree, first by writing to the People's Commissariat of Education and then challenging Lunacharsky directly by telegram several weeks later.[170] Nevertheless, Lunacharsky appealed for outdated inscriptions to be reported, for which responses included the gold letters on St Isaac's Cathedral ("In your name shall the King rejoice") and the chapel in the Summer Garden ("Do not touch the anointed one").[171] Ten sites in Petrograd were chosen for statues dedicated to individuals of revolutionary significance, including Marx, Radishchev, Bakunin, Plekhanov, Danton and Robespierre.[172] A former Hermitage restorer, Leonid Shervud, formed the monument to Radishchev, located on the fence of the Winter Palace overlooking the Neva, which opened to the *Marseillaise* and the red curtain treatment on 22 September 1918. Lunacharsky "jumping on a piece of granite, delivered a fiery speech to the people"

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[166] Lunacharsky in Fitzpatrick, *Commissar of the Enlightenment*, pp.126-127.
[167] T. Deutscher, *Not by politics alone: The other Lenin*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1977, p.201.
[168] Ibid, p.203.
[169] Konivets, *Zimnii dvorets: Ot imperatorskoi rezidentsii do Kavshkoly Osoaviakhima*, p.228.
[170] V.N. Dmitrievich and D.V. Dmitrievich, 'O restavratsii Kremlia, vydache okhrannykh gramot, sozdanii proletarskikh muzeev i vstrechakh s Leninym po povodu monumental'noi propagandy'*, Ustnaia istoriia*: http://oralhistory.ru/talks/orh-220%E2%80%93221/text, (Conversation recorded 6 October 1971; Published 29 June 2017).
[171] *Krasnaia Gazeta*, 4 October 1918, Morning edition, No.209.
[172] Konivets, *Zimnii dvorets: Ot imperatorskoi rezidentsii do Kavshkoly Osoaviakhima*, p.228.

present, whilst newspaper reports celebrated the choice of location "a wide gap in the former home of tyrants…having consecrated this home with a monument to one of the first martyrs of the revolution, which turns this home of Kings to a House of the People".[173] The plaster bust did not even stand for a year and by 2 January 1919, "the monument erected at the corner of the Winter Palace to Comrade Radishchev fell and crashed", ending the first monument erected by the new government in Petrograd rather inglorious fashion.[174]

Fig. 16: Radishchev outside the Winter Palace, overlooking the Neva, in 1918.[175]

Such episodes offer some reality to the idea that Lenin could have pushed harder for a sweeping programme of monumental propaganda. As Schterenberg noted, Russia simply lacked skilled craftsmen: "We have few masters who could put up these monuments. When the monuments were erected, there was a definite desire to remove them immediately…they were considered anti-artistic and nasty in every sense".[176] Schterenberg was hopeful that future students and workers "will create with our increased intention in this area… (and we will build) a framework of sculptural masters,

[173] *Petrogradskaia Pravda*, No.207, 22 September 1918, 'Index of the employees of the Hermitage'.
[174] Ibid. *Krasnaia Gazeta*, Evening edition, No.189, 23 September 1918.
[175] 'Otkryt pamiatnik A.N. Radishchevu': http://panevin.ru/calendar/otkrit_pamyatnik_an_radishevu.html
[176] *Izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo*, No.1, 1919, p.72.

which we currently do not have in Russia".[177] The situation was even worse in Moscow, where a Sophia Petrovskaia monument outside the Nikolaevskii railway station had been opened in November 1918. Passer-by's "involuntarily stopped and instead of this being due to reverence, they rolled about with laughter".[178]

A place of sanctuary

Internally, the Hermitage faced a period of being more vexed by external implications rather than the day to day rigours of museum management. As discussed before, their finest collections had been evacuated to Moscow, whilst the museum itself was closed to the public. Their work instead focused on private collections being taken under their control from elsewhere, the formation of inventories and the assessment of artefacts for value. Many of the challenges which faced them related to the significant human hardship that Petrograd endured in the years following the Revolution. Lunacharsky, who remained in the city whilst the bulk of government operations moved to Moscow in March 1918, had warned "things will be hard for St. Petersburg (Petrograd)… it will have to go through the agonizing process of reducing its economic and political significance. Of course, the government will try to ease this painful process, but still Petersburg cannot be saved from a terrible food crisis or future growth of unemployment".[179] The situation was critical during the Civil War years, and those at the Hermitage and the Winter Palace were by no means exempt from suffering. Yakov Smirnov, a keeper who had published on the Hermitage collection of Sassanian silver, was among the museum employees who died of hunger.[180]

H.G. Wells wrote in a visit to Soviet Russia that due to shortages, it "was impossible to get ordinary dishes" or "buy a glass or a cup".[181] Mansions tried in vain to keep inventory lists whilst "scattered objects like crystal glass or family silver with a coat of arms were exchanged for food". It was amidst this atmosphere that Grigorii Yatmanov was appealing to citizens to "make every effort to find all of the stolen items from the Winter Palace on 25-26 October and return them to the commandant of the Winter Palace". Assuredly anyone buying or possessing stolen goods were promised to face "legal responsibility and will suffer severe punishment". Resulting finds went to a variety of homes. Yatmanov himself received 24 thin crystal glasses decorated with an elegant

[177] Ibid.
[178] M.D. Wrangel, *My life in Communist Paradise*, Archive of the Russian Revolution, Berlin, 1922, Vol.4, p.213.
[179] Lunacharsky in Norman, p.159.
[180] Norman, p.159.
[181] H.G. Wells, *Russia in the Shadows*, New York: Doran, 1921, pp.27-30.

pattern.[182] Events at the Armorial Hall made up of dishware before concerts, as did artists in preparation for exhibitions. 200 plates with the blue coat of arms were now used by the Children's Labour Colony in the Palace of the Arts, with a further 500 going to the canteen of the Children's Evacuation Centre for refugee children.[183] Around 150 addresses, including five orphanages, were sent packages of porcelain or glassware.

In October 1918, the Hermitage had received part of the premises of the Winter Palace and all of the rooms of the Small Hermitage, but Hermitage jurisdiction was overlooked in favour of what were considered more pressing issues.[184] The need for housing for proletarian orphans had led the Soviet government to suggest the use of the grand rooms of the Winter Palace, which became known as the 'Palace of the Poor'. The southern wing of the Winter Palace was still being used for concerts and exhibitions. Some of the grand rooms were utilised as a cinema, or even a canteen, whilst the main halls were being used for Party meetings.[185] Rumours abounded on the issue of how the Winter Palace would function going forward, despite the clear need of the Hermitage to expand. The site continued to be used for soldiers returning from captivity in Germany throughout 1918; whilst a hostel with accommodation based on the hospital which had existed there during the First World War, provided for up to 1000 people after opening in 1919.[186]

For all the merits of the charitable exercises, the Winter Palace as a place of sanctuary certainly saw abuses, at least as far as cultural preservationists were concerned. In November 1918, the Palace was a temporary dormitory for several thousand visitors who were attending the Congress of Rural Poverty. The Peasant delegates left their mark. Palace bathtubs, rare Sevres and Oriental vases were filled with excrement, despite the lavatories and plumbing being in good order. Maxim Gorky in particular was astonished this desecration, despite his clear sympathies with the Revolution itself: "This was not done out of need …This hooliganism was an expression of the desire to break, destroy, mock and spoil beauty".[187]

Petitions received by the Hermitage in 1918 give a suitably bleak picture of need. A letter addressed to "your excellency" Count Tolstoy begs for a former member of the Chancellery (*Zakolodiaznyi*) to be taken in as a servant in order to "have a piece of daily bread for myself and my family", which was subsequently given the assent on the 16 August.[188] It was clearly not easy to get

[182] Konivets, *Zimnii dvorets: Ot imperatorskoi rezidentsii do Kavshkoly Osoaviakhima*, pp.234-235.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Meeting No.45, 9 October 1918, *Zhurnaly Zasedanii Soveta Ermitazha, (Chast' 1) 1917-1919,* pp.155-159.
[185] Matveev (ed.), *Ermitazh Uyedinonnyy ili vystavochnaya mozaika,* p.119.
[186] Murray, *Unsung hero of the Russian Avant-Garde*, p.98.
[187] Gorky in Norman, *Hermitage*, p.165.
[188] RGIA (Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv). F. 475. Op. 1. D. 873.

work at the Hermitage, even concerning these lower ranked positions. The museum's office kept a list of persons to consider as and when vacancies arose, with often years passing before an individual returned to the conversation. Letters of recommendation were often from the very highest esteem, even in the new ideological climate, with references from Princess Nadezhda Dmiterievna Beloselskaia, sister of the economist Vasilii Vorontsov and General Mikhail Skobelev.[189] The Hermitage was also viewed as something of a sanctuary for those of highly specialized or noble backgrounds. Boris Simbirskii wrote to the Hermitage with the objective of taking a post as an archaeologist, having seen his military service cut short by the demobilization of the army. A Persian specialist, Simbirskii was a collector of historical weapons and used his travels to Persia to "assemble an entire collection of weapons, characteristic of gradual development within that region". Despite having an estate in Simbirsk, he explained that "my property was destroyed by peasants… and most of my collection was gone". Other requests came from a law graduate cum art enthusiast who had toured European museums from Stockholm to Constantinople and now wished to enlist in the service as a "scientific and artistic employee). The peasant Ivan Batienko, who had served twenty-seven years in the copper pantry prior to evacuating the city in Autumn of 1917 before returning the following year for a further two years, which ended in being dismissed because of the "abolition of his duty station".[190] He returned with a petition in 1922, citing his twenty-nine years of service in the pantry.

With the situation in Petrograd still acute into the early 1920's, the trend turned towards employment at the Hermitage being even more attractive amidst the acute desperation. Whilst issued irregularly, just under half (50 of 107 in April 1922) at the Hermitage were supposed to receive rations. Hundreds of applications were received from illiterate janitors to painters who had graduated from privileged institutions. Ivan Kuznetsov asked "Please accept me as a painter and a sculptor", promising to "show up to 40 paintings at any time".[191] He indeed went on to paint portraits of Zinoviev, Lenin, Trotsky and Lunacharsky. Another trend to emerge from these years were the attempts made by servants trying desperately to organized work for their relatives, with many citing their return to the city after displacement during the Civil War, such as Zakhar Dobriakov, who could "not settle in Yaroslavl… and returned to Petrograd".[192] Personal relationships still counted for something in such petitions. S.N. Glagolev applied to be a gallery minister, but given his letter of recommendation by a fellow churchgoer of Troinitskii, who had noted his service as a "former court cook" who enjoyed a "good reputation", Glagolev was appointed as 'First Category

[189] Ibid.
[190] RGIA. F. 476. Op. 1. D. 474. L. 17.
[191] Konivets, *Zimnii dvorets: Ot imperatorskoi rezidentsii do Kavshkoly Osoaviakhima*, pp.243-244.
[192] RGIA. F. 475. Op. 1. D. 910.

Cook'.[193] Finally, the Hermitage still clearly operated as an institution of *noblesse oblige*, who took steps to ensure one of their number did not fall into destitution. Anna Vasilieva had been "left without a husband (a gallery attendant), with a baby and no means of livelihood" and as such the Hermitage stepped in to prevent "starvation for her and her child… and provide an opportunity for further existence".[194]

Nationalising cultural property

> The greatest catastrophe in the war of 1914-18 was not slaughter, but namely 'robbery', the invasion of the state into private life… The present doctrine of the world does not make me give up on what life teaches me and what will inevitably teach even those who now prefer the vision of the world from a book, instead of life. But in this case, I am ready to forget for a while my convictions and look at the tasks from a political view which I deny. And even today, from this point of view, I can't agree with the expediency of this decree.[195]
>
> My wife joined the commissariat of education and was placed in charge of museums and ancient monuments. It was her duty to fight for the monuments of the past against the conditions of civil war. It was a difficult matter. Neither the White nor the Red troops were much inclined to look out for historical estates, provincial Kremlins, or ancient churches. This led to many arguments between the war commissariat and the department of museums. The guardians of the palaces and churches accused the troops of lack of respect for culture; the military commissaries accused the guardians of preferring dead objects to living people. Formally, it looked as if I were engaged in an endless departmental quarrel with my wife. Many jokes were made about us on this score.[196]

The fate of museums and their collections were tied inherently to the continuity of preservationist commissions, whose work had begun to effectively quantify the collections across Petrograd, and the determination of Lenin's government to nationalize property in Russia. Following on from the Provisional Government's decision to declare the Winter Palace and its contents as national property in March 1917, the Gorky and then the Vereshchagin commissions worked with both the Provisional

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[193] Ibid.
[194] B.B. Piotrovsky, *Stranitsy moei zhizni*, St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1995, p.32.
[195] 25 November 1918. Benois, *Dnevnik 1918-1924*, pp.196-200.
[196] L. Trotsky, *My life: My attempt at an* autobiography, New York: Dover, 2007, p.356.

Government and the Petrograd Soviet on the protection and inventorization of artistic and historical artefacts.

After the October Revolution, more severe action was taken to deal with privately owned property, including art collections. With the nationalization of all industries taking place in December 1917, Lenin soon legislated to nationalize Tsarist palaces and monasteries. In May 1918, the Soviet of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) forbid the export of a Botticelli painting (*Madonna with child*) belonging to Princess Meshcherskaia, with the painting then requisitioned in what was one of the first acts of cultural policy concerning cultural property.[197] A resolution published in *Izvestiia* ensured that governmental approval would now be required with "the goal of ending export abroad of objects of special artistic and historical significance, which threatens the loss of cultural treasures of the people".[198] It ended the sale abroad of art without the permission of the Board on Art Affairs and the Protection of Art and Antiquities in Petrograd (Narkompros in Moscow). Furthermore, "all shops, commission offices and individuals producing art objects and antiquities for trade" were now required to register with the Board, with a non-fulfilment punishable by the "full severity of revolutionary law", which carried the potential for confiscation of property and imprisonment.[199]

Fig.17: *Madonna with child*, a painting nationalized and forbidden from export by Sovnarkom.[200]

[197] J. Cahn, *Nikolai Punin and Avant-Garde Museology (1917-1932),* University of Southern California, 1999, p.69.
[198] Izvestiia, No. 207 (24 September 1918) in I. Matsa (ed.), *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let. Materialy i dokumentatsiia*, Moscow and Leningrad: OGIZ, 1933, pp.22-23.
[199] Ibid.
[200] 'Madonna s mladentsem' in *V osobniake na Povarskoi, ili istoriia odnoi kartiny*: https://www.a-sudak.com/articles/tondo/

A further decree released on 5 October 1918 enforced mandatory registration of art and antiquities located in private hands, societies and institutions. Similar enforcements followed to nationalize scholarly collections in scientific museums and laboratories in December 1918; libraries and private archives (of writers, composers and artists) in July 1919; and property left behind by fleeing White forces (April 1920). In total, Lenin signed 32 decrees and resolutions of this kind between November 1917 and September 1921, directed at the preservation of art.

The reaction to the October decree within the Hermitage, especially from Alexandre Benois, did not hold back. Benois had joined an earlier protest on 24 April 1918 by a Hermitage colleague (Weiner) against other members of the Board for taking part in the expropriation of property.[201] Furthermore, his hatred of the abolition of private collections on a philosophical level is apparent in his reflections. Benois recognizes the genuine threat to his view of collections: "The collector, as a poet, as an artist…in the future state is simply unacceptable".[202] Yet it was in a letter to Maxim Gorky that Benois allowed his true feelings to vent.

> The same Mr Yatmanov is the author of one of the most ill-faeted decrees of our time. It was he – in conjunction with one of the members of the former collegium… in defiance of all the members of the collegium, issued a compulsory requiring the compulsory registration of all private collections of artistic objects. This measure alone characterizes the person, an absurd administrator, as harmful.
>
> I am not a socialist, for me private property is inviolable under all circumstances, and I am convinced that only this natural institution is based in all culture.[203]

The impact of Bolshevik cultural property measures began to be felt by museums and galleries quite noticeably from late 1918 onwards, with Lenin's signed decree once again given the *Izvestiia* platform to justify the first nationalization of a private art collection, that of Sergei Shchukin, in November 1918.[204] Lenin declared that it was decreed state property because of its "high artistic value" and "great national importance for the people's enlightenment". Six weeks later, two more great art collections were both nationalized from Ivan Morozov and I.S. Ostroukhov. Both Shchukin and Morozov were offered positions to act as guide curators to these now nationalized collections, which subsequently became museums of modern Western art and immediately opened for the public. This process of nationalization, creating inventories and redistributing artworks continued

[201] 24 April 1918. Benois, *Dnevnik 1918-1924*, pp.140-143.
[202] 25 November 1918. Ibid, pp.196-200.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Cahn, p.71.

throughout tsarist palaces, aristocratic estates and private museums. The collections were often disrupted and destroyed, leading to the recreation of existing collections in state museums which received an impossible influx of new acquisitions. Amongst the chief 'beneficiaries', alongside the Russian Museum, was the Hermitage, which took on huge collections of applied art from royal palaces, mansions of the nobility and over time, smaller museums, such as the Museum of the Society for the Encouragement of the Arts and the Museum of the Academy of Arts (formerly Shuvalov Palace).[205]

A significant impact of the nationalization decrees came with Hermitage's net gain of formerly private art collections. Gatchina Palace provides a fascinating case study of the demands upon preservationists in the years following 1917. Under the Provisional Government's authority, museumification of palace-collections began after the February Revolution, headed by specifically created artistic and historical commissions for Peterhof, Tsarskoe Selo and Gatchina. Gatchina was considered the jewel of this trio: the largest suburban collection of artistic and historical valuables, referred to as nothing less than a 'Second Hermitage'.[206] Given its importance, Count Valentin Zubov, a prominent art critic and historian from the Institute of History, joined a sub-commission on the protection of monuments and museums to study Gatchina.[207] His work was only superficially touched by the eventful summer of 1917 which had seen the July Days and an attempted military coup in September by General Kornilov. Zubov was able to prepare a detailed description of the art valuables in the museum. When news of the Bolshevik coup arrived, it was anticipated that work should carry on in expectation that the government would fall in due course. Zubov quickly found himself in the position of other preservationists – he was an official of the deposed administration and yet without authority from the new government. In these circumstances he drew their attention to the need to "protect the property taken from the 'despots' and now owned by the people" and put himself at the service of Lunacharsky, who formally appointed him on 26 November 1918.[208] As Gatchina Palace was seized by "invaders", Zubov's description captures the scenario perhaps even more pertinently than the accounts from the Winter Palace or the Hermitage, as it dawned upon him that "the fate of the contents of the palace depended on my behaviour":[209]

[205] Matveev (ed.), *Ermitazh "Uedinennyi", ili vystavochnaia mozaika Ermitazh*, pp.148-152.
[206] V.G. Ananiev, 'Institut iskusstv i prigorodnye dvortsy-muzei 1920-i godi' (pp.128-144), Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta, Vol.2 No.3 (*Istorii*), 2014, p.133.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Zubov, p.58. N.S. Tret'iakov, *Gatchina: Imperatorskii dvorets. Tret'e stoletie istorii*. St. Petersburg: LenArt, 1994, p. 371.
[209] Zubov, p.59.

> Two worlds, separated by more than a century, were touching on my eyes at that moment. Here, in this majestic silence, it seemed that the 18th century lived with its luxury, its carelessness, vainness, petty court intrigues, sometimes leading to palace coups and secret murders, there was a huge shaft of new times rising, ready to sweep the world, the proletariat, in intoxication triumphant his first victory.
>
> "The winners are not judged," so be it, but I will save everything that I can save from the heritage of the past, I will fight for the last chandelier, for the smallest trifle. I will pretend to be anything, accept any political tint in order to safeguard spiritual values that are more difficult to replace than people. For the next eight years, which I spent even after that in Russia, I remained faithful to this decision until the minute when I became convinced that my presence there could not be more useful. Today, after fifty years, after all the events and catastrophes experienced not only by Russia, it seems to me that: similar efforts, although laudable, are in vain. We are living through an era equal in its historical significance and its destructive power to at least the great migration of nations; God forbid that so much is preserved from past times as much from classical antiquity.

Zubov worked under some of the most bizarre circumstances imaginable to bring about the opening of the Gatchina Palace Museum. In the immediate aftermath of October, Gatchina was of central importance, briefly harbouring Alexander Kerensky as detachments of Red Guards fought with General Petr Krasnov's Cossack units. Fighting avoided the palace itself and the Cossacks were persuaded not to oppose the Red authorities on 1 November 1917 as Kerensky left Gatchina under the cover of the night.[210] As these circumstances unfolded, it was Zubov, a man of aristocratic lineage, who thanklessly attempted to manage a site which temporarily housed Cossacks "living together inside the Palace with the Bolsheviks".[211] During this time "the only significant loss of museum property" occurred. Days passed with Zubov taking the best observation point he could, relying on several supportive Red Guards whilst different groups of opportunistic burglars were "tearing seals from the doors" having "penetrated the forbidden premises".[212] Meanwhile, a Cossack defending the 'regimental treasury' which "the new guests managed to get out of him whilst he was sleeping", despite having safeguarded it under his pillow. This state of insecurity was at least

[210] Kerensky efforts at an advance on Petrograd to recapture the capital would ultimately fail and the Cossacks were promised a safe return to the Don, including General Krasnov, who would join the White Forces during the Civil War despite promising to give up his resistance to the Revolution. W. Woytinsky and G. Garvy. 'The Gatchina Campaign (for the Anniversary of the Bolshevik Coup).' (pp.260-79), *Soviet Studies*, Vol.32 No. 2 (1980).
[211] Zubov, p.60.
[212] Ibid.

remedied when Nikolai Pokrovskii has contacted the Bolsheviks and secured a visit from Grigorii Yatmanov and Mendelbaum, who appointed Zubov as Director of the Gatchina Palace Museum, giving him "relief from the nightmare". In subsequent meetings at the Winter Palace, aligned with other preservationists and Hermitage Council figures who served the interim government, "nothing prevents me from working with the Bolsheviks". Zubov stated that he was "not interested in the political question at all, and I am not a monarchist". Despite listening to several hours of Lunacharsky speaking on the "final victory of communism", Zubov reflected "we smiled back then and he probably didn't believe in what he said".

On his return to Gatchina as a representative of the 'workers and peasants government', Zubov returned to museum work. His task was not easy. His supporter in chief, Lunacharsky, "still enjoyed prestige in his party" but saw his authority "gradually lost". The local Soviet keenly sought to "seize the palace for its needs", and were ignorant of Gatchina's "artistic and historical value".

> Unpleasant confrontations often occurred between me and the Soviet. I had already asked Lunacharsky several times about the question of trust, even proposing resignation, but every time he replied that this was simply out of the question and that he fully supported me.

Following these constant disagreements, Lunacharsky sent 'a highly respected person' to ensure work could continue. This turned out to be Comrade Kimmel:

> An Estonian…a fanatic of the Communist idea, but a kind person and a pure soul, quite limited and with almost no education, he put his brains to the party literature and rushed into one thought. Everything must be socialized.[213]

When the Brest-Litovsk negotiations reopened the threat of Gatchina standing in the wake of a German offensive, a genuine threat towards the protection of treasures resurfaced.

> The same panic that a few months earlier swept the interim government now attacked the Gatchina Council, which sent me an order to pack and evaluate everything that was valuable in the palace, especially gold and silver objects. As Director of the Museum, I was directly subordinate to central government, but as a citizen I had to obey the local one. The competences of individual authorities have not yet been precisely demarcated and local councils jealously vomited their prerogatives. The order was brought to me at a time when I, anticipating possible exchanges of fire in the area, stray bullets and sudden searches, was busy bricking up the best objects in one of the mezzanine tower rooms of the Arsenal quarry… I

[213] Zubov, p.66.

> refused to fulfil the demand without the order of the people's commissioner and the imprudence to repeat what the government had said.[214]

In March 1918, Zubov was henceforth taken to Smol'nyi after being arrested on the orders of the Gatchina Soviet. Zubov was questioned over his relationship with Prince Mikhail Alexandrovich, who was living at Gatchina when the October seizure occurred and who was left in financial desperation as a result of the Revolution. The arrest was to Zubov's estimation "the trick of the local authorities, who wanted to get rid of me".[215] His interrogation was in part carried out by Moses Uritskii, described by Zubov as "a deeply honest man, devoted to fanaticism…(which) so forged his will that he knew how to be cruel".[216] When Zubov was present for the questioning of the Grand Duke, Zubov describes it as "two beings belonging to two different worlds, completely incapable of understanding each other and equally convinced of the fairness of their inherent world view, it was worthy of the ancient tragedy".[217] When Zubov himself was questioned, Uritskii was instantly puzzled as to why he would be questioning a Soviet official, even eloquently recognizing the importance of Zubov's past and future cooperation to the Soviet government.[218] Uritskii eventually resolved that the Gatchina Soviet had failed to bring "anything serious" against Zubov. Nevertheless, Zubov had "made (himself) unpopular" and Uritskii was forced to give them "a little satisfaction". He was unwilling to consider interfering in the "justice of the workers and peasants authorities", a clear demonstration that "Lunacharsky does not have real authority".[219] Zubov was not to return to Gatchina.

Zubov was retained in an official capacity and transferred to Moscow. Despite repeated arrests in the coming years, he continued to examine suburban palace-museums, namely Pavlovsk in 1918-22. Institute academics continued to work on museum construction within palaces, without a "unity of understanding" as to what should be shown.[220] The use of a sociological method began to be applied in the early 1920's, as it was elsewhere in the humanities, without a clear outline and reflected an attempt at a "declaration of loyalty".[221] By approaching art sociologically, museum specialists could no longer "bypass the question of everyday life". Whilst the initial emphasis of this shift took place within central historic and domestic museums, there was a definite impact for those working on palace-museums.[222] But whilst F.I. Schmidt asserted that in Peterhof it was necessary to

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[214] Ibid, p.55.
[215] Ibid, p.69.
[216] Ibid, p.71.
[217] Ibid, p.73.
[218] Ibid, p.74.
[219] Ibid, p.74.
[220] Ananiev, p.134.
[221] Ibid.
[222] Ibid.

create 'artificial ensembles' to establish exposition narratives whilst V.M. Kremkova focused on the analysis of historical materials to form the basis for new exposures. V.P. Briullov derided the "fascination with economic conditions in the suburbs", which "removed an appropriate balance".[223]

At the same time that a greater concern was beginning to be shown for achieving a form of academic formalism, Zubov's Institute of History struggled to find a departmental home as 'new institutions that played a significant role in the intellectual life of the era' were created, pushing the Institute towards specialising on the visual arts. Nevertheless, Zubov remained an impassioned proponent for the protection of cultural property and his understanding of the restoration debate remained perceptive. Zubov, as well as Alexander Benois, keenly defended previously private collections as inviolable entities. Both expressed grievances regarding the turn away from specialist protection and restoration after 1920.

> In the summer of 1922, a sharp conflict arose between me and some of my Hermitage colleagues. It was a matter of principle: should palaces be considered as inviolable cultural and historical monuments, where each item has its own place certified by (its distinct) inventory, or are they just a repository from which central museums can draw upon.[224]

Zubov's recorded reflections from the time echo an active opposition towards "incompetent interference of the administrative authorities in the activities of museums". This meant a categoric rejection of "any outside organizations in the palace".[225]A prime example of the 'outside authority' and its failing approach to protecting cultural property came in the form of an anecdote regarding a statue of *Hypnos* at Pavlovsk Palace.

> The Hermitage requested (the statue) on the authority of the Petrograd scientific department of the Commissariat of Education, which was non-academic and had exclusively administrative functions. Without warning, the Director of the Palace Museum (Taleporovskii) sent his men with a truck to pick the statue up with a sack.[226]

In Benois' dealings with the Gatchina Estate, he had recognized significant failings earlier in 1920.

> When I arrived in Gatchina last night I had a conversation with Makarov (the Palace Director). He is alarmed by Yatmanov's demand to appear in front him. He is sure that this is a consequence of the Isakov Commission, which came to Gatchina on three occasions. Isakov

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[223] Ibid.
[224] Zubov, p.111.
[225] V.A. Semenov, 'Pervyi direktor. Graf Valentin Platonovich Zubov: stranitsy biografii': http://gatchinapalace.ru/m/special/zubov_article_semenova.php#_edn12
[226] Ibid.

> created some kind of inspector's position at the museum and he was given help by lawful detectives and fiscal agents: Fandikov, in charge of profitability, Gagarin and someone else. Here in Gatchina, he behaved arrogantly and expressed an extremely negative attitude towards the creation of the portrait museum (Isakov was always hostile towards my outgoing projects…she is always hurt by others due to her absolute lack of talent). Since this would prevent the use of the Arsenal Square, he expressed discontent against the upper floor which Makarov had given for museum workers and not the Nepmen (who have taken the entire lower floor) and I think that here the envy and frustration of Isakov's psychology could be what brought me here. Even Makarov will suffer for this.[227]

Lunacharsky concurred, condemning the "barbarous attitude" shown in the use of the Gatchina Palace and promising to petition the Petrograd authorities to correct the mistake.[228]

Whilst the Hermitage continually showed what appears to be genuine concern for the integrity of the Gatchina and other palace collections, but it must also be recognised that Hermitage gained a significant level of prestige from their relationship and furthermore, were criticised for their behaviour towards smaller museums. During Zubov's work at the Pavlovsk Palace, he acted to restore the historical display of paintings, believing that "suburban palaces represent a unique phenomenon in the cultural life of Russia and therefore must remain intact". In particular, Zubov referred to the painting *Madonna Bronzino*, which when situated in Maria Fedorovna's apartments would perfectly illustrate her tastes, but instead was transferred into the Hermitage collection.

> I have repeatedly (in print and private speeches) had the occasion to express my point of view on the Hermitage's predatory policy regarding smaller museum units and on the very significance of the latter (Hermitage) in the overall state of our museums. But against persistence and ill will, feeling physical strength behind oneself, it is impossible to fight by persuasion, ideas about the artistic appearance of the era.[229]

Zubov was certainly not alone in his disdain. Commenting in 1923, the guardian of the Pavlovsk Palace Museum, V.N. Taleporovskii asked to be taken on record as he attacked the Hermitage for "robbing palaces", as the Hermitage prepared to transfer a collection of ancient sculptures in 1922.[230]

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[227] 25 June 1924 (Note 35). Benois, *Dnevnik 1918-1924*, p.757.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Semenov, 'Pervyi direktor. Graf Valentin Platonovich Zubov: stranitsy biografii'.
[230] Meeting No. 172, 24 January 1922. M. Piotrovsky (ed.), *Zhurnaly Zasedanii Soveta Ermitazha, (Chast' 2) 1920-1926,* St. Petersburg: State Hermitage Museum, 2009, pp.289-292.

> It is absolutely clear that the collection of ancient art: statues, Roman portraits, busts and vases…is organically connected with the foundation of the palace, it is not only an indivisible, integral complex with Pavlovsk, but also as historical material from the age of Paul I, and it is beyond comparison…When the Pavlovsk Palace Museum is being created, discarding the random accretions of later years, it is possible to create the only one of its kind in the world, without the dismemberment of the treasures of Pavlovsk, without the removal of objects from Pavlovsk.[231]

The Hermitage and the Russian Museum both had internal divisions over preservation of such collections. Benois played a leading role. On one hand his attitude contained reservations: "In each of the palace-museums there are parts, sometimes very significant, in which it is most important to keep everything in the form in which it once was…at the moment of revolution".[232] On the other hand, he appeared to be increasingly comfortable with the argument that "historical authenticity should be abandoned". Benois supported the notion that "things of world significance" should be concentrated in central museums in order to "reveal the course of history of art on a global scale with the best possible fullness and best examples".

Suburban palace-museums therefore functioned as a source of replenishment for the collections of both the Hermitage and the Russian Museum. Gatchina certainly saw a significant number of rare, museum quality works transferred to the Hermitage, leaving it to primarily operate as an artistic display for public viewing. The conflicted attitudes of men like Alexander Benois were assuaged by the knowledge that the collections of palaces like the Stroganov, Shuvalov, Iusupov, Bobrinskii and Sheremetev were converted into 'mini-museums' that would keep the bulk of their artworks in-situ.[233] The Hermitage Council were also adamant that restoration "can only take place under the direct control of the Hermitage", which led to the calls to urgently increase the number of restoration staff.[234] Therefore the relationship between palace-museums and the Hermitage in the early 1920's provides clear evidence of a mutually beneficial outcome, at least between Narkompros and the Hermitage. The Hermitage were keen to establish an unrivalled regional (if not national) authority and expertise, the palaces themselves unable to adequately preserve or manage themselves, and central authorities more than happy to progress towards centralized administration. Hermitage Council meetings record a request for the Hermitage to "take over the

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[231] AGRM (Arkhiv gosudarstvennogo russkogo muzeia). F. 137, Op. 1, D. 2263, L. 13 in Semenov, 'Pervyi direktor. Graf Valentin Platonovich Zubov: stranitsy biografii'.
[232] Benois in Semenov, 'Pervyi direktor. Graf Valentin Platonovich Zubov: stranitsy biografii'.
[233] Norman, p.168.
[234] Meeting No.68, 5 March 1919 and No.96, 3 September 1919. *Zhurnaly Zasedanii Soveta Ermitazha, (Chast' 1) 1917-1919,* pp.323-328; pp.484-487.

administration of the museum's collections" at the Stroganov Palace, with Benois asked to take a lead on the issue, whilst the Iusupov Palace was given help to prepare an excursion programme.[235]

In years to follow, Palace Museums, such as the Stroganov and the Stieglitz in 1923 would be rescheduled as 'branches' of the Hermitage. Later, between 1925 and 1930, palace museums, were successively closed down and the collections passed to the administration of the Museum Fund (formerly the Collegium on Museum Affairs).[236] Specialist museums, such as the Stieglitz, followed suit in closing to allow collections to be absorbed elsewhere before formal liquidation of the 'first Hermitage branch' a few years later. Similar outcomes took place at the museums in the Academy of Science, the Society for the Encouragement of the Arts and the Archaeological Society.[237] The Hermitage and the Russian Museum were now free to take their pick of items in store, with one of the two large depots conveniently stationed in the Hermitage itself.[238] The closure of smaller institutions was hastened predominantly by reasoning related to the political incentives of centralization, with fewer, larger museums obviously a welcome efficiency for a state looking to implement more centralized cultural control in the late 1920's, overcoming the danger of "quirky individualistic institutions".[239]

Contentious displays

The liquidation of independent cultural institutions and implementing centralized control had, in essence, started far earlier in the decade and the Hermitage recognized the need to carefully manoeuvre through challenging waters. Following a drought in 1920, the first major challenge perhaps came in the form of famine, which followed the six million deaths which had already amounted from the war and civil war. The ground work to raise capital for state expenditure from Russia's treasures had already been created via the *Sovnarkom* decree on 3 February 1920. The State Treasury for the Storage of Valuables (*Gokhran*) was created with the mandate for the "centralization, storage and accountability for all the valuables of (Soviet Russia)" including ingots of

[235] Meeting No.96, 3 September 1919; and No.99, 24 September 1919. Ibid, pp.323-328; pp.498-501.
[236] The 'State Museum Fund' decreed State domain over valued historical and cultural artefacts, including those in museums, first discussed conceptually by F Schmitt in April 1919, as including the total possessions of state museums in the Soviet Union. This operated as a subdivision of Glavnauka from 1921. F.D. Riabchikova, 'Gosudarstvennyi muzeinyi fond: vozniknoveniei osmyslenie poniatiia (1918–1991 gg.)' (pp.39-54). *Voprosy muzeologii*, Vol.9 No.1, 2018, pp.39-43.
[237] 'History of the Museum of Applied Art': http://www.stieglitzmuseum.ru/en/museum.htm
[238] Norman, p.168.
[239] Ibid, p.169.

gold, diamonds, precious stones and pearls.[240] Albeit through ambiguous language, "religious communities" were initially given an exemptions "like objects of worship", in part because of Lenin's own fear of the wrath of the peasantry, who remained more loyal to the Church.

The Central Committee (VTsIK) issued a decree on 23 February 1922 to force the Church to hand over objects containing jewels and precious metals to exchange for hard currency and therefore foreign food purchases.[241] Timing here was pivotal. Whilst this was still a dire period for Volga peasants, who continued to endure hunger and bitter winter conditions, the American Relief Administration shipments to Russian ports had slowed down at the request of the Soviet government. February 1922 appears to have been the month whereby the imperial Russian gold reserves ran out, whilst authorization for Soviet purchasing agents abroad was temporarily revoked. Whilst Gokhran's work carried out under relative discretion and was guarded by Red Army supervision, the wider propaganda ambition resolved that was an act of popular outrage at the Church's indifference to the suffering of famine victims. In reality, Trotsky in particular was incensed by the scale of resistance to confiscation, encouraging the Politburo resolution to take a tougher line, including the issuance of threats to leading clergymen. In Petrograd, Metropolitan Benjamin (like Patriarch Tikhon in Moscow) cooperated in handing over valuables, having reached an agreement whereby parishioners could donate their possessions, substituting for church property during the relief campaign.[242] This was challenged from both sides. Party leaders challenged this approach and continued with confiscations, whilst protests erupted in response to those 'stealing' from churches. A number of priests broke ranks with other clergymen to force the church to hand over property and wrest control from Patriarch Tikhon. Benjamin excommunicated those involved, enraging the Soviet authorities, and subsequently this brought about his arrest for counter-revolutionary activity. Benjamin was tried, found guilty and executed on the eastern outskirts of Petrograd on the night of 12-13 August 1922.[243]

Those inside the Hermitage had already reacted with distaste towards the "alienation of cultural treasures", with Benois glibly dismissing the plan to sell Church treasures on the basis that the "Western proletariat will not want to play the role of usurer in relation to the plight of their

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[240] A decree '*On the compilation of state fund of valuables for foreign trade'* in February 1921 further extended the clear planning towards generating income from Russia's cultural property at a time of immense difficulty. S. McMeekin, *History's greatest heist: The Looting of Russia by the Bolsheviks,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009, p.63.

[241] *Vserossiiskii Tsentral'nyi Ispolnitel'nyi Komitet* was the highest legislative body in the early Soviet Union.

[242] The Church were prevented from distributing their food and money in the relief effort and instead anything raised was to be passed through *Pomgol* (an abbreviation of Pomoshch' golodayushchim, or relief for the starving), the government hunger relief committee. McMeekin, p.78.

[243] *Zhurnaly Zasedanii Soveta Ermitazha, (Chast' 2) 1920-1926*, p.11.

Russian brothers".[244] On 27 February, L.A. Il'in, who was in charge of restoration at the museum, addressed the Hermitage Council with a proposal to convene a special commission to supervise seizures from churches. On 10 April, the authorities of Petrograd adopted a resolution on the compulsory supervision by museums of the work of the commissions on the removal of valuables from churches, whilst the Hermitage specifically were assigned the role of a repository of church objects of artistic significance. From 12 April 1922 onwards art objects requisitioned in the churches of Petrograd and the surrounding district were transferred to the museum for temporary storage.[245] Despite constant oversight by the museum staff, many violations were suffered. Leonid Matsulevich, an art-historian and archaeologist on the Hermitage Council, reported on the manner by which religious artefacts were confiscated, dwelling on an example of a chalice which had been "deliberately broken by sharp tools".[246] Over the course of the campaign run by the government's hunger relief committee (*Pomgol*), over 3000 items were received by the Hermitage.[247]

An exhibition of Church valuables was arranged for 5 November 1922, which the council decided to restrict to a ticket only event for 40-60 people.[248] The guide to the exhibition began with the preface:

> The church concentrated in itself the greatest achievements of the human spirit. The church and its art were one of the main centres of the spiritual and artistic aspirations of the people and the epoch.[249]

Hosted across seven rooms on the third floor of the Old Hermitage, the exhibition took place at the height of the anti-religious campaign, and its popularity meant that the display continued until June 1924.

The campaign of 1922 to seize Church valuables may have appeared to work in a mutually beneficial relationship with the state, but the wider picture clarifies in a far more disturbing reality for the Hermitage. Proving that the Hermitage was not an exceptional case, Gokhran were sent to the Hermitage to select items for foreign sale. Troinitskii approached Lunacharsky for defence to no avail, with one of his likely concerns being the likelihood of poor value received in return for the artefacts sold, as well as the lack of information provided on the prospective owners.[250] Immediately

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[244] 3 August 1921. Benois, *Dnevnik 1918-1924*, pp.239-247.
[245] Meeting No.228, 24 April 1922. *Zhurnaly Zasedanii Soveta Ermitazha, (Chast' 2) 1920-1926*, pp.450-451.
[246] Meeting No.233, 10 July 1922; and No.234, 17 July 1922, Ibid, pp.464-465; pp.466-468.
[247] Ibid, p.8.
[248] Meeting No.241, 16 October 1922, Ibid, pp.485-487.
[249] Ibid, p.11.
[250] E. Solomakha, 'Soviet Museums and the First Five Year Plan', *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 43, No.1-4 2009, p.136.

300 gold and 2000 silver items were selected and transferred to Gokhran. Sales did not resolve the financial problems of the museum, with the Hermitage receiving roughly a half of what it expected.[251] Ineffective sales meant that the Hermitage continued to press for revenue by renting out buildings, selling publications and charging entrance fees.

The Hermitage may have had to deal with contentious displays of an anti-religious character in 1922, but this was far from the only exhibition of challenge as the museum continued to adapt to demand. From 1 December 1922, the Historical Rooms which had been the former living quarters of Alexander II and Nicholas II opened, whilst the first-floor rooms of Nicholas I opened in 1925 following restoration. Owing to Vereshchagin, the idea had been present since the February Revolution, despite the continuing strife in the palace following October. In the immediate aftermath, a tour of these rooms moved Benois to reflect such hopes in his diary:

> My hopes of creating a great museum in the Winter Palace, more precisely of a number of historical and domestic museums that would be known as a continuation of the Hermitage, came to life. However, Vereshchagin disappointed me. He suddenly spoke of the need to provide a significant part of the palace to different organizations! Oh, what miracles could have been done if there were not these bureaucratic souls, always thinking about how to please the authorities.[252]

Nevertheless, furnishings were restored, whilst the apartments were renovated to match the conditions befitting the former rulers, with the exception of jewels which had been removed and sent to Moscow. Nikolai Vasiliev was appointed as Head of the Rooms having been Commissioner for the Inspection of Museums and the Preservation of Art and Antiquities, and indeed, in charge of the Palace of the Arts. Ultimately, he and the rooms were "subordinate to the State Hermitage and there is no independent management, with all orders received from the Director of the State Hermitage".[253] Initially, those visiting were allowed into the rooms only on Thursdays and by appointment and were carefully led by a guide who provided a detailed historical explanation. But it soon became clear that the allocations were not sufficient to meet the public demand. The first December attendance had been 820 people, but in each of the following three months it reached over 3000.[254] Such was the unexpected interest, opening hours were extended to three days, whilst the 'Rules for Visiting the Historical Rooms' were soon published, advising visitors that spitting and smoking were prohibited, in an effort to control the intake. Complaints arose from the Historical

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[251] Ibid.
[252] Konivets, *Zimnii dvorets: Ot imperatorskoi rezidentsii do Kavshkoly Osoaviakhima*, p.274.
[253] *Kharakteristika i struktura muzeia istoricheskikh komnat pri byvshem Zimnem dvortse* in Ibid, p.277.
[254] Ibid, p.278.

Rooms staff when excursions were now in such number that they had to "clean, wash and scrape all museum objects from dust". By August 1923, the Hermitage's Deputy Director, Aleksei Il'in was petitioned by Vasiliev to increase the fee (40 to 75 roubles) to reduce attendance, but it did not affect the numbers of curious visitors. By the end of 1925, numbers of visitors to the rooms had reached a peak of 18,545 and increasingly it became a fixture for educational, institutional and Red Army excursions. Records on the visiting parties show the range of people entering the Historical Rooms: the All-Union State Trust for the processing of agricultural products (*Mosselprom*), the Putilov Plant (*Krasnyi Putilovets*), the Cardboard Factory, Textile and Transport Workers and the Herzen Institute. Meanwhile the rooms were central to those wishing to study the history of the Winter Palace, with the Old Petersburg Society initially leading a series of lectures from 1923.

Excursions through the Historical Rooms provided a difficult quandary, ideologically speaking, and reactions to the apartments polarized the visiting public. A former member of the State Duma, Vasili Shul'gin, visited Leningrad illegally in January 1925 and recorded his experience, first noticing the evident popularity of the rooms: "here, on the contrary (to the Museum of the Revolution) there were a lot of people".[255] Preparations were made for the tour in which visitors were given a pair of slippers to go over their outdoor shoes and guides were placed to ensure that one could speak whilst the other could ensure nothing was stolen. Aside from the 'cold' manner of explanations, Shul'gin's reflections focused on the former circumstances of the fallen sovereigns.

> These rooms, which indicated the modest personal life of the sovereigns produced quite a sensation among the handful of people around us. No particularly clear interjections were made, the meaning of which was, however, obvious: they did not expect it. ... We entered the private chambers of the last Sovereign. They are brutally protected by his murderers with the utmost care. And the attention of a handful of people somehow increased, sharpened. They became even quieter, more impressionable. The tragedy of the recent martyrdom breezed in these rooms.
>
> There are no particularly valuable things in the chambers of Nicholas II and Alexandra Fedorovna: all these are intimate things that have been of value only insofar as they were dear to them…So the young lady murmured in an icy stream.
>
> There was something very heavy in finding these intimate rooms, so to speak, before the grave, still fresh. The Russian soul, sensitive to these kinds of things, understands this.[256]

[255] Ibid, p.280.
[256] Shul'gin in Ibid, p.11.

The level of sympathy demonstrated by Shul'gin was not atypical of visitor reaction and clearly this would be a factor in the eventual closure of the rooms, despite other factors being cited. In Konivets' reading of the Historical Rooms, "if someone had hoped to show the home of the tyrants and cause revolutionary hatred of the former oppressors…this was not achieved".[257] The intimate spaces of the former Tsarist apartments, coupled with the cold delivery of guides appeared to allow a degree of pity for the now defeated enemy. A commission, including Troinitskii, Benois, Kaplan (Director of the Museum of the Revolution) and Yatmanov, inspected the exposition and concluded that the rooms lacked museum value and could be removed from public display. Troinitskii's report on the matter is evidence that he was already under pressure to "demonstrate loyalty to the authorities and show that he is in step with the times" and show a willingness to prioritise "taking care of the ideological education of the masses".[258] Troinitskii judged that the rooms had "no historical" meaning and were an apparent exercise in bad taste, free of educational worth.

> The cultural-historical and agitational significance of these rooms, even with a very skilful display of them, is insignificant at best and most likely even has a negative character. The masses go into them, driven by ordinary curiosity, and there is no way for 40-50 minutes, during which a group of 30 people or very unprepared visitors passes over 30 rooms, to clearly show or explain all the negative sides of these premises, the characteristic decadence enjoyed by representatives of the fallen regime. The bad taste of the situation is indicative only for people of a certain level of development, who can not only see but compare essentially and draw conclusions. For the overwhelming majority of visitors, the historic rooms will not only reveal their bourgeois misery, but dazzle with the glitter of gilding, the richness of decoration and the luxury of carpets and fabrics.[259]

Troinitskii's urgency, aside from the ideological pressure, was also practical given the assertive ambitions of the Museum of the Revolution who had appealed to the Leningrad Glavnauka for the Nicholas II apartments to be transferred to them.[260] Clearly Troinitskii wanted rooms free for Hermitage displays. Economic imperative also gave further reasoning given the expense of maintenance, but this factor is perhaps cancelled out by the disproportionate revenue over Hermitage ticket sales. The Leningrad Glavnauka ordered the closure of the rooms on 26 July 1926, with the Hermitage Council resolving to close them by 2 August, with the exception of Nicholas I's quarters. The reaction to the closure in *Leningradskaia Pravda*, if indeed it can be attributed to

[257] Ibid, p.283.
[258] Ibid, p.284.
[259] Ibid.
[260] Glavnauka was the state body within the Commissariat for Education (*Narkompros*) which managed scientific research institutions, including museums.

ideological factors, provides interesting reading. Some complaints believed it spoke of a dubious silence on behalf of royalist academics.

> It makes me seriously think that the initiator of the closing of the rooms is the notorious Professor Platonov. Can he be objective in this matter? He who sang the praises of the House of Romanov in 1913! [261]

Whilst others recognized their visit to the historical rooms as central to their growing sense of ideological consciousness. Comrade Raevskii, a demobilized sailor recalled his visit in 1922.

> I had to visit these rooms with a group of young sailors, and they were all very angry, seeing how the last national bloodsucker lived with all of his hangers on…They assured me that when they were replaced by a new generation of Red Fleet ranks, they would take them into these rooms with their first duty so that they, like us in military service would hold the rifle in their hands…This (closure) is really a bungling by learned men.

Another worker named Gobulev summarised the discontent.

> For three years, I saw first-hand the thirst with which the newly arrived Rabfak workers inspected the rooms of the Tsar. This is the place where I felt my self-consciousness growing, the place where even greater hatred for the past took root in me.[262]

The statements published reflected the complex anger espoused by the aforementioned sailor and worker, whilst Leningrad journalists who respected the academic exercise of the restoration process in the historical rooms and other palaces (such as the Yusupov) saw it as ensuring a fuller understanding of the past.

> There is an intellectual fawning that happens (when seeing the palaces)…That's beautiful! That's elegant…Here is culture!...Otherwise the sightseeing worker looks at this 'sweet life'. Eyes flash with a strong burning hatred, often a wrinkle strains on the forehead. It is clear why the sightseer is darkened by these memories. He cannot look coolly at the mausoleums of the dead capitalist ghouls. It is there you can teach and learn of the great and all-consuming hatred.[263]

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[261] Ibid.
[262] *Rabfak* refers to higher education institutions for workers. Ibid, p.286.
[263] P. Kudelli, *Head of Leningrad Istpart* in E.A. Ignatova, *Zapiski o Peterburge: Zhizneopisanie goroda so vremeni ego osnovaniia do 40-x godov XX veka*, St. Petersburg: Amfora, 2005, p.634.

The protestations of readers and even Leningrad Istpart were in vain and the decision to close the rooms was upheld.[264] The apartments of Nicholas II were dismantled and furniture sold or transferred, including respiratory equipment to the Lesgaft Institute for scientific purposes. The apartments of Nicholas I and Alexander II ceased to resemble their previous form. Istpart reacted with disbelief that such a disruption in the battle for historical consciousness would be allowed to happen, believing that "with skilful explanation", the Historical Rooms would "continue to be of great benefit in strengthening revolutionary consciousness amongst the more backward and the working class youth. After visiting the Museum of the Revolution, it is necessary to give the visitor a contrasting impression, which is given by the royal rooms".[265]

*

The Museum of the Revolution (GMR) presented a significant challenge to the Hermitage, not only in regards to the obvious underlying ideological message being sent by its presence, but equally through the practicality of two museums jostling for the right to expand. Following its opening on 11 January 1920, the museum angled to contain a rich exposition about the "pioneers of the revolution, who were conducting an underground struggle against the oppressors who had twisted the working class in the era of autocracy…in the former quarters of bloody emperors…at the tables where they may have signed death sentences".[266] The museum's works would stand as a testament to the "martyrs of the revolution" with their portraits acting as "an eternal reminder of retribution". The museum had been established by decree of the Petrograd Soviet and had powerful political backers, not least Grigorii Zinoviev, who lauded the museum's intended function to show workers and peasants how to honour the memory of revolutionaries, whilst reconciling the masses with the intelligentsia. Zinoviev's motives for the function of the museum intentionally put the GMR at odds with the Hermitage and its traditions.

The Hermitage Council never reconciled to this arrangement and to their mind, the GMR was an amateurish imposter in the Winter Palace right from its opening in January 1920. As early as April, the Hermitage Council had privately discussed their reservations, with Benois noting that he had "insisted on the need to smoke out the Museum of the Revolution from the Winter".[267] Benois complained within his diary that the "museum has grown into several halls and if we do not remove it in time, the authorities will probably get used to considering it the Winter Palace Museum of the

[264] The Commission on the History of the October Revolution and Communist Party (*Istpart*), established in 1920, were tasked with coordinating the history of the revolution. Corney, 'Rethinking a Great Event', p.400.
[265] Ibid.
[266] Konivets, *Zimnii dvorets: Ot imperatorskoi rezidentsii do Kavshkoly Osoaviakhima*, p.256.
[267] 28 April 1923. Benois, *Dnevnik 1918-1924*, pp.400-403.

Revolution. And then we will be threatened with embarrassment and eviction on their part, all the more likely since Shchegolev's rogues have probably already managed to establish warm relations with the local proletariat".[268] Benois' diary, whilst often tongue in cheek, was no doubt observant of what must have seemed darkly farcical from his perspective. As the "non-partisan" GMR was being established, Bolsheviks, often youths, were given immediately positions of authority despite evidence lack of experience, whilst museum staff attempted to go about their duties under watch.[269] Even the first director of the museum, Mikhail Kaplan, complained about their presence, judging that the "Bolsheviki do not care about merit…their chief concern is a membership card".[270]

In addition to large exhibition halls, more than half a dozen rooms in the Winter Palace were provided by the GMR as well as domestic staff, funds and other services. To further aggravate the Hermitage, no clear dividing line was set between the museums in terms of possessions, which did not satisfy the Council at all. Delimitation was not a significant problem until 1926 when the Hermitage reviewed the areas occupied by both museums to assess the costs of maintenance. The following exchange, in which Kaplan agrees to pay a lesser share once they had "the opportunity to petition the People's Commissariat of Education for this money", appears typical of the passively aggressive, pernickety correspondence between the Hermitage and the GMR.[271] Unhappy with the 1.5:1 ratio of payment, Kaplan offered to have the roof measured more accurately to determine the areas taken up by both museums, whilst the GMR refused to pay for janitors who cleaned the yards opposite the palace. Aware of the arguments over money, the head of Glavnauka was forced to intervene to demand utility payments from the GMR. A delimitation agreement was signed on 27 December 1926, but only following tense negotiations and the mediation of an independent architect (A.V. Sivkov). Following the closure of the Historic Rooms, the Rotunda which formerly housed the *White Terror* exhibition now came under Hermitage control, effectively in exchange for the 'diamond pantry'. The Hermitage were now prevented from using a series of staircases, unless in case of fire. But the most significant dispute came with the Hermitage demand to have the Neva Enfilade transferred to them given that the three halls of the GMR were said to "violate the proper circulation of visitors and prevent the correct use of the Jordan entrance".[272] Kaplan put up significant opposition, arguing later that "the exchange of territory was recognized as impossible", citing the expectation that the "numbers of visitors to the museum will increase significantly by the

[268] Pavel Shchegolev was one of the founding members of the museum, and the Petrograd Historical and Revolutionary Archive. Ibid.
[269] E.N. Rafienko, 'Istoriko-revoliutsionnye muzei i istoricheskaia nauka v 1920-e gg.', *Muzeevedenie. Iz istorii okhrany i ispol'zovaniia kul'turnogo naslediia RSFSR*, St. Petersburg, 1987.
[270] E. Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia*, London, 1925, Chapter XIII.
[271] Konivets, *Zimnii dvorets: Ot imperatorskoi rezidentsii do Kavshkoly Osoaviakhima*, pp.257-258.
[272] TSGALI (Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva Sankt-Peterburga), F.235, Op.1, D.19.

10th anniversary of the revolution".[273] Following the agreement, as if in confirmation of their distinction, new GMR exhibitions were opened on the *Imperialist War* and *February Days*, displaying German cannons, gasmasks and pistols in the Jordan lobby. Relations had soured to the extent that when Kaplan requested the transfer of the Great Church for use as a lecture hall, the Hermitage simply left the request "without consequences". The GMR was in no hurry to either pay for outstanding maintenance expenses, or indeed part with its 'territories'. The Jordan staircase and lobby remained an unresolved issue, with the GMR citing exhibitions for anniversary events. The staircase - clearly at odds with the museum - was renamed the Lenin staircase before it became the Excursion staircase.

At this stage, bogged down with litigation which triangulated between the Hermitage, the GMR and the Leningrad Soviet, the Museum of the Revolution were at the height of their own ambition. Deputy Director Shulkhov sought to dedicate a branch to the revolutionary youth movement in the Winter Palace in conjunction with the regional executive and the Komsomol. The new museum would occupy rooms on the third floor, despite the apparent lack of space. The Hermitage representative during planning meetings in 1931, Iosif Orbeli, judged that it was "inappropriate to place the youth museum on the third floor", leading a compromised arrangement on the first floor, with a completion date set for 1 March 1938.[274] In actual fact the GMR turned away from the plan and used their own premises for the newly entitled All-Union Museum of Leningrad Komsomol, opening in time for the 15th anniversary of the Leningrad Komsomol in 1932 and proudly lauding its status as the first museum in the USSR dedicated to the communist youth movement and their part in "socialist construction". The Museum of the Revolution joined the many academic and cultural institutions who were brought to heel during the mid-1930s. Demands were made to change exhibition practices, in line with Stalinist orthodoxy. After two temporary closures for restructuring, the museum declined in status, certainly in its remaining years within the Winter Palace.

In 1940-41, following years of litigation obstacles, the Hermitage returned with plans outlined regarding "transferring the premises of the Museum of the Revolution (located between the Jordan and Children's entrances) to the State Hermitage" sent to Leningrad Soviet (*Lensovet*) by the GMR.[275] They feared the transfer would "derail the normal operation of the Museum of the Revolution" because closing the Jordan staircase meant closing the closure of their school room, the carpentry facilities and the restrooms. GMR Director Shudenko professed that "with all my ardent

[273] Ibid.
[274] Konivets, *Zimnii dvorets: Ot imperatorskoi rezidentsii do Kavshkoly Osoaviakhima*, p.263.
[275] TsGALI, F.235, Op.1, D.19.

desire to help the Hermitage, I cannot make the concessions to the area without causing serious damage to the Museum of the Revolution" and the issue was pushed aside until when the GMR left the premises formally in 1947.[276] The project to place revolutionary history at the centre of the country's greatest museum and to have a lasting reminder of the October Revolution at the site of its victory had ended within two decades.

'Moscow is now undoubtedly the centre of the country's artistic life'

The greatest challenge to the integrity of the Hermitage's collection and status outright remained the threat of the desire by Moscow to push ahead with a magnetic cultural revolution which would pull all valuables towards the new capital. The Hermitage Council had spent a significant proportion of their energies throughout the post-revolutionary years trying to ensure the safety of their collections as part of the overall goal to secure their return without incurring damage or losses. The most traumatic experiences had occurred in November and December 1918, when newspaper reports suggesting that crates had been opened with a view to their display in Moscow museums. Worse news followed with reports that their boxes "were dumped in disarray and many of them damaged" during the siege against the Kremlin.[277] The Council protested forcefully against the "intrusion of outsiders to the Hermitage and its interests" on hearing rumours of an "alleged unpacking of Hermitage boxes".[278] Word spread that Red Army soldiers had ordered the movement of boxes without control by 'competent persons' and certainly "without the integrity that would be required for an institution with an international standing". Eleven senior keepers, alongside members of the cultural preservationist circles such as Gorky, had written to Lenin "extremely concerned at the danger threatening the treasures of the Hermitage, Russian Museum and the Academy of Arts", pleading to hasten the safe return of the items to Petrograd.[279] The affair had been traumatic enough to bring Lunacharsky to offer his resignation, which was effectively refused, but it did clearly count against his authority in the coming years and without doubt harmed efforts to defend Petrograd's cultural autonomy.

The crisis ended without the disastrous consequences which had been feared in Petrograd. Moving the collection proved impossible due to the lack of transport and soon enough Moscow's

[276] Ibid, D.30.
[277] Meeting No.55, 5 December 1918; and No.56, 6 December 1918. *Zhurnaly Zasedanii Soveta Ermitazha, (Chast' 1) 1917-1919,* pp.222-224; pp.225-227.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Norman, p.166.

challenge to Hermitage authority continued in May 1919. The Life of Art (*Zhizn' iskusstva*), a Petrograd newspaper formed in 1918, reported that Trotskaia was leading renewed attempts to use the Hermitage collections there to create a Museum of Western Art.[280] Troinitskii, considered "any attempts to seize Hermitage property to be unacceptable" and that the Council should not voluntarily agree to the opening of their artefacts. Nevertheless, the Hermitage leadership recognized the difficulty of their position and made it clear that should any exhibition take place with their artefacts, it would be with the involvement of "restoration masters from the Hermitage". Without their knowledge and care, "the greatest danger to irreplaceable and mostly unique world artistic monuments" could occur.

The affair continued to be the centre of an emerging conflict which carried the undertones of a much greater struggle, related to the subordination of the intelligentsia to the authority of the party and therefore the state. The Collegium for Museums and the Protection of Monuments of Art and Antiquities established a commission to "delimit the range of activities of the Hermitage and the newly formed Moscow Museum of Western Art", which Troinitskii recognized as a method by which Hermitage treasures could be unpacked and reallocated in Moscow.[281] Yatmanov's response on 2 June 1919 was uncompromising, resolving that: "all of the staff of the Hermitage are at the disposal of the Department for Museum Affairs and the protection of monuments of art and antiquity", furthermore attacking "the incompetence of the Director of the Hermitage to determine the duties of his subordinates". Yatmanov gave little indication that he was willing to negotiate and continued to demand that artworks be ceded to Moscow, highlighting a list compiled by Muratov.[282] The best that Troinitskii could muster was to respond with a counter demand for the inclusion of material from country palaces in the collection taken to Moscow, in order to reduce the losses from the Hermitage itself.[283] He was told that the Hermitage could not presume to dictate the conditions for exhibitions in a foreign city, and furthermore, the Moscow Museum Affairs Department had resolved "not to postpone this issue anymore" given that for Trotskaia, it was "a matter of paramount importance in order to familiarize the masses with the Hermitage masterpieces".[284] Hermitage received the following reassurance veiled in an assertion of Moscow's authority:

> The Hermitage Council has nothing to fear, since this issue of enormous importance, cannot be resolved separately from the general plan of the country's museum construction on a

[280] Meeting No.79, 26 May 1920. *Zhurnaly Zasedanii Soveta Ermitazha, (Chast' 2) 1920-1926,* pp.385-388.
[281] Meeting No.81, 31 May 1919 – 3/6/1919. Ibid*,* pp.395-397.
[282] Pavel Muratov (1881-1950) was an art-historian and preservationist working for the department for museums and monument protection within *Narkompros*. Ibid, p.581.
[283] Meeting No.82, 11 June 1919. Ibid, pp.399-403.
[284] Letter from V.V. Voinov referring to the words of N.I. Trotskaia (26 May 1919). Ibid, p.404.

> nationwide scale, which seems now in a more or less distant future. This is in no way associated with a controlled unpacking or with an exhibition.
>
> (Continued)…Moscow now, undoubtedly, is the centre of the country's artistic life and therefore the design of the exhibition of the Hermitage paintings has become an urgent need.[285]

The Hermitage representative in Moscow, Vselovod Voinov, a lowly clerk prior to the Revolution, complained bitterly in defence of Hermitage interests having arrived only to be told of a three-stage process had already been determined beginning with the controlled opening of crates, followed by an exhibition and a sharing of the spoils between the two cities. Voinov had good reason to complain, experiencing the limitations of the Moscow plan first-hand. Skylights were broken in the Museum of Fine Arts allowing rain inside, whilst the marble walls precluded the possible hanging of numerous paintings.[286]

The Hermitage response itself was relatively forthright, arguing that the "arrangement of an exhibition of hermitage treasures at the present time is absolutely impossible" because of a lack of suitably prepared premises and technical means in Moscow, whilst raising other concerns including the lack of fuel. At the following meeting, Troinitskii continued to assert that no exhibition would happen without the Hermitage's participation, and eventually this steadfastness held out as Moscow accepted that they could not action an exhibition without Hermitage cooperation. Nevertheless the collective strength of the Hermitage leadership and their ability to maintain autonomy had been placed under tremendous strain. Three arrests of Hermitage staff had recently taken place, whilst Troinitskii was still struggling to work with Nikolai Punin, the Commissar to the Hermitage, who had worked to impose restrictions on the activities of the Hermitage, before finally resigning his post "without having the time to work on the request of G.S. Yatmanov to further reorganize the Hermitage".[287]

Further entanglements were inevitable. With the Civil War continuing to rage across Russia, collections could not be moved. In the meantime, negotiations took place ensuring that the Hermitage requested a share of Shchukin and Mozorov collections to compensate against losses of Old Masters taken to Moscow, offering some consolation in a deal where Moscow held the trump cards. With permission secured by Yatmanov, the re-evacuation finally followed on 17 November at

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[285] Ibid.
[286] Ibid.
[287] Meeting No.83, 11 June 1919, *Zhurnaly Zasedanii Soveta Ermitazha, (Chast' 2) 1920-1926,* pp.413-417.

the end of the Civil War, secured by a specially commissioned train carrying a battalion of guards.[288] Travel took place at the dead of night, so as to avoid risk of robbery. The Council minutes record the activities of transfer with such peculiar precision that there can be doubt as to how anxious the Hermitage was to get their treasures back to Petrograd. Trotskaia even refused to supply lorries to move crates to the station in a parting shot. Criticism of Moscow remained evident in a report on the re-evacuation, leaving the "entire burden" of the work to "fall on the shoulders of Hermitage employees who showed dedication, enthusiasm and readiness to complete the task".[289]

> The position of the Moscow museum circles was evident from the very beginning; in yielding the collections of Petrograd, they refused to assist in the transport and labour. Under such conditions, transportation could hardly have been realized without the assistance of M.M. Arzhanov (Head of Military Communications)… (However) There are outsiders to the Hermitage who have shown their utmost care, maximum energy and self-sacrificing readiness to serve this cause to the end of the evacuation.[290]

A banquet celebrated the diffusion of the great anxiety which followed four days of packing, travel and unpacking. But the stern warning Trotskaia had given back in May 1919 stood. The Hermitage was at the mercy of a national agenda for museums in the form of the Museum Fund, which Yatmanov tactfully discussed at length in the meeting following the return of treasures from Moscow.[291] In 1922, a long process of selection and transfer of objects destined for Moscow museums started. Members of the Commission described the scenario:

> Moscow and Petrograd members of the Commission examined the stocks of the Hermitage. From the very beginning of the work, the main principle was put forward…that the future museum of Western Painting in Moscow should fully and vividly present each of the main schools of Western painting…Together with A.N. Benois, the best first-class works from the Hermitage halls, we selected what could be transferred to Moscow. When selecting works from the funds and halls of the Hermitage, as well as from palace-museums, it was taken into account that the interests of the Hermitage, as a collection of world significance, should come first. Nevertheless, it should be noted that representatives of the Hermitage found it possible to identify among the best paintings of the Hermitage several samples which could have been given to Moscow without harming themselves.[292]

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[288] Meeting No.159, 9 November 1920. Ibid, pp.234-236.
[289] 'Otchet o revakuatsii', No. 161, 22 November 1920. Ibid, pp.241-248.
[290] Ibid.
[291] Meeting No.165, 6 December 1920. Ibid, pp.257-261.
[292] N.I. Romanov, Academic Council of the Rumyantsev Museum. Ibid, p.15.

The Hermitage suffered the great loss of Old Masters, ceding the paintings to Moscow as part of the project to establish the Pushkin Museum as a great picture gallery; the result of a six year period of negotiation with Moscow in which Alexandre Benois and his colleagues in the picture gallery tried in vain to prevent handing over major works.[293] Seventy eight paintings from the pre-Revolution Hermitage were despatched to Moscow, whilst the Yusupov collection which had been under their control was divided with the Pushkin. By 1925, 355 paintings had been transferred to Moscow in total and relations had been soured by the demands from Moscow steadily growing over time. Troinitskii wrote of Moscow's demands with foreboding defiance, judging that that they "are such that accepting them entirely threatens the living growth of the Hermitage gallery, and therefore its existence".[294]

> Meanwhile, the requirements of the Pushkin Museum appear to see Leningrad as a repository, from which you can scoop with a generous hand, choosing the best…The severity of moral pressure on the part of some Moscow figures is further aggravated by the fact that over the past three years the Hermitage has been waging a stubborn struggle, defending in a mixed-Soviet-Polish special commission, the interests of the Hermitage from Polish claims.

The Treaty of Riga on 18 March 1921 required the Hermitage to work on distributing cultural artworks to Poland. Painful negotiations took place in the following two years. Polish delegations visited to inspect the Hermitage exhibitions on 9 May 1922, with Benois describing some difficulties as the return of drawings by foreign masters caused a dispute to break out in his department.[295] The agreements meant ceding works from its collection to harmonize Polish claims on cultural property, though Hermitage staff did manage to negotiate for a minimizing of damage by replacing valuable works and entire collections with 'equivalents'.[296] The Poles were not alone in seeing the Hermitage collection as containing important works relevant to their national heritage and in the early 1930's the Hermitage would see an increasing number of exhibits transferred to other republics within the Soviet Union, most especially to Ukraine.[297]

Bringing ideology to the Hermitage

[293] Norman, p.169.
[294] *Zhurnaly Zasedanii Soveta Ermitazha, (Chast' 2) 1920-1926*, p.15.
[295] 9 May 1922. Benois, *Dnevnik 1918-1924*, pp.345-346.
[296] Ibid.
[297] Norman, p.170.

In May 1927, Sergei Troinitskii's sacking as Director of the Hermitage led to a significant period of instability and a declining autonomy over its own affairs. By this stage, several key figures in the Council had left. Perhaps the most high profile departure was Alexander Benois, who had fled the country after taking a leave of absence to Paris from which he never returned in 1926. Troinitskii was removed from office following a "long and bitter struggle" with Iosif Orbeli, an ambitious man "who managed to keep on good terms with the authorities in Moscow".[298] Orbeli had penned a lengthy paper 'The Unscholarly Structure of the Museum', arguing that the museum should not be divided by countries or periods, but by cultures. It successfully forced the creation of a commission to reconsider the structure of the museum. Single-mindedly pursuing prominence for his Oriental Department, Orbeli was savage in undermining Troinitskii, framing him as the enemy of progress. Orbeli appeared to be the model example of Stalinist office politics, sending a resignation letter not to the Hermitage administration, but to Glavnauka, deliberately pulling Narkompros into the argument. Despite endeavouring to make peace with Moscow, Troinitskii ultimately failed, and a fiery meeting of the Council heard a confidence debate, which Troinitskii attempted to chair himself. Orbeli's words were uncompromising in his opposition to the incumbent:

> If S.N. Troinitskii is not removed as director and overall head of the institution…I wholeheartedly request that you allow me not to be a witness of the disgraceful things taking place in the Hermitage, since as an employee I am in effect a participant in behaviour with which I am totally unable to come to terms.

The confidence vote duly led to Troinitskii's demotion to Director of the Applied Arts Department. Four years after Troinitskii's demotion, he was dismissed in September 1931 on the orders of the Workers and Peasants Commission. He was given a lowly post at the *Antikvariat* (1931-35), the agency responsible for enacting government backed sales from the Hermitage collections during the 1920's and 1930's. These events had allowed Orbeli to besmirch Troinitskii's reputation - blaming him for the losses. In actual fact Troinitskii had been unabated in his resistance to sales.[299] He was later labelled as a "socially dangerous element" in 1935, and then exiled to Ufa for three years and never returning to Leningrad.[300] Troinitskii was the only director of the Hermitage to be arrested and prosecuted by the secret police (part of the NKVD) and subsequently ironed out of Hermitage

[298] Orbeli (1887-1961) was an academician specialising in the history of the Southern Caucasus, rising to take the directorship from 1934. Norman, pp.170-171.
[299] Orbeli was allegedly in danger himself but managed to evade arrest despite fellow Armenians being put under pressure to denounce Orbeli, who used the Georgian version of his surname over the Armenian Orbelian. Norman, pp.221; p.237.
[300] Troinitskii did return to museum work in Moscow (Museum of Fine Arts), but was not rehabilitated until 1989, long after his death. AGE (Arkhiv Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha). F.1 Op.121/C D.76 L.494-516.

history, even to the extent that his image was removed from a group photograph of senior staff in museum history publications.[301]

Meanwhile, his antagonist Orbeli, with so many staff dependent on his protection, went on to be characterized in hallowed terms as the man who held the Hermitage together during the Leningrad Siege (1941-44). Yet his fortune, in contrast to Troinitskii, belied a stronger suit of playing 'office politics'. His single-minded pursuits often caused chaos within the museum, especially when building up the Oriental Department in the late 1920's, which contributed to an altogether "unhappy institution" whilst Soviet apparatchiks took over following Troinitskii.[302] A number of those who stood in his way ending up in prison or worse, though on occasion risking his own skin to protect his friends.[303] The immediate legacy of his feud with Troinitskii had been an atmosphere of resentment that was so toxic that a commission had to be set up "for resolving the conflict between the scholarly personnel of the Hermitage and I.A. Orbeli".[304] Letters to the commission advised that Orbeli was the "main disrupter of the main rules of museum work" despite positioning himself to the contrary. Most employees sought to keep contact with Orbeli to a minimum, as they had concluded "there is no chance whatever of regarding him as a comrade". The commission decided resolution was beyond them and dissolved. Orbeli, famed for his furious temper, would go on to play a central role in discrediting the archaeologist Sergey Zhebelev in 1928, who had recently been appointed to the Soviet Academy of Sciences. The diary of Sergey Oldenburg's wife commented that "at the height of his unbridled anger, when he (Orbeli) is mastered only by anger and hatred, his good sense is silent. Like the most primitive person, he can blindly and cruelly bring harm upon other people". The affair turned into a national scandal which also led to the arrest of other Hermitage staff, including Alexander Sivers who was curator in the Numismatics Department, and tellingly a recent signatory to a letter of complaint about Orbeli.[305]

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[301] In reference to a museum history by Sergei Varshavsky and Boris Rest in 1978. Norman, p.221.
[302] Orbeli took take the position of Director in 1934. Despite a clear clash between personalities (more so than issues), there is no evidence that Orbeli had a role in Troinitskii's arrest in 1935. Norman, p.222.
[303] Orbeli reputedly petitioned Anastas Mikoyan (in charge of the Armenian purges) in person to speak in defence of his protégé (on Turkish art) Anton Adzhan, but was told that he was too late. This turned out to be a lie, as Adzhan was not executed for another nine months. Norman, p.237.
[304] Norman, p.227.
[305] Alexander Sivers, one of the great specialists of Russian nobility and an assistant curator within the Numismatics Department (1923-28) who also edited the Hermitage's printed media, had an especially draining story of decline. Sivers, having been arrested in a previous purge in 1918, was further detained on the false charge of 'stealing an archive' whilst Head of the Russian Department at the Academy of Sciences in November 1929 and sentenced to three years in Turukhansk. He was only able to practice his extraordinary expertise in restraint due to being forbidden from settling in large cities. Konivets, *Zimnii dvorets: Ot imperatorskoi rezidentsii do Kavshkoly Osoaviakhima*, pp.340-353. Also, AGE. F. 1, Op. 1, D. 1034, *Dnevnika E. G. Ol'denburg*.

By 1928, academic squabbles were no longer limited to matters of scholarly reputation. The Leningrad intelligentsia would be decimated over the course of the next decade and the Hermitage staff were no exception, especially given the high proportion of scholars with noble origins. Arguments ostensibly about history, art or literature now easily found their way into politics. One renowned example started with the arrest of Grigorii Borovka, who would become one of a hundred scholars in Leningrad and Moscow implicated in what became known as the 'Academicians' affair when he was arrested on 21 September 1930.[306] Borovka's family of German origin, which had lived in Russia since the time of Peter the Great, had returned to Germany in 1918, frightened by the Revolution. He remained to pursue the work he was so fascinated with under Oscar Waldhauer in the Antiquities Department, where he worked alongside his girlfriend, the poet and curator, Katya Malkina, who would later inform the family of Borovka's arrest. He had continued to visit his family in Berlin at every opportunity during the 1920's. His visits facilitated his appointment as a member of the German Archaeological Institute in 1927, whilst he also organized an exhibition of artefacts from the Noin-Ula burial barrows, and helped with the sale of Hermitage antiquities at the Lepke auction house.[307] Borovka, one of the first Hermitage staff to be repressed, was accused of being a German spy on account of his involvement in a planned Russo-German archaeological expedition to the Crimea. There had been ongoing collaboration between archaeologists who had emigrated in light of the Revolution and those who remained throughout the 1920's. One émigré, the leading expert on the Scythians, Mikhail Rostovstev, was to direct Borovka and others to compile an anthology on the archaeological monuments of Southern Russia. One of Rostovstev's texts, translated by Hermitage Curator, Yevgeny Pridlik, was taken in manuscript form to Berlin by Borovka in exchange for payment which allowed him return to Leningrad. Borovka's actions were interpreted as espionage. But the affair once again had its connection to Orbeli who launched a ferocious campaign against Sergei Zhebelev, who had contributed an obituary in memory of Yakov Smirnov, who had been Orbeli's teacher and respected Hermitage scholar. Angry at Zhebelev's use of unpublished materials, Orbeli took it upon himself to cast a shadow over Zhebelev's reputation, including arguing its tone was non-Soviet. This attracted the attention of Communists in the Hermitage, which in no little time snowballed into a national scandal, merging into the arrest of Platonov's arrest for creating a counter-revolutionary monarchical organization with associations to the German spy network. Among those arrested were two future Hermitage directors, Mikhail Artamonov and Boris

[306] Borovka was detained for a year without trial while the secret police (OGPU) gathered evidence. Whilst the Academicians affair did not become the major conspiracy they obviously desired, he was sentenced to ten years in the camps as a German spy on 7 October 1931.
[307] Noin-Ula was a burial site in Mongolia.

Piotrovsky, whilst Borovka was sentenced to ten years in the camps, released in September 1940 and subsequently rearrested before being shot as war broke out with Germany.[308]

After Troinitskii, and the brief tenure of Oscar Waldhauer, the museum's specialist on classical history, none of the subsequent five directors had ever worked in museums and were 'party men'.[309] Instead, they had been appointed to take a lead on purging the old guard of curators and their quite obviously limiting class origins. More than fifty curators were arrested and sentenced to internal exile, prison, labour camps or execution. Twelve of the staff were executed as spies, including Dmitry Zhukov. Outlandish charges followed the predictably regressive route of claiming that the Oriental Department harboured Japanese spies.[310] On 29 May 1937, Zhukov confessed under torture to being in the service of the Japanese and leading a spy ring of Trotskyite terrorists. Nikolai Nevskii, a Russian scholar who had lived in Japan between 1915-20 studying the Tangut scripts and returned on the call of fellow Orientalists, joined the Hermitage in 1934 and was arrested in 1937. Confessing to working for Japanese intelligence during torture, he mistakenly believed he was protecting his Japanese wife. Alongside Zhukov, he was executed on 24 November 1937.[311] As the evidence would suggest, the Hermitage suffered at the hands of *Yezhovshchina* and the Great Purge in line with the horrific extent felt across Russian society as a whole.[312]

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For the Hermitage, the direct effect of cleansing on an institutional scale came in 1929. On 4 December the museum faced an "inspection on the efforts to carry out preparatory work on purging the State Hermitage apparatus", leading to the urgent creation of committees in sub-departments.[313] General meetings were held with all staff, sometimes lasting hours at a time, with thorough minutes taken. In 1931, institutions in Petrograd received a text, 'Work programme for cleaning and checking the apparatus', requiring an assessment of the "quality of the work by staff and personnel in the context of the compliance of this device, and with the tasks of socialist

[308] Two other Hermitage curators were arrested alongside Borovka in 1930. A noblewoman from the Drawings Department, Olga Fe sentenced to three years in a concentration camp for spying (later commuted to five years exile in Ufa), and Orientalist Alexander Strelkov, arrested as an agitator, imprisoned for two years prior to his case being dismissed. He suffered the same fate at Borovka when war broke out. Norman, pp.233-234.
[309] Solomakha, *Soviet Museums and the First Five Year Plan*, p.138.
[310] On 24 November 1937, a total of 719 people were executed in Leningrad. 'Kak druzhili, tak i budem druzhit: Arest Nikolaia Oleinikova', *Istoricheskaia pamiat'*: http://istpamyat.ru/lyudi-i-sudby/kak-druzhili-tak-i-budem-druzhit-arest-nikolaya-olejnikova/#document.
[311] Nevskii's rehabilitation in 1957 led to the publication of his Tangut studies in 1960, leading itself to the award of a posthumous Lenin Prize in 1962. Norman, p.236.
[312] Estimates for the extent of these atrocities very of course, but the generally accepted figure now appears to be around 1 million deaths. M. Ellman, 'Soviet Repression Statistics: Some Comments', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 54 No. 7, 2002.
[313] AGE. F.1 Op.17 D.171 L.23-24.

construction at this stage of reconstruction within the Soviet apparatus". The Hermitage, like other state institutions, were ordered to resist those who were "perverting Soviet laws, merging with NEP-men, hindering the struggle with red-tape", especially those who would "squander the needs of the workers" like "bribe takers, saboteurs, pests". Directed at the Hermitage more specifically, guidelines were given on how the Hermitage should look to organize itself, in addition to instructions on how to implement the "decisions of the 16th Party Congress".[314] In particular, questions were raised as to "how the Hermitage is adapted for servicing propaganda and agitation", "what products it gives to the masses" and how it had "adapted for use by schools and higher education institutions for training". Whilst much of the document was aimed generically at correcting the perceived wrongs in institutions across the city, it nevertheless reminds us of the real focus of socialist construction: "raising labour productivity…and the rational use of labour". It was demanded of the Hermitage that they "self-consolidate until the end of the Five-Year Plan". In this environment, the Hermitage was of course vulnerable.

Explicit evidence of Hermitage displays being directed towards 'sociological' work appeared in 1928. An All-Union Conference on Excursions came to the conclusion that work in the museum was "urgently needed to strengthen the approach of their scientific and cultural values to workers visiting the museum, both in terms of 'popularization' and in the deepening of work".[315] The socio-political role of the museum more broadly was being brought into focus, with the ambition clearly that exhibition work would aim to "arrange temporary and permanent exhibitions on modern/topical issues that would appear to answer questions that interest and excite the worker" and opportunities should be taken "to conduct propaganda work on the materials of the exhibitions". Museums were now required to organize mobile exhibitions for houses of culture and large clubs/organizations. Where feasible, according to the nature of their materials, mobile exhibitions for red corners and workshops should take place, whilst thematic exhibitions would involve working with other museums. With the Winter Palace opening the *Exhibition on the Hermitage History* (1930), increased attention came from public viewings which judged the "suitability and importance of the exhibitions for workers".[316] On 8 April 1930, 54 representatives from industrial enterprises visited to give their feedback. Whilst those from the Kulakova plant considered that the "work done on the exhibition to be very significant and believes that the exhibition will reach the working audience", others formed proposals or criticisms. Andreev from Krasnyi Putilovets appeared disappointed: "it was revealed at the exhibition (what October gave the

[314] Ibid, Op.5, D.1164 (1931).
[315] Matveev (ed.), *Ermitazh «vsemirnyi», ili planeta Ermitazh*, p.157.
[316] Ibid, p.158.

Hermitage), but it is not shown what the Hermitage will give to October by the end of the Five-Year Plan. It is necessary to point out the place of socialist competition".

Plans were formed to organize introductory and temporary exhibitions to sections of the permanent display. Suggestions for these could be put forward by regional trade union councils and the authorities responsible for regional political education. In December 1928, the Hermitage's own survey of their exhibition and excursion work confirmed the intended "promotion of temporary exhibitions to the periphery" (mobile exhibitions), many of which had a distinctly politicized bent, such as *Money in the era of revolutions*, *Epoch of bourgeois revolutions in the West*, *Art and Class*), alongside the slightly more subtle themes *How archaeology reveals the past of mankind*, and the *Birth and Death of Militarism*.[317] Greater emphasis was given to self-evaluation, with sections of the 1928 report given to the "elaboration of questions about new forms of work". Self-evaluation continued to extend towards showcasing the distinction between the eras within the Hermitage itself, visible in the display *Visitors of the Tsarist and Soviet Hermitage* which itself left made clear that the 'Imperial' Hermitage was the preserve of a "narrow circle of the public (elite)", contrary to the Soviet era, which responded to the "ever growing cultural demands of the proletarian masses". Under Soviet control, the museum had "turned from a haphazard repository of antiquities and rarities for a few lovers of aesthetics into the institution of mass political prospectus". The Hermitage of the Tsarist past was labelled in French, with only the name of the object and artist, whereas the Soviet era gave "special explanations describing the artistic direction to which the artist belongs, with focus on their class ideology". The halls now contained a summary of the "overall ideological position of the class whose art is represented". Practically, the displays were made superior by "greater frequency of labelling", plans indicating a suggested route and even "parallel display of music" illustrating the era of focus. The Hermitage, with Director Legran adamant about its importance, even went so far as to tie historically themed concerts to exhibitions, such as *French music in the era of bourgeois revolution* and *German music in the era of Imperialism*.[318]

The level of scrutiny towards interpretation continued to elaborate. Meetings of the 'State Hermitage Labelling Committee' examined labelling to such an extent that every word appeared up for analysis. In religious displays, 'Mary' or 'Mother of Jesus' was considered appropriate in everyday composition, but 'Virgin' was applied in theological examples.[319] In the development of an anti-religious exhibition, which opened on 15 April 1930 as a joint project with the Academy of Sciences,

[317] Ibid, p.159.
[318] B.V. Legran, *Sotsialisticheskaia rekonstruktsiia Ermitazha*, Leningrad, 1934. Matveev (ed.), *Ermitazh «vsemirnyi», ili planeta Ermitazh*, p.172.
[319] Ibid, p.160.

emphasis was given towards framing the "evolution of religion as a series of phenomena of human culture" for the eyes of the "broad working masses".[320]

Records of meetings in the Hermitage in 1930-31 further underline the evolving role of ideological concern in planning, with the role of director P.Y. Irbit, deputy director with responsibilities for political education, a useful case in point. Irbit chaired a meeting reflecting on the exhibition *East on fire* by inviting other contributors (such as the Museum of the Revolution and the Society for Oriental Studies) to discuss shared thematic interests, such as the "struggle of the imperialists for sources of raw materials and markets" and the "penetration of imperialism and its consequences". Irbit also had a key role in inspecting the first branch of the Hermitage (the former Stieglitz Museum) on 28 February 1931 alongside *Drevtrest* (political propaganda) and *Lentechkunstprom* (State Technical School of the Art Industry). His comments summarised the scrutiny given towards ideological display:

> It should be noted that this exhibition, which we have now viewed, cannot yet be called Soviet. This is not a museum, but a collection of individual things, and in its present form it can be rather called a bourgeois museum. You need to open it, but furniture, cloth, porcelain etc. – it must be tied into a complex, though not a complex which repeats the Hermitage. The museum must have a 'production character', this is the most important thing. Now there is still no production on show… no system. Saying this, I do not want to offend museum staff, who contributed their work and knowledge, and love for business, but it is obvious that such a state cannot satisfy us. In this form, as the museum is in now, there is no system, and it is impossible to trace the core of development and, if the exhibition is opened, it is only for production purposes. It would be nice to present our modern, post-revolutionary furniture.
>
> The museum in its present state is rather an antique shop. It is completely unsuitable (for single or unguided visitors). We are only talking about an organized viewer under experienced guidance (being able to visit). It is necessary to rebuild the museum by joint efforts, with the involvement of comrades from production and political education, and we will create a commission of permanent representatives of interested organizations. Drevtrest should be an indispensable member of this commission.[321]

[320] This was effectively the predecessor for the State Museum of the History of Religion, opening to meet the fifth anniversary of the *Union of Militant Atheists*. A permanent museum opened when the Kazan Cathedral was repurposed for the Academy in the summer of 1931, opening 15 November 1932. Ibid, p.161.
[321] Ibid, p.163.

The changing role of leadership in the museum, now a very different beast from the days of Tolstoy, Benois and Troinitskii, was clear by 1931. Narkompros were increasingly direct in their oversight. In the spring of 1931 they asked for a report, evidenced by photography of the exhibition halls, on the (propaganda) campaign for strengthening the defence capability of the Soviet Union, with an answer quickly arranged based on two poster exhibitions (*A decade of defence* and *Day of the Red Army*). In the same period, a production plan by the graphics department for an exhibition on the *Bourgeois Revolution in France* was rejected, meaning that a Marxist consultant (Shchegolev) was drafted in on the basis that the expositions had shown "unsatisfactory re-exposure plans", though in part the work had been affected by two members of staff being arrested by the GPU.[322] It is quite clear that the pace of change in applying new techniques to research, analysis and exposure did take their toll, with reflections concluding that "research work was not put in a sufficiently clear framework", whilst staff were prevented from making use of "the research work carried out in the Hermitage Department for Antiquities for many years". The report of excursion and exhibition work in 1931 recognized significant flaws. Mobile or introductory exhibitions in particular, "did not fulfil their original purpose – to go to factories and serve as a transition for the museum and the Hermitage itself". The most damning criticism, given the direction, was the "lack of mass views" being achieved.[323]

Attempts were made to bring the practice of the museum, and more broadly art history, into public discussion and understanding. A common aspect of practice was to have a public discussion of exhibitions. One such example for an exhibition of French Modernists and Western Masters (March 1930), including works by Monet, Matisse, Picasso and Van Gogh, contained explicit assessment of the relationship an artist had with class struggle. Gaughin and Van Gogh were analysed by a member of the Communist Academy, Ivan Matsa, as such: "Neither of them found a place within that society. Both of them desperately protested against everything around them" but disputed the purity their 'socialism'. Specifically on Van Gogh, Matsa concluded:

> Van Gogh is said to be a proletarian artist. His biographers made it possible to assert that he was close to the proletariat, but that is not why you need to judge van Gogh. He was not fond of the proletariat, but of priestly socialism. He was very far from the proletariat. Some artists in their development come to fruition at a particular stage of the general development of class

[322] Ibid, p.165.
[323] Ibid.

> struggle. They can criticize capitalism, sometimes very sharply and decisively… this does not allow them to be interpreted as being close to the proletariat.[324]

By the 15th anniversary of the October Revolution, the implementation of "socialist reconstruction of the museum" was now the apparent priority. The exhibition themes during were explicit: *Achievements in the fifteen years since the October Revolution* and *The Crisis of Capitalism and the growth of world proletarian revolution*. A temporary exhibition, *USSR in construction* was held in the Hermitage foyer, whilst special touring exhibitions focused on 'current political campaigns'. Such was the importance of the primary focus that funds were drained from temporary exhibitions due to the demand that permanent exhibitions be reorganized. Nevertheless, newly opened exhibitions during 1932 were given recognition from authoritative experts and public viewers, whilst newspaper reports glowed with praise:

> This exhibition, unlike other exhibitions of the Hermitage, besides the goal to show the role of art in the class struggle, also has purely utilitarian tasks - to be useful for technology and artistic design of products. The task of showing the historical development of furniture is not yet complete and requires a number of research projects, but the main tasks of the museum are resolved.[325]

> The Hermitage is one of the best museums in the world. Every tourist, whether a foreigner, or a Soviet citizen, considers it his duty to see this treasury in Leningrad first of all.

> A number of new departments have been created at the Hermitage. Take at least the department of the East, it gives a complete picture of the development of culture in the East, from ancient Egypt and Babylon to the era of imperialism.[326]

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To some extent, the staff at the Hermitage managed the challenges brought about by the demands of 'socialist construction' well. Advanced preparations were even made in some instances. A commission was created in June 1929 to prepare for their entry into socialist competition. Researchers made a commitment to "to improve their Marxist training", but as yet were not working

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[324] Matsa would himself be accused of belonging to a group of critics (or "pathetic aestheticizing cosmopolitans") who were accused of "discrediting the best works of Soviet art" and slandering Socialist realists. Ibid, pp.170-171.

[325] T. Mikarnovskii in Ibid, p.175.

[326] Praise was not universal - criticisms were made of expositions relating to the textiles industry, with Hermitage staff accused of limited familiarity and the failure to demonstrate gradual development of Soviet textiles. (Moscow) *Evening News* in Ibid, p.177.

with Marxist museology.[327] As with all institutions, they were bound to respond to the demands of the Work Programme by answering the accompanying questionnaire and to implement reforms where necessary. The Hermitage was still seen as a hotbed of 'former people', with scores of its scientific and academic staff deriving from noble backgrounds. The Hermitage were called upon to report on the social composition of its staff in 1931, which included preparing a response to the document *Stalinskaia estafeta po voprosu kadrov*, which was completed by all Soviet institutions from factories to museums.[328] Of 144 personnel, only 8 were CPSU members, with 2 further candidates, and 3 Komsomol members. These results were a damning indictment, especially when compared to the 57 'nobles' (against 1 'worker'). From here on, a production plan was strictly communicated to every employee and division of labour was carefully examined. Department heads were forced to provide a work report each month and a diary kept to track employees.[329] Summary reports to Glavnauka covered everything in the museum. Reports from 1931 offers such an example. They gave details of the demonstrably ideological tone taken with exhibitions, such as *Class Struggle in the Netherlands* or *Art in France in the era of Feudal Reaction*. But the level of exacting detail to ensure oversight went much deeper, including details on the design of shop windows, right through to the repairs made in the pantry room. This thorough oversight ensured 'production' targets (from the museum to the masses) were met.

Details of departmental or even individual actions further reflect the impact of the 'ideological purging'. Aleksei Il'in, who had led the Numismatics Department for a decade and held the position of Troinitskii's deputy, was responsible for compiling a catalogue of Russian coins from the Peter the Great era, but rather than record this truthfully, he fabricated his performance.[330] His 'underperformance' of 20 per cent was recorded as a result of illness in order to avoid being labelled as a saboteur. Notes kept on his project deliberately referenced the contribution the Five Year Plan: "In the order of socialist competition with the Graphics Department" the Numismatics Department

[327] AGE. F.1 Op.17 D.171 L.31.
[328] *Stalinskaia estafeta po voprosu kadrov* was essentially a questionnaire or survey prompting an assessment of institutional personnel in terms of their family history, party membership and so on.
[329] AGE. F.1 Op.5 Ch.2 D.1170.
[330] Aleksei Il'in's story is fascinating in its own right. A well-educated man who always considered himself an amateur numismatist appeared to have lived many lives: the owner of a cartographic factory which supplied eleven government ministries, sitting on the zemstvo council, a history and law scholar and Chairman of the Red Cross when under the patronage of Maria Feodorovna, all in the pre-revolutionary era. The Revolution lost him his fortune almost overnight, with his family estate and business (renamed the State Cartographic Institute) nationalized. From November 1918, Il'in gave ten years of service to the museum in relatively calm conditions. In the Lenin-era purges, Il'in's name (mirroring Lenin's) was said to have protected him to some extent, but in 1931, he was cleansed from the Hermitage, which lost him his pension and meaningful work. Whilst not reinstated fully as a Head of Department, he continued to work, escaping Kirov-era repression, becoming a professor at 80 before dying at his desk on 4 July 1942. AGE F.1 Op.13 D.307. Also, Konivets, *Zimniy Dvorets*, pp.323-340.

"verified" their works against the "Catalogue of Oriental Coins, Number 7103".[331] This inter-departmental 'competition' was a common feature within the museum at this time.[332] Within the Hermitage, employee records were constructed in such a way as to avoid ruining lives, whilst the museum protected employees against the scrutiny of the Workers and Peasants Inspectorate. Whilst it was still possible, appeals were made against their decisions in the 1920's, with the aforementioned Il'in able to transfer to another position, despite receiving a reprimand, and A.N. Kuba, a longstanding employee since 1912, had a decision against him overturned.[333] However, only ten who were caught up in 'purging' measures were left at their work, and usually additional proceedings found a route to at least force them to leave the Hermitage. External pressures were enough to bear heavily on staffing decisions. Council Member, Professor Evgenii Pridik, escaped purging simply because he was released as part of an effort to reduce staff numbers in 1930. Undoubtedly explicit efforts were made to target those with dubious class origins. Y.G. Lisenkov was taken in early 1929 on account of his pre-revolutionary service to the State Chancellery and whilst reinstated on the basis of his exemplary work re-evacuating museum valuables in 1920, he was supposedly petrified every time he was called to a superior. M.I. Maksimova, an employee since 1914, was accused of links to the "white emigres of Europe", without any evidence, having studied in Germany and travelled in Europe.[334]

The most distinct wave of activity came following the 'Slavists affair' in 1933-34 which led to a swathe of Hermitage curators being arrested. Two Hermitage specialists were accused of supplying arms to Ukrainian nationalists with the intention of organizing an armed uprising, and were sentenced to ten years in the camps. Another wave of arrests followed Sergei Kirov's murder in 1934. The first victim was Vera Nikolaeva, an Egyptologist, who was arrested with her brother simply for sharing the same surname as the murderer, despite there being no family connection. Nevertheless, she was sentenced to ten years in prison before the sentence was changed to execution on 17 November 1937. With suspicions running wild about counter-revolutionary conspiracies, virtually all of Leningrad's former nobility were arrested during February and March 1935, including Troinitskii. Perhaps two of the most tragic victims were Nikolai Bauer and Richard Vasmer. The former had led the Department of Western European Art for five years and spent half

[331] AGE. F.1 Op.5 Ch.2 D.1181 L.9; 33.
[332] It is pertinent here to recognize that the nature of internal competition, denunciations and other features of the purges broadly reflect the patterns seen elsewhere in Soviet society. The behaviour of the Hermitage and its staff fit Wendy Goldman's model of 'dual-mindedness' whereby public or institutional behaviour co-existed alongside contrary private acts. A thorough analysis can be found in W. Goldman, *Inventing the Enemy: Denunciation and Terror in Stalin's Russia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
[333] B.B. Piotrovsky, *Istoriia Ermitazha: Kratkii ocherk. Materialy i dokumenty*, Moscow: Iskusstvo, 2000, p.497.
[334] Konivets, *Zimnii dvorets: Ot imperatorskoi rezidentsii do Kavshkoly Osoaviakhima,* p.320.

of his life at the Hermitage. He was fired for giving "false information about himself" in 1938 in response to a questionnaire. In the summer of 1942, Bauer was arrested and shot in September. Vasmer, an expert on the Muslim East, had worked at the Hermitage since 1911. He was arrested in 1934, just two years after being made a professor, before being exiled to Tashkent where he died four years later.[335] The impact of the purges on Leningrad did not die down until the temporary stasis of wartime, though they returned with some vigour in the following years, with a forceful persecution of deviant scholars, especially in 1948 when a purge hit the Leningrad intelligentsia and party organizations, which of course, included individuals from the Hermitage.[336]

Human upheaval and misfortune was just part of a broader picture of unrest. The financial state of the Hermitage was increasingly precarious, with in the later 1920's it faced a shortfall against planned expenses. Despite curatorial opposition, the People's Commissariat of Foreign and Domestic Trade recognized the tremendous potential to profit from the Hermitage storerooms in order to build foreign currency reserves.[337] Sales of artistic treasures, keeping pace with the industrial thrust of the First Five Year Plan, peaked at the 24,000 removals of Hermitage goods between 1928 and 1933, with a significant proportion from the wealthy private collectors who had been forced to nationalize their collections.[338] Despite Troinitskii's earlier protestations against random visits from the representatives of antiques firms who had been sent directly to the Hermitage, his demand that the pre-revolutionary collection should be ring-fenced from sales was ignored and prominent masterpieces were promptly sold in 1928-29. Interest began to strengthen in the Western press, though interested parties in some cases were disappointed (believing that the best work remained in the palaces) or even filed lawsuits upon recognizing their former possessions.[339] Following a series of auctions in the late 1920's, the Soviet government had received such a slim proportion of expected revenue that it owed a debt on the advance it had given the company it was trading through.

Art sales from the Hermitage proved a uniquely divisive issue, dividing curators arguably to a greater extent than any other issue. Some collaborated knowing it would ultimately keep them out of prison, helping Antikvariat select and catalogue items for sale, but in reality, few did it without some resistance. Troinitskii only assisted in the belief that he was best qualified to decide what could

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[335] V.F. Marishkina and S.A. Gedeonov*, Sotrudniki Imperatorskogo Ermitazha*, St. Petersburg: State Hermitage, 2004, pp.155-157.
[336] Y. Gorlitskii and O. Khevniuk, *Cold Peace: Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945-1953*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp.79-89; pp.99-100; C. Kelly, 'The 'Leningrad Affair: Remembering the 'Communist Alternative' in the Second Capital', *Slavonica*, Vol.17 No.2, 2011, pp.103-122.
[337] Solomakha, *Soviet Museums and the First Five Year Plan*, pp.137-138.
[338] Ibid, p.133.
[339] Ibid, pp.141-143.

be sold and more importantly what absolutely could not, whilst Borovka deliberately miscataloged items to prevent them selling, allowing their return to the museum. Orbeli's behaviour was once again intransigent, refusing to hand over the items which made up his hard-won Oriental Department. Rumour has it that at one stage he blocked the storeroom door behind which lay the collection of Sassanian Silver that was due to be selected for sale, and threatened to swallow the key if anyone attempted to enter.[340] Even the director and party member of the time, Boris Legran, was persuaded by Orbeli's passion, writing to Glavnauka to appeal for reason. Antikvariat refuted allegations that they had served an "ultimatum", calling for "an explanation of your (Legran's) attitude".[341] Clearly angered that "each extra day reduces the price of the goods and makes a loss for the state", the letter reaffirmed the "most urgent necessity" when the "whole party is fighting for hard currency". Ending in an episode which once again reaffirmed Orbeli's political skill, Legran and Orbeli drafted a letter which they passed to a close associate of Stalin's, Avel Enukidze, a Georgian party activist and friend of Legran. Coming to the attention of Stalin, Orbeli received the response that "an investigation has shown that Antikvariat's requests are not justified", "the Commissariat of Trade…have been ordered by the respective agency not to touch the Oriental Department of the Hermitage".[342] Any works of art demanded from the Hermitage were consistently deemed 'Oriental'. After a few minor scuffles, Antikvariat demanded nothing more from the museum.

Beyond the Hermitage

Reform within the Hermitage during the Stalinist period reflected efforts to centralize cultural policy and bring the intentions of great cultural institutions, to a greater extent, into line with the state's desired outcomes for culture. Burgeoning efforts were made to expand mobile exhibitions and recognize the need to change the nature of display towards communicating to the working masses.[343] As this process intensified after the mid-1920's, the Hermitage acquired greater reach and

[340] Norman, p.199.
[341] Dated 14 February 1932. Ibid, p.200.
[342] ARAN SPb. (Sankt-Peterburgskiy filial arkhiva rossiyskoy akademii nauk). F. 909. Op. 3. D. 163: http://ranar.spb.ru/rus/vystavki/id/414/
[343] This is no effort to diminish the reach of the Hermitage prior to the mid-1920's, though the scale of its outreach is far more regional in nature. There are exceptions, with numerous visits from consuls and foreign diplomats recorded in Hermitage Council Meetings, and even the receipt of political leaders from abroad in the case of the Afghan Padishah. See Hermitage Council Meetings 183 (Turkish Consul and Finnish Diplomats); and on the visit of Amanullah Khan, who was recognized by the Soviet Union when he took the throne in February 1919. Konivets details the rather bizarre visit of Khan, who stayed in the rooms of the Winter Palace and received all the pomp and grandeur of a royal visit, all during the Russian Civil War. His progressive rule

prestige within its institutional type. This manifested itself in numerous avenues, such as the oversight of branches (e.g. the former Stieglitz Museum), acting as a leader in institutional expertise within the Soviet Union, and furthermore, as a prestigious institution on the world stage, working with international organizations of similar renown.

From 1925, Glavnauka was explicit in their collection of data to appraise the Hermitage's societal reach and for the Hermitage to make apparent their 'connection with production'. This involved a demonstration of the Hermitage's "activity in the field of agriculture and industry…and in general, the field of educational work". The response they received gratified Glavnauka, thanking the Hermitage for the "illustrative material that allowed the general public to see the role of museums in the life of the country, their cultural value and their basic immediate needs". Glavnauka further suggested developing a plan for the Hermitage to display which exhibitions would be "outside" the museum; the first mention of exhibitions beyond the Winter Palace and the first distinct recognition of exhibitions as a leading function of the museum.[344] Reports two years later confirmed the expansion of educational work to "force all museum workers to view their activities from a new angle and not limit themselves to working on things, but to take into account the work on the audience – the museum visitor". By 1931, evidence from the Hermitage reports suggests an increased ambition to capture anniversary and holiday themes, such as *Women in the past and present* (on International Women's Day), or anti-religious themes to coincide with Easter. Criticism at the failings of such exhibitions were strongly worded and the same year saw conclusions drawn that "almost all exhibitions were insufficiently used and did not fulfil their original purpose – to go into the factories and serve as a transitional bridge between the red corners of the plants where they were supposed to be campaigning for the museum and the Hermitage itself".[345] Communication with public organizations "cannot be recognized as actively carried out", whilst a "lack of mass views" questioned the approach of such activity. Questions still existed over the Hermitage's external work, as well as the nature of materials used (reproductions, explanation texts etc.) for instance. But it appears clear that by the early 1930's, external work was an established method of agitation, and moreover, this was its overriding purpose.

Agitation work would certainly continue right into the wartime and beyond, with external exhibitions reduced to a more regional reach by 1941, preventing all but "insignificant proportions" of "political and educational work" with only a small number of 'defence exhibitions'. After the

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would last only a decade, and was in part supported by the intervention of Soviet troops in 1924. See Konivets, *Zimnii dvorets: Ot imperatorskoi rezidentsii do Kavshkoly Osoaviakhima*, pp.288-291

[344] Matveev (ed.), *Ermitazh "provintsial'nyi", ili Imperiia Ermitazh,* p.34.

[345] Ibid, p.35.

conclusion of the war, the Hermitage helped to organize an exhibition *Russian Military Valour* based on materials from local artists and galleries for use in hospitals, regional branches of the Union of Soviet Artists and for interregional exhibitions in 1948, showing how "from the first months of evacuation [the Hermitage] was involved in organizing mobile exhibitions" .[346] But to characterize the Hermitage's reach beyond its museum premises solely as agitation work would be inaccurate.

A simple analysis of one department, Numismatics, emphasises the extraordinary academic and professional importance of the Hermitage. In 1927-28 alone, its constant intercourse with museums around the Soviet Union stretched to Astrakhan in Southern Russia, Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan, Kherson in Ukraine and Samarkand in Uzbekistan.[347] The list of organizations that purchased photographs from the Hermitage in 1937, from Grozny to Petropavlovsk, totalled some 384,494, a clear indicator of the "geography of the Hermitage's development" and the scale of interest across the USSR.

Ample evidence is also available for this geographical reach spanning beyond the Soviet Union. Boris Piotrovsky wrote in 1930 that the "prestige of the Hermitage abroad grew" under the directorate of L.L. Obolenskii primarily as a result of a Soviet delegation's participation in the Second International Congress on Iranian/Persian Art and Archaeology in London.[348] They showcased Hermitage treasures at the accompanying exhibition, in which their exhibits took place of honour, and talked to the international scientific community about the work of Soviet museums, greatly stimulating interest in not just the Hermitage Sassanian collection, but the work of Soviet museums more broadly. The coming years certainly elaborated along similar lines. In 1935, the Hermitage gave assistance to the People's Commissariat of Education in their participation in exhibitions in Paris and Venice by lending works by Michelangelo, Raphael and Leonardo da Vinci.[349] In London, an *International Exhibition of Chinese Art* (1935-36) solidified strengthening relations, negotiated in part via the British consulate. The Hermitage then took part in the *World Exhibition* in Paris, under the motto *Art and Technology in Modern Life* between May and November 1937 across two venues.[350] The exhibition display in the Soviet Pavilion was created by Hermitage staff with the use of three albums of photographs taken in the halls of the museum. By the time of their safe return on 13 May 1938, the Leningrad Porcelain Factory had earned a gold medal, whilst at the other exhibition, *Treasures of French Art*, the Hermitage had contributed five paintings and items of silver jewellery. Building on this success, the Hermitage were asked to lend for an exhibition arranged in New York,

[346] Ibid, p.40.
[347] Ibid, p.38.
[348] Matveev (ed.), *Ermitazh «vsemirnyi», ili planeta Ermitazh*, p.72.
[349] Ibid, p.73.
[350] Ibid, p.76.

with a request received in February 1938, though rejected on the basis that Orbeli did not want to deprive "our exposition for more than a year" of what he regarded as some of the outstanding objects within their collection. Nevertheless, an arrangement was concluded which sent photographs of museum work relating to palace museums, restoration, exhibition activities and was published for the World Exhibition in New York in 1939. Even a Hermitage film was created specifically for the exhibition, showing excursions of Red Army men, sailors, visitors from across the world, "signifying that they are the owners of the Hermitage".[351]

The 1930's also saw a significant trend of foreign exhibitions being held in the Hermitage, with the first formal work being received from abroad in March 1931 in the form of a Sassanian dish decorated with a rider on horseback received from a New York based collector for "exhibition and scientific study".[352] A large exhibition of Chinese painting was organized in the Hermitage in 1934 with the help of a professor from Nanjing University, a Hermitage committee and Xu Bei-Hoon, a prominent Chinese artist, before transferring to Moscow.[353] Given its appearance in Leningrad coincided with a display of contemporary Latvian art, a significant discourse took place questioning the "further development of Soviet art and socialist realism". Following a proposal made by the London Congress in 1931, an *International Congress on Persian Art and Archaeology* was organised in Leningrad in 1935 and Orbeli hosted 300 representatives from 18 different countries. The list of donors stretched from the domestic (Academy of Sciences, State Historical Museum) to the international (Louvre and National Library in Paris, several professors from the USA).[354] Of the international partnerships extended in the late 1930s, it was perhaps the exhibition of *Modern Czechoslovak Art* in 1937 that carried the greatest political weight, as it was intended as a gesture of support against "aggression on the part of German fascism", whilst the USSR associated itself with Czechoslovakia with a "common desire to preserve peace".[355] The establishment of effective soft diplomatic channels was again evident in Orbeli's view that the exhibition was central to the "development of cultural ties between the peoples of our homeland and the peoples of the Czechoslovak Republic". Indeed the exhibition opening was just part of an array of events upholding the "friendship between the peoples of the USSR and Czechoslovakia", with Orbeli's speech celebrating the recent visit of the Red Banner Ensemble of Red Army Song and Dance to Prague and

[351] Ibid, p.80.
[352] Ibid, p.99.
[353] Another major Chinese exhibition at the Hermitage, *Culture and Art in Feudal China* opened in August 1939. Ibid, p.102.
[354] Ibid, p.104.
[355] Ibid, pp.106-107.

the successful performances of the Czechoslovak Choir, as well as a sell-out opera, in the USSR – all in cooperation with the respective ministries for education.[356]

The previous examples suggest the Hermitage's skill in the complex development of reciprocal relationships as a result of growing outreach, and this was certainly not limited to the international stage. The article 'The Hermitage's work with collective farmers' evidences a trip to the Mginskii district (Leningrad Oblast) in February 1939 when the Hermitage delegation, led by Iosif Orbeli, presented an exhibition of great paintings in the museum. A month later, 670 people from the Mginskii district's collective farms arrived as part of a ceremonial meeting. The ceremony held field workers, scientific workers and museum staff together in a mutual commitment.[357] Collective farmers expected "good books on history, culture and art" and are "waiting for travelling exhibitions…popular lectures and reports", whilst in turn the collective farmers were bound to "significantly raise the average yield of grain crops, double the crop of vegetables to supply Leningrad", in addition to developing animal husbandry, caring for the best 'Stakhanovites' and increasing the yield of cows and cash income on their collective farms.

Whilst this connection displayed the Hermitage's place within socialist construction, their reach into the wider USSR proved their continuing cultural value and academic worth. In the same year, reports which describe *The Work of the first travelling exhibition of the Hermitage in Tbilisi* took around 100 artworks of Western European art to three trans-Caucasian republics, which were supported by pre-emptive restoration of the works and the formulation of a catalogue. In response, students at the Tbilisi State Institute were deeply grateful and looked forward to "such exhibitions being organized as often as possible", suggesting the desire for greater cooperation. During their tour, Hermitage staff conducted 19 classes with students from the Art Academy, the Theatre School and the Theatre for Young People, whilst also engaging in 280 excursions of the exhibition in both Russian and Georgian. Despite a number of shortcomings, 34,000 visitors attended and "the experience of the first travelling exhibition of the Hermitage fully justified itself". The success of the venture furthered the willingness of the Hermitage to engage with museums from other Soviet Republics, though the decision taken by the All Union Committee for the Arts in 1938 to give restoration responsibilities to the largest regional museums also no doubt played a role in building such connections. The Hermitage now held responsibility for museums including the Kazakh National Gallery (Alma-Ata), Tashkent Art Museum, Kyrgyz Art Gallery, Bashkir Art Gallery and the Metekhi Museum (Tbilisi).[358] Events involving the Hermitage were underlined with a subtext. The reopening

[356] Ibid, p.108.
[357] Matveev (ed.), *Ermitazh "provintsial'nyi", ili Imperiia Ermitazh*, p.39.
[358] Matveev (ed.), *Ermitazh «vsemirnyi», ili planeta Ermitazh*, p.82.

of the House of Artists in Yerevan for Stalin's birthday in 1939 opened with a speech that highlighted how Stalin himself had expressed support for how such events demonstrated the "most beautiful phenomena of our era – the great brotherhood of nations, the tremendous growth of national cultures, the importance of the exchange of artistic values".[359] A Hermitage-led exhibition intending to popularize 'great eastern masters' in Yerevan and Baku in 1940 provides further evidence of the role the Hermitage could play as in 'soft power' diplomacy. Hermitage representative Asaevich spoke to around 170 selected guests, reporting on the history of the museum and led the resolution adopted by the participants:

> We, the oil workers, the intelligentsia of the mountains…gathered for a solemn meeting at the Palace of Culture, dedicated to the 175th anniversary of the largest museum in the USSR – the State Hermitage – noted for its great cultural and educational value and the greatest treasury of world art. At a time when the fire of the second imperialist war is burning in the homeland of Rembrandt and Rubens, and the works of great artists are exposed to destruction, the Soviet Union widely celebrates the 300th anniversary of Rubens…The staff of the Hermitage have conducted very important work on the Museum's artistic treasures to bring them to the broad masses of workers…I am pleased to note that the 175th anniversary has coincided with the organization of a travelling exhibition of Hermitage paintings.

Asaevich went on to observe the highly sympathetic responses of audiences and engaged with "direct work with the audiences of the exhibition". The lecture programme, which examined Italian, Dutch and French masters, was deemed a success, "evidenced by the fact that the lectures received resonance outside of the artistic community".[360] Asaevich even created a guide to the *First Mobile Exhibition*, though it was delayed due to "a sharp discussion on the fundamental issues of Western art". Importantly, Asaevich's report showed that "besides lectures and excursions, there were other forms of political and educational work" relating to the exhibition.

Conclusion: The struggle for autonomy

In the post-Soviet period, Anatolii Khazanaov wrote a convincing assessment of the politics of memory in Moscow's historical museums. Khazanov predicated that despite huge social and political changes after 1991, which produced enormous rifts between new and old values and memories,

[359] Ibid, p.86.
[360] Ibid, pp.93-94.

museums and their interpretation failed to demonstrate a fundamental break from the Soviet past.[361] In his argument, Khazanov views museums of the Soviet period as lacking in any real autonomous identity, unable to achieve the necessary independence to change course. Controlled by the Soviet government, who were resolved to turn museums to use for communist propaganda, museums simply acquired an openly didactic and politicized character for state organized instruction.[362]

Accepting the obvious contextual differences, the history of the Hermitage in the Soviet period sits as a counterweight to the idea that museums acquired the status of an unmoveable object and a mere vehicle for top-down orthodoxy. The Hermitage certainly absorbed part of the same widespread impetus for turning museums and galleries towards institutional public instruction, but the Hermitage occupied a status and, moreover, a character decidedly separate from the experience of the 'normal' museum. In fact, the Hermitage during the Soviet period consistently battled to maintain a special level of autonomy and prestige quite apart from what might be considered the norm.

The Hermitage leadership were armed with the firm belief that they were without equal as a museum, with both staff and collections at a level of specialism that could not be matched. In early exchanges at least, there was a tangible refusal to be bullied by the new authorities. In 1919, Grigorii Yatmanov and Nikolai Punin challenged the Hermitage by removing their exclusive autonomy on purchasing, which was met with fierce rebuttal, whilst the Council refused to readily allow Hermitage treasures or premises to be utilised without their leadership.[363] The following month saw a collective protest against having to subordinate to the Collegium.[364] Sergei Troinitskii's directorship was characterized by the shift from stubborn resistance to an increasingly pragmatic and tactical relationship with external authority. He moved to work closer with the Russian Museum to form a loose alliance in a display of scepticism towards attempts to reorganize museum leadership.[365] Troinitskii's defence of Hermitage independence was further tested in another great dynamic of the early Soviet age: Moscow's predominance over the northern capital. Against an overwhelming determination for Moscow to "create a museum of world importance", Trointskii rejected any attempts to "disfigure" the museums of Petrograd, whilst making the case for preventing outsiders

[361] A. Khazanov, 'Selecting the past: the politics of memory in Moscow's history museums', *City and Society*, Vol.12 No.2 (June 2008), p.35.
[362] Ibid, pp.36-37.
[363] Meeting No.55, 5 December 1918; and No.56, 6 December 1918. *Zhurnaly Zasedanii Soveta Ermitazha, (Chast' 2) 1920-1926,* pp.222-224; pp.225-227.
[364] Meeting No.73, 9 April 1919. Ibid, p.354-359.
[365] Meeting No.148, 23 August 1920. Ibid, pp.191-194.

from taking their pick of artefacts "associated with Petersburg for centuries" from their storerooms.[366] Achieving the return of a vast majority of artefacts in 1922 did not prevent the wider reality that the tide had turned against the former capital. A year later the newly established Glavmuzei, the main administrative body across the USSR, cemented Moscow as the centre of power for museums.[367]

Benois and his colleagues were understandably resistant to being treated as unexceptional in the face of rigorous and inflexible external controls. Troinitskii's pragmatic recognition of this frustrated Hermitage colleagues who refused to relent from their deeply liberal values. Benois attacked Troinitskii as an "avid monopolist" and his apparent willingness to support the argument that "all museum property should be considered indivisible" in relation to the creation of the 'Museum Fund'.[368] Yatmanov's relationship with the Hermitage consistently reiterated that the debate should be framed in terms of a nationwide plan in discussions over distribution and the organization of collections.[369] At a level that perhaps affected staff in the more direct sense, the formality of Hermitage workers joining the All-Russian Union of Workers in Education and Socialist Culture (*Servpro*), who had an explicitly political programme ("raising the class consciousness of its members"), indicated the transition towards centralized and politicized objectives.[370]

Nevertheless, Troinitskii set upon a path which allowed the Hermitage to maintain themselves as a powerful institution at regional, national and international level. During the 1920s, Troinitskii's support and cooperation during exhibitions related to the work of the Hermitage during the Soviet period allowed a mutually beneficial outcome. In one such example from 1920, displays showed the great qualities of Hermitage museum work under Soviet leadership. The Soviet administration appeared as a respected guardian of a now public cultural institution, supporting the growth of the museum's collection and their skilled oversight in utilising the Hermitage's specialisms in areas such as restoration.[371] The Hermitage meanwhile stood out as being central to the future construction of a museum network, a museum capable of enlightening its public (given its popularity) and ultimately as an institution that could be entrusted with a significant degree of autonomy, perhaps despite the nature of its staff.

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[366] 18 December 1922. Benois, *Dnevnik 1918-1924*, pp.377-381.
[367] Meeting No.187, 16 May 1921. Ibid, p.329-331.
[368] 2 July 1923. Benois, *Dnevnik 1918-1924*, pp.555-558. Also, 16 June 1923, p.514-520.
[369] Meeting No.165, 6 December 1920. *Zhurnaly Zasedanii Soveta Ermitazha, (Chast' 2) 1920-1926,* pp.257-261.
[370] Meeting No.193, 4 July 1921. Ibid, pp.349-352.
[371] Meeting No.123, 3 March 1920. Ibid, pp.61-71.

Mikhail Piotrovsky, the first post-Soviet director of the museum, recalled how the Hermitage staff and leadership worked with the Soviet authorities during the pre-war Stalinist period. His family derived quite clearly from the intelligentsia, but were not party members until the post-war period, a move born out of patriotic motive. From conversations with his father Boris, director between 1960 and 1990, the approach of the Hermitage intelligentsia towards the Communist party and government authorities is summarised thus:

> *In the main, it was regarded as an uncomfortable source of power reflecting a low intellectual level. It was something to be dealt with – and if possible manipulated – but not to join. That did not mean they rejected the left-wing idealism of Marx and Engels. Rather it was the institution and its supporters that they were wary of.*[372]

The contrasting success of Iosif Orbeli and Sergei Troinitskii in manipulating the relationship between the museum and political power showed the process to be unpredictable and often dangerous. Both Orbeli and Troinitskii had rallied against the sales of Hermitage artefacts during their respective tenures, but the outcomes speak of the tumultuous path of cultural leaders during the Stalinist period. Stalin's inner cabinet issued a document, 'Measures to increase the export and sale abroad of objects of art and antiquity' in January 1928. When Sovnarkom demanded thirty million rubles be raised from sales, Troinitskii responded by trying to persuade the government that their sales would "result in the destruction of the Hermitage and reduce it from its place as the first museum in the world to the status of a store of second and third rate objects". He told Sergey Oldenburg that Anastas Mikoyan, the Commissar for Trade, was overseeing "literally an orgy of selling".[373] Archival material evidences Troinitskii's disbelief at Antiquariat forcing keepers into impromptu defences of around 'twenty to thirty seconds' whereby they might attempt to persuade officials of the need to retain the artefacts in museum holdings. The following year saw Trotsky's wife lose her position as the head of the museum section of Narkompros. Its commissar, Lunacharsky was dismissed, whilst Yatmanov, still in charge of Leningrad's museums, was discredited. Essentially all those who opposed government policy on sales were removed.

Orbeli had worked under several 'party men' before taking the directorship himself, and working at close quarters to these men had a significant bearing on Orbeli's approach. It was under him that the Hermitage that the museum took a more ambitious role in affairs beyond the Winter Palace. Significant progress was made in bringing travelling exhibitions to distant corners of the Soviet Union and archaeological discoveries involving Hermitage experts contributed to a so-called

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[372] Mikhail Piotrovsky in Norman, *Dynastic Rule*, p.46.
[373] AGE, F. 1, Op. 1, D. 1034, *Dnevnika E. G. Ol'denburg*.

'golden age' between 1935 and 1950. Both these trends bore the hallmarks of adapting to the political demands of the age. Funding and the opportunity to research were more freely available, but at the cost of making minor compromises to reconstruct some conclusions to paint a positive illumination of the past of the Russian people. Making such compromises was without doubt a matter of survival. Four years earlier in 1931, at the All-Russian Conference for Archaeology and Ethnography displayed all of the current trends in archaeological thought, from 'creeping empiricism' to 'formalism. The consequence was the "liquidation of almost all the old archaeologists who were not able to or did not want to adjust themselves to the new requirements and failed to convince everyone of their devotion to the party and government".[374] It was during the following period, a barren spell for new archaeological research at the Hermitage, that Legran's Marxist reconstruction of the Hermitage took place, which implemented a new socio-economic periodization of history. For the institution and its staff to continue, their acceptance was a necessity.

In 1941, over a million works of art were transported in two specially organized trains to Sverdlovsk (Ekaterinburg) in the Urals following the invasion of the Soviet Union by German troops on 22 June 1941. Leningrad was soon encircled in a siege lasting for 900 days. Hundreds of thousands of people, including Hermitage staff, died of starvation. A skeleton staff remained despite severe conditions, digging out victims after the buildings had been shelled and bandaging the wounded, whilst others tried to continue with scholarly activities.[375] Twelve air raid shelters were fitted in the basements of the complex, during which time 12,000 people were housed there permanently. Once the war ended, the museum would not suffer the same fear of losing its collections to Moscow as it did during the Civil War. Indeed it would enter the post-war period as the sole master of its premises, with the Museum of the Revolution having been removed from the Winter Palace, and with its prestige very much intact.

Mikhail Artamonov's 1957 exhibition guidebook, *Forty Years of the Soviet Hermitage* (*Sorok let Sovetskogo Ermitazha*), is testament to the place that the museum had reached in the period following the Great Patriotic War.[376] The book emphasises the cultural maturity of the Soviet state and "the mastering of artistic heritage by ordinary people". The guide speaks of the great Hermitage accomplishments: the five-fold growth in the premises occupied by the museum, the

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[374] Mikhail Miller in Norman, *Hermitage*, p.208. Significant projects like the study of the Urartu in the Pazyryk Valley were curtailed by the sharp effects of political arrests, such as those of Sergei Rudenko (1933) and Mikhail Gryaznov (1934). Their work was prevented until 1947, when world leading discoveries were revealed. The University of Washington https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/museums/shm/shmpazyryk.html and www.hermitagemuseum.org/ hold examples of Rudenko's discoveries. Also Norman, *Hermitage,* pp.215-217.

[375] 'The Start of World War II and Evacuation of the Museum Collections to the Urals': www.hermitagemuseum.org/

[376] M.I. Artamonov, *Sorok let Sovetskogo Ermitazha*, Leningrad, 1957, p.3.

stubborn resistance during the blockade and its growing visitor numbers. The guide clarifies that only “during the years of Soviet power” were technical innovations made and “proper conditions” provided for the museum’s development.[377] But above all else, the guide emphasises that their central goal has been to “involve the working people in the development of artistic heritage”.[378] In their own words, this was “the greatest museum of the Soviet Union and one of the top museums in the world”. As things stood after the Winter Palace had been captured for the glory of the October Revolution, the Hermitage was a relic of Tsarist autocracy, a bourgeois frivolity of questionable relevance to the Soviet future. On the other side of a war that had surpassed the October Revolution as an event to define the credentials of the Soviet system, the Hermitage stood for something very different. Both palace and museum had withstood the weathering forces of time since the Revolution and both were more secure than ever.

[377] Ibid, p.20.
[378] Ibid, p.4.

Chapter 3: The Museum of the Revolution (1917-41)

The Hermitage had presented the new Bolshevik administration with immediate challenges to the nature of their agenda. Were they intent on sweeping away the cultural infrastructure laid down by their Tsarist predecessors? Would their approach to cultural heritage be consumed by spite, or driven by a grand agenda for renewal and creation? Or would Lenin's own demand for cultural conservatism lead to a new spirit of preservation? Who would help them achieve these ends? Whilst their actions, demonstrated in the previous chapter, tell us of the Bolsheviks' disregard for iconoclasm and the desire to utilise the existence of the past, it does not examine the recognition shown for a new curation - one which acknowledged Bolshevik intervention in history. The museum offered a place whereby the long struggle of the revolutionary movement could be legitimised and given a degree of permanence. Moreover, a different type of museum to the Hermitage, and a different understanding of history more broadly, was required to truly recognise their achievement and correct the absence of class struggle.

The Museum of the Revolution (*Gosudarstvennyi Muzei Revoliutsii*) would fit alongside numerous parallel efforts to 'institutionalize October'. Both the Marx Engels Institute, an academic research facility committed to the historical record of the Communist Party, and Istpart, an organization devoted to collating and retelling the October Revolution, curated the effort to make tangible the historic rise of the revolutionary movement. The museums of Petrograd, Russia's longstanding cultural capital, were central to this effort. Where the Hermitage had offered a greater obstacle towards framing of historical progression and cultural heritage, a museum displaying the course of revolutionary history would serve the Bolshevik cause far more effectively and would be expected to have their confidence. The concept of a revolutionary museum, on the very site where they had led the seizure of power, was undoubtedly appealing given the enormous potential to commemorate the October Revolution as the high water mark of the revolutionary movement, but also to establish its tangible historic significance for the Russian people. At the All Russian Museums Congress in Petrograd in February 1919, Anatoly Lunacharsky spelt out the need to "show the masses that the museum is essential to them".[1] At the same Congress, the academic Naum Marr recognized the extraordinary potential of museums to be used for a new period of enlightenment. 'Now that nothing is private', Russia's cultural wealth could be shared for all. Both men understood the remarkable potential of the museum as a central component of the cultural apparatus by which

[1] N. Semenova,'A Soviet Museum experiment', p. 81.

the masses could be educated. The result was that existing museum holdings swelled following the nationalization decrees of 1918 and scores of palace museums were shaped from formerly private collections. In the immediate period following the October Revolution the number of museums in Russia doubled between 1918 and 1920.[2] This rich inheritance would be meaningless unless museums were able to reflect the revised attitude towards Russia's history, especially the epoch defining events which had resulted in the victory of the revolutionary movement. With this remit in mind, Narkompros formed a committee for museum affairs, Glavmuzei, to manage the reorganization of the museum network. In the decade that followed the October Revolution, over 100 historical-revolutionary museums were opened in Russia.

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The Museum of the Revolution (GMR) was established by the Petrograd Soviet on 9 October 1919. The museum was given one of the most historically significant places in the city of the revolution: the Winter Palace. There, the museum was entrusted with safeguarding the revolution by gathering and documenting the material evidence of revolutionary struggle. The GMR was creating collections from anew, creating a reverence for events and concepts that had previously not previously been given a permanent visible public platform. The museum's inimitable collections, coupled with the unique location, gave the GMR the responsibility for the presentation of revolution to the general public.

The broader function of the Museum of the Revolution was to 'become a central museum that can fully and comprehensively illuminate the progress and development of revolutionary movements on a global scale'.[3] Therefore it had not merely a remit to justify and reflect October itself, but also the history of righteous historical struggles for social, economic and political emancipation. This implied an explicitly educational function. The view that only a sustained period of education would remove the shackles of chauvinism and illiteracy in order to enable the masses to fulfil their potential had indeed unified a greater number of intellectuals from across the political spectrum. Likewise, the GMR was established in such a way that it did not make the Bolshevik claim to the revolution exclusive. The creators of the museum came from a variety of political parties, the humanitarian intelligentsia and the Narodnik (Populist) movement, though the Petrograd Soviet did immediately position the true authority of the collegium behind powerful Bolsheviks. These leaders

[2] There were 457 museums in total in 1920. Smith, 'Cultural Heritage and the People's Property', p. 416.
[3] L.A. Mis'ko, 'Ekskursia v proshloe: ekskursionnaia rabota v gosudarstvennom muzee revoliutsii (1921-39)' in A.M. Kulegin (ed.), *GMPIR: 90 let v prostranstve istorii i politiki 1919-2009*, St. Petersburg: Norma, 2010, p.76.

included Anatoly Lunacharsky (Commissar for Education) and Grigorii Zinoviev (Petrograd Soviet Chairman and Politburo member). Most of these men had clear Bolshevik credentials, suggesting a desire to enshrine the revolution in a manner of their own choosing. However, the collegium also included pragmatic appointments. It included the leading academic Sergei Oldenburg, a former Kadet and an acquaintance of Lenin himself since 1891; and Mikhail Kaplan, the first director of the museum. In truth, Kaplan was not suited to the Bolshevik vision. He had lived abroad, was born into a family of formerly good standing and insisted on placing duty above concerns of party allegiance.[4] Oldenburg's appointment, alongside Vsevolod Sreznevskii, Sergey Isakov (future scientific secretary of the museum) and Mikhail Kaplan emphasised the balance taken between the necessary pragmatism of working with existing expertise, and selecting men who placed preservation of Russian culture above any concerns about their new masters. Some of the figures taking place on this first leadership board had these qualities and more. Grigorii Yatmanov had an impeccable party record, as well as refined credentials in the history of art. Pavel Shchegolev had been a fierce opponent of the Tsarist Regime to the extent that he was a member of the Extraordinary Investigative Committee of the Provisional Government, before becoming one of the founders of the Museum of the Revolution and the Archive of the Revolution. It was these men who defined the principles of the museum and its place in the system of cultural institutions in Russia and who formulated its objectives.

While senior Bolsheviks held predominance in the collegium, the roots of the museum lay in the desire for revolutionaries to record their long struggle and to communicate this to a population not fully versed in the long arc of their history. The original collection of artefacts was built around one secretly gathered by Mikhail Novorusskii, a veteran of the revolutionary movement, since the Revolution of 1905. Speaking at the museum opening in 1920, Novorusskii reflected that he 'never stopped collecting certain items . . . they served as a memorial to the lives of comrades'.[5] This collection of items was sent to Berlin, 'where the rudiments of the Museum of the Revolution were laid' until such a time when they could be displayed in Russia itself. Great efforts were also made to engage the public in the process of building the museum.[6] In May 1919, *Petrogradskaia Pravda* lauded the importance of creating a museum in the 'former chambers of bloody emperors and at

[4] V. R. Leikina-Svirskaia, 'Iz istorii leningradskogo muzeia revoliutsii', *Ocherki istorii muzeinogo dela v SSSR*, No.3, Moscow, 1961, p.55. Also, V.M. Ushakova, 'Obychnaia zhizn' v neobychnuiu epokhu M.M. Levis (1890-1991) i ee Vospominaniia v fondakh GMPIR' in A.M. Kulegin (ed.), *GMPIR: 90 let v prostranstve istorii i politiki 1919-2009*, St. Petersburg: Norma, 2010, p. 84.

[5] E.G. Artemov, 'Opyt proshlogo, vzgliad v budushchee. Osnovnye istoricheskie etapy deiatel'nosti Muzeia' in A.M. Kulegin (ed.), *GMPIR: 90 let v prostranstve istorii i politiki 1919-2009*, St. Petersburg: Norma, 2010, p. 7.

[6] When materials began to be stored in Berlin exactly is unknown, but it appears that it began after Novorusskii lived in St. Petersburg (1907).

the tables where they may have signed death sentences', while envisioning portraits of martyrs standing 'like an eternal reminder of retribution'.[7] Likewise the press appealed to the public in sourcing collections. The same newspaper gained a strong response from Petrograders when asking for 'monuments of the Russian Revolution', especially from revolutionary veterans.

Fig. 18: Mikhail Novorusskii, who established the basis for the first GMR collection.[8]

In this initial period, a relatively supportive balance was achieved between Soviet institutions, museum specialists and the cooperation of the public, often through civic groups. Members of one such group, the Society of Former Political Prisoners and Exiles, made up of prominent participants of the revolutionary movement, were part of the collegium which created the museum. The society conducted scholarly research, preserved collections of artefacts and materials, and published *Katorga i ssylka* journal, devoted to those who were put to hard labour and exile. Their activities and research contributed to the development of the GMR. The Petrograd Soviet had agreed to provide 'all materials relating to Soviet construction, as well as materials on the history of the revolutionary movement', while the museum's status was underlined when it was provided with the use of a special agitation train to collect materials from Civil War battlefields.

It also seemed apparent that cultural policy formed a genuine priority during the initial period of the new government. Lunacharsky's public discourse suggested a great endorsement of creativity, cultural enlightenment and preservation of Russia's great heritage – an outline manifesto that largely pleased all who were willing to cooperate with the Soviet authorities. Even the ever-

[7] A.V. Konivets, 'Zimnii dvorets v poslerevoliutsionnye gody: otkrytie Muzeia Revoliutsii', *Istoriia Peterburga*, No.2, 2010, p. 66.
[8] Photograph of Novoruskii in Artemov (ed.), *Iz'iatiiu ne podlezhit... Xranit' vechno*, p.71.

critical Nikolai Punin had to admit his pleasure at sharing the goal of establishing a new culture in his preface to Lunacharsky's published speech at the Petrograd Free Art Society in 1918.[9] The speech readily asked his listeners to embrace the plan for monumental propaganda, a plan to erect dozens of monuments and decorate buildings across the key cities of Russia in celebration of the first anniversary of the 'Great October Revolution'. Lunacharsky argued that even amdist the difficulties of Civil War, they would be rich in cultural wealth. It was amidst this positivity that Lunacharsky declared the many former mansions of the nobility in Petrograd as People's palaces, and the same spirit appeared to be inspiring the plans for the Museum of the Revolution. In practice, there was initial reason to suggest that Lunacharsky's optimism, coupled with promises of support, reached firmly into the creation and support of museums. The numbers of museums in Russia doubled between 1918 and 1920, with collections swelling as a result of nationalisation decrees and the extraordinary measures for the preservation of historical and cultural monuments during 1918. Revolutionary museums were central to this process of expansion.[10] On 11 May 1919, *Petrogradskaia Pravda* published an 'urgent procedure' by the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR, "Regulations on the Museum of the Revolution." In accordance with it, throughout the country it was planned to create a whole network of similar museums: two all-Russian ones in Petrograd and Moscow and local museums of revolution in the provinces.[11] Amidst the swathe of expansion and ambition that brought over 100 museums to be built over the next decade, the state distinguished the Petrograd Museum of the Revolution for its ideological significance. Theoretically, it was to be the model of the new Soviet approach towards museums and bore greater responsibility as such.

This responsibility came with a weight of expectation and interference initially not so obvious in other Petrograd cultural institutions. When Emma Goldman, the American anarchist, arrived at the suite given to the Museum of the Revolution, the former nursery to the Tsar's children in the Winter Palace, she admitted to her great wonder and excitement at the "magic of the great change", imagining a recent past whereby the windows captured a view of the Peter and Paul Fortress when it was the "living tomb" of the Tsar's political enemies.[12] Kaplan, the secretary of the museum when Goldman joined the staff, told her that "The Bolsheviki...complain about a lack of help, yet nobody but a Communist has much of a chance".[13] Nevertheless, in 1920, the Museum of

[9] N. Punin, 'Predislovie' in A.V. Lunacharsky, *Rech', proiznesennaia na otkrytii Petrogradskikh Gosudarstvennykh Svobodnykh Xudozhestvenno-Uchebnykh Masterskikh 10 oktiabria 1918 goda*, Petrograd, 1918, pp.6-7.
[10] Rafienko, p.79.
[11] 'Istoriia GMR/GMPIR': http://www.polithistory.ru/museum/history/view.php?id=22
[12] E. Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia*, Chapter XIII, London: C.W. Daniel, 1925.
[13] Ibid.

the Revolution was considered "among the least interfered with institutions", even "non-partisan".[14] Communist youths were brought in to oversee the Museum being organized on site, despite being unfamiliar with the nature of the work. According to Goldman, regardless of their lack of expertise, Bolsheviks were immediately given positions of authority, a move which resulted in both friction and confusion. Museum staff resented being watched and felt spied upon. Kaplan criticised their presence, "The Bolsheviki do not care about merit…their chief concern is a membership card".[15]

Support was also not especially forthcoming. Working conditions, as with material and technical difficulties, made the initial stages of organizing and displaying within the museum incredibly difficult. One description by Maria Karnaukhova, the Head of Collections, summarises the situation upon her arrival in October 1923; "The staff worked in the corner room, heated by one iron stove. They worked in coats, in galoshes. The cold was appalling".[16] Of course, this was by no means an exceptional state of affairs in Petrograd both during and following the Civil War. Nevertheless, it is worth recognizing the severity of working affairs which accompanied the high expectations of the new government. Even colleagues who visited from related museums were surprised by the poor conditions, given the prestigious place the museum held as the leading institution of its kind. A colleague from Gomel' at the Popovitskaia Museum recalled in 1925 that "They worked in terrible conditions in the sense of cold…the walls of the Palace were literally flowing streams".[17]

The acute difficulty of circumstances were further heightened when examining the financial deficit faced by the museum. The money allocated by Narkompros did not suffice, leaving expenses for renovating the premises and equipping the new expositions, in extreme cases, to the Petrograd Soviet.[18] The struggle to obtain funding as an indicator of limited financial resources was further borne out in analysis of staff wages, with salaries of museum staff wages broadly in parallel to that of factory workers in the mid-1920s at around 30-40 roubles per month. Above this average, the deputy director and academic were paid 175 roubles per month in 1928, guardians 138 roubles, senior assistant keepers 80 roubles and guardian assistants 70 roubles. Junior staff were especially poorly paid, security guards (20-24 roubles) and museum attendants (38 roubles) certainly struggled to make ends meet.[19]

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[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] GMPIR F.VI D.45/1 L.8, *Vospominaniia sotrudnikov*.
[17] Ibid, p.17.
[18] Leikina-Svirskaia, p.62.
[19] E.I. Safonova, 'Moskovskie tekstil'shchiki v gody nepa: kvalifikatsiia i differentsiatsiia v oplate', *Ekonomicheskaia istoriia*, Moscow: Rosspen, 2001, p.393.

Despite conditions on the ground, ambition at the top remained unfazed. Lenin himself wrote amendments to the draft resolution on the establishment of a commission to study the history of the October Revolution in September 1920, and in December, the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Russia considered the organization of the "world's first museum on Marxism".[20] It was also at this time that the founders of the Museum of the Revolution had fixed their vision for the Museum as a "living organism, a laboratory of revolutionary thought". It was to cover all stages of the development of the revolutionary movement, beginning from its origins (the activities of A.N. Radishcheva) and ending with the three Russian revolutions. Their plans on the main tasks of the museum, how to work with the masses and how to ensure competency were agreed upon and work to construct the first expositions was underway having begun in December 1919, ready for full completion in 1922.

The main functional task of the Museum of the Revolution, as far as the Bolshevik leadership saw it, was educational and unambiguous in its portrayal of the revolutionary movement – both in the past, and indeed in how it prepared the visitor for the tasks of the day. The role of the Bolshevik leadership in particular, required placing at the apex of the revolutionary struggle both in historical terms and in its current position as the enlightenment function it maintained during the early years of Soviet rule. Whilst a formal party diktat was not in operation as the museum's first exhibitions opened, it would have been impossible for significant decisions to be taken that would have been objectionable to them. The dissemination of revolution played a central role in the legitimacy of the Soviet state, and the museum offered a physical space whereby this justification could be recognized by the visitor in a voluntary, educational process. The Museum of the Revolution in Petrograd was created with the ambition of being the "recognized leadership among the historical and revolutionary museums of the country".[21] It quickly achieved this reality. By the mid-1920's, the museum staff showed themselves to be innovators in "the propagation and dissemination of historical knowledge".[22]

Collecting the revolution

The core of the Museum of the Revolution collection had been built in the aftermath of the revolutionary events of 1905, with Mikhail Novorusskii the most notable figure, building a sizeable

[20] E.G. Artemov, 'Opyt proshlogo, vzgliad v budushchee', p.8.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.

collection in Berlin, before bringing it to Russia in 1917. Some aspects of the collections were impressive well before the Museum opened officially in 1920. Documentary sources were recognized as particularly impressive and specialist archivists like M.K. Lemke worked with the board of the museum on acquisitions, whilst respected biographer D.S. Makhlin and Academy of the Sciences librarian V.N. Sreznevskii compiled the museum's collection of illegal publications.[23]

Yet collections of this nature were often tarnished by the balancing act of the museum. On one hand documentary sources were effective in that they represented the point of view of enemies to the Tsarist regime. On the other hand, curatorship was constrained by their need to represent issues such as class antagonism without considering the upper echelons of Russian society, with materials from the nobility or those carrying their perspectives broadly rejected for use. Notable collections of documents, mainly diaries and memoirs, related to the Romanov dynasty were acquired by the museum without any likelihood of being used for exposition. Materials relating to the hunting activities of Nicholas II or the financial records of Romanov households were held but not considered for display.[24] Nevertheless, the document collection, with unique documents and archival material collected in these formative years was central to the early displays, before many were eventually transferred to Moscow in the late 1920s.[25]

The press was mobilized to engage the wider public in building the collections for the museum, a call to which many veterans and political activists responded. But the bulk of collections sourcing was completed by the staff of the museum. Given their limited resources, it was the ingenuity and the eagerness of the museum workers that enabled such an array of artefacts to be gathered. This enthusiasm led to often peculiar finds, especially in these early stages of building a collection. V.R. Leikina-Svirskaia recalled one story on this theme, "Once, crossing the ice of the frozen Neva, an employee noticed a man wearing Denikin's greatcoat".[26] She subsequently took him to the museum, where they "exchanged the coat, and Denikin's coat entered our exhibition", placing it on a mannequin and soon finding pride of place in the Civil War department.

The museum cast its net wide in order to secure an effective range of items for their collections. Staff ventured to Pskov, Arkhangel'sk, the Caucasus, Ukraine, and Belarus in 1920-21; enlarging collections of newspapers, documentary sources, banners, posters, weapons and everyday objects. In Khar'kov, a Bureau of the Museum of the Revolution was established to collect materials

[23] GMPIR. F.VI D.45/1 L.16, 'Istoriia GMR: Vstrecha s sotrudnikami muzeia: stareishie rabotniki muzeia Revoliutsii' (Stenogramma, 25 March 1960).
[24] GMPIR F.III D.14487. GMPIR F.II D.51853/51854/51856/51857.
[25] E.Y. Andrianova, 'Muzeia stremleniia sozdavat' marksistskie ekspozitsii' in A.M. Kulegin (ed.), *GMPIR: 90 let v prostranstve istorii i politiki 1919-2009*, St. Petersburg: Norma, 2010, p.69.
[26] Leikina-Svirskaia, p.57.

relating to history of the Civil War. Emma Goldman assisted in the collection of materials for the museum in 1920-21, helping with preparations for their long journeys: the challenges of securing a railway car, equipping it for the "arduous trip" and the bureaucratic difficulty of securing the documents which would give them access to the material they set out to collect.[27] Goldman's experience is a useful microcosm of the new circumstances that such an institution faced in Petrograd. Despite her initial problems securing transport, a task that would have otherwise taken several months, it was acted upon quickly because they had the cooperation of Grigorii Yatmanov, the head of the Department for Museums and Monument Protection and importantly, "a Communist". His position put him in charge of the buildings of the Winter Palace and Goldman was escorted to collect materials for the excursion from the Tsar's former storerooms. Despite the larger part of this collection having been removed, much was left for use. Admitting that "tin plates and pots would have been more appropriate for the expedition", Goldman was given crested Romanov service due to the rule that "no institution may draw upon another for anything it has in its own possession".[28]

The museum was also given institutional and voluntary assistance in the process of collection, helped by students, civil servants, workers and intellectuals in sourcing funds. Organizations such as the Petrograd Union of Workers Consumers Societies, the Health Committee, the Bund Archive Commission and the Political Education Committee all lent assistance.[29] Later into the 1920's, additions were collected from disbanded museums (such as the Komsomol Museum), as well as donations from private individuals and publishing houses in the case of the Museum's print and poster collection. When the first research on the Russian revolutionary poster led to a book in 1925, its author (V. Polonskii) cited the GMR as the richest collection of its kind in the country.[30]

Despite impressive speed in the search for artefacts, the challenge of sourcing and maintaining an overall collection for the museum was intensely difficult. Upon her arrival as Head of Collections, Maria Karnaukhova complained about the "scarcity of museum funds".[31] Elizaveta Yakovleva, the Head of Department on the creation of the Social Democrats (1883-1901) complained about the extremely poor conditions of staff facilities upon arriving in the summer of 1923. Her description of the museum library notes that "Among the valuable books, very often the rats have gnawed away the bindings. Rare documents and dishevelled remains of private collections, portraits

[27] E. Goldman, Chapter XIII.
[28] Ibid.
[29] L.P. Tugova and A.A. Boiko, 'Fond plakata GMR-GMPIR 1900-30 v zerkale istorii' in A.M. Kulegin (ed.), *GMPIR: 90 let v prostranstve istorii i politiki 1919-2009*, St. Petersburg: Norma, 2010, p.53.
[30] Ibid.
[31] GMPIR. F.VI D.45/1 L.17, *Vospominaniia* (Maria Karnaukhova).

of unknown persons…all of this was covered with a thick layer of wet dust from the melted salt scattered everywhere".[32]

Quite clearly, within the first five years of the existence of the Museum of the Revolution, significant achievements were made in line within the social function of the first historical-revolutionary museum in Soviet Russia. The collection, study and storage of historical-revolutionary materials was performed with enthusiasm and capable expertise. A "distinctive feature of the work of the team in those years", according to Evgeny Artemov, was the ability to "present visitors with most of the materials coming into the collection".[33] However, as the testaments from Goldman, Karnaukhova and Yakovleva suggest, the level of support, whether through the provision of funds, independence or material conditions failed to meet the steep ambitions of a museum created by the Petrograd Soviet to an institution at the pinnacle of 'illuminating' the general public towards a greater consciousness of the revolutionary movement, and indeed its relevance to them. Backing for the museum, at least in terms of building its collection, was highly sporadic and subject to the acute economic challenges of the civil war years and those following the conflict. The ambition of the project, to build, safeguard and display to the public artefacts and thematic displays emphasising the historical and progressive importance of the revolutionary movement – despite the adversity of the conditions – undoubtedly had great merit. When taking into account the limited funds, the dangerous or at least decrepit conditions for those seeking to collect, store and ready this fledgling collection for exposition, the scale and range of materials was astounding. Perhaps the best evidence of this can be found in the efforts to represent the civil war. In 1919, with the region only recently captured by Bolshevik forces, a pine bough, which White Guards had used to hang Red Army prisoners, was retrieved from Yamburg [34] Unique homemade weapons were sourced from Siberian guerrillas, as well as banners from partisan detachments in the region.

Such artefacts were acutely relevant to the dividing lines of the day, and these objects contained the potential for bringing about political consciousness. The next challenge was to use this wealth for genuine public engagement and to win the battle to inculcate genuine historical-revolutionary consciousness into the Soviet public.

[32] GMPIR. F.VI D.45/1 L.18, *Vospominaniia* (Elizaveta Yakovleva).
[33] E.G. Artemov, 'Opyt proshlogo, vzgliad v budushchee', p.9.
[34] S.L. Spiridonov, 'Tema Grazhdanskoi Voiny v Rossii v ekspozitsii GMR' in Kulegin, A.M (ed.), *GMPIR: 90 let v prostranstve istorii i politiki. 1919-2009*, St. Petersburg: Norma, 2010, p.126.

Fig. 19: A recent photograph of the pine bough which displayed evidence of atrocities by White forces during the civil war. The artefact remains an important part of the GMPIR collection.[35]

Educating visitors: The 'illumination' function

As the first institution created by the new state to collect, display and represent the revolutionary movement, the Museum of the Revolution was well placed to set a precedent in terms of how the significance of the Russia's revolutions should be understood by the visiting masses. Moreover, this leads us to recognize the clear intent for the Museum of the Revolution to be a cornerstone of the education of the public. It was here that they needed to be illuminated, the history of the revolutionary movement made tangible to them. The way in which revolution would be taught and learned in the museum setting provided a heavy indication as to the nature of the relationship between authority and the general public. Would revolution be communicated as a conversation between active participants, or as great revolutionary gladiators seeking acknowledgement from spectators? Was revolution immediately to be communicated as a vital element of the recent past, or as an ongoing process with which the visitor could identify?

Of course these are questions equally as prevalent to other mediums of communication between the new rulers and the public, such as mass-participant festivals, or print media activity.

[35] Pine bough photograph in Artemov (ed.), *Iz'iatiiu ne podlezhit... Xranit' vechno*, p.151.

But in the case of the Museum of the Revolution, we might at least suggest there are differences in how a conversation focusing on history and ideology would be conducted. This was a museum created and staffed largely by academic experts in Russia's cultural capital, with a civil society alert to the merits and demerits of cultural institutions. Unlike the press, museums theoretically retained a high level of independent expertise, which initially the new government, to a large extent, chose to work with, rather than against. It was also to be a museum that had put great efforts into evidencing the revolutionary movement through objects, whether by publications of the underground radical press, banners from a protest of the February Revolution or Civil War weapons claimed from the field of battle. Therefore the museum initially sought to be less a place of abstraction, and more a monument to what had been achieved and a justification of the ongoing struggle. One final difference from other mediums, in judging how the public were enlightened on the subject of revolution, was the difficulty of having the 'correct' voices by which to lead the process of dissemination. Communist expertise in museums and in organized education was in short supply. Therefore carefully constructed education programmes were essential if the Museum of the Revolution was to be successful.

The predominant method of the formal educational process in the Museum of the Revolution, and indeed its branches located at outposts such as the Shlissel'burg Fortress and the Peter and Paul Fortress, was conducted through excursions. These excursions more commonly came in the format of a tour of the expositions and exhibitions of the museum via a guide who could demonstrate the exhibits in a manner prescribed by the curator, but moreover would "immerse the visitor in the very historical era, make him live in this era, breathe its air, understand and accept events in their completeness and complexity, without notes or innuendo".[36] Excursion guides were expected to retain a high level of professionalism, to respect their visitors and to adapt not only to changing socio-political circumstances, but also to the everyday demands of their public in order to make excursions accessible and understandable to even the least informed visitor.

The excursion service at the Museum of the Revolution begun simultaneously with the opening of the first exhibitions and was continuously updated, especially in the late 1920's and early 1930's. Significantly, the Tourist Institute also opened in 1922 in Petrograd, which developed and tested methods of excursions on various humanities and natural science topics.[37] Guides, often referred to as 'lecturers' or 'leaders', were drawn from across the many posts of the museum. By the end of the 1930's, 25 of the 41 research staff at the GMP led excursions for visitors.[38] Researchers

[36] Mis'ko, p.76.
[37] Ibid, p.77.
[38] Ibid.

were required to be involved in excursion activity in order to better study the demands of the visitors, with only staff completely unrelated to the expositions (such as archivists or librarians) not participating in this activity. According to archival records, in addition to the permanent team of researchers, the museum used 19 freelance guides in 1938, such was the demand.[39]

The level of expertise required was significant. All excursions staff were tasked with the development of new topics of excursion. Archival records strongly suggests that all active excursion staff were accredited for a particular section, meaning that they were required to show their ability to lead in that particular section in order to be certified. Training was thorough. It was taken under the supervision of department heads and senior research staff. Senior staff would conduct individual consultations for GMR guides, as well as systematically listening to them on two or three occasions each year.[40] Documentation suggests that once a listening protocol was satisfied by a commission, certification was awarded, allowing a guide to be classified as 'category 2' for the section under scrutiny (e.g. the V.I. Lenin room at the Smol'nyi Institute) and therefore allowed to independently lead groups for excursions.[41] Of course, guides themselves were provided for in order to develop. They were assisted with written clarification of the methodological work in each department. Continuous improvement of the professional level of guides was supported by the clear depth of planning by the museum administration. In preparing for tours, heads of department consistently conducted tours of their sections in 'master-classes'. In response, the guides were challenged to arrange a sequence in which to best examine the material in the exposition. Other branches of the Museum of the Revolution were also overseen in order to ensure a high degree of expert pedagogy. At the Shlissel'burg Fortress, special seminars were organized to train guides on the history of the citadel.[42] The quality of excursion guide at Shlissel'burg was noted for their individual approach to how tours were conducted, with feedback complimenting the emotive, engaging style of the practitioners at work.[43]

Professional training and development even extended to the incorporation of outside lecturers – with senior historians such as B.D. Grekov giving lectures to the scientific staff on the history of the USSR. Guides even regularly visited other museums in order to draw comparative experience. Records from 1938 show excursions to the State Hermitage Museum apartment of

[39] Ibid.
[40] GMPIR. O.1 D.41 L.3-7.
[41] Ibid.
[42] M.I. Trubkin, 'Shlissel'burgskaia krepost' Oreshek - filial Muzeia Revoliutsii' in A.M. Kulegin (ed.), *GMPIR: 90 let v prostranstve istorii i politiki 1919-2009*, St. Petersburg: Norma, 2010, p.26.
[43] Ibid, p.29.

Alexander Pushkin, for example.[44] The museum itself also reached out to train tourist guides on its expositions, with a programme of nine three-hour classes in action during the latter years of the 1930's.

The tour content itself differed somewhat depending on the type of group being escorted, and of course the nature of the exhibitions in place. However, attention was always paid by the guide to ensure the material of the exhibitions offered an opportunity to develop the understanding of visitors in Marxist themes. Visitor groups were offered different types of tour, namely an 'overview' tour, covering all of the available exhibitions and departments; and 'thematic' tours, whereby visitors only visited a small selection of rooms in order to be enlightened on one issue (or 'problem').[45] Archival documents suggest that the *overview* tour was conducted primarily to out-of-town tourists and groups of excursionists, exclusively in the summer months. This type of tour would no doubt have challenged even the most hardened of revolutionaries at three hours long.[46] The thematic tours were rather kinder at a mere hour and a half to two hours dependent on the theme. All such tours were by appointment only and required pre-booking.

Whilst tourist groups may have been a notable proportion of those visiting the museum for excursions, other group visits came from Home-maintenance Associations (*Zheks*) and workers organizations. However, educational visits from organizations focused mainly on formal places of study. The Museum of the Revolution developed distinct and fruitful relationships with educational institutions, with systematic assistance provided to universities, technical schools, secondary schools and colleges. Excursions were central to the curriculum at the (Zinoviev) Communist University and the Military-Political Academy in Petrograd (later Leningrad), as well as many others. The Dean of Advanced Studies of the Institute of Textile and Light Industry, Lobanov, reported in 1939 that over a three-year period, the Institute had taken 3,000 students through the GMR. Lobanov even went so far as to proclaim a positive correlation in the results of those who had experienced the excursions over those who had not attended during courses in 1939. He was so convinced that he allowed "10 hours for the Museum program".[47] He was not alone in his praise. Head of the Party section on School Improvement for leading NKVD officers, Stavrov, argued "In our school, chiefs of the militia across the whole union are retraining…Having come to the Museum after studying the history of the party in schools, they feel their growth…The materials of the Museum helped them pass".[48]

[44] GMPIR. O.1 D. 46 L.6.
[45] Mis'ko, p.77
[46] Ibid.
[47] GMPIR. O.1 D.61 L.4
[48] Ibid.

Great attention was given to working with schoolchildren. In 1937, the following tasks were set, “To take part in the city museum festival…by organizing group excursions to the museum”. Numerical challenges were further laid down; the enrolment of 3,600 students in 120 groups; the organization of 12 cultural trips of 150 persons (1,800) through the museum and its branches, and no less than 600 groups of extra-curricular excursions, amounting to 15,000 persons.[49] The Museum not only hosted students within its walls, but would correlate its study programs in line with the work of the school. Museum staff were obliged to attend pedagogical conferences prior to the start of the academic year in order to ensure consistency. Annual auditions were held to find and train guides for school groups. Furthermore, such was the focus on building relationships with schools that in 1937 the Museum effectively sponsored selected schools. This meant building a scheme of work in collaboration with the school, and ensuring that the Museum reserved a “number of places (up to 20%) for each supported school” during cultural campaigns, holidays and festivals.[50]

Fig. 20: Schoolchildren queue outside an entrance ahead of their museum excursion in 1937.[51]

Further to their commitment to youth participation in the museum, in 1927 the museum granted free entry to students from Leningrad universities should they join excursion groups. This right was extended to individual entry for those studying humanities subjects.

Historical-revolutionary museums also provided detailed publications, aimed primarily at schools, to create a more systematic approach to educational visits. Both the Museum of the Revolution in Moscow and Petrograd (Leningrad) created published guides for teachers which

[49] GMPIR. O.1 D.36 L.1-2
[50] Ibid.
[51] Photograph in Mis’ko, p.77.

sought to provide a series of visits to the museum over several years of schooling. This process allowed for an increasing level of challenge depending on how abstract the subject matter was to the student. One such publication from 1929 best summarises the approach of these museums towards students learning about the revolutionary movement, namely *Two excursions to the Museum of the Revolution* (*Dve ekskursii v Muzei revoliutsii*), intended for Moscow, but similar in content and style to those utilised in Leningrad. The table below summarises the basic programme of study for students learning about the history of the revolutionary movement (Fig. 21).

Year of study	Themes and emphasis of study related to the Museum of the Revolution
Year IV	*The struggle of peasants and workers – with an emphasis on 1905 and 1917.*
Year V	*The struggle of peasants for land before the revolution of 1917.*
Year VI	*The formation and work of the Social Democrats (RSDLP); Underground political movements; Events prior to and following 1905.*
Year VII	*From Populism to Marxism*
Year VIII	*February to October 1917*
Year IX	*Civil War*
Year X	*The international struggle (Comintern)*

The published guide sets its ambitions high, seeking to shape a programme of social science that helps students "comprehend the historical epoch we are experiencing: the era of socialist construction".[52] The carefully compiled plans assured the readership – presumably educators such as teachers who could lead their own excursion – that the published guidance contained: (1) a rationale for the entire topic, (2) the itinerary, (3) an explanation of the museum material according to the theme according to the age group/content of the curriculum, (4) schemes of work and how materials will be used for study and finally, (5) guidance on how to work with the children.[53] Advice was provided on the intricacies of delivery, such as the method of question and answer session most appropriate to dealing with elements of the excursion, whilst the guides justify the benefits of learning in the museum setting for the children. In this regard, the museum guidance allows for

[52] T.M. Barabanova, L.T. Pavlova, *Dve ekskursii v Muzei revoliutsii: Ekskursionnaia biblioteka obshchestvoveda Trudovoi shkoly*, Moscow, 1929, pp.3-5.
[53] Ibid, p.5 and pp.12-30.

flexible scenarios – allowing the school group in question to begin or finish a topic of study with the visit, or even with students conducting a field study to gather knowledge in order to return to classes armed with the wisdom to complete a project or share their findings based on the individual tasks they have been set.[54] Guide material strongly suggests the intention of building close relationships between schools and the museum, offering the opportunity for teachers to make pre-visits to the site in order to better understand the material and themes within the expositions. For their benefit, and that of the students, a selected reading list for specific subjects of study is offered from appointed historians of the revolution, like Pokrovskii and Sverchkov (for the theme *The Struggle of Workers and Peasants in 1905*), and the journalistic account by John Reed or even extracts from Lenin's collected works (for *The Struggle of Workers and Peasants in 1917*).[55]

Using Year IV as a case in point, the museum gave methodological instructions in order for the teacher to prepare and execute an effective excursion to the museum. Requirements for the excursion needed to consider, (1) how to achieve a consistent theme and guiding idea for the excursion, (2) how to select material for the topic, (3) how to combine the material in complexes (or into higher order thinking) and (4) a sharp, focused excursion design.[56] The museum justified its construction of exhibitions and indeed excursions on the basis of this thinking, with a central idea able to be traced throughout the learning process. In the case of the Year IV excursion in the guide publication, a common theme was planned to help educate on the basis of two case studies related to worker and peasant struggle (divided into 1905 and 1917). In respect to 1905, the core principle giving meaning to both was the theme "the proletariat is the hegemon of the revolution". In the case of 1917, the embracing philosophy was that "growing class struggle unfolded and led from a bourgeois-democratic revolution towards a socialist revolution".[57]

Leaders – teachers and tour guides – were advised to focus on exhibits being used to introduce something new to the tour, and to expand and deepen the presentation of the issue studied. Repetitive content was seen as only serving to "clog the children's perception" of the excursion. When taking younger students (which included Year IV), the advice was to be "economical".[58] The advice was to take an excursion plan which was more selective in the use of artefacts, yet maximised the impact. One example from the Year IV excursion guide suggests using a Savitskii painting to display "aggravation of the land crisis and class struggle in the village", before an Ivanov picture to reveal the "transformation of latent discontent into rebellion", and finally analysing

[54] Ibid, p.5.
[55] Ibid, p.10.
[56] Ibid, p.6.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid, p.7.

a diagram to assess the causes of unrest in 1905.[59] In order to turn such a route into complex reflection, the leader was to seek to "deepen the emotional" aspect of the debate around an artefact.

Published educational guidance such as *Two excursions at the Museum of the Revolution* clearly sought to build an early sense of socio-historical consciousness, as a recurring reflection is given to drawing links between the what was seen in the exhibition rooms, the meta-theme of the study and its relevance to the wider arc of history. For example, it was suggested that the leader might draw links between the party's development of class consciousness in the masses, and the preparations for revolution in 1905.[60] Practically, it was strongly advised to draw links between the end of one section and the beginning of another, so as not to lose consistency. Guidance also reaffirmed the "methodologically correct conduct" during learning excursions. This was exact to the point of suggesting how best to perceive of artefacts: (1) direct perception of the image, (2) analysis of the artefact and finally (3) a conclusion would need to be drawn before moving towards the next stage.[61] Themes should also be studied in a way that would capture the interest or excitement of the students – all quite possible provided the methodological guidance was followed carefully. Indeed, the place of the guide or leader was of paramount importance, something that the educational guidance published by historical-revolutionary museums made clear. Their role must combine a high level of planning and knowledge, with emotion and the ability to bring drama. As more and more educational visits took place, especially from schools, publications of this nature and the correlating advice, became more commonplace as part of the plan to ensure students had a strong grasp of revolutionary history.

From studying visitor reports and museum guest books, the reaction from students broadly confirms the intended propaganda function of the museum, certainly at least in the entries recorded in the 1930's. Excursions through the exhibitions of the 1930's held a very different character to the relatively unstandardized equivalents of those prior to the late 1920's. As with the expositions, excursions were shaped by the effects of museum standardization along Marxist-Leninist lines after the First Museums Conference (1930) and perhaps even more dramatically after the events of 1935-36, when the publication of *A Short Course of the History of the CPSU(b)* and a new director, Sergei Avvakumov, reformed the museum against the backdrop of the purges. After the official history had been laid down in this definitive way, museum guides had the explicit task of "showing the leading role of Lenin and the Bolshevik Party…and its struggle that ensured the victory of the working class

[59] Ibid, pp.7-8.
[60] Ibid, p.8.
[61] Ibid, p.9.

in our country".[62] Indeed guides were now limited to commenting upon "officially approved and ideologically verified materials" that showed the "historical triumph of the only true doctrine".[63] Visitor comments from 1935 suggest that the guides were successful in delivering this message without ambiguity. Students from the School of Propagandists from the Volodarskii District confirmed that "an excursion to the Museum of the Revolution certainly helps to study the history of our party".[64] Visiting Leningrad military cadets praised the consistency of the expositions, which helped "visitors to better learn the material".[65] Other feedback from the Engels Higher Party School willingly praised the tour guide for the "very well constructed lecture, adapting to the requirements of visitors and taking into account the instructions of the CPSU(b) on the teaching of history, which showed Lenin and Stalin very well".[66] Such comments of course reflect the position of the guide and the excursion in the second half of the 1930's – it was effectively official commentary by an official commentator, merely reflecting the controlled content of the installations. Despite this, Mis'ko suggests the "deep professionalism and education, characteristic of Old Petersburg (and somehow instilled in new Leningrad intellectuals)" was able to "prevent the Museum of the Revolution from becoming an ordinary branch of Agitprop".[67]

But not all entries were willing to toe the line, with a student named as Rabinovich writing in November 1936 that "Everything was not as good as it should have been. Why in the Decembrists section was there no mention of 'Russkaia Pravda'? Why in the Populists' department is there no 'Kolokol' Bell? In general, the museum is now a collection of pictures about the history of the party and only suitable for illustration, not for study".[68] Whilst many criticisms were of a more vapid nature, such as complaints about the "incredible cold in most rooms, or logistical, "The departments are very scattered, which tires out the visitor",[69] there were also suggestions that would have troubled the authorities ensuring Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. There still remained a desire to "see the historical rooms of the last Tsars" and curiosity to see the living quarters of the Imperial family amongst visitors to the GMR remained.[70] Of course, this was not ignored and the apartments of Nicholas I and Nicholas II were closed off. Aside from this, comments from this time suggested the

[62] O.V. Velikanova, 'Stalinizm v mikroistorii razrusheniia Muzeia Revoliutsii v Leningrade Chastnyi sluchai bol'shoi politiki (1935-1956)' in A.M. Kulegin (ed.), *GMPIR: 90 let v prostranstve istorii i politiki 1919-2009*, St. Petersburg: Norma, 2010, p.88.
[63] Mis'ko, p.81.
[64] GMPIR. O.1 D.43 L.29.
[65] GMPIR. O.1 D.43 L.26.
[66] GMPIR. O.1 D.43 L.9
[67] Mis'ko, p.81.
[68] GMPIR. O.1 D.43 L.3.
[69] GMPIR. O.1 D.43 L.33.
[70] GMPIR. O.1 D.43 L.32.

exhibition designs were also critiqued as being distant and sterile, beyond a history displayed or discussed via diagrams, charts and simplified contrasts between progressive and reactionary.

Sample period	Excursions taken	Excursion participants	Total visitors
November/December 1922	122	3,172	4,800
November/December 1923	1,102	27,023	44,515
1923-24 (Annual report)	1,731	40,557	66,761
October 1926 – October 1927	2,350	-	131,834
1931 (Annual report)	4,137	-	212,239
1938 (Annual report)	7,739	-	165,707

Fig. 22: A summary of visitor and excursion participants at the GMR (1922-1938).

Representing the revolution: expositions at the Museum of the Revolution

As previously discussed in the earlier examination of collections, the creation of expositions in the Museum of the Revolution was uniquely ambitious. This ambition was particularly prevalent in the representation of the ongoing state of revolution: the museum was able to piece together history as it was taking place. The creation of the museum, the designing of its exhibitions and the building of its collections took place amidst the tumult of civil war, and it was committed to ensuring that the continuing challenges would not prevent the museum from fulfilling its remit to enlighten. The museum commissioned its own train car, which made three trips to Ukraine, as well as Arkhangel'sk and Belorussia to gather materials ranging from leaflets, banners, newspapers and posters to weapons used in the conflict. In 1920, the museum had a bureau in Khar'kov in order to gather artefacts, whilst men like D.A. Furmanov, Head of the Political Department of the 9th Army, and former squadron commander, V.N. Gurslanova, exhaustively collected materials before they were transported to Petrograd. There, they would become central components of the first expositions.[71]

[71] L.A. Dubinin, *Muzei Velikogo Oktiabria*, Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1965, pp.13-14.

From its beginnings in the Winter Palace, the museum was divided into four departments.[72] The first, starting from the Saltykovskii entrance hall, focused on the 'underground period', emphasising the peasant uprisings from the 17th century onwards (including the Pugachev uprising) and guiding the visitor until the events of 1905. This exposition had rooms on the Decembrist revolt, the mid-19th century, populism and the 'birth of social democracy', including of course, the Russian Socialist Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP). The second department dealt with the development of the revolutionary movement in Europe, highlighting the Paris Commune and the role of the International. The third section, with the visitor entering from the famous Jordan staircase, encompassed the 'Imperialist War' beginning in 1914, the February and October revolutions of 1917 and the Civil War. Here, as might be expected, these rooms were developed in the greatest detail. Significant sections were devoted to themes such as the fall of autocracy and the organization of the masses. Rooms were curated for displaying the politicization of the army during the Imperialist War and different theatres of the Civil War. Finally, the museum had a fourth department which reflected upon the victims of forced labour and penal servitude. These themes would be explored in greater detail once the Museum of the Revolution had fully opened its branches at Shlissel'burg and the Peter and Paul Fortress.

The first exhibitions, opened in November 1922, were not single expositions and instead they maintained separate, yet quite obviously related themes. Each department maintained their own collections, held responsibility for their own exhibitions, and their displays were dictated to a large extent by recently collected material.[73] The creation of expositions relied heavily on their own scientific developments, their experience and of course, the framework of Marxist-Leninist theory. In certain departments, the staff were drawing upon personal experience of the themes – indeed, many were participants in revolutionary events and the Civil War. They were also participating in unchartered territory in that the historiography of such events was still being formed. The historiography was being created in tandem with collecting and design work, meaning that the early exhibitions were remarkably pliable.

If the contemporary nature of revolutionary events initially rendered the civil war section fluid in its development, then subjects without a clearly determined narrative, such as the use of masonic objects in the Decembrists display, gave another example of unprecedented curatorship. As evidenced in the museum guides of 1928 and 1933, Masonic objects certainly remained in the displayed collection for at least a decade, despite the broadly negative attitude held by communists

[72] V.D. Zamirailo et al., *Muzei Revoliutsii. Kratkii putevoditel' po muzeiu*, Leningrad, c.1928, pp.4-9.
[73] Spiridonov, p.127.

towards freemasonry. The lack of records means that there are no definitive answers as to the logic of why they were utilised, but it appears that it was the first attempt to use Masonic artefacts to discuss a phenomenon in Russian history, rather than purely as objects of wonder.[74] The section was formed in 1925 and removed ten years later, when the Bureau of the Leningrad City Council Committee of the Communist Party passed a resolution which criticised "serious methodological errors", leading to their retraction from display and eventual transfer to the Hermitage in 1954.[75] These items were used in conjunction with the exposition on the Decembrists and the revolt of 1825, focusing especially on the proliferation of secret societies in the first quarter of the nineteenth century after the French Revolution "had showed them a revolutionary way out" and the contradictions which had emerged "between the demands of the capitalist economy developing in Russia and the old Feudal way of life".[76] The displays, as described by the 1928 guide to the museum, in addition to articles published by pedagogical staff the following year, fully suggest that the exhibition openly illustrated the importance of Decembrist participation in masonic lodges. Freemasonry was portrayed as a "cosmopolitan brotherhood" with the objective of transforming life through "moral improvement".[77] Importantly, the primary driving force was the desire for "equality of all people". But just as central, as a result of their independence from both church and state, was the ability of Freemasons to explore freedom of conscience, and therefore freedom of thought.[78] In an article written by Nikolai Druzhinin for a Museum of the Revolution collection of articles in 1929, the bold direction found within Freemasonry paved the way for the doctrine of liberal individualism and political parties.

[74] L.V. Kudzeevich, 'Masonskie predmety v Muzee Revoliutsii: rekonstruktsiia kontseptsii eksponirovaniia' in A.M. Kulegin (ed.), *GMPIR: 90 let v prostranstve istorii i politiki. 1919-2009*, St. Petersburg: Norma, 2010, p.39.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Zamirailo et al., *Muzei Revoliutsii. Kratkii putevoditel' po muzeiu*, p.14.

[77] N.M. Druzhinin, 'Masonskie znaki P.I. Pestelia', Moscow: Muzei revoliutsii SSSR, 1929, pp.40-41.

[78] Ibid.

Fig. 23: Part of the GMR exposition devoted to the Decembrist movement, Leningrad, late 1920's.[79]

The use of masonic objects at the Museum of the Revolution showed an ability by the museum staff to be innovative, especially in updating their exhibitions in tandem with a developing historiography. A case in point can be found with the support of Nikolai Druzhinin's research in the late 1920's. Druzhinin, employed since 1926 to tackle the many problems of museology and methodology within exposition work, extended the existing knowledge of freemasonry and the Decembrist movement from the renowned amateur historian and narodnik, V.I. Semevskii.[80] In line with Druzhinin's argument, the expositions increasingly reflected freemasonry as a school of noble conspiracy. Developed focus was given to the causal movements leading to the activities of the Decembrists, the agrarian crisis of the early nineteenth century and the social composition of the Decembrists themselves. The article by Druzhinin portrayed Pavel Pestel's lodge, the Union of Salvation (*Soiuz spaseniia*), as filled with members of noble families "imbued with the mood of cabin liberalism", increasingly drawn to "casual conversations".[81] This sparked a reconceptualization of the display and even the search for new artefacts. The Pestel collections were considered amongst the museum's key exhibits, enabling visitors to gain a clear insight into the formative stages of a secret political society. They emphasised Pestel's preference for masonic societies as a "suitable shell for a militant,

[79] Photograph reprinted in Kudzeevich, p.39.

[80] V.I. Semevskii, 'Dekabristy-masony', *Minuvshie gody*, Nos.2-6, St. Petersburg, 1908, pp.379-433. Also, P. O'Meara, *The Decembrist Pavel Pestel: Russia's First Republican*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

[81] Druzhinin, 'Masonskie znaki P.I. Pestelia', pp.16-17.

strictly disciplined organization", with Aleksandr Murav'ev noting that it "seemed relatively easy to take advantage of the ready-made, more or less homogenous closed cell". Druzhinin's work in examining Pestel's belongings had a direct impact on GMR display, with aprons, daggers relating to the French masonic system, notebooks and letters of the Swedish masonic system placed as a central element of the Decembrist display. In essence, the museum curators were keen to recognize Druzhinin's research as at the forefront of understanding the earlier stages of the revolutionary movement. It was a shared quest for the curators, alongside dynamic historical research of the day. Druzhinin's fate, like the more dynamic early curating of the GMR, would not survive the demand for orthodoxy, and his work was publicly criticised by M.N. Pokrovskii, the dominant force in the historical sciences, in *Pravda* in 1929. Druzhinin was denied the right to defend himself, with a letter he wrote in response refused publication. He was arrested in 1930 and exiled to Siberia before being restored to academic life.[82] During his time at the museum, he published a monograph on Nikita Murav'ev, amongst a wider catalogue on the Decembrists and the Northern Society, in which he contended that the main objective of the Decembrists was "radical change of the form of government and an overall social reform" rather than merely regicide, a wider scope than had been previously argued.[83]

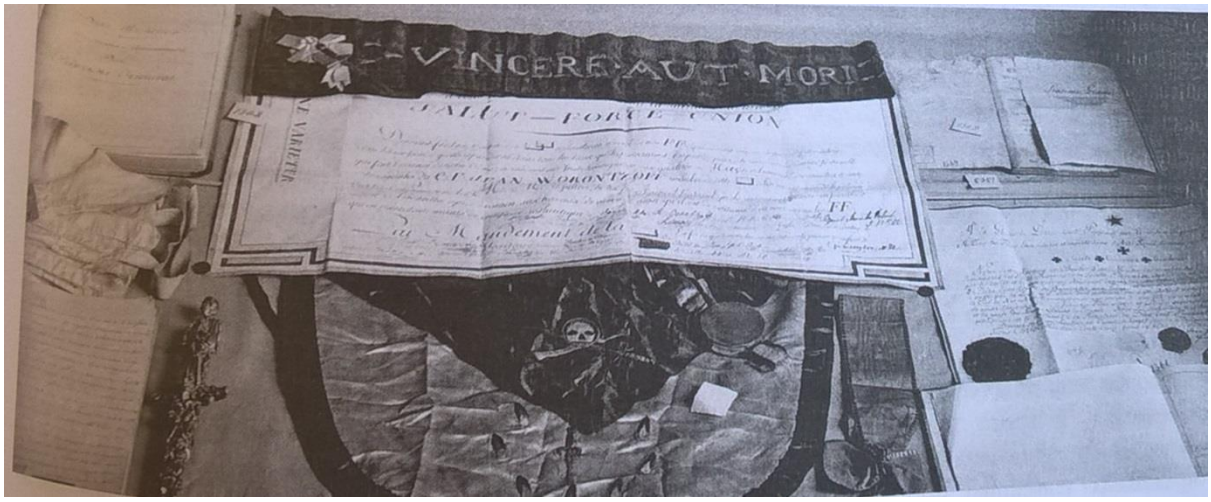

Fig. 24: GMR display case with masonic documents and symbols in the early 1930's.[84]

[82] V.N. Abrosimova, 'Pravda vsegda odna! Pis'ma akademika N.M. Druzhnin – Yu.G. Oksmanu', http://ihst.ru/projects/sohist/document/abr00vr.htm
[83] N.M. Druzhinin, 'Dekabrist Nikita Murav'ev' in N.M. Druzhinin, *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii v XIX veke,* Moscow: Nauka, 1985, p.73.
[84] Photograph reprinted in Kudzeevich, p.43.

The representation of masonry showed the potential of the museum's exhibitions to be at the forefront of drawing new conclusions which contributed to new ground in the historiography. Other sections were more carefully guarded and more acutely aware of the bearing that the topics had on a contemporary perception of the revolutionary movement. The *Guide to the 1905 department at the Museum of the Revolution* (1931) is representative of the need to provide a clear link between the events of 1905 and the seizure of power in October 1917, which effectively formed the culmination of the exhibition. Hence the department was designed with Lenin's analysis, that "without a dress rehearsal" (i.e. 1905), the success of the October revolution would not have been possible. A new effort to emphasise 1905 led to a newly opened, updated exposition in 1930, marking the 25th anniversary of the December uprising in Moscow.[85]

The 1905 department was constructed with clear educational navigation in mind, both in terms of visitor understanding and in the suggestion that major lessons were learnt by the revolutionaries and had been disseminated in order to ensure success in 1917. From 1930, the department had clearly defined elements; (1) *The beginning of the revolution*, (2) *The urban movement acquires a new ally in the revolutionary peasantry*, (3) *Whilst the proletariat fights, the bourgeoisie sneaks into power,* (4) *The revolution on the rise: the labour movement erupts*, and (5) *The zenith of the revolution and the beginning of reaction*. The first room, *The beginning of the revolution*, provides a microcosm of how the museum expositions sought to be effective in their distillation of complex revolutionary history. Immediately upon entering the room, a number of diagrams clarify the economic and political situation facing the country, including the fall in wages during 1904, followed by a satirical judgment on the right hand wall, capturing the heinous social structure of Russian society in the form of a social pyramid. The use of visual representation continued with photographs capturing the assembly of factory workers and strikes at the Putilov Plant from January 1905. The arrangement of the exposition enabled a progressive experience for visitors, one typical of the museum's approach. First a statement of context, a justification of grievances, both in conclusive, factual terminology, and in terms of broad consensus and opinion. This would then lead to the development of an emotional tone, often with the use of art. In the case of the first 1905 room, this included Voitsekh Kossak's *Krovavoe voskresen'e v Peterburge (Bloody Sunday in St. Petersburg)* and the original cast from which Matvey Manizer's bronze relief was created for *Monument to the victims of 9th January 1905*.

[85] S.I. Chukhman, *Otdel 1905 goda v gosudarstvennom muzee revoliutsii v Leningrade*, Leningrad: OGIZ (Gos. izd-vo izobrazitel'nykh iskusstv), 1931, p.4.

Fig. 25: Voitsekh Kossak's *Krovavoe voskresen'e v Peterburge 22 ianvaria 1905 goda*.[86]

The following room, focusing on the spread of revolution, emphasises the trend from the late 1920's towards the museum making greater use of emotive art, giving a more romanticised tone to expositions. The GMR employed its own artists to this end, utilising their work where there was need for an artistic interpretation of events. Olga Tauber, a recent graduate from the Leningrad Academy of Arts, was one such example, joining the museum in 1927.[87] Her main work in this room was in the form of a model which illustrated a shortage of land in the countryside for the peasants, alongside the following photographs which depicted the struggle of the peasants against landowners.[88] The sculpture model strides a position somewhere between the menacing implication of revenge, and the taste of black humour as the oversized peasant stands tall over the land. Yet Tauber's original sculpture reflects a trend that had begun in the last few years of the 1920's, whereby the pressure to reform shifted the emphasis of the museum's social function, introducing what Artemov calls "vulgar sociology" and the denial of "museum specificity".[89] Instead of the primacy of original collected artefacts, the emphasis was increasingly placed on an orthodox dissemination of history for functional, educational purposes. A final reasoning for the museum looking towards original artwork like Tauber's model can also traced to the lack of available 'unique' objects. The significant collection of archival material on the history of the revolutionary movement the museum had built up during

[86] G.A. Gapon, *Gosudarstvennoe upravlenie v Rossii v portretakh*: http://deduhova.ru/statesman/georgij-apollonovich-gapon/

[87] O.N. Tauber, 'Biografiia', *Tramvai iskusstv*: http://tramvaiiskusstv.ru/skulptura/spisok-khudozhnikov/item/1159-tauber-olga-nikolaevna-1899.html

[88] Chukhman, p.8.

[89] E.G. Artemov, 'Opyt proshlogo, vzgliad v budushchee', p.10.

the 1920's was almost all transferred to the Moscow central archives or Leningrad regional archives.[90]

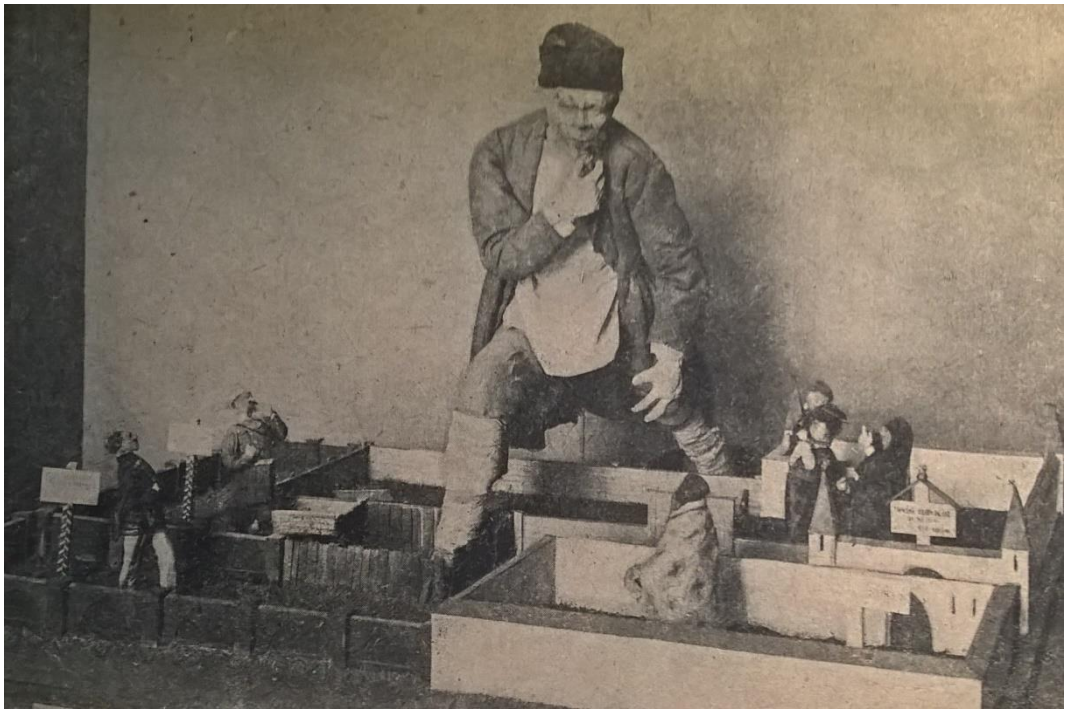

Fig. 26: *Peasant land shortage*, a model created by the sculptor O.N. Tauber and B.M. Bunakova.[91]

The restructuring of the State Museum of the Revolution (GMR) as a result of the First Museum Congress of the USSR in December 1930 effectively created a more centralised oversight over museum methodology. For museum exhibitions, but historical and revolutionary exhibitions in particular, it meant replacing existing methods of constructing expositions with a "propaganda approach to the display of historical phenomena". Moreover, with the party insisting upon the intensification of class struggle in the period of socialist construction, the will of the party was brought more directly into the field of museum activities. Taking the 1905 department as an example clarifies the impact of reform, as curators struggled to meet the demands of the First Museums Congress and the Commissariat of Education instructions that identified the "Marxist-Leninist display of materials on the history of the revolution" as the main task of the museum.[92] Given the directives of the First Museums Congress, the expositions within the 1905 department and indeed the 1931 guide act as strong evidence of the shift towards upholding the place of the Bolsheviks as a consistent presence in the two decades prior to October 1917. The exhibition

[90] GMPIR. F.VI. D.45/1, *Vospominaniia*, p.8.
[91] Photograph in Chukhman, *Otdel 1905 goda v gosudarstvennom muzee revoliutsii v Leningrade*, p.9.
[92] E.G. Artemov, 'Opyt proshlogo, vzgliad v budushchee', p.10.

presentation suggests that there is no question of their importance in 1905, with the Third Congress of the RSDLP offering ample evidence of the revolutionary Marxism of the Bolsheviks struggling against the "stubborn resistance" of the Mensheviks.[93]

The process of ensuring that historical and revolutionary museums enlightened their visitors along Marxist-Leninist lines branched out into the use of publications built primarily around the expanding collection of photography and original artwork in the museum. Created from the Moscow equivalent of the GMR, a book series aimed at schools contained visually stimulating artwork in the museum's collection, supported with thorough narratives to educate readers. One such publication, focusing on the "development of capitalism in Russia and the revolutionary struggle of the working class" between 1885 and 1905, clearly maintains an educational ambition, particularly appealing to students of art or even teachers with an interest in disseminating the historical period.[94] Alongside emotive and distressing original paintings, like *Shooting* (*Rasstrel*) by Sergei Ivanov, a participant in the 1905 Moscow uprising, the book imparts cleverly placed quotations from Lenin and a picture section dating his activities across the aforementioned period. Publications like this, alongside the efforts in revolutionary museums themselves, sought to combine orthodox Marxist-Leninist history with the popularization of approved artwork.

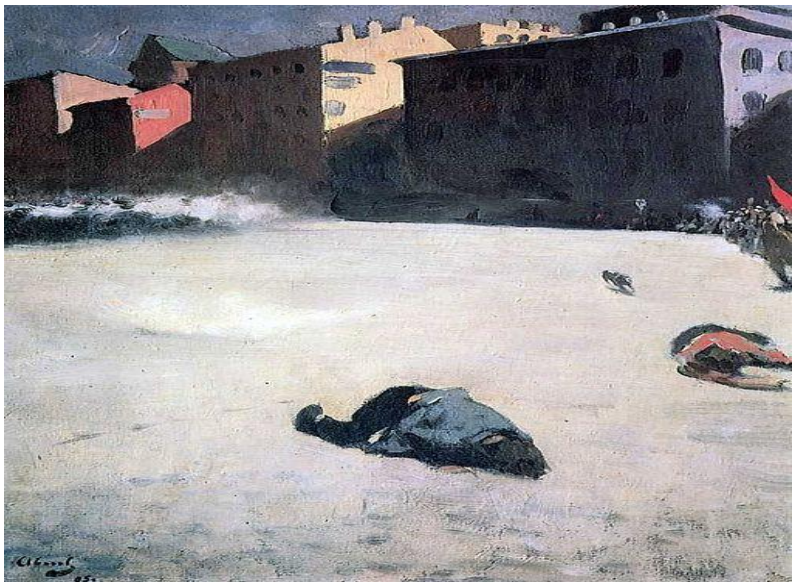

Fig. 27: *Shooting* (*Rasstrel*) by Sergei Ivanov (Museum of the Revolution, Moscow).[95]

[93] Chukhman, p.10.
[94] S.I. Mitskevich, '*Muzei revolutsii SSSR*', Moscow, 1927, p.2.
[95] Painting in Ibid.

The requirement to create Marxist expositions offered the most significant factor behind the evolution of GMR exhibitions throughout the 1920's. Yet there were other practical and critical considerations that also led to modernization. Andrianova argues that initial expositions suffered somewhat from the task of creating permanent exhibitions because of a failure to moderate, with almost everything collected put into displays.[96] An exhibition on 'White Terror during the Civil War', which focused primarily on Denikin's troops, had been constructed with materials brought by the expedition of the museum to the south of Russia.[97] In this exhibition, the museum worked closely with historian P.A. Schegolev, a leading expert, but one who "did not fully know and understand the museum business".[98] The exhibition had many clothing items and the nature of the layout was perceived as awkward or unclear. Comments from other staff recognized that the exhibition hall appeared as an 'open book', with visitors required to read dense portions of text. Other staff minced no words at all, reflecting on the exhibition design as "poor", arguing some of the works shown were "anti-artistic".[99] A jubilee exhibition celebrating the 25th anniversary of the RSDLP was dominated by a deluge of quotations and slogans, producing "outright boredom" on the faces of visitors.[100] Exhibition design of this period was characterized by handicraft. Staff recollections discuss the well-known "Uncle Yasha" (Y.V. Zolotov), the permanent assistant who combined the roles of carpenter, locksmith, framer and designer.[101]

The approach to exhibition design was of course limited significantly by the acute lack of funding, but slowly innovations started to bring progress during the middle of the decade. Coloured borders signified or distinguished the displayed artefacts: black for Kadets or Monarchists, pink for SR's and Mensheviks, yellow for Bolsheviks. The museum also moved away from the use of flat diagrams by the end of the decade, whilst quotes from textbooks were not used, and every point was in some way highlighted and illustrated.[102] Funding constraints still required staff to be thrifty in their quest to make improvements. An agreed weakness in the museum was the chronic shortage of clothing, leading to forays into the local flea markets to find illustrative material, which filled gaps in the display of socio-economic background of the required era.[103] Spiridonov's research into the work of the changing display of Civil War materials at the museum argues that the permanent exhibitions of all departments were already functioning well by 1927, but that ongoing restructuring was taking

[96] GMPIR. F.VI D.45/1, *Zapis'*, p.17.
[97] Leikina-Svirskaia, p.57, p.64.
[98] Andrianova, p.69.
[99] GMPIR. F.VI D.45/1, *Vospominaniia*, p.17.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid, p.18.
[102] GMPIR. F.VI D.45/1, *Otchet*, p.23.
[103] GMPIR. F.VI D.45/1, *Vospominaniia*, p.18.

place due to a need for "deeper scientific study" and the central goal of a systematic display on the history of the revolutionary movement had still not been attained.[104]

As has been highlighted, large-scale reform took place in light of the First Museums Congress at the end of 1930. Changes were made to the scientific approach and exposition work. The civil war department was singled out for reform, with changes required to meet the 15th anniversary of Soviet power. From 1932, the exhibition was developed around a themed-chronological approach, reflecting the key events of the Civil War, beginning with January 1918 and finishing with the formation of the USSR in December 1922, providing a clearer historical outline. If earlier incarnations of the civil war department had a propaganda element, it now became a predominant emphasis. Visual aids on the history of the Bolshevik party were now central to the exhibition. Slogans, diagrams, quotes and diagrams, as well as the now lessened numbers of artefacts, only reinforced this visual agitation.[105] Even the early signs of a growing personality cult around Stalin were starting to be seen, with his quotations and a Lenin-Stalin relief – but this was not a predominant feature at this stage.[106] Even with the trend to move away from original artefacts, the staff working on the updated 1932 display felt it necessary to "materialize the exposition" and "saturate the exposition with authentic things". This led to the use of life-size imitation figures dressed in civil war clothing. One such scene included a White Guard officer, a figure in civilian clothing and an English officer drinking for a "single and indivisible" Russia.[107] In the early years of the 1930's, with indecision between the previous reliance on authentic materials and the new trend to create models or propaganda displays, the 'theatrical exposition' became commonplace. Leikina-Svirskaia reflected on this trend in the museum, noting that "the confusion of genuine monuments with theatrical props was later justly condemned".[108] Another growing practice was the emphasis on 'domestic fragments', attempts to recreate living conditions that evoked a certain time. For example, one fragment created the atmosphere of a civil war-era Petrograd worker, complete with leather jacket hanging from the wall, documents including propaganda posters and food cards, whilst a burzhuika (stove) completed the scene.[109] Illustrative methods presupposed the presence of exposition materials that were not genuine, creating opportunities to discuss topics that were too difficult to effectively evidence through exhibits. Such visual aids were used widely in the early 1930's, perhaps most notably in the shape of the huge papier-maché figures (or interventionists) which wriggled

[104] Spiridonov, p.127. Leikina-Svirskaia, pp.68-69.
[105] E. Yakovleva, S.I. Chukhman, V.R. Leikina, *Gosudarstvennyi muzei Revoliutsii v Leningrade: Kratkii putevoditel' 'po otdelam'*, Leningrad, 1933, pp.19-33.
[106] Ibid, p.27.
[107] Leikina-Svirskaia, pp.69-70.
[108] Ibid, p.71.
[109] Ibid, p.72.

from the ceiling, followed by a relief map of Russia where foreign imperialists were ready to gorge upon the bounty of Russia's plentiful natural resources.

Fig. 28: A model in the Civil War department. *Foreign imperialists look to exploit Russia*, 1932-35.[110]

During this period, the Civil War department also used what might be deemed 'interactive' displays. A model was designed that showed the Bolsheviks as the real representatives of the peasantry in the short-lived Constituent Assembly (1917-18), despite not having a majority. The model contained representatives from each major party, differing in size depending on their number of deputies. Behind each of the party representatives, a Bolshevik worker, backed by a mass of peasants, appeared with a 'decree on land', and lit up so that a silhouette was created over the scene.[111] Another display with moving parts showed the so-called democratic counter-revolution, preparing the ground for the White Guards. The figure of a Socialist Revolutionary stood on a throne with the banner of democracy in his hands hidden under a hollow cloak, beside a gallows frame. With a lever turn, a hidden mechanism was triggered, the Socialist Revolutionary was kicked to the ground by a general's boot, leaving Admiral Kolchak to appear on the throne. Now the gallows lay in his hands, while the banner of democracy lay at his feet.[112]

The radical restructuring of the early 1930's was certainly not limited to the civil war department. In a sign of the pressure applied by Narkompros, a circular letter was sent to all museums in March 1933 demanding that they reflect on the results of the First Five Year Plan and

[110] Spiridonov, p.132.
[111] Ibid, p.129.
[112] Leikina-Svirskaia, p.73-74

the goals of the Second Five Year Plan in their expositions. Yakovleva recalls the effort to react to the First Five Year Plan. In the anteroom, "a large, moving circle layout" was constructed, with "slides and models showing the data of industrial and agricultural growth".[113] In the frenetic push to get the expositions ready, the staff struggled with the "grief of electrified layouts…they were built with handicraft and fell into disrepair at amazing speed". The museum staff took every effort, creating models that reflected historical changes in statistics and "complex socio-economic processes". Models made with "painted plywood figures depicted the stratification of the village" showed that this was still time when innovation was required without expense. Similarly, photographs "were subjected to colouring by hand".[114]

Museums were tasked with "investigating the state and the struggle for quality in the national economy and cultural construction in their region".[115] They were required to organize appropriate classes with workers and collective farmers. All museums faced the impact of distorting and displacing their traditional methodology, their work with visitors and of course their exhibition layout and content. Despite this shift, with the object moving further into the background against the emphasis on agitation, Artemov argues that "a number of historical and revolutionary museums struggled for the right to maintain the principle of building expositions which provided for a harmonious combination of genuine objects with a minimum of auxiliary material".[116] In this struggle, GMR "took an active part" and maintained authentic exhibits as a leading element of expositions.[117]

This struggle had been hardened with the publication of *Sovetskii Muzei* by Narkompros in 1931. In the very first issue, the article 'On the tasks of the Soviet Museum', clearly displayed an antagonistic position towards any institution considering dissent. The article derided museums that had resisted reform and the demands of the wider cultural revolution; "While remaining sections of the cultural front passed one after another from the restoration period to the reconstructive one, some museums experienced their abstractly collective and protective period".[118] The article accused some museum institutions of "guarding themselves from the socialist construction of the museum". It attacked "individual museum exhibits" that had "linked their fate with the doomed past", whilst other museum workers had gone "hand in hand and shoulder to shoulder" with the Bolsheviks and

[113] GMPIR. F.VI D.45/1, *Vospominaniia*, p.18.
[114] Ibid.
[115] E.G. Artemov, 'Opyt proshlogo, vzgliad v budushchee', p.10.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid, p.11.
[118] *Sovetskii Muzei*, No.1 (1931), p.4.

the working class.[119] The article went on to argue in support of the museum as a "political and educational complex", not just recognizing the events of the past, but instead acting to "help revolutionary understanding and bring revolutionary action".[120] Narkompros fully placed their support firmly behind "restructuring our museums on the basis of dialectical materialism" and against the "ideological distortions of Marxism".[121]

Recognizing that they could not ignore the magazine, V.R. Leikina-Svirskaia contributed 'New exhibition in the Leningrad Museum of the Revolution' to the sixth issue later that year. Leikina-Svirskaia gave a lengthy description of the exhibition, supported by photographic evidence. She asserted that the museum was seeking to build expositions in a new way, avoiding "flat diagrams (and)….unreadable quotations", as well as coloured background decorations and a range of methods best suited to the modern era.[122] Leikina-Svirskaia concluded that the museum had found that the best Marxist analysis was achieved by using modern sources and by relating the "evaluation of historical phenomena in the past to the tasks of the proletarian revolution".[123]

Following Leikina-Svirskaia's defence, an article by S. Livshits, 'The history of class struggle and its reflection in museums', drew comparison between the museums of the revolution in Leningrad and Moscow. Livshits certainly recognized both museums for their assessment of "objectivism" in the display of the past, but the critical review judged the "Marxist illumination to be better in the Moscow museum", despite some appreciation of the Leningrad museum.[124] "The Leningrad Museum of the Revolution remains without a domestic background showing how workers and peasants, landlords and capitalists lived".[125] Little is known about the reaction to the articles, or if they led directly to the reforms that followed, but the articles of *Sovetskii Muzei* give a definitive pattern of the pressure faced by museums and indeed cultural institutions in the early 1930's.

[119] Ibid, p.5.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.
[122] *Sovetskii Muzei*, No.6, p.33.
[123] Ibid, p.34.
[124] Ibid, pp.42-43.
[125] Ibid, p.43-44.

Fig. 29: Storage rooms at the GMR in 1930.[126]

"The old manual was removed": GMR after 1935

Reflecting back on how he came to be appointed as director of the Museum of the Revolution in May 1935, Sergei Avvakumov described how "the staff of the museum was stunned by the decision of the Party committee".[127] Preceding his appointment and the decision to close the museum, there had been a "thorough examination of the museum, (and) its expositions". The Regional Party Committee concluded that "the expositions of the Museum of the Revolution were vicious, that they greatly exaggerated the role of Narodism in the history of the revolutionary workers movement in Russia, and diminished and distorted the role of the Communist Party". "The Museum was closed. The old leadership was removed".[128]

The report and its repercussions were decidedly brutal. The commission requested a complete review of the staff within a month of the report. Most of the dismissed staff were subsequently arrested during the ensuing purges. Director Ernest Eisenschmidt and his deputy Mikhail Kaplan were dismissed as "socially alien elements".[129] Eisenschmidt's demise is particularly

[126] Artemov (ed.), *Iz'iatiiu ne podlezhit... Xranit' vechno*, p.9.
[127] GMPIR. F.VI D.45/1 *Stenogramma vstrechi*, p.26.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid.

striking.[130] He appeared to be fast-tracked into the directorship in 1930 without museum experience, but following dismissal in 1935, he faced demotion to the Museum of Socialist Reconstruction of Agriculture and his career never recovered. When his arrest came at midnight on 23 November 1937, Eisenschmidt believed it to be a misunderstanding and promised his family he would return. Instead, Eisenschmidt's family faced months of agonizing obstacles before being told he had been deported. In fact, he had been shot on 4 February 1938 as part of an order to kill a group of Latvian spies.[131]

On a structural level, 'Prison camps and exile' was dissolved as a department. The report demanded a radical reworking of all three remaining departments and to this end, the museum was closed for six months whilst the work was completed. Reconstruction affected all departments. Original documents that were perceived not to fit the desired framework on the history of the CPSU(b) were removed and often hastily replaced with paintings, sculptures and models. The commission report judged that the museum expositions came into "conflict with the political situation in the country", whilst "insufficient attention was paid to the role of party and state figures, historical and party themes".[132] The inspectors, acutely aware of the tense political climate of the time, saw grave danger in what they felt was the heroization of underground terrorists within the display on *Narodnaia Volia* (People's Will). Inspectors would have been fully aware that taking chances was not an option. The timing was critical in this respect; the report was created six months after Sergei Kirov's assassination and shortly after Zinoviev and Kamenev had been forced to admit complicity in the murder and to maintaining a terrorist centre in January 1935.[133] The report examined documents and materials which "told in the smallest detail how bombs were being prepared" and how the target of the attack was monitored.[134] This persuaded the inspectors that the museum management were dangerous, especially with the current fears regarding conspiracies and

[130] Eisensmidt was formerly an executive secretary in the Latvian sub-section of the Central Committee in Moscow (1924-29) and in charge of the national minorities sub-section of the Leningrad Regional Committee of the CPSU(b) before his directorship at GMR. His family were never informed of his whereabouts at the time and were given false information suggesting his execution had been cancelled. A few years later, the authorities informed the family of his death from toxic pneumonia, which also turned out to be untrue. Ernest Krishiewicz Eisenschmidt, 'Returned names: Books of memory in Russia': http://visz.nlr.ru/person/show/268822

[131] Ibid.

[132] E.G. Artemov, 'Opyt proshlogo, vzgliad v budushchee', p.11.

[133] D.M. Crowe (ed.), *Stalin's Soviet Justice: Show Trials, War Crimes Trials, and Nuremberg*, London: Bloomsbury, 2019, p.51.

[134] Velikanova, 'Stalinizm v mikroistorii…', pp.96-97.

assassinations.[135] For his role in the creation of the exposition, A.V. Pribyleva, on the museum council, was arrested in the following purges.

Sergei Avvakumov, a reliable man from the party's point of view and an ardent propagandist of communist ideas, was tasked with a significant list of immediate priorities before the planned reopening by November 1935 and the next anniversary of the October revolution. Highlighting the role of Lenin and the Bolsheviks was perhaps considered his most pressing remit, alongside more emphasis on the struggle against populism, Menshevism and opposition at all stages of the revolution. The role of Stalin during the preparation and victory of the October revolution also needed more apparent magnification.[136] Clarity in reflecting Stalin's economic success was also a definite demand. This task was not to wait. One of the first moves by the museum in the following reorganization was contact by GMR to museums in Tiflis and Baku, with an urgent request for evidence of the prosperity of farmers, especially depictions of the village before and after collectivization and evidence of new buildings such as schools, theatres and libraries.[137]

Fig. 30: Sergei Avvakumov, Director of the GMR from May 1935.[138]

[135] Ibid.

[136] B.A. Muzychenko, 'Sergei Iosifovich Avvakumov - direktor Gosudarstvennogo muzeia Revoliutsi' in A.M. Kulegin (ed.), *GMPIR: 90 let v prostranstve istorii i politiki 1919-2009*, St. Petersburg: Norma, 2010, p.88.

[137] Velikanova, 'Stalinizm v mikroistorii…', p.97.

[138] 'Sergei Avvakumov', *Sankt-Peterburgskogo instituta istorii RAN*: http://www.spbiiran.nw.ru/s_i_avvakumov/

Museum staff were clearly shocked by the rapidity of change. 'Communisation' of the museum led to notable dismissals and staff changes, such as A.T. Shakol, one of the "active creators of the old Museum of the Revolution" since 1919, though changes were not widespread.[139] For the remaining staff, many in the museum did not admit their guilt, stubbornly refusing to acknowledge their part in what were considered serious methodological errors. In 1960, Avvakumov himself later admitted that the museum's errors depended heavily on the state of 'historical science', and it was "impossible to blame the museum for academic errors or subjectivity".[140] His view was that many of the demands from the report merely stated "known shortcomings" such as the exaggerated role of populism, which subsequently was placed "in the shadows".[141] Yakovleva saw the older methods far more critically regarding the changes as clearly necessary. To her mind, "the old method of exposition represented historical facts on the surface…which created misconceptions about the role of the individual in history".[142] Populist 'heroes' were portrayed "more vividly and expressively than the leading role of the Communist Party".[143] Her account however, dates from 1940.

The atmosphere at the time of GMR's temporary closure was characterized by class war. Intransigence towards political opponents reigned throughout the USSR. A Short Course of the history of the CPSU(b) (*Kratkii kurs istorii VKP[b]*) had been written and was in the process of being edited by Stalin, who had commissioned the text himself declaring that a book was necessary "instead of the Bible", which would "give a rigorous answer…to many important questions".[144] It may have been compiled by a team of historians and party members, most prominently Petr Pospelov, Emel'ian Yaroslavsky and Vilhelms Knorins, but Stalin contributed his own chapter about dialectical materialism and was said to have closely supervised the other contributions, making him "to all intents and purposes…the general editor".[145] Pospelov's account, mirrored by Yaroslavsky, recalls the dexterity with which Stalin and senior gigures pored over the book's editing.

> I must say that I've seen an awful lot of editorial sessions in my 40 years of party work, but never in my life have I seen such editing, nor in general attention to scholarship or the printed word… Every day, about 5 or 6 o'clock in the evening (actually much closer to midnight), the editorial commission would assemble in Stalin's office… Every line was subjected to discussion.

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[139] Velikanova, 'Stalinizm v mikroistorii…', p.97.
[140] GMPIR. F.VI D.45/1, *Stenogramma vstrechi*, p.24.
[141] Ibid, p.44.
[142] GMPIR. F.VI D.45/1, *Vospominaniia*, p.18.
[143] Ibid.
[144] R. Service, *A history of Modern Russia: From Nicholas II to Vladimir Putin*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005, pp.237-238.
[145] Knorins was executed, 29 July 1938, after his arrest during the Great Purges. Ibid.

> Comrade Stalin took every kind of correction very seriously, even down to the last comma, and discussed it all".[146]

The book determined the historiography in the USSR, with museums firmly under scrutiny to reflect the text as the new orthodoxy – especially on the history of the Communist Party and the revolutionary movement. L.D. Pavlova recalled in 1938 that "the Museum had received a party document, a resolution on the *Short Course of the History of the CPSU(b)*, and this document was the basis…for re-exposure".[147] The new exposition of the museum was built strictly in accordance with the chapters of the history textbook of the party and it actually become an "illustration of the textbook".[148]

With the weight of expectation upon him, Avvakumov reopened the museum with special guests Nadezhda Krupskaia, Maria Il'inichna Ul'ianova and Lenin's nephew, Victor Lozgachev on 23 October 1935, two weeks before the public reopening.[149] *Leningradskaia Pravda* reported that the guests of honour were shown the atmospheric recreation of Lenin's Helsinki room in the October section, set during his stay in Helsinki during the Kornilov affair in August 1917. Krupskaia and Ul'ianova also inspected the 'Civil War' department and the panorama of *Barrikady na Presne* (Barricades on Presnya) by the artist Babichev in the '1905' department.[150] The spectacle, which appeared to pass with relative success, preceded the full reopening. Despite its closure for almost half of 1935, 336,000 attended that year, followed by 625,000 the following year.[151]

On Avvakumov's initiative, three sections were reshaped, with a chronological framework from the serf uprisings to the first Russian Revolution. In 1936, Avvakumov planned the creation of additional departments under the titles; 'From the first revolution to the second' and 'Socialist construction and the Comintern'. A further new exposition, 'The October Socialist Revolution' was completed for the 20th anniversary celebrations, distinguishing it from the civil war department. 'Revolution in the West' now required a head of department, whilst the post of artist-designer was created, ostensibly to save money.[152] Work also concentrated on improvements to the artistic design of the museum, including the increased use of models and development in the creation of charts

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[146] RGASPI, F. 89, Op. 8, D. 807, L. 4–5 cited in D. Brandenberger and M. Zelenov (eds), *Stalin's Master Narrative: A Critical Edition of the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course,* Yale University Press: London, 2019.
[147] GMPIR. F.VI D.45/1, *Stenogramma vstrechi*, p.32.
[148] GMPIR. D. 58 L.70.
[149] Andrianova, p.72.
[150] Muzychenko, p.88.
[151] Andrianova, p.73.
[152] Muzychenko, p.89.

and tables, including new displays which reflected economic development in both Tsarist and Soviet Russia.

Sergei Avvakumov's directorship, at least in its early stages, saw three further changes of significance. The first was to establish greater links with the people of Leningrad. Contact was established with collective farms to ensure that farmers who visited the city could attend GMR. Arrangements with district party committees were made to further the numbers of people visiting the museum, following up on Avvakumov's demand that more attention be paid to work with factories and plants. He also created the post of 'Head of the Mass Sector', fully prioritising visitor numbers. In 1936-37, the museum achieved its highest numbers yet with 621,485 visitors, whilst 278,002 of them were 'individual visitors' (i.e. not in group tours).[153] A second reform regarded the excursions policy of the museum, as the "excursion bureau continues to exceed" the rate of excursions per day for each guide.[154] At this time excursions were not only assigned to the 'mass-awareness' department, but also the research staff. Whether this move was for the wellbeing of staff, or to retain quality standards, is unclear.

A third change, or at least a further development, was the greater attention to visitor relations and their impact on society. As well as an expansion of projects beyond the museum, the museum also created visitor questionnaires about each exposition, based on the same pattern for each department.[155] For researchers (scientific workers), it was also obligatory to provide a review and to enter into the visitor book, in order to provide feedback and give suggestions for potential improvements.

By reviewing the visitor feedback during and following the 'Avvakumov overhaul', a picture can be formed in terms of how effective the communication was between those managing the museum and the visitor. Perhaps predictably, student and teacher entries tended towards recognising what had been learned: "The museum educates young patriots in the spirit of communism and devotion to the Bolshevik Party", whilst "What I have seen leaves a lasting impression on me. The happy and joyful life we now have in our country is the result of heavy battles of the revolutionary Russian proletariat with the Tsarist autocracy and the Russian bourgeoisie".[156] A visiting teacher recognised the educational value of the museum, writing "Thank you comrade Stalin and the CPSU(b) for well-equipped museums for teachers and lecturers".[157] Other visitors besides

[153] Ibid.
[154] GMPIR. *Zakazy dlia muzeia* (17 February 1936 – 30 December 1936), p.5.
[155] Muzychenko, pp.90-91.
[156] GMPIR. F.VI, *Sobrany otzyvy posetitelei muzeia Revoliutsii (1938-40)*. Selected entry dated 8 May 1938.
[157] Ibid, 4 March 1939.

were keen to make their support very clear amidst the polarized rhetoric of the late 1930's, especially those with a party role. A party deputy visiting from Arkhangel'sk is amongst the most forceful on record after his visit, exclaiming "I want to smash the traitors of the homeland! And build communism even more actively".[158] Military personnel were just as keen to enjoy the victories of the past; "We are kings of the world! We are masters of everything and in this house of the Romanovs…today everything is royal dust! Thank you Bolshevik Party! Thank you Lenin and Stalin for our today and tomorrow!"[159]

However, it was made clear that recent developments in the expositions had not won universal and uncritical praise. "The halls are well equipped. But the exhibits are a bit monotonous and boring" was one such unsigned judgment.[160] Another was disappointed about the potential to be educated; "A lot of confusion. No-one is told anything seeing as there are no guides. You leave the museum and only to a small degree do you take away knowledge about the past".[161] Further comments suggest that the museum was not operating as an effective cultural institution. One critic, again leaving an unreadable signature so as not to be identified, concluded; "The management of palaces and museums need to restore order in the work of museums. The thing is that the administration did not seem to have the purpose to enlighten. Instead they are interested in haggling. Such is the order in all the museums of Leningrad. They need to be changed immediately".[162] Some criticisms weigh heavy with the politics of the age, showing anger at the representation of individuals who had now been judged as 'enemies of the people'. Similarly, recorded comments, again unsigned, felt entirely the opposite, instead condemning the removal of such persons. They preferred that the Museum of the Revolution should show the past "how it really was".[163]

Avvakumov did not remain in post for long, but oversaw a period of immeasurable volatility in the history of the museum. He received an internal order from the Leningrad Committee of the CPSU(b) in December 1936, releasing him from the Museum of the Revolution and instead posting him to the Leningrad Museum of Lenin.[164] During his tenure, the orders of the party had been fulfilled. By the 20th anniversary of the October revolution, updated expositions had been installed, in which the "theory of the two leaders" strengthened the presence of Stalin. The scientific and

[158] Ibid, 14 July 1938.
[159] Ibid, 6 July 1938.
[160] Ibid (Undated).
[161] Ibid, 3 March 1983.
[162] Ibid, 17 March 1938.
[163] Ibid (Undated).
[164] GMPIR. *Zakazy dlia muzeia* (17 February 1936 – 30 December 1936), p.35.

technical activities of the museum had been given concentrated effort, as had new methods to utilise and design the museum space more effectively. More than ever before, great efforts had been made to attract visitors. Constant reorganization of expositions had incurred significant expenditure however, limiting the full development of the museum in other aspects. After his directorship at GMR, Avvakumov's own personal story is a useful, but by no means isolated example of a Soviet academician. After the Lenin Museum, he became director at the Kirov museum and a renowned author on Kirov's life before becoming Head of Propaganda at *Leningradskaia Pravda* in wartime, in addition to collecting artefacts related to the siege of Leningrad for the Leningrad Committee of the CPSU(b).[165] After the war, he worked for the committee as Deputy Head of Propaganda, then at the Institute of History before being arrested for his alleged involvement in the 'Leningrad affair', a series of fabricated criminal cases accusing politicians and party members of treasonous activity. Avvakumov was accused of participating in an anti-Soviet, Trotskyite group in the mid 1920's.[166] Despite admitting errors, Avvakumov pleaded not guilty, but nevertheless received a sentence of 25 years in a detention camp in 1950, when he was 56, and his family were exiled from Leningrad. Fortunately he was rehabilitated in June 1954 when his case was considered by Nikita Khrushchev as First Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, returning to party service as a senior researcher and lecturer until his death in 1964.[167] His life stands as an insightful, but typical case of the era. Despite his long service to the CPSU, including the reorganization of GMR, he was given no special treatment during a time of intense suspicion where rapid changes in circumstance were eminently possible. He was also never known to have spoken out against the party or the government.

The reforms started during Avvakumov's time continued under the acting director, M.I. Solodnikova and the next permanent director, S.I. Shudenko. The rebuilding of the Civil War department best distils the direction of the museum in these years. Having been redeveloped, the exposition now concentrated on the Bolsheviks during the Civil War, rather than the Civil War in the predominant context of revolutionary struggle. To accomplish this, materials were removed that reflected the activities of other revolutionary leaders, whilst large paintings of Stalin were installed.[168] Indeed, the use of large works of art acted as the leading exhibits, with *Stalin and Dzerzhinskii on the Eastern Front* commissioned, whilst the sculpture *Stalin, Voroshilov and the Red*

[165] Muzychenko, p.92.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Muzychenko, p.93. Also, GMPIR. F.VI D. 2601, *Udostoverenie Voennoi kollegii Verkhovnogo suda o prekrashchenii dela protiv S.I. Avvakumova* (20 August 1954) p.1.
[168] Artemov E.G., 'K voprosu o periodizatsii istorii muzeia Velikogo Oktiabria (1919–1988 gg.), *Pervyi istoriko-revoliutsionnyi*, Leningrad, 1989, p.31.

Army was planned to be at the centre of the new exposition.[169] In total, 21 original paintings on historical themes, 10 authorized copies from recognized historical paintings and 10 sculptures were introduced into the exposition of the departments on the October Revolution and the Civil War.[170]

Fig. 31: The GMR in 1938. Historical paintings are displayed with more prominence.[171]

The placement of artwork was now central to the exposition, a complete sea change from the original dynamics of the museum creators. Likewise, the new incarnation of the Civil War department reflected the complete adoption of the *Short Course of the History of the CPSU(b)*. Specific importance was given to the role of Stalin during the Civil War, supported by Rudolph Frentz's painting *Stalin at the head of the defence of Tsaritsyn* and a range of documentary artefacts dedicated to the victorious defence of the city. Numerous materials placed Stalin and Lenin as the "organizers of victory on the fronts of the Civil War", supplementing the now quite apparent 'two leaders' theory. Materials which recognized other military commanders walked a difficult line from a curatorial perspective. Mikhail Frunze, Kliment Voroshilov and others were retained as great 'proletarian' generals, whilst men such as Mikhail Tukhachevskii, Vasilii Bliukher and Ioakim Vatsetis

[169] GMPIR. D.38 L.9.
[170] GMPIR. D.58 L.60.
[171] Artemov (ed.), *Iz'iatiiu ne podlezhit... Xranit' vechno*, p.9.

had already been declared 'enemies of the people', meaning they had no mention in the expositions.[172] Likewise, material on the original creator of the Red Army and personal enemy of Stalin, Trotsky, was retained but carefully managed. Documents and photographic evidence lauded the role of legendary heroes who died during the conflict, perhaps most famously Vasilii Chapaev, Nikolai Shchors and Sergei Lazo.[173] Timed to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the museum, two great dioramas were created by a team of artists managed by Rudolph Frentz: *The storming of the rebellious Red Hill by heroic sailors under the leadership of Stalin* and *The defeat of Yudenich at Pulkovo Heights in 1919*.[174]

The outbreak of the Great Patriotic War in 1941 meant that *'*The Bolshevik Party in the period of foreign intervention and Civil War*'* turned out to be the last new exposition at the Museum of the Revolution. Plans to create a display on 'Socialist Construction' were not completed before 1941. What turned out to be the museum's final years at the Winter Palace also saw further disruption, and permanent losses, to the collections of the museum. In April 1937, the Leningrad City Committee of the CPSU(b) ordered the transfer of many materials related to Lenin's life to the city's Lenin museum, including a funeral wreath and original materials from rooms he stayed in during the revolutionary period.[175] Later in the same year, the museum was gravely affected by the order 'On the procedure for removing funds of departments, storing and accounting of materials subject to transfer to a special fund' (15 December 1937).[176] Harmful materials were to be withdrawn from collections and "either destroyed…or transferred to a special fund".[177] Unsurprisingly, given the ongoing purges, the losses were extreme in the cases of formerly heroic Soviet figures now deemed 'enemies of the people', including Trotsky, Zinoviev, Bukharin and Rykov. Collection purges hit the Civil War materials particularly hard. Portraits and photographs of White Guards and ministers, in total 325 items, were taken in late August 1941, as were collections of counterrevolutionary newspapers (*Mir, Voice of the Fatherland*).[178] It is also estimated that 215 images of Trotsky from the period of the October Revolution and Civil War were confiscated, with 380 other enemies of the people.[179]

In the final years before war, GMR was essentially in a redundant position. It could no longer prioritise the preservation and display of authentic historical artefacts, whilst the adoption of the

[172] GMPIR. D.58 L.73.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid. Also, GMPIR. D.58 L.79.
[175] Velikanova, 'Stalinizm v mikroistorii…', p.98.
[176] Spiridonov, p.131.
[177] Ibid.
[178] GMPIR. '*Akty i perepiska o vyvoze eksponatov…*' (June 1936 – December 1951), 27 December 1937.
[179] Ibid, 30 August 1941.

Short Course of the History of the CPSU(b) rendered all expositions standardized. GMR, and many Leningrad museums besides, were caught in the position of maintaining duplicate expositions. Upon the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War, the museum closed its doors to visitors. Expositions were dismantled and collections were housed under the ramparts of the Winter Palace. A small team remained to ensure the safe storage of objects and indeed the collection of materials during the siege. Around 17,000 items were collected related to the war.[180] Meanwhile, regular travelling exhibitions and lectures continued to be organized until the end of the war in the USSR in 1945.

Branching out: Beyond the Winter Palace

The Museum of the Revolution had briefly been unique in collecting and displaying monuments to revolution from its opening in 1920. However, it acted as a precursor for the establishment of similar museums across Russia and in time, the USSR. Within the next decade, revolution-themed museums had been opened in Simbirsk (1923), Moscow (1924), Chita (1925), Kiev, Kazan (both 1926), Ashgabat (1929), Shushenskii (1930) and Tajikistan (1932). GMR also took a direct part in the creation of revolution-themed museums in north-western Russia, in Vologda, Pskov and Novgorod, while its call to create further related museums received support from the Khar'kov and Minsk Soviets.[181] As the senior museum of its type, the GMR was entrusted to provide methodological assistance to other museums in creating expositions, in addition to providing materials where possible. Since its creation, GMR had branched into developing its own publishing activity, compiling its own catalogues, guides, photo albums and almanacs, as well as historical and revolutionary books. Building on this intention to fulfil its desired function as a 'revolutionary laboratory', the GMR also sought opportunities to work in partnerships with publishing houses and film makers.[182]

However, the primary reach the museum had beyond the walls of the Winter Palace was in its role in the 'museumification' of historical and revolutionary monuments in Leningrad oblast, most notably the Trubetskoi Bastion of the Peter and Paul Fortress, transferred to the Museum of the Revolution in January 1924, but later followed by Shlissel'burg Fortress (60km east of Leningrad), where a museum branch had been created in August 1928.[183] The GMR was the first institution given

[180] Velikanova, 'Stalinizm v mikroistorii…', p.98.
[181] Artemov, 'Opyt proshlogo, vzgliad v budushchee', p.9.
[182] Ibid.
[183] N.R. Slavnitskii, 'Istoriia Petropavlovskoi kreposti - filiala Gosudarstvennogo muzeia Revoliutsii' in A.M. Kulegin (ed.), *GMPIR: 90 let v prostranstve istorii i politiki. 1919-2009*, St. Petersburg: Norma, 2010, p.17. Also, Trubkin, p.28.

the responsibility to form memorial museums to Lenin. In 1927, Lenin's room in the Smol'nyi Institute and a Lenin memorial museum on the Petrograd side of the Neva opened to the public.[184] Into the 1930's, the GMR began research work on the restoration of one of Lenin's apartments on Kazachiy pereulok on the banks of the Karpovka – brought to completion by the completion of the Leningrad branch of the Central Lenin Museum in 1937, who subsequently took responsibility for Lenin memorial sites in the city from 1939. Likewise, GMR staff were transferred to the former Kschessinskaia mansion where they created a museum dedicated to the life of Sergei Kirov, some two years after his assassination.[185] Further afield, a monument on the lake near Sestroretsk (35km north-west of Leningrad) and an accompanying exposition on Lenin's hut (*shalash*) was controlled by GMR between 1936 and 1939. An additional site, the former Arakcheev manor at the Gruzino estate in Novgorod oblast was taken under GMR management from the State Russian Museum in 1931. All sites were required to continue the guiding principles of the 'mother museum' at the Winter Palace: to use these sites to display the revolutionary movement and place the October Revolution at the centre of that concept, and to speak with a simple, intelligible language with the aim of overcoming their "accursed capitalist heritage".[186]

Undoubtedly the most important branch of the Museum of the Revolution, both in terms of popularity with visitors and in its undoubted propaganda value, was the Peter and Paul Fortress. The fortress held an infamous place in the history of St. Petersburg, created with the foundation of the city in 1703 in order to defend the city at a time where the lands had only just been reclaimed from Sweden in the Great Northern War. Whilst the fortress would never be called upon to defend St. Petersburg, it became renowned as a prison for high-ranking or political prisoners. The Trubetskoi Bastion, constructed in the 1870's, was the main prison block and had incarcerated many significant dissidents and radicals. Of course, it was the figures associated with the revolutionary movement that gave the Peter and Paul Fortress such potent value as a symbol of radicalism. Prisoners had been luminaries of nineteenth century radicalism, including participants in the Decembrist uprising, as well as Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Nikolai Chernyshevsky and Mikhail Bakunin. The black romanticism that could be swelled by the site was well founded in these cases. Dostoyevsky had been arrested and incarcerated in 1849 as a member of the Petrashevskii Circle, a group of intellectuals accused of publishing and distributing anti-government propaganda. Despite receiving a death sentence by firing squad, the Tsar commuted the sentenced members of the circle in favour of exile. Chernyshevsky was also forced to undergo a 'mock execution' in 1862 before penal servitude and

[184] Velikanova, 'Stalinizm v mikroistorii…', p.96.
[185] Artemov, 'Opyt proshlogo, vzgliad v budushchee', p.11.
[186] Mis'ko, p.77.

exile. During his time at the Peter and Paul Fortress, he had written his famous revolutionary novel, *What is to be done?*, a significant influence on Lenin himself and a text which "far more than Marx's *Capital* supplied the emotional dynamic that eventually went to make the Russian Revolution".[187] In later years, Leon Trotsky was held there between April and June 1906 prior to his exile in Siberia for his part in the organization of the St Peterburg Soviet, whilst Bolshevik writer Maxim Gorky was also briefly imprisoned for his part in the 1905 revolution.[188]

The Peter and Paul Fortress was seized by Bolsheviks at the start of the October Revolution and used to bombard the Winter Palace on the night of 25 October 1917. Furthermore, the captured ministers from the Palace were confined as prisoners. Even after this success, the fortress continued to remain a military facility and a military target. A garrison was located there and it was the Petrograd headquarters of internal defence, and it continued to receive political prisoners, although officially the Trubetskoi Bastion was abolished as a place of confinement.[189] In contrast, estimates suggest that at least 112 persons, including four Grand Dukes, were killed at the fortress in the three years following the October revolution. Even during this period, the first excursion groups were allowed onto the territory of *Zaiachii ostrov*, where the fortress is located - delegates from the Second Congress of the Third International – in July 1920.[190] In the same year, a discussion began regarding the 'museumification' of the fortress for the first time, with the suggestion arising that the Trubetskoi Bastion should be converted into a historical-revolutionary museum.

Free access was initially not forthcoming despite free passage being accepted from 29 April 1921.[191] As soon as 10 May, passes to the fortress were abolished due to instances of "strangers interfering with the work of institutions…walking through the fortress without cause", only for this decision to be reversed a few weeks later, though continuing the ban on tourists entering the actual buildings themselves.[192] Due to the dual purpose use of the site, *Glavnauka*, the General Directorate of Scientific, Museum and Art Institutions – a body created by Narkompros in January 1922 – organized excursions through the Fortress. After another brief period of limited access (July 1923), the fortress only accepted organized groups via commandant permission and by fulfilling the demand for advanced details of group leaders and numbers. The demands upon group leaders were stringent. They were required to be responsible for the behaviour of their participants on the excursion, and specifically to "keep a compact group near the leader, and not to wander around the

[187] J. Frank in M. Amis, *Koba the Dread*, London: Miramax, 2002, p.27.
[188] R. Service, *Trotsky*, London: Macmillan, 2009, p.95.
[189] Slavnitskii, p.17.
[190] Ibid.
[191] TsGA SPb. (Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Sankt-Peterburga), F.4538 O.1 D.18 L.29.
[192] TsGA SPb. F.4538 O.1 D.18 L.34, 39.

fortress alone".[193] This warning was to be taken seriously, as anyone found on site without a pass would be arrested, with the Criminal Investigation Department given their identity and address as a result to enable further investigation into criminal records.

Towards the end of 1923, the Revolutionary Military Council transferred the Trubetskoi Bastion and prison building to the Museum of the Revolution. Under the authority of the State Museum Fund, the Peter and Paul Cathedral too was opened for wider access. For the Cathedral, the new arrangements from June 1924 allowed individual visitors and paid excursions for four days a week (Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday) from 11am until 5pm, whilst another day (Thursday) was set aside for free student excursions organized by Narkompros, leaving Saturday free for 'political education'.[194] It was not until September 1924 that individual visitors were admitted into the fortress in exchange for identity cards. This continued until 19 November, when entrance for all citizens "should be considered free".[195] This rather awkward beginning, highly guarded in nature, reflects the unusual state of affairs for Glavnauka and the use of the site for political enlightenment. No clear leadership structure or functionality for the Peter and Paul Fortress had been established by this point.

The function of the fortress turned more clearly towards excursion activity during 1924. Visiting the fortress was advertised in Leningrad newspapers from May 1924, with charges of 20 kopecks for individuals and 10 for tourists entering as part of a group. Interest was strong. In the first year of excursions, 86,627 visitors were recorded and 70,000 of them were part of tour groups in 2413 excursions.[196] The attraction was no doubt in part related to the tours often being conducted by former prisoners. Former employees spoke of crowds of around a hundred people gathering to listen.[197] Once the Museum of the Revolution took over from Glavnauka in March 1926, restoration work began to create a more effective exposition space. Pavements and sidewalks were repaired, whilst the Trubetskoi Bastion was given restoration work in order to open a museum display there. Two cells were restored to befit the conditions of the 1870s, formerly the sites of incarceration for Pyotr Kropotkin and Sergei Sinegub. A further three were recreated for the 1880's, alongside a 'detention room', punishment cells and a visiting room. Furthermore, mannequins dressed as prisoners were placed in two cells, with more mannequins being used to depict warders and placed in the corridors. This exposition remained unchanged until 1935 when the reassessment of populism

[193] TsGA SPb. F.4538 O.1 D.31 L.29-30.
[194] TsGALI SPb. F.36, O.1 D.170 L.182.
[195] TsGA SPb. F.4538 O.1 D.34 L.342.
[196] A.I. Barabanova, G.A. Popova, 'Petropavlovskaia krepost'-muzei' in B.S. Arakcheev (ed.), *Petropavlovskaia krepost': Stranitsy istorii*, St. Petersburg: Art-Palas, 2001, p.408.
[197] Ibid.

and the events of the 1870's and 1880's took place. The mannequins stayed in place until the 1950's when they were regarded as primitive and worn.[198]

During the GMR's tenure of the Peter and Paul Fortress during the 1930's, the conditions remained challenging to say the least. Even when the office of the military commandant was abolished there in 1926, three-quarters of the site remained within some form of military usage. Inspections during the 1930's reveal the extent of problems as far as using the site for a museum facility or in conducting excursions there. A report produced after an inspection of the Fortress in 1933, amongst a much greater list, carried the following criticisms:

1. All roads require major repairs.
2. Outdoor lighting is almost completely absent.
3. Sewerage of the fortress is 'upset'. The whole territory is covered with non-flowing mud, especially in household yards.
4. Ugly fences have been installed, destroying the historical value of the fortress.
5. The Mint, when moving to the Trubetskoi Bastion, in the path of tourists, flaunts a large garbage pit.
6. The outer walls of the Trubetskoi Bastion and the historic corridor are collapsing, making the observation of the bastion unsafe…
12. The tower overlooking the Neva (with a flagpole) is now fenced off. The area around the tower is clogged with manure. Because of the destruction of rainwater pipes, the walls are water damaged.
13. On the sides of the tower, there is a wooden tower dating back to Peter I. Beams and platforms have rotted away and the guns are threatened by potential collapse.
15. At the north-western bastion near the execution site of the Decembrists, amongst piles of manure and slurry, rabbits are kept. On the roof of the bastion there is a pigsty belonging to the 22nd Regiment of the GPU…
17. The Peter and Paul Cathedral does not have a guide. As a result, there is no etiquette and historical meaning is not conveyed to visitors.[199]

In addition to this edited selection of obstacles, green spaces were judged "unfit for use" and "littered with manure and garbage". Further strongly worded concerns were raised regarding the safety of stone walls and the ruination of the 'commandant's pier' – all preventing access for

[198] TsGALI SPb. F.36, O.1 D.223 L.30.
[199] TsGA SPb. F.1000 O.69 D.165 L.215-216.

excursion groups and tourists.[200] These problems, as well as the desire to restore the chimes of the Peter and Paul Cathedral, led the Presidium of the City Council to allocate 10,450 rubles for urgent restoration and repair work in 1933.[201] Another inspection in June 1937 found that the Trubetskoi Bastion had a roof in poor condition, no electrical wiring and severe damage to the flooring of the first floor and the lower walls as a result of flooding in 1924.[202] Yet another commission followed in 1938, under the chairmanship of Kuz'ma Petrov-Vodkin (the famous artist). They immediately recognized the poor condition of the museum artefacts in the Fortress, whilst drawing attention to the need for roofing repairs in the Peter and Paul Cathedral and the poor state of the 'Grand Tomb'.

Ultimately this concluded in the commission judging that the Museum of the Revolution had methodically managed the historical site poorly. Criticisms were made regarding the lack of research work conducted, hence the lack of new excursion routes and topics.[203] Whilst the Museum of the Revolution responded, with the board seeking to adjust its work, the safety of objects and the repair works were still not attended to. This continuing problem was one of management responsibility, with the military institutions and security forces stationed there refusing to cooperate. It was not until the 1940's that a unified management structure was suggested, with subordination to the District Soviet.[204] This decision was never implemented in any case. Despite the many problems that prevented the smooth running of the Peter and Paul Fortress as a historical museum site, it clearly maintained popularity with visitors. In 1936-37, the fortress received 370,147 people, and 178,801 in 1938 alone.[205] The future also looked bright in terms of finally achieving a singularity of purpose. In 1939, a Leningrad Soviet meeting of the Presidium came to the conclusion that the Peter and Paul Fortress was to be appointed as a "museum town…with the gradual withdrawal of enterprises and institutions located on its territory that have nothing to do with museums".[206] A following meeting agreed unanimously that considerable funds were required to create a museum town. The discussion recognized that the current situation gave the museum not "a single meter of space on which it could conduct exposition work", and a corresponding building was required.[207] Unfortunately, with funds for restoration of museum facilities only limited in size and preparations focussing on the impending war, plans were set aside. Repairs to the Trubetskoi Bastion began in 1939, but ceased a year later due to lack of funds, whilst the Peter and Paul Cathedral was closed

[200] Ibid.
[201] TsGA SPb. F.7384 O.16. D.17 L.4-5.
[202] TsGA SPb. F.7384 O.17. D.287 L.227.
[203] TsGA SPb. F.7384 O.16. D.17 L.100-101.
[204] TsGA SPb. F.7384 O.16. D.17 L.125.
[205] TsGA SPb. F.7384 O.16. D.17 L.196.
[206] TsGA SPb. F.7384 O.16. D.17 L.172.
[207] TsGA SPb. F.7384 O.16. D.17 L.178.

due to its poor condition.[208] Once again, upon the outbreak of war, the site returned to operating purely as a military facility.

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Like the Peter and Paul Fortress, the Shlissel'burg (or Oreshek) Fortress had a long-established history, dating back to a wooden fortress built by Grand Prince Yuri of Moscow in 1323 to defend the northern approach towards Novgorod. Much later, as with the Peter and Paul Fortress, it was recaptured by Peter the Great in 1702 during the Great Northern War and eventually it lost its military role, leaving it to function as an Imperial prison, initially to hold disgraced members of the royal family, including Peter the Great's sister (Maria Alekseevna) and his first wife (Evdokiia Lopukhina).[209] Amongst those who languished in the prison were 17 participants in the Decembrist revolt before transportation to Siberia; and political prisoners, including Aleksandr Ulyanov (Lenin's older brother) and anarchist revolutionary Mikhail Bakunin between 1854 and 1857. Members of *Narodnaia Volia* were incarcerated in the fortress, as were prominent Socialist Revolutionaries. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the fortress operated as an execution site, whilst in 1884, Alexander III established the site as a "regime of complete isolation for prisoners" via the Statute of the Shlissel'burg Fortress.[210] To ensure their complete isolation, convicts were not only prevented from communication with the outside world, but also with fellow prisoners.[211] Moreover, the prison authorities were allowed unlimited powers to deliver justice and correction. Cell conditions were in near total darkness, whilst bread and water offered the only nourishment. The regulations for guards with relation to punishment encouraged the use of shackles and beatings with metal rods of up to fifty blows.[212] Of the 68 prisoners held at Shlissel'burg between 1884 and 1906, 15 were executed, 15 died of diseases, 3 committed suicide and 8 went insane.[213] For its remaining 'active' period, the fortress was used as a penal servitude prison, with newly built detention houses. In this time, Shlissel'burg incarcerated representatives of all revolutionary parties, including those who participated in 1905. The February revolution of 1917 brought about the downfall of the fortress, with rebelling workers from the nearby gunpowder factory setting free the prisoners and burning down the prison buildings.[214]

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[208] TsGA SPb. F.7384 O.16. D.17 L.100; 213-217.
[209] A.D. Margolis, *Shlissel'burg Fortress*, Saint Petersburg Encyclopaedia, http://www.encspb.ru/object/2804023027?lc=en
[210] Trubkin, p.24.
[211] Ibid.
[212] M.V. Novorusskii, *Zapiski shlissel'burzhtsa, 1887—1905*, Petrograd, 1920, p.33.
[213] Margolis.
[214] Ibid.

Mikhail Novorusskii, a prisoner for 18 years and a founder member of the Museum of the Revolution in Petrograd, urged for respect to be given to those who had suffered in the fortress. After October 1917, Novorusskii pursued the authorities in Petrograd seeking to perpetuate the memory of dead prisoners. Eventually in the summer of 1918, the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet allocated 16,000 rubles for their memorialization.[215] A monument to the prisoners at their burial place was constructed and opened on 23 January 1919 at a ceremony attended by Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, Grigorii Zinoviev, members of the local executive committee and former prisoners. Subsequently the fortress was discussed by the organizing committee behind the GMR in May 1919. Visits took place to the fortress itself, leading to calls for emergency measures to be taken, as many were concerned that the buildings and memories would "disappear".[216] Soon draft plans were in motion to create a museum of the Shlissel'burg Fortress, with major thematic displays, texts for the expositions and intended renovations all planned in draft form.[217] Shortly after Vladimir Lenin's death, the directorate of the Museum of the Revolution requested that the courtyard used for executions at the fortress be memorialized, especially poignant given that Lenin's older brother had been one of those killed at Shlissel'burg.[218]

The gathering of collections for the museum took place during 1923 and 1924. Around 1000 portraits, documents, manuscripts and revolutionary relics were collected. In November 1925, the Council of People's Commissars issued a decree placing Shlissel'burg onto a list of historical monuments of national importance.[219] Narkompros, given control of Shlissel'burg, was ordered to organize a museum in the fortress and it became a branch of the Leningrad Museum of the Revolution. 50,000 rubles were allocated from the reserve fund of the Council of People's Commissars, whilst the Leningrad Glavnauka adopted a plan for the restoration of the fortress and the creation of a multifaceted museum complex in 1926, in a meeting attended by GMR Director Mikhail Kaplan; Head of Glavnauka, Fedor Petrov; Head of Leningrad Glavnauka, G.S. Ratmanov; research fellow of the museum, A.G. Shakol and revolutionary movement participants, including Mikhail Novorusskii and David Trilisser.[220] Plans were created to enable restoration to tackle priorities in stages. The plan for organizing the museum in the fortress included the creation of an exposition, the reconstruction of several prison cells and the restoration of the old prison, known as the 'Secret House' as it was in the late 18th or early 19th century, and the new prison, which had held

[215] M.V. Novorusskii, *Putevoditel' po Shlissel'burgu*, Petrograd, 1923, p.58.
[216] GMPIR. D.58 L.127.
[217] GMPIR. F.II – 29512.
[218] Trubkin, p.25.
[219] Leikina-Svirskaia, p.66.
[220] Trubkin, p.25. Both Novorusskii and Trilisser were prominent figures in the *Society of Former Political Convicts and Exiles*. The latter was Head of the Leningrad Department from 1926-1935.

members of *Narodnaia Volia*. During this period of preparation, the Shlissel'burg Fortress Museum had now taken on ten members of staff; including three researchers and seven technical staff.[221] The former were preoccupied with gathering materials on the former prisoners of Shlissel'burg prison. According to the 1927 reports, in developing a new historical-revolutionary exposition, they compiled 857 items of storage in their collection.[222]

Whilst exact data on visitor numbers is incomplete, there was certainly interest from Leningrad residents. In the first year (from October 1926), at least 13,945 people make the journey to the remote fortress.[223] One of the most appealing opportunities was through the excursions offered, usually in collaboration with former inmates such as Mikhail Novorusskii, Vera Figner and Nikolai Mozorov. Great interest stirred around speakers with *Narodnaia Volia* roots, with lectures by men like V.S. Pankratov giving their accounts of their past experience.[224] Novorusskii's lectures and excursions were another highlight, whilst Figner recalled that their work inspired the arrival of large steam boats to Shlissel'burg on summer weekends. He remarked on the commitment to relaying their tormented experiences, noting that "every time, Mikhail Vasilievich (Novorusskii) had to talk for four or more hours in the open air about those who were imprisoned in the Shlissel'burg Fortress".[225] With extensive training and experience in travelling exhibitions, Novorusskii in particular became a genuine museum specialist. His pedigree of collecting had long prepared him for this acclaim, having collected revolutionary materials since 1907 for the future Museum of the Revolution in Leningrad. His own experiences alone accounted for many relics (rare photographs, portraits, clothing) during his imprisonment and activity as a revolutionary.

Novorusskii's active participation as an activist, museum founder and excursion leader alludes to the strength of civic society that remained relatively developed during the 1920's. The Society of Former Political Convicts and Exiles, originally set up in Moscow in March 1921 opened a Leningrad department in May 1924 – with Novorusskii amongst the most prominent of their 122 members, many of whom were veterans of the revolutionary movement.[226] Their objectives included providing assistance to former Tsarist prisoners and studying the history of penal servitude and exile in Russia. Their research, ranging from the Decembrists to Jewish revolutionary movements, was of great importance to the GMR and specifically the Shlissel'burg fortress branch.

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[221] GMPIR. D.58 L.231.
[222] GMPIR. D.58 L.227.
[223] GMPIR. D.58 L.234.
[224] Trubkin, p.26.
[225] Ibid.
[226] A.D. Margolis, *Society of Former Political Convicts and Exiles*, Saint Petersburg Encyclopaedia, http://www.encspb.ru/object/2804021902?lc=en

Indeed the head of the Leningrad department, D.A. Trilisser, alongside Novorusskii, was instrumental in the plans adopted by the Leningrad Glavnauka to create the Shlissel'burg Fortress 'museum complex'. Novorusskii himself wrote the first guide to the fortress in 1923, which outlined the history of *Narodnaia Volia* imprisonment there and the development of the prisons over time. A year later E.E. Kolosov had orchestrated excursion plans, indicating suggested routes, stops and detailed explanations in a 'tour guide' pamphlet. This was written simultaneously with Kolosov's completion of his book, *The State Prison Shlissel'burg* in 1924, based on horrifying eyewitness accounts from members of the Leningrad department (of former convicts and exiles), including a preface from one of its most influential figures, N.A. Morozov. This had only been possible because of the determination of the society to record their memories, a task made more urgent by the lack of archival material on the subject. Furthermore, the group produced numerous memoirs from the society's members, even contributing to a magazine, *Penal Servitude and Exile* published in Moscow between 1921 and 1935. Yet their most apparent contribution to the GMR was direct and often in the flesh. Former political prisoners within the society trained guides on the history of the Shlissel'burg Fortress and participated in lecture work in Leningrad, as well as reconstruction work to restore the buildings. These battle hardened men, who had suffered at the hands of Tsarist tyranny, were delivering excursions around the city's most prominent revolutionary sites, including of course, the museums. They were the direct channel to the sacrifices that had been needed in order to achieve revolution. They had the experience that was indisputable, popular with audiences and inspirational for future generations. In keeping with the tumult of 1935, the society was abolished by a decree of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the USSR, and many of its members were subsequently repressed during the purges.

With the prospective creation of a museum at Shlissel'burg, the GMR at the Winter Palace opened a new department focussing on *Imprisonment and Exile* in December 1925. Here, Shlissel'burg also took a prominent position. A significant amount of materials in the department were devoted to the history of the prison, whilst expositions included *Gallery of executed revolutionaries* and a solitary confinement cell which included items from the fortress and items previously belonging to Vera Figner and Mikhail Novorusskii.[227] The new department had a particularly strong emotional impact upon visitors and the reproduced cell appeared to inspire great respect for prisoners.

[227] Trubkin, p.26.

Fig. 32: Former prisoners of the Shlissel'burg Fortress, opening the exhibition "Imprisonment and Exile" in 1926. N.A. Morozov stands in the centre, holding his hat.[228]

Fig. 33: Members of the Commission for the restoration of the Shlissel'burg Fortress with a group of workers in 1926.[229]

[228] Trubkin, p.28.
[229] Ibid, p.29.

The design for the 'museumification' of Shlissel'burg also recognised the importance of sustaining attention to detail and capturing the emotive power of the site. The opening ceremony in 1928 validated the importance of Shlissel'burg as an important site of revolutionary memory, with veterans from the *Society of Former Political Convicts and Exiles* gathering alongside workers from Krasnyi Putilovets, the Society of Old Bolsheviks and representatives from the GMR. The related article in *Leningradskaia Pravda* emotively described the survival of former Shlissel'burg prisoners and the joy of veterans who had announced the revolution in "those damned walls where its fighters were slowly being killed". Trissiler's speech at the event recognized that "The grim story of the fortress is over, but it should not be forgotten. That is why it is timely to open a museum here, where hundreds of dead fighters are looking down from the walls".[230] Inside, the prisoners cells were restored to their original form, "down to the smallest details" with objects of prison life and punishment cells enlightening the visitor to the harshness of this regime.[231]

This publicity no doubt assisted the popularity of the Shlissel'burg with visitors. Records suggest that excursion visits here were hugely popular with the Leningrad public, surpassing the obstacle of its remote location. In 1927-28, 14,996 attended across 134 excursions, with another 11,002 visitors following between December 1929 and September 1930.[232] Two researchers involved in 'mass-work', effectively an outreach role, were paid for from the state budget to advise and oversee the excursions.[233] It has been suggested that this tactic, of bringing in external staff as an authority was in part a move to add "socialist competition" and to 'shock' employees.[234] Whatever the case, the results appear to have been sound and it did not preclude the originality of the tours. Trubkin's analysis of excursion work at the Shlissel'burg suggests that what set these guides apart was their "handicraft approach to business" and their more personable, even eccentric, traits.[235] One guide from the era named Shapiro recalled "I had to listen to many guides in Moscow and Leningrad, but I rarely met with such masters of the business as Comrades Lieberman, Hanukov, Zelikin and others (at Shlissel'burg)".[236] Shapiro continued, drawing attention to their individual styles; "Each of these guides conducted excursions differently". One guide (Presman) guided so "emotionally" that his method led several women to faint because of the impact of the tour on the "nervous system". Contrary to Presman, Khanukov was optimistic and brought cheerfulness, whilst "Zelikin's excursions

[230] *Leningradskaia Pravda*, 28 August 1928.
[231] *Leningradskaia Pravda,* 21 July 1928.
[232] GMPIR. D.58 L.262-263.
[233] GMPIR. D.2 L.5.
[234] Trubkin, p.28.
[235] Trubkin, p.29.
[236] GMPIR. D.2 L.26.

were passionately impulsive and emotional" and Lieberman exuded skilfulness.[237] What was characteristic in all of these comrades was "the absence of a terrible scourge – boredom". Their work did not stop at the fortress. Employees of the branch delivered lectures at schools and participated in events on the 'Red Calendar', most especially on the 10th anniversary of Soviet power. The Museum of the Shlissel'burg Fortress even organized an external exhibition on board the ships *Leningrad-Ozernaia* (Leningrad Lake), *Grazhdanin* (Citizen) and *Sotsialisticheskaia Respublik*a (Socialist Republic), in addition to many other small exhibitions conducted for other organizations.[238]

The 1930's saw a gradual downturn in the fortunes of the museum for numerous reasons, not least the difficulties they faced as an outpost in an increasingly centralized approach to museums. Problems arose within accounting and collections at the Shlissel'burg Fortress, in part because collections had to be taken through the main museum in Leningrad to be registered. By 1933, the demand was made to put collections into storage at the GMR. Work at Shlissel'burg was interrupted by the outbreak of war with Finland, and many more materials were simply taken to Leningrad, before the Great Patriotic War led to significant damage as a result of bombardment. Nevertheless, its brief heyday in the late 1920's is significant. It strongly evidences the dynamic qualities present in museum creators and staff during the first decade following the October revolution. At this stage it was more than possible, on occasions where the propaganda value and enlightenment potential was great, to see genuine participation by both civic bodies, veterans, the public and the state. Yet increasingly the policy agenda in the 1930's highlighted the overwhelming challenges faced by revolutionary-historical museums at a time of intensive oversight and centralization, the dismantling of independent civic societies and of course, the rapidly changing nature of the political climate.

Beyond the Shlissel'burg Fortress, the work of the Museum of the Revolution away from the Winter Palace certainly had expanded during the 1930's and is consistent with the growing role they had in bringing the history of the revolutionary movement to the people. Under Avvakumov's leadership from 1935, he tightened controls to ensure that only trained museum guides provided excursions at their sites, reacting against reports of "erroneous explanation" being given at outlying sites such as Lenin's *Shalash* (hut) at Razliv.[239] In addition to ensuring oversight and quality control, the Avvakumov era also showed a much greater interest in publicising the reach of the museum. Thirteen displays to publicise their monuments at Razliv were installed at sites such as the Tarkhova resort and Sestroretsk station, whilst the museum increased its party propaganda and agitation

[237] Ibid.
[238] GMPIR. D.714 L.319.
[239] GMPIR. *GMR Perepiska s organizatsiiami*, p.11.

function by extending its relationship with regional party committees.[240] Avvakumov was also instrumental in plans to develop the Gruzino estate, which has been added to the GMR remit in 1931 as "a monument of to the feudal-serfdom era of Tsarist Russia". The estate, which had been donated by Tsar Paul I to Count Alexei Arakcheev in 1796, contained a significant artistic collection and sixty-five hectares of sculpted parks.[241] Given its valuable collection, it was nationalized and transferred to the Petrograd department for museums and the protection of monuments, with a first inventory formed in December 1919. After a brief spell under the control of the State Russian Museum in the late 1920's, the estate was transferred to GMR in 1931.[242] A new exhibition opened in 1935 on the history of military settlements, and the new management had the foresight to publicize the estate at relevant regional train stations.[243] Party connections in the Chudovskii district were used to organize cultural campaigns whereby museum guides could be distributed to collective farmers. Excursions for collective farmers to the Gruzino estate were also expanded, with five cultural trips organized for February and March according to 1936 records. Like Shlissel'burg, and despite its remote location, it was visited by thousands of tourists. Visitors came for the beautiful architecture, parklands and preserved interiors. Spurred by this popularity, the Museum of the Revolution formed grand plans for the future of Gruzino, but the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War ensured that they were not to be implemented. According to an inspection of the estate in 1944, the buildings were "turned into ruins…and as artistic and historical monuments should be considered dead" as a result of "artillery attacks, bombardments and explosions" caused by the German invasion.[244] Meanwhile, because the parks were left "completely destroyed", the estate was now described as a "lifeless desert". Reports estimated the total damage to have reached 200 million rubles, including 50 million for the palace and the same amount for the cathedral.[245] Whilst the inventory suggests that the museum collection remained more or less intact when the German Army invaded on 21 June 1941, there is no definitive evidence as to whether the most valuable items were moved elsewhere, or whether they were destroyed.[246]

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[240] Ibid, p.15.
[241] I.M. Karoseva, 'Usad'ba grafa A.A. Arakcheeva Gruzino kak filial Gosudarstvennogo muzeia Revoliutsii' in A.M. Kulegin (ed.), *GMPIR: 90 let v prostranstve istorii i politiki. 1919-2009*, St. Petersburg: Norma, 2010, pp.31-32.
[242] GMPIR. D.713. *Akty peredachi i inventarizatsii* (27 November 1931).
[243] GMPIR. D.715 L.11. *Akty o strakhovanii i peredache muzeinykh eksponatov Gruzinskogo filiala* (1932-1941).
[244] GMPIR. D.724 L.78, *Akty ushcherba, prichinennogo vo vremia voiny Gruzinskomu filialu* (1944).
[245] Ibid.
[246] Karoseva, p.38.

Revision and decline: GMR after 1936

Following the most tumultuous year in the history of the Leningrad Museum of the Revolution, with its closure, change in directorship and radical exposition overhaul, the first attempt was made to remove GMR from the Winter Palace in 1936.[247] The director of the Hermitage, Iosif Orbeli, wrote directly to Stalin and requested that GMR be evicted in order to provide for the expansion of the Hermitage. This was not prioritized before the war, but a second attempt won the support of the Leningrad Soviet in 1945. Despite stubborn resistance from the museum and the People's Commissariat of Education, the decision held. No alternative premises were found, despite several being considered, including the Sheremetev Palace, Mikhailovskii Castle and the Beloselskii-Belozerskii Palace. Instead, soldiers packed the belongings of the museum into boxes in February 1946. Without a home, these years saw the most significant degradations of the GMR collections. In the following five years, huge photographic and document collections were destroyed, including leaflets published by Denikin and Kolchak during the Civil War, and documents signed by Trotsky. In 1951 alone, 12,000 documents were destroyed, including 1,039 on the history of the White movement.[248] The number of original artefacts relating to non-Bolshevik forces during the Civil War era was now barely notable, and the same could be said of members of the first Soviet government. With a significantly reduced staff, for ten years the artefacts and possessions of the museum would be stored in the attics of the Marble and Stroganov Palaces, and in the Peter and Paul Fortress, which was to become its main platform.

It was not until 1956 that the Leningrad State Museum of the Great October Revolution was opened. By this time, many had no idea that the museum had been created over 35 years ago and had been one of the most popular in the city for several decades.[249] In fact, over 10 million people had visited the Museum of the Revolution in its first two decades (prior to the outbreak of war) at the Winter Palace site alone.[250] By 1927, aside from the Hermitage and the Russian Museum, it was the most visited museum in Leningrad (346,000), and if branches were included, it outstripped even them (598,000).[251] Even without considering the numerous branches established by GMR, visitor numbers in the late 1930's had reached close to a million people per year, peaking at 832,000 in

[247] Artemov, 'Opyt proshlogo, vzgliad v budushchee', p.12.
[248] A.G. Kalmykov, 'Tekhnologiia ispravleniia istorii (Sud'ba politicheski vrednykh materialov v fondakh Gosudarstvennogo muzeia politicheskoi istorii Rossii), *Ezhegodnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo nauchnogo obshchestva istorikov i arkhivisto*v, St. Petersburg, 2000, pp.332-335.
[249] Velikanova, 'Stalinizm v mikroistorii…', p.95.
[250] GMPIR. F.VI D.45/1, p.6.
[251] Velikanova, 'Stalinizm v mikroistorii…', p.96.

1937. By 1941, even taking into account the purges of items and documents that had already occurred, the museum had amassed a collection of artefacts numbering 30,000 items, 58,000 newspapers and 52,000 magazines and journals. As things stood prior to the war, the museum was seen as hugely prestigious. It occupied some of the grandest and most emotive buildings and revolutionary sites in Russia. Certainly for Leningrad, if not the Soviet Union, it was at the high point of the hierarchy on revolutionary history until Moscow assumed greater precedence in the 1930's. Employees were recognized as an authority on their subjects and welcomed to factories, schools and academic institutes as such.[252] In short, it was a powerful cultural, educational and ideological institution.

Yet the Museum of the Revolution's institutional authority was frequently undermined. It constantly struggled to find a period of stability in which it could attempt to execute its function of enlightenment. It was not given special treatment, despite the prestigious surroundings of the Winter Palace, support from some of the most powerful party figures and the status of being the world's first museum on Marxism. From the outset, funds allocated to the museum by Narkompros did not suffice, leaving the museum to appeal to the Petrograd Soviet in cases of emergency.[253] Staff wages, which were very modest, were only just covered by the state budget allocation. Entrance fees from the public quickly matched the finances from the state budget. Maintenance costs formed a frequent source of concern, with the museum having to request more money from the state budget when shortcomings were revealed in terms of fire safety.[254] In 1929 the condition of electricity in the buildings left the Winter Palace without light, which halted the work of the museum entirely. The late 1920's also saw the expansion of the museum's remit, as the GMR in Leningrad was given responsibility over several branches. When the Shlissel'burg Fortress was added as a branch, the museum there was so in need of restoration funds that Glavnauka allowed the museum to sell off items considered "unnecessary inventory" in order to fund "necessary repairs on historical buildings".[255] Evidently, despite the ideological significance of GMR, the ambitions it held were out of step with the precarious financial position it faced, and ultimately it was not afforded the same level of privilege that might have been present just a few years earlier. As the 1920's passed into the early 1930's, museums faced considerable scrutiny in terms of how far they could offer value to the great priorities of the day, which were increasingly dominated by the demands of industry and agriculture. Investment in cultural heritage was simply not a priority.

[252] Andrianova, p.75.
[253] Leikina-Svirskaia, p.58.
[254] TsGALI SPb. F.285 O.1 D.5 L.13.
[255] TsGALI SPb. F.285 O.1 D.3 L.10.

Spiridonov wrote that "history has long been a powerful means of political propaganda, so it is understandable that every new head of state considers, if not to rewrite history, then at least to correct it based on current political tasks".[256] This position recognises the realities of Soviet institutional life in the 1920's; even more so for the decade that followed. For the most part, the significant changes in the approach of the GMR to its role were directly the results of socio-political circumstances rather than pedagogical developments. As a case in point, the civil war department of the GMR stands as evidence. The original exposition of the early 1920's was perhaps the "most objective demonstration of the history (of the Civil War) for the entire Soviet period of the museum's existence".[257] At this stage, the museum was based heavily on authentic exhibits and the guiding principles were quite simple – to be clear, to provoke emotion and to be accessible for masses of visitors. Reconstruction came about as a result of external factors, beginning with the First Museums Congress in late 1930. Yet in reality, sweeping changes had already happened in other branches of academic thought, preceding the Congress. During the first years of collectivization and the First Five Year Plan, non-Marxists had suffered reprisals and arrests, whilst Marxist scholars were engaged in a struggle to win the mandate from the Central Committee to "guide the professions".[258] Exactly two years before the First Museums Congress, the All-Union Congress of Marxist Historians waged war in a campaign against non-Marxist historians, based on a belief that non-Marxists were in league with bourgeois specialists and wealthy peasants. The result was the closing of numerous scholarly organizations and greater control over others, including the Academy of Sciences. The position of the historical profession in the early 1930's in Soviet Russia was indicative of the wider "pathetic servitude of scholarship".[259] This only intensified following Stalin's own intervention in 1931 concerning historical scholarship in *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia*, which effectively set the tone for a protracted period of historical orthodoxy.[260] Historians were certainly as likely to suffer as anyone during the Stalinist purges. The Marx Engels Institute endured a purge of staff who were deemed ideologically suspicious following the trial and exile of the head of the institute, David Riazanov, who had been accused of hiding Menshevik documents in the building.[261] The institute was promptly restructured and merged into the much larger Lenin Institute in November 1931.

The revision of Soviet history, which shifted towards the central role Stalin had played and deviated away from world revolution, undoubtedly dictated the fate of the Museum of the

[256] Spiridonov, p.127.
[257] Ibid.
[258] Enteen, *Soviet historians and the study of Russian imperialism*, pp.15-16.
[259] Ibid, p.23.
[260] Ibid, p.24.
[261] Barber, p.122.

Revolution in the 1930's. The shifting ethos of the museum, especially when overlooking the full extent of the period from GMR's establishment and the outbreak of war, was from revolutionary culture to pompous chauvinism; from spontaneity to conservatism, with manicured collections.[262] These overarching trends might suggest that we would be right in perceiving the GMR as having limited significance, but this would be far from correct. Particularly in the 1920's, the GMR showed remarkable evidence of innovation, specialism and visitor popularity. It represented a genuine attempt to record the history of the revolutionary movement in a way that could touch the hearts and minds of all those who attended, whether by displaying materials it had acquired with remarkable speed, or by the originality provided by its association with revolutionary veterans and those who had been scarred by the Tsarist regime. Initially, it was also a setting whereby a shared investment from across the anti-Tsarist divide could be recognized, with the original collegium containing non-Bolsheviks and academics without a revolutionary heritage or persuasion. This trend was true of parallel developments involved in the process of 'institutionalizing October': only a third of the staff (39 of 109) at the Marx Engels Institute were members of the Communist Party, despite being under its watchful eye, at the end of the 1920's.[263]

The museum was a model of *obshchestvennost'* in its early stages. While perhaps best evidenced by the independent Society of Former Political Convicts and Exiles, this was by no means a lone example of civic activity. The founding fathers of the museum and this society were effectively revolutionary veterans – most notably Mikhail Novorusskii, who helped form the bulk of the original collection of the GMR. Additionally, even prior to the imposition of greater hierarchy and central control, the museum had built a strong profile with local academic institutions, workers organizations and schools, without significant interference. All of this was done with extraordinary levels of challenge, mostly as a result of increasing responsibility (including more branches) and severe shortages of funding, and to some extent, expertise.

[262] Velikanova, 'Stalinizm v mikroistorii…', p.95.
[263] Barber, p.16.

Fig. 34: An excursion tour at the Shlissel'burg Fortress taken by Nikolai Tiutchev, a member of the Socialist Revolutionaries, c.1920-21.[264]

Originality and an enthusiastic desire to use the realities of the revolutionary struggle to engage visitors were the attributes which had enabled to museum to build a significant reputation during the 1920's, but became features that invited centralized control by the beginning of the 1930s. In the case of the masonic exhibits within the displays on the Decembrists, or the explanation of the explosives associated with the *Narodnaia Volia* (People's Will) we can see the seeds of what was rooted out by the didacticism of the *Short Course of the History of the CPSU(b)* and indeed the changes dictated in the museum after its closure in 1935. The museum no longer celebrated the achievements of the revolutionary struggle in an emotive, personalized way, but it became an effective purveyor of revolutionary orthodoxy under Stalin. Undoubtedly one could hold that it reached far more people in this era, but it had already lost many of the valuable attributes that had contributed to its success. There was no willing engagement from voluntary societies, the humanity of revolutionaries giving tours had been phased out and ambiguity or independence from different museum departments and branches was no longer visible. Any variables in the way expositions could be constructed or interpreted via excursions had been removed, and the opportunity to hear visitor feedback without the foreboding sense of being watched had also been erased.

[264] Trubkin, p.28.

Conclusion

The museums of the Winter Palace offer an intriguing window into the place and function of the museum in the period following the October revolution. Overlooked museum archives in the Hermitage and the Museum of Political History in St. Petersburg have provided an altogether more sapient understanding of the complex position of cultural institutions in the two decades from 1917 until the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War in 1941. The Hermitage stands as an example apart from simple categorisation. Before, during and after the Soviet period, it has remained the zenith for museums of its type: a stellar symbol of Russian culture both at home and abroad. The Museum of the Revolution occupies a very different place in the evolution of cultural institutions and museums: a proud example of breaking new ground with the backing of a young, energetic state, yet grown out of the seed of activism and an urgency to see their truth told regardless of the new opulent surroundings they were given. Both stand testament to the need to study institutions that were given the remit to succour the Russian people with enlightenment through the realisation of Soviet culture.

This concluding chapter returns to two basic questions at the heart of this thesis. Firstly, how far did these museums "frame the public understanding of events" and 'mythologize October? [1] Secondly, what can this study conclude about the function of museums in early Soviet Russia and beyond? At the outset, this thesis has sought to understand the role of the museum in the challenge to frame the revolution as the outcome of historical progression, and therefore assisting in the creation of a 'transcendent event'.[2] This in turn would aid popular legitimacy, or even a 'cult of volition'.[3] This was to be a long "struggle over memory" that would be a dominant factor influencing the cultural motives of the young Soviet state.[4] Lenin himself had recognised the importance of a mastery over the past. The presentation of the past must be functional, or it was superfluous. As was intimated from the beginning, the importance of cultural institutions as 'schools for citizens' was already present in late Tsarist Russia, certainly under Alexander III and Nicholas II, but their use to usher in a newly empowered ideology and understanding of the past on this scale was certainly new.

The path taken through the two museums at the heart of this thesis gives us ample evidence by which to understand how the museum could disseminate the past and create greater historical

[1] Corney, p.15.
[2] Ibid, p.10.
[3] Furet, pp.63-66.
[4] Corney, p.11.

consciousness. Lenin's cultural conservatism, coupled with his limited enthusiasm for the museum, supported maintaining the culture of the past in order to better understand it. No merit was seen in iconoclasm and the destruction of Russia's past culture. As Geraldine Norman put it, "Some revolutions destroy everything that has gone before, while others deliberately preserve the artefacts of the previous regime so as to demonstrate its wickedly luxurious nature".[5] On the night of 25 October 1917, Lenin himself specifically sent a group of guards to protect the wing of the Winter Palace housing the Hermitage, ensuring the safety of the building and its precious collection.[6] The palace and its iconic square would instead present an enlightened, mature presence for a young, inexperienced state. The Kazan Cathedral, inspired by St Peter's in Rome, was similarly repurposed into the Museum of Atheism. Tearing down Russia's symbols, though typically revolutionary in nature, would not have been popular with the public or the cultural preservationists that the state required for a smooth transition. The Hermitage may have been alien to Bolshevik principles, but it was at the forefront of a satisfactory outcome. Its staff, perhaps more than any other cultural institution, knew the value of not only their treasured collections, but those private collections housed in and around Petrograd. Paintings and decorative arts collections from the palaces of the Stroganovs and Yusupovs helped to form the enlarged Hermitage collection, whilst the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings that would arrive predominantly during the 1930's derived from two Moscow merchants: Sergei Shchukin and Ivan Morozov.[7] Without the expertise that the Hermitage would give such collections, nationalisation of artefacts would have been unseemly and in all probability impossible. As is so often the case when reflecting upon the schisms in history, gaining mastery over art and culture proved essential in building legitimacy. A cull of the Hermitage staff and their artefacts was a level of recklessness that never really appealed to Lenin's pragmatism.

Richard Stites posited that the risk of political factionalism and splintering the intelligentsia weighed heavily on the considerations of the early Soviet cultural outlook during the 1920's.[8] This decade saw a tightening of the grip on cultural activism through movements like Proletkult, whilst significant tension quite clearly emerged between party leadership and pluralist efforts at cultural enlightenment. In Petrograd, Zinoviev was central to the view that it was right to "put some fear into the intelligentsia", as the city Cheka engaged in mass arrests, acting independently from Moscow.[9] For many of the leftist intelligentsia, the "Russian Revolution ended with the death of Aleksandr

[5] Norman, *Dynastic Rule*, p.7.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams*, p.7.
[9] Volkov, pp.234-235.

Blok", the disillusioned poet who was refused the opportunity to get medical treatment abroad.[10] His punishment, alongside fellow artist Nikolai Gumilyov, who was arrested and shot by the Cheka in 1921, evidenced a conscious effort to destroy "the equilibrium between state authority and the cultural elite that had been created during the pre-revolutionary times".[11] For Solomon Volkov, the Bolshevik treatment of the cultural elite in the early 1920's was proof enough that they "regarded artists as their serfs".[12] Not only was the city losing some of its cultural majesty through Bolshevik policy, but it was also clear that there was a wounded feel in the former capital as Moscow rose to prominence. Whilst some cultural commentators retained a belief that Petrograd was undergoing an "inexorable resurrection", others, like Mstislav Dobuzhinskii recalled the former capital in 1921 as "dying before my very eyes with a death of incredible beauty".[13]

From the very beginning it was implausible to roll out a sweeping cultural programme without allies, even if they were, at times, awkward bedfellows. Even the most rebellious of creatives were put to work. Blok worked for Narkompros during Lunacharsky's time in office and even Gumilyov lectured to Petrograd's workers.[14] Making the best of existing expertise and utilising Russia's cultural wealth prior to Stalin's leadership without question shaped the role of the Winter Palace museums. In one sense this meant working with potentially challenging figures within the art world, from Nikolai Punin to Alexandre Benois, but the logic of necessity was sound even if it was unwittingly achieved. The ongoing clash between the avant-garde and those more concerned for preservation enabled the state to act as mediator. Conflicting attitudes between those driven towards a broad cultural exorcism and those who decried the threat to cultural heritage only added impetus to the desire of the state to centralise control in their hands. The establishment of more distinct centralised museum management under Glavnauka and Glavmuzei ensured that policies were increasingly beyond the grasp of localised disagreements or singular examples, whilst the creation of the Gosmuzeifond left museums in no doubt that they were to be considered as part of a holistic approach to Russia's cultural wealth.

The landscape of cultural policy following 1917 was impeded by much greater concerns for the survival of the revolution itself, not least through the evacuation of artefacts to Moscow, a move

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[10] Arthur Lourié (Russian composer). 'The final days of Russian writers: Alexander Blok and Nikolai Gumilev', *Russia Beyond*, 23 June 2014: https://www.rbth.com/literature/2014/06/23/the_final_days_of_russian_writers_alexander_blok_and_nikolai_gumilev_37641.ht

[11] Gumilyov had created the All-Russia Union of Writers in 1920. He was openly monarchist and contemptuous of Bolshevism, was arrested for his participation in a non-existent monarchist plot, known as the Petrograd military organization. V. Shentalinski, *Crime Without Punishment*, Moscow: Progress, 2007, p. 286.

[12] Volkov, p.237.

[13] Ibid, p.225.

[14] Ibid, p.228.

which followed the shift of government departments to the new capital. The early Soviet years for the Hermitage were characterized by its resistance to Moscow's predominance and the lustful eyes of Moscow's cultural institutions towards its status. We can only speculate what fortune the Hermitage would have had if it had been in closer proximity to the capital. Nevertheless, it is worth dwelling on the Hermitage's success in maintaining its influential status. Boris Piotrovsky, reflecting on his extraordinary working life at the Hermitage, traced the evolution of the museum's working relationship with the Communist Party. His own experiences with the party reflect the tenuous hold with which an academic could count on their position during the 1930's. Piotrovsky was arrested and incarcerated for 40 days in 1935, denying accusations of associating with terrorists. His response was to defend himself in court, a move which surprisingly won him respect within the party.[15] His reflections recognised that the party was a powerful force to do politics with. Piotrovsky argues that museum intellectuals achieved a Faustian pact of sorts in order to maintain their intellectual autonomy – a necessary evil. The Hermitage became in a sense the symbol of Soviet intellectual and cultural maturity. In 1939, when the Hermitage celebrated its 175th anniversary, it was given the privilege of conferring its own degrees. Awards and medals could be given to its employees and other institutions were banned from the use of 'hermitage' in their titles. Piotrovsky suggests that under Stalinism the Hermitage developed a greater level of prestige, especially in terms of an international reputation, beginning with the directorate of Leonid Obolenskii in 1930. In the years following this, the Hermitage developed strong working relationships in Europe and North America. For example, the museum worked closely with collectors in New York and Berlin's Kaiser Friedrich museum in 1931, whilst VOKS were involved in the organization of a 1932 exhibition of revolutionary Dutch artists. During the 1939 anniversary exhibition, Piotrovsky noted that solemn celebrations marked the point at which the Hermitage was "turning into a truly global museum".[16] Under the current directorship of Mikhail Piotrovsky, the Hermitage has extended this label into unchartered territory, with Hermitage museum outposts in Amsterdam and most recently Shanghai.[17] Within Russia, branches have been initiated in Kazan and Vyborg, whilst agreements have been formed to open in Omsk, Ekaterinburg and Vladivostok. It is hard to imagine any other museum in the world capable of this level of ambition, but a close relationship with the state and the encyclopaedic reserves of artefacts constructed under Soviet rule have enabled such vision.

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[15] A few years later, Piotrovsky lost his mentor Leon Gyuzalyan, arrested and shot in Anastas Mikoyan's Armenian purges in 1938. Norman, *Dynastic Rule*, pp.36-38.

[16] Matveev*, Ermitazh "Uedinennyi", ili vystavochnaia mozaika Ermitazh*, pp.196-198.

[17] Negotiations to establish a Hermitage museum in Barcelona appear to have stalled, whilst a branch in London closed due to a lack of funding, as did a partnership venture in Las Vegas with the Guggenheim museum in New York. Norman, *Dynastic Rule*, pp.14-15.

International standing, as well as a much stronger status domestically, was hard won. Socialist reconstruction involving the reorganization of permanent exhibits was adopted in 1930, preceding the temporary exhibition *USSR in construction*, celebrating fifteen years of Soviet rule. The Hermitage was given a starring role in exhibiting 'current political campaigns' including anti-religious themes, world proletarian revolution and the crisis of capitalism, reflecting the utility of the Hermitage by 1932.[18] It was important that a successful Hermitage was recognized to be a Soviet success. As a correspondent for *Vecherniaia Moskva* remarked "For fifteen soviet years, the Hermitage has significantly increased its wealth", enough to be considered one of the greatest museums in the world.[19]

Sorok let Sovetskogo Ermitazha published in 1957 underlines the progression of the museum towards a proud Soviet emblem. The guide is written with heavy political overtones, lauding the Soviet Hermitage for achieving "the mastering of artistic heritage by ordinary people".[20] Explicit references are made to the party programme and the role of "art in the life of the people".[21] Furthermore, the guide evaluates the growing impact of the Hermitage's educational reach and celebrates its renowned academic status. Educational excursions numbered just 136 in 1919. Between 1952-56, some 14,000 school excursions took place.[22] Mobile exhibitions travelled freely across the USSR to bring the people's treasures to their rightful owners, whilst the museum's experts were sought around the world for their unique knowledge. Under their watch, the Hermitage, it proudly boasted, had expanded five-fold. But this glorification of the Hermitage was not new in the 1950's. For many years, the Hermitage had routinely hosted an 'exhibition of exhibitions' which celebrated its history and its progress, tracking its movement towards becoming something of a global phenomenon whose potential had lay dormant under Tsarist rule. Yet by 1957 it was evident that times had changed somewhat. If evidence of socialist construction was pompous and overbearing twenty-five years earlier, it was now comparatively sure footed. Emphasis had shifted towards reflecting present day concerns in the mould of scientific analysis and its practical application through restoration and dynamism in archaeology.[23] The Hermitage had the capacity to remain relevant at the forefront of cultural presentation, preservation and study, whether it was during the effort to nationalise collections at the outset of the Soviet period, or four decades later, to reflect the high technical level reached by Soviet scientific methods.

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[18] Matveev, *Ermitazh "Uedinennyi", ili vystavochnaia mozaika Ermitazh*, p.175.
[19] Ibid, p.177.
[20] *Sorok let Sovetskogo Ermitazha,* p.4.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid, p.5.
[23] Ibid, pp.15-18.

If the Hermitage had maintained and even exaggerated an exceptional status amongst museums in the USSR, then the Museum of the Revolution (GMR) went in quite the opposite direction. It once had the backing of senior Bolsheviks in Petrograd and benefited from the prestige that went with being a flagship museum of its type. Yet there is a sense that its purpose was lost as ambitions to create a "historical vision" of October and the revolutionary movement waned in favour of more pressing present day concerns.[24] The museum had been "conceived of as a heroic chronicle, an illustration of the all-conquering power of people's revolution".[25] Furthermore it was a museum with an explicit connection to activism and genuine innovation. From the very beginning of the GMR, curators worked tirelessly to gather materials from the revolutionary movement, including contemporary artefacts from the Civil War. The GMR were also centrally important in the creation and use of custom-made artefacts, designed to help carry the narrative of the exhibition or theme in question, with graphic artists given a key role.[26] Present day literature from GMPIR is keen to frame the founders of the museum as pioneering pluralists dedicated towards building on the experiences of revolutionaries from within the Bolshevik movement and beyond. Truth and recognition to them was of paramount importance. Their dedication to working with former convicts and exiles, their provision of fitting memorials and excursions at Shlisselburg and the Peter and Paul Fortress appears to evidence this very well. Commitment to museum display principles being stronger than their adherence to the party created the circumstances for their own demise. Their collections were judged to have contained historical errors, leading to the closure of the museum in 1935 and the installation of Sergei Avvakumov to tighten up on orthodox representation. But criticism of their working methodology started significantly earlier. Many of their original items were transferred to central archives or the IMEL in Moscow in the early 1930's without explanation. Increased influence from party organs led to the removal of original documents and photographs, many of which evidenced parties opposed to socialism.[27] From then on, the museum was "plagued by inconsistency with the party line". Thousands of artefacts were purged from its collection, amounting to 93,626 objects transferred or destroyed.[28]

The activist ethos of Mikhail Novorusskii's collection and its emergence during the flux of revolution and Civil War presented a complicit marriage of convenience with the party as things stood in the early 1920's. Its positioning in the Winter Palace, ruffling the feathers of the Hermitage in the process, served the purpose of delivering a rather abrupt statement of intent. But like many of

[24] Von Geldern, p.3.
[25] Artemov (ed.), *Iz'iatiiu ne podlezhit... Xranit' vechno*, p.7.
[26] Ibid, p.10.
[27] Ibid, p.13.
[28] Ibid, p.14.

the cultural partnerships forged in the embers of the revolution, it was not fated to last. Bureaucratic centralization pushed museum management towards government oversight, whilst the nature of its expositions became far more didactic or driven to contemporary needs, rather than representing the history of the revolutionary movement as an explicit priority. Parallels are easy to see in comparison with the Moscow Museum of the Revolution, now the State Central Museum of the Contemporary History of Russia. As with the GMR, it devoted exhibitions to peasant wars in Russia, the Decembrist uprising, populist revolutionaries, as well as placing a significant focus on the October Revolution. Into the late 1920's, the museum focused on socialist construction and emphasised the achievements of Soviet society. It absorbed branches within the city, including the underground printing house of the Central Committee of the RSDRP and the Historical and Revolutionary Museum and had accumulated some one million artefacts by the eve of the Great Patriotic War. The museum is perhaps even more distinct in how Stalinist orthodoxy changed its displays, with a showcase of gifts to Stalin forming their last exhibition prior to the war. When compared to the GMR in Leningrad, the Moscow museum developed a more immediate and distinct purpose to reflect the struggle against fascism, with trophy weapons even installed in the museum courtyard. Following the war, it was increasingly clear that Moscow had taken the mantle of premier revolutionary museum in the USSR. The museum expositions followed a Ministry of Education policy to focus almost exclusively on the Soviet period. Unnecessary funds and artefacts were transferred predominantly into archival storage. By 1968, it had become the scientific and research centre amongst the historical and revolutionary museums of the Soviet Union, before developing a laboratory of museology in the late 1970's.

The Leningrad Museum of the Revolution experienced a divergent course in comparison. While very much in Moscow's shadow, the museum was able to develop outside of the spotlight after its move to a location to the north of the Neva. Housed in the former Kschessinska mansion from 1955, the museum embraced Khrushchevian voluntarism and there was no question that it retained a progressive remit rather than presenting itself as a fusty historical museum. The museum established a significant collection on space exploration and considered the development of the national economy during Brezhnev's leadership of the USSR.[29] During the 1980's the museum was faced with choosing between waiting and reacting to leadership from above, or making its own choices at a time when, in their own words, it was a "matter of life and death".[30] The museum appears today to be remarkably proud of the choices it made, rejecting "ideological uniformity of

[29] Ibid, p.16.
[30] Ibid.

the collection" and instead pursuing plurality.[31] Evidence was gathered from across the political spectrum and a "critically objective view of the past" has been central to the museum ethos in recent decades. The Museum of Political History was also able to broker international relationships. This move was aided by a willingness by the museum to build partnerships on projects to memorialise the atrocities at Katyn during the Second World War, as well as exhibition partnerships spanning from the UK to Vietnam.[32]

The transformation from "ideological conformity" towards plurality and open expression was not confined to the Museum of Political History. Former Soviet Republics are replete with examples of activism generating a spirit akin to that channelled by comrades of Mikhail Novorusskii at the time of the revolution. Egle Rindzeviciute's study of museums acting as a vehicle to disclose Soviet repression found a particularly high concentration of grass-roots community organizations assembling exhibitions and museums in the late 1980's as a variety of groups sought to challenge existing historical narratives.[33] Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of such museums, emerging out of conflict-ridden pasts, do not usually contribute to social cohesion and often have been criticised for contributing to fragmentation. Their urgency in reacting against the secrecy and distortion of Soviet repression, especially in non-Russian former Soviet republics, led to an overflow or excess in displaying the past as a surge in transparency followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. A similar urgency had occupied Novorusski and his comrades almost a century earlier and that feverish enthusiasm can still be sensed when examining the museum's collections today. The contemporary Museum of Political History treads an altogether more balanced path, neither condemning nor condoning the historical processes which it displays.

Gorbachev's structural reforms of the 1980's certainly had a significant bearing on the Hermitage too. Despite much talk of privatizing museums, the Hermitage was immediately listed by the Ministry of Culture amongst the institutions of special importance to be excluded from such a policy.[34] The dreams and realities present throughout the late 1980's reflected sharp contradictions on the state of play at the Hermitage. On one hand, major expansion plans were drawn up in 1985 for the Hermitage to expand into the East Wing of the General Staff Building, and to acquire a storage facility elsewhere in the city. These were only being completed three decades later. Workers Collectives at the principal museums of Leningrad, including the Russian Museum, had succeeded in electing a chosen member to their respective museum leaderships – though this was foiled at the

[31] Ibid, p.19.
[32] Ibid, p.23.
[33] E. Rindzeviciute, 'The Overflow of secrets: the disclosure of Soviet repression in museums as an excess', *Current Anthropology,* Vol.56 Issue 12 (December 2015), p.277.
[34] This was enshrined in law on 18 December 1991. Norman, *Dynastic Rule*, p.130.

Hermitage. Nevertheless, strong debates took place over whether the existing Academic Council or the new Workers Collective should lead the 'democratic management' of the museum. The level of criticism towards the directorship even led to the creation of a newspaper, *Panorama*, which ambitiously proclaimed itself to be the journal of the Party Bureau, the trade union, the Komsomol Committee and the Director's Office.[35] Deputy Director Vitali Suslov's plans for joint ventures, which included foreign partnerships, ceded a great deal of future profits to foreign agencies, and highlighted the precarious ambition of the time. The agency was to control foreign exhibitions, shops, replicas of museum items, a museum restaurant and staff canteen – not to mention a 400-room hotel on the Palace Embankment. But ultimately the management of the venture failed and resulted in financial turmoil for the Hermitage. The leadership of the museum continued to come under significant strain from criticism via the Workers Collective, with Boris Piotrovsky the target of anger. Mikhail Piotrovsky likened their activities to party committees in the 1920's in their unerring desire to remove the old regime in favour of young careerists.[36] Boris Piotrovsky's death in 1990 led to the intervention of the Ministry of Culture to decide upon the future of the museum's management. The strangeness of the moment produced a special obituary edition of *Panorama* (October 1990) which celebrated his life, with acknowledgements including the new director (Suslov) and even by Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin. Without any expectation, Suslov appointed Mikhail Piotrovsky as his deputy, with a personal remit of trying to push staff towards focusing on research rather than the disputes of the Workers Collective and to establish a consensus around the sanctity of the institution. For him, "it was to the Hermitage to which they belonged – not the Hermitage that belonged to them".[37]

Mikhail Piotrovsky was appointed Director of the Hermitage on 11 July 1992 to a Russia in turmoil. Yeltsin's liberalisation of foreign trade, prices and currency had precipitated spiralling inflation. Piotrovsky was somewhat sanguine, recognizing that "the Party went out of me, not me out of the Party".[38] In the post-Soviet period, it is not difficult to find evidence of the Hermitage's political pull. Mikhail Piotrovsky quickly initiated the building of relationships with the most influential politicians of the new Russia. Anatoli Sobchak, close friend of Yeltsin and Mayor of newly renamed St. Petersburg, used to tour associates around the Hermitage prior to his indictment for corruption. Mikhail Piotrovsky's own position for directorship was perfect, given that he was from

[35] Ibid, p.132.
[36] One must recognize that given that his Mikhail's father was hospitalized with a stroke shortly after a fiery meeting with the Workers Collective, his recollections are understandably coloured with some bitterness. Ibid, p.136.
[37] Ibid, p.142.
[38] Ibid, p.143.

outside the museum, a good scholar and not closely tied to the Party. Yevgeni Sidorov, the Minister of Culture in the new government, recalled from the time that his first task was to dismiss museum directors that were "old Party war horses".[39] Sidorov and Yevgeni Primakov, Head of the Foreign Intelligence Service and fellow Arabist, influenced the choice of Piotrovsky.[40] Mikhail's choice of Deputy was also influenced by political connections: Georgi Vilinbakhnov, a heraldry expert and a hereditary noble who knew the corridors of power in Moscow. Boris Yeltsin himself was said to have won the 'culture vote' after a well-publicised visit to the museum in 1996 where he declared the Hermitage to be under the direct patronage of the Russian President.[41] A separate line was allotted in the state budget with a grant that could not be cancelled by the Ministry of Culture, acquisition funding and financing to cancel debts followed. It certainly did not prevent financial shortfalls, but as a sign of state support, this quite clearly reflected the high standing of the Hermitage. It raised the Hermitage "heads and shoulders above the other museums of Russia" and made Piotrovsky a political player.[42] He was invited to the highest-level receptions in Moscow and even offered the post of Minister of Culture in 1996, but he turned down the post in favour of remaining at the Hermitage.

Throughout the formative years of his directorship, Piotrovsky quickly formed international contacts, most notably those able to teach the Hermitage "how to operate in a capitalist environment" like McKinsey, the American management consultancy.[43] IBM created a website for the Hermitage on a 'pro-bono' basis. A global advertising firm, McCann-Erickson, were amongst those that helped the Hermitage change itself from a cloistered, reclusive and serious institution towards becoming an accessible authority. As Piotrovsky's drive towards international modernisation took hold, the Hermitage became one of the first to substantially benefit from UNESCO investment in Russia. Even joint venture schemes which threatened to pass very little profit onto the museum was finally resolved following tax complications. 'Friends of the Hermitage' organizations thrived across the world within a decade of the Piotrovsky directorship. Claims for restitution of artworks, most famously regarding wartime 'trophy art' involving Germany, have broadly been resolved though a mature presence in soft diplomacy. The *Bronze Age: Europe without borders* exhibition (2013) stands as testament to the significant rule the Hermitage has in making

[39] Ibid, p.145.
[40] Primakov would later become Prime Minister in 1998.
[41] 'Decree of Russian President, Boris Yeltsin (12 June 1996)', History of Hermitage Museum: https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/explore/history/historical-article/1950/Eltsin+Decree/?lng=
[42] Norman, *Dynastic Rule*, p.174.
[43] Ibid, p.149.

Russia a highly respected cultural force even in the face of political opposition.[44] This particular exhibition involved cooperative teams from both Russian and German museums, which specifically tackled the issue of trophy art.

Finally, it is worth dwelling on the development of the Hermitage during the Putin presidency. Piotrovsky was an established acquaintance of Vladimir Putin prior to his Presidency and supported his first election campaign, with a special responsibility to spread the word internationally, a task he performed admirably as he was meeting numerous leading politicians through travelling exhibitions and Hermitage satellite ventures in the Netherlands, the UK and the USA. Piotrovsky has personally given Hermitage tours to several US Presidents including George W. Bush and Bill Clinton. Putin's favour towards the Hermitage under the trusted Piotrovsky directorship has been extraordinarily evident. Piotrovsky was invited to a private dinner with the President of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn, in 2000 and the relaxed social atmosphere left the World Bank promising to pick up the funding for the renovation of the General Staff Building, which ultimately constituted a loan that the Russian state paid for later on.[45] That may have been two decades ago, but Putin's favour has never soured and the Hermitage remains closely aligned to the Russian state and its President. For the 250th anniversary of the Hermitage in 2014, Putin arrived to deliver two magnificent Faberge items: the Rothschild Egg and a monumental clock, originally presented by the Romanov family to Alexander III and his wife in 1891 to celebrate their silver wedding.[46] As recently as 2019, Vladimir Putin issued a statement of public gratitude on Piotrovsky's 75th birthday:

> 'As Director of the State Hermitage, you make a significant personal contribution to the development of the famous museum and the preservation of our rich historical, cultural and spiritual heritage as well as the promotion of international cultural ties.'[47]

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At the outset of this thesis, we examined the importance of the determination shown by the Bolsheviks for the achievement of a cultural policy which included furthering obschevennost' and

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[44] Ibid, p.168.
[45] 'Visit of the World Bank Control Committee (2009)', *Hermitage News*: https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/news/news-item/news/1999_2013/hm11_2_386/?lng=
[46] 'Putin gives Faberge Egg to the Hermitage for its 250th anniversary', *Moscow Times*: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/12/09/putin-gives-faberge-egg-to-hermitage-for-250th-anniversary-a42110
[47] 'Congratulations to Director of the State Hermitage Mikhail Piotrovsky', *Kremlin Website*: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/62274

kul'turnost in Soviet citizens. This thesis, whilst conducted in order to make thorough use of two exemplary case studies, has shown that neither museum was sealed off from this broad aim, or indeed the wider implications that adjoined the expansion of a state control of cultural, educational or historical institutions. Michael David-Fox, in his study of higher learning in the Soviet Union, showed that cultural and educational institutions needed to the be "at least a step ahead of the society it was attempting to build".[48] For David-Fox, higher education, like museums, represented opportunities to implement communist ideas within new institutions on the 'third' or cultural front. Where his studies reflect the efforts to live a new communist everyday life (at Sverdlov), the creation of red specialists (Institute of Red Professors) or a collectivist Marxist science (at the Communist Academy), the two museums studied here reflect a more complex and less efficient route by which to achieve cultural aims. Nevertheless, David-Fox's study correctly identifies that victory on the 'cultural front' (ie. a "victory on the battlefield of the mind") proved more elusive than either military triumph or the consolidation of political power.[49]

Upon closer inspection, appreciable overlaps exist between the Hermitage, the GMR and the impact of cultural policy on other Soviet institutions. In higher learning, David-Fox identified a project inextricably tied to the third front, the so-called *smena* or changing of the guard.[50] This effectively meant the attempt to create a post-revolutionary elite via the proletarianization of the party and more broadly the promotion of former workers and peasants into the political-social elite. David-Fox's study recognises the great tension experienced between the higher learning institutions and "anti-intellectual intellectuals".[51] The Hermitage and its staff certainly represented a barrier to *smena*. They had been overseen in soft-touch fashion by the Ministry of the Imperial Court prior to 1917 and when Lunacharsky began to bring about democratization of the museum leadership, the Hermitage responded wilfully by ignorning the young commissar in charge and then threatening a mass-walkout in response to Nikolai Punin's attempts to deprive the Council of its functions. Whilst the Hermitage maintained a core of expertise which still had its roots in nobility and the bourgeois intelligentsia, government restructuring to take museums under central control ensured that they had limits on their influence. Both the Hermitage and the GMR had limited communist expertise and it would not be until the Great Break that proletarianization would sweep both institutions. Following Troinitskii's departure at the Hermitage in 1927, the directorship would remain in the hands of party apparatchiks, as was the GMR in the same period. *Smena* also occurred as a result of purges, with cleansing taking place on an institutional scale. *Yezhovshchina* affected both museums,

[48] David-Fox, *Revolution of the mind*, pp.2-3.
[49] Ibid, p.5.
[50] Ibid, p.14.
[51] Ibid, p.16.

with more than fifty curators were arrested and sentenced to internal exile, prison camps or execution in the Hermitage alone.

In the *Great Retreat*, Timasheff gives credence to the argument that the creation and development of special institutions proved central to the positioning of state machinery in culture, education and the arts.[52] This is highly prevalent to both the Hermitage and the GMR. The Hermitage undeniably maintained special status throughout the Soviet period. Initially the Hermitage offered an institutional basis by which to preserve national cultural wealth, supporting Lenin's instinctive opposition to a cultural resetting. It provided a foundation for working with the existing expertise of preservationists, a natural home for the logistical challenges brought about by nationalisation of artefacts and by extension, a place where the value of the newly gathered collections might be better studied. The Hermitage meaningfully gave weight to the sentiment that the Soviet state could justifiably be recognised as a mature cultural guardian. This was a Russian institution which remained unscathed regardless of perspective.

The cache of the Hermitage as an iconic Russian museum would operate in step with a form of cultural patriotism. The Hermitage contributed to foreign exhibitions, outreach projects across the Soviet Union and take a stake in representing the USSR through soft-diplomacy. The Hermitage was part of the galaxy of cultural institutions and individuals involved the cultivation of a positive, responsible image of the Soviet Union.[53] Of particular importance was the use cultural institutions to deflect criticisms that the USSR was in some way deficient or uncivilized in the minds of foreigners either visiting the Soviet Union or abroad. Given that Stalinism was hostile to militant communists, cultural modernity and avant-gardists, the Hermitage was well placed to retain a position of influence. Likewise, as Fitzpatrick notes, other traditional institutions such as the Bolshoi Theatre and the Academy of Sciences also retained a pride of place amongst the new beneficiaries of cultural acclaim under Stalin, like chess players or pianists.[54] Special status of course did not free the Hermitage from problems or provide it with unfettered privilege of course, but it remained a trusted institution with a reputation throughout the interwar years. In this time period at least, it would not gain the institutional autonomy that might be associated with the contemporary Hermitage. Cultural management, according to Timasheff, could not be changed because it formed an "essential part of the dictatorial structure and therefore could not be abandoned".[55] As a museum of great emblematic power, the Hermitage above all museums needed to be kept in check.

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[52] Timasheff, p.245.
[53] David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment*, pp.14-25.
[54] Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front*, pp.9-14.
[55] Timasheff, p.284.

To some degree the Museum of the Revolution also operated with special status initially. Short of true communist expertise and without a clear project to generate a definite sense of organizing the history of the revolutionary movement, it is easy to see why it operated with relative importance in its formative years. But its profile declined largely because of developments beyond its control. Its roots in activist collecting and grass roots revolutionism were tolerated in the first decade of Soviet rule. It was able to adapt with initial fluidity through innovative scholarship and to some extent the transition towards a more explicitly enlightenment function. In terms of the visitors it was able to reach, especially through educational excursions, the GMR was an exceptional museum, especially in the 1930s. The expansion of the propaganda state initially justified and benefitted the museum, providing support for its collecting and even creating an interrelationship with the museum educational programmes. But as revolutionary-historical themed museums expanded, as Istpart and IMEL formed a distinct role in creating a historical narrative and as the expectations of the museum to curate to the function of 'vulgar sociology', the GMR ceased to be in any sense unique. It is not hard to find examples of museums performing this function to the letter of the party's requirements in the 1930's. The Central Lenin Museum, offered 21 rooms of exhibits, 15 of which were arranged in chronological order so as to form a "school of Bolshevik history", explicitly mapped the rise of Communist Party according to Lenin's career as a visionary, revolutionary and statesman.[56] It is important to recognise the pressure placed on the GMR to succeed in its remit following Stalin's explicit intervention in party history in 1931. In 1936, their forced closure due to curatorial failings came following a year in which the NKVD had arrested 43,686 people on charges of anti-Soviet agitation, half of which were people engaging in idle gossip.[57]

At the same time, the Musuem of the Revolution was one of many victims of the struggle to find a perfected party narrative of history. Growing frustration was building over the failure of historians and curators alike to frame Bolshevik history within a systematic Marxist-Leninist narrative governed by the historical dialectic. Historians and historical institutions like the GMR were involved in a high stakes game, which fuelled the personality cult further. The GMR suffered in part because of a wider pedagogical conflict over how to present revolutionary history. Brandenberger's study of the *Short Course* draws on the example of Yaroslavsky, who believed intented in the "more popularized" presentation of history, advising the importance of providing "a living, representative picture" of the subject matter in order to give the reader or viewer a "sense of the epoch".[58] In

[56] Brandenberger, *Propaganda State*, p.46.
[57] Ibid, p.62.
[58] Ibid, pp.251-252.

reference to the *Short Course*, yet mirroring curation at the GMR, Yaroslavsky had faith in visual displays and perspectives not in the official narrative if it brought the history alive. Shumeiko recalls Yarolslavsky lecturing at the Miusskaia Square party school, when his students complained about his deviation from the party line:

> I myself witnessed quite a dramatic scene [while investigating these reports] at a lecture of Yaroslavsky's in the Lenin auditorium of the Miusskaia Square party school. Comments could be heard echoing from the audience during the lecture such as: "Illustrate the facts according to the Short Course —what you are saying is not depicted there!" The old man, trying to remain calm, answered that he had personally witnessed the events that he was describing. "So what?" echoed from the hall. "There is an official interpretation." [....] I would say that such incidents undermined Yaroslavsky's prestige, as well as that of his Central Committee lecturers' group. And the aging old man began to give lectures less and less frequently.[59]

As a result of the predominance of the *Short Course* and accompanying *Short Biography* texts, "party history had ossified into a schematic, lifeless paean to Stalin's unerring leadership of the Bolshevik movement".[60] Between 1936 and 1941, under directors Avvakumov, Solodnikova and Shudenko, this moved in step. The redevelopment of the Civil War department completely followed the line taken in the aforementioned books, emphasising the Bolsheviks during the Civil War, as opposed to its place in revolutionary struggle. Expositions supplemented the 'two leaders' theory whilst erasing figures now recognised as enemies of the people, including Mikhail Tuchachevskii.[61] Regardless, the GMR, struggled to remain vibrant and entirely sure of its curatorial direction during these years. Unsurprisingly, the visitor responses bare evidence to this by recognising the monotone displays and failure to enlighten. The GMR, like so many other museums, stagnated amidst the struggle to connect the ordinary citizen with the ever more confusing and inaccessible nature of the Soviet past.

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The direction of these museums beyond the initial zeal of the 1920's provides clear evidence that much of the dynamic activism and cultural progression sought out of revolution was shortlived in the arena of the museum. Both the Museum of the Revolution and the Hermitage developed different solutions to the challenge of managing functional museums in a post-revolutionary environment. Whilst the GMR sought to take ownership of at least a small part of displaying the revolution itself and contesting the memory of the October Revolution and its history, the Hermitage was only ever

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[59] G.V. Shumeiko, *Iz letopisi Staroi ploshchadi: istoricheskii ocherk*, Moscow, 1996, pp.97-98.
[60] Brandenberger, *Propaganda State*, p.52.
[61] GMPIR. D.58 L.73.

truly interested in the preservation of its collections, its academic principles and its autonomy from explicit interference from Moscow. It broadly succeeded in the first two categories, despite the loss of numerous treasures during the 1930's, but the third provided its most unpalatable trial. Over time, withstanding the impact of academic purges and the demands placed upon its display – especially under Stalinism – the Hermitage functioned very effectively and without any doubt benefited from a prestigious relationship with the state under Soviet rule. Maintaining an intelligent discretion in their dealing with the Party would in turn be greatly beneficial when the Soviet Union ceased to be. Indeed, the Hermitage was remarkably well placed to benefit from regime change. Alignment with Yeltsin and Putin have consolidated the Hermitage as an untouchable pillar of Russian culture – a far cry from the early uncertainty following 1917. Furthermore, the Hermitage has been able to exploit a resurgent interest in the Romanov dynasty and the heritage of Russia's imperial past. It has been able to secure its position further as an unparalleled source of soft power, capable of sophisticated dialogue at a relatively relaxed, official level with countries across the globe.

On reflection, the Museum of the Revolution burned rather too bright in that initial heat of the revolution. Like many of the energetic cultural projects in Petrograd and Russia more broadly, it captured a sense of optimism and opportunity. Its founding principles were driven towards ensuring that the history of revolutionaries would be heard. It was not exclusive or selective and did not fully subscribe to the 'enlightened minority' mentality shared between the Bolshevik leadership and the Hermitage. The Hermitage stood as an exotic other in a Russia where it stood apart as a unique collection and an astounding international ambassador, whilst the Museum of the Revolution was the flagship which spawned a template which would be multiplied many times across the Soviet Union. Undoubtedly the GMR had a great influence over the delineation of revolutionary history and was central to the process of mythologizing October, but equally it was not orthodox. It contained people and tangible evidence that sought to bring the revolution alive. This was its blessing as it was to be its curse.

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*GMPIR archival materials in some cases do not follow standard archival conventions, whilst others carry incomplete archival labelling.

RGIA SPb.: *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv* (St. Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

F.475: Petrogradskoe Dvortsovoe Upravlenie.

F.476: Hofmarshal'skaia chast'

TsGA SPb.: Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Sankt-Peterburga (St. Petersburg, Central State Archive)

F.1000: Leningradskii Gubernskii Sovet Rabochix, Krest'ianskix i Krasnoarmeiskix Deputov i ego ispolnitel'nyi komitet. Leningrad. 1918-1927.

F.4538: Komendatura Petropavlovskoi Kreposti i Shtaba Petrogradskogo Ukreplennogo Raiona. Petrograd. 1919-1926.

F.7384: Sankt-Peterburgskii Gorodskoi Sovet Narodnyx Deputov. Sankt-Peterburg. 1917-1993.

TsGALI SPb.: *Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva Sankt-Peterburga* (St. Petersburg, Central State Archive of Literature and Art).

F.36: Gosudarstvennyi Muzeinyi Fond Leningradskogo Otdeleniia Glavnogo Upravleniia Nauchnyx i Nauchno-Xudozhestvennyx Uchrezhdenii Akademicheskogo Tsentra Narodnogo Komissariata Prosveshcheniia RSFSR (Glavnauki Narkomprosa RSFSR). Leningrad. 1917-1929.

F.244: Glavnauka: Otchety o deiatel'nosti muzeia and Perepiska glavnauka (both Op.1).

F.285: Gosudarstvennyi Muzei Revoliutsii Komiteta Po Delam Kul'turno-Prosvetitel'nyx Uchrezhdenii Pri Sovete Ministrov RSFSR. Leningrad.

AGRM: *Arkhiv gosudarstvennogo russkogo muzeia* (St. Petersburg, Archive of the State Russian Museum).

GMI SPb.: *Gosudarstvennyi muzei istorii Sankt-Peterburga* (St. Petersburg, State Museum of the History of Saint Petersburg).

TsGIA SPb.: *Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv Sankt-Peterburga* (St. Petersburg, Central State Historical Archive).

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