

Planning for a Communist Future:  
Professionalization, Nationalism, and Preservation Practice in Soviet Moscow, 1964-1974

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**Abstract**

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This paper explores the growth of historic preservation institutions in Soviet Moscow during the late 1960s and 70s. Beginning with the decade long creation of the General Plan of 1971 and exploring elements of professionalization, international exchanges, and citizen involvement in preservation battles, this paper complicates the narrative of emergent nationalism in Brezhnev era Moscow. Soviet preservationists worked within a bureaucratic structure that demonstrated a responsiveness to their activism, while high ranking officials, such as chief architect, Mikhail Posokhin, self-consciously cast Soviet planning and preservation practice as an alternative to Western and capitalist methods. Cases such as the rescuing of the *belye palaty* in Moscow's central district demonstrate telling examples of Soviet citizenship and activism, as well as a dynamism rarely associated with "stagnation" era Soviet historiography.



As for the imperative that we must think about basic human needs (*dumat' o cheloveke*), it seems to me that in restoring the historic city [in Warsaw] they demonstrated greater care for basic human needs than had they hastily thrown up box-houses. Even more, they were thinking about future generations and the fate of their country in distant future times. Here we must pause: what does it mean for us? Why do we need historic landmarks (*pamiatniki*), architectural monuments, manuscripts, even art?  
-Vladimir Soloukhin, 1965

Only in the continuity of the historical guarantee that Moscow will remain a distinctive city with its own unique face, can we preserve the best of what it has and develop all that is necessary to develop, stemming from the context of the present day and the requirements of the next. This is one of the fundamental positions of the General Plan for the development of Moscow.  
-Vladimir Libson, 1972

In 1968 Aleksandr Veksler authored a short book entitled *The Moscow within Moscow* (*Moskva v Moskve*). Veksler, an archeologist and architect at the beginning of a lengthy career that would last until 2009 and involve the supervision of massive urban archeological sites, outlines the significant archeological discoveries that had been made over the course of the previous decade due to new construction in the Soviet capital. His book, although focused on the practice of modern scientific archeology in Moscow, makes use of a fascinating metaphor about hidden truths and a process of growing self-awareness and discovery. If Freudian psychological preoccupations with the subconscious were strictly forbidden in an environment of Marxist ideological orthodoxy, Soviet intellectuals found other ways to indulge in self-reflexivity. Veksler's title is itself a harkening back to a storied tradition of the Russian intelligentsia, as he indicates in an epigraph drawn from the writings of early 19th century *belles-lettres* author, Vladimir Filimonov: "We Muscovites know, in Moscow there is another Moscow."<sup>1</sup> Veksler's sense of excitement at the prospect of plumbing the depths of Moscow's buried history is

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<sup>1</sup> A. G. Veksler, *Moskva v Moskve : istoriia v nedrakh stolitsy* (Moskva: Moskovskiĭ rabochiĭ, 1968), 5.

palpable: “The greatest modern city, Moscow simultaneously presents itself as a gigantic archeological complex...the feudal city and its many peripheral monuments have left behind powerful and epochal sedimentation— the so called cultural layer.”

The exploration and excavation of this cultural layer came at a cost. Veksler’s book clearly communicates the conditions in which Moscow’s ancient history was discovered, conditions of rapid change and unprecedented urban construction. This development emerged as a byproduct of modern science and industrial innovations in construction technology and transportation infrastructure. In the Soviet context this was called *tipovoe proektirovanie* and *tipizatsia*, and corresponded to prefabrication trends in practice across the globe. Suddenly humans had the ability to shape the world in their image to a greater degree than they had previously imagined possible, and for many with this power there came a strong sense that important things were being lost.

Modern archeology, utilizing cutting edge scientific and technological innovation, could provide an antidote, of sorts. Veksler’s book takes a distinct archeological approach, one he calls “topographical”: eleven of the fourteen chapters in *Moskva v Moskve* are dedicated to archeological findings made at some of the most recognizable large-scale development projects of the 1950s and 60s. Veksler begins each chapter with a depiction of the new buildings and goes on to explain “what lies beneath.” The list of locations includes the new Olympic sports complex at Luzhniki, the newly expanded *sadovoe kol'tso* ring road, the *detskii mir* children’s emporium, the gargantuan *Rossia* hotel behind Red Square, the experimental *cheremushki* housing development, and the last Stalinesque “wedding cake” building designed by Dmitry Chechulin. Veksler makes his intent clear: “In these places, successive centuries of construction cannot completely erase traces of feudal fortresses, master craftsmen’s workshops, or even the earliest

fishermen's huts. And today these pages of history are opened by archeology— in the words of Taras Shevchenko: 'history's mysterious mother.' This is both poetic and scientifically accurate."<sup>2</sup> By highlighting what was learned in the process of demolition and disruption at some of Moscow's most famous sites, Veksler complicates the picture of historic preservation interests in the Soviet city.

This paper hopes to accomplish a similar task, unearthing the contested nature of preservation practice during a seminal moment in late Soviet life. By exploring early Brezhnev era Moscow city planning practice and historical preservation efforts in tandem, one can begin to see the ways that Soviet historians, architects, planners, and politicians conceptualized a future for the "model communist city." This can be useful for a number of reasons. In a political and social climate so frequently considered informal and opaque, the primary sources available in this case help to shed light on the workings of the Soviet municipal "system."<sup>3</sup> The subject also allows for seemingly rare Soviet narratives of successful social mobilization within the structures of municipal organization, from those who were not explicitly taking a stand against the regime or communism. Ultimately this is an examination of various reactions, both personal and institutional, to the rapid reorientation and change that accompanied postwar urban development. Many of the characters in this narrative continued to play important leadership roles in Moscow well beyond the Soviet era.<sup>4</sup> By honing in on dynamic elements of Soviet life during this period,

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<sup>2</sup> Veksler, *Moskva v Moskve*. P. 17

<sup>3</sup> There are many fascinating scholarly attempts to "look under the hood" of social life in the Soviet Union in hopes of making sense of the paradoxical system. See especially, Alena V Ledeneva, *Can Russia Modernise?: Sistema, Power Networks and Informal Governance*, 2013; Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Alena V. Ledeneva, *Russia's Economy of Favours : Blat, Networking, and Informal Exchange*, Cambridge Russian, Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies ; 102 (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> The revival of tsarist and Orthodox Russia in the aftermath of the Soviet Union is most prominently demonstrated by the story of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, rebuilt at great

this paper complicates survey textbook periodization misnomers, such as those that coarsely characterize the 1970s in the USSR as a time of stagnation, an interlude between the more dynamic Khrushchev and Gorbachev eras.<sup>5</sup>

Much of the writing on the topic of historic preservation in the Soviet Union zeroes in on the narrative of emergent nationalism. In this narrative, a totalitarian or post-totalitarian society begins to regain ethnic consciousness via preservation efforts initially mistaken by power holders as innocuous or marginally significant, the ultimate result of which is a Soviet Union dissolved into fifteen states, organized around the nation-state principle, hidden for all those years under socialist internationalism.<sup>6</sup> While it is not the intent of this paper to challenge the validity of this narrative, it does hope to sidestep some of the nationalist implications of growing preservation interests in Moscow and look at the mechanisms of social mobilization that engaged growing number of Muscovites in preservation struggles, as well as the ways that various groups concerned began to justify their planning and preservation preferences in language that emphasized catering to “human needs” with scientific methods. While deep seated concern for the legacy of ancient Muscovy and masterworks of feudal Russian architecture without a doubt played a significant role in the impetus for preservation, it is important to note the ways that both the preservationists and the planners couched their decisions and opinions in terms of the future

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expense in the immediate post-Soviet years by the son of Mikhail Posokhin. Sigurd Ottovich Shmidt, *Istoriia Moskvyy i problemy moskvovedeniia : v dvukh knigakh*, *Istoriia Moskvyy i problemy moskvovedeniia, v dvukh knigakh* ; 2 (Moskva: Knizhnitsa, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> A number of other works have attempted to do the same, including Zubok's, *Failed Empire*, *New Cold War History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007) and Yurchak's, *Everything Was Forever, until It Was No More*.

<sup>6</sup> This narrative was most succinctly articulated and dissected by Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994) see also Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire : Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, Cornell University Press, 2001); Yitzhak M. Brudny, *Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953-1991* (Harvard University Press, 1998); Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford University Press, 1993).

of communism in the preeminent socialist city. Despite the appeal of their flamboyant rhetoric as a subject of study, the radical nationalists made up a small fragment of the voices speaking in defense of preservation.<sup>7</sup> Many practicing preservationists were by no means Russian nationalists. Probably the best example of this is Vladimir Libson, whose role will be discussed at length in the following chapters. These practitioners were motivated by many things other than a secret hope to see a reborn tsarist Orthodox Russia rise from the ashes.<sup>8</sup> Moscow needed to retain its cultural legacy, its masterpieces (*shedeuvri*) of art in the built environment and elsewhere in order to champion the ideological project of socialism; and *all* parties considered in this paper were specifically concerned with the ‘human’ element, or as the Czechs put it, “socialism with a human face.” There was an exceptional amount of criticism underway inside this system; however, it was rarely directed at the ideological underpinnings, but rather at the degrees of implementation and methods of arrival at the fast approaching “end of history.”

The emergent nationalism narrative is understandably enticing for any student of Soviet life during this time, as the movement generated some of the more radical and idiosyncratic Russian voices of the era. When authors with the rhetorical heft of Solzhenitsyn, Soloukhin, Glazunov, or Osipov speak on the importance of preservation side by side with grandiose and totalizing narratives of world history, East and West dynamics, and Slavophilism, it is of course tempting to give their writings more breathing room in an overall assessment. However, this

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<sup>7</sup> An example: Dunlop, in summarizing the emergence of nationalism during the mid-sixties highlights a radical group called the All-Russian Social-Christian Union for the Liberation of the People or VSKhSON. This group lasted from 1964-1967 and totaled a membership of 28 and was without a doubt, a fringe movement. VSKhSON is discussed in the same context as VOPIK, which enjoyed enormous popularity and had a membership of 7 million within a few years of its inception. John B. Dunlop, *The Faces of Contemporary Russian Nationalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 36.

<sup>8</sup> In Appendix 2, Dunlop includes an interview with prominent painter Ilya Glazunov, whose career was taking off in the late 60s and early 70s. Glazunov would become an outspoken monarchist and self-defined Russian patriot in the ensuing decades and rise to prominence in post-Soviet Russia. Dunlop, *The Faces of Contemporary Russian Nationalism*.

paper hopes to reinsert the less fanciful, less theoretical, and less fringe articulations of the importance of preservation that came from actual city planners, preservationists, and architects familiar with the difficulties of the task at hand. While undercurrents of emergent nationalisms (and there were many various strains) were growing in strength, they had by no means usurped the communist and internationalist convictions of even those operating in a realm as conventionally patriotic as preservation.<sup>9</sup>

Historic preservation is generally associated with architectural and thus cultural preservation. It was by no means the only or even the most prominent form of preservation in the Soviet Union or elsewhere. In fact, this story can and should be seen within the broader context of preservation efforts that include the protection of wilderness and nature. The All Russian Society for the Protection of Nature (VOOP) was formed in 1924 with the direct support of Bolshevik leaders Lunacharsky, Krupskaya, and Pokrovsky. Environmental activists and wilderness preservationists in the Soviet Union enjoyed a surprisingly stable viability in what Douglas Weiner calls “the unlikely survival of an independent, critical-minded, scientist-led movement for nature protection [that lasted] clear through the Stalin years and beyond.”<sup>10</sup> The seemingly apolitical context and scientific professionalism of the societies that advocated for the protection of nature helped to insulate the group from the harsher expediencies of the party

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<sup>9</sup> Brudny, *Reinventing Russia*. See Brudny’s introduction for one of the best summations of the various strains of nationalism during the post-war period. He identifies a period of “inclusionary politics” from roughly 1965-1980 when the CPSU attempted to ameliorate the nationalists by awarding them Lenin Medals, publishing their books extensively and placing them in positions of editorial authority at prestigious journals. All of this is again considered to be a “co-option” and perceived as a failure on both sides.

<sup>10</sup> Douglas R. Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom : Russian Nature Protection from Stalin to Gorbachëv* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 1999), 1. Weiner’s book exhaustively traces what he calls a “succession of independent social movements for nature protection” that predated and survived the entire Soviet system. Weiner does an excellent job of tracing the contours of “scientific public opinion” as it manifested in VOOP, explaining the significance of the category to Soviet citizens.

apparatus and the field saw surprisingly little censorship interference. This buffer existed to a certain degree among the professional preservationists, who emphasized the scientific nature of their work, cataloging and researching the past with precise techniques—a strong sense of pride in first-rate preservation and restoration methodology runs through many of the voices cited in this paper.

In addition to the environmental precedent for preservation that Moscow's historic preservationists drew upon explicitly, they had examples from the near abroad as well. Many of the articles that advocated for greater landmark protections in Moscow reference the experience of Warsaw in the aftermath of the war. The Poles had meticulously rebuilt their medieval city, and most Russian Soviet preservationists lauded them for it.<sup>11</sup> The Georgian Soviet Republic's preservation society was invoked by Russian activists, such as Vladimir Soloukhin, who wanted to see something similar emerge in Russia.<sup>12</sup>

In order to unearth 1960-1970s preservation conflicts in context, this paper will consider three related cases, all of which came to a head in 1971-1972: the General Plan of 1971, the fight for the wards on Kropotkinskaia, and the collaboration in preservation practice between the USSR and the United States, one of the less sung results of *détente*. The first of these—the implementation of the 1971 General Plan for the City of Moscow—was developed over the course of a decade. The debates surrounding the plan were in part a product of a professional staff of more than 700 people dedicated exclusively to coming up with Moscow's next roadmap to a bright socialist future. Many even outside this structure deemed it prudent to contribute to the discussion, often from a self-consciously marginal position.<sup>13</sup> The plan, unveiled on the pages

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<sup>11</sup> P. Reviakin et al., “Kak Dal'she Stroit' Moskvu?,” *Moskva (Moscow, Russia : 1957-)* 3 (1963): 1.P. 147

<sup>12</sup> Vladimir Soloukhin, *S liricheskikh pozitsii*. (Moskva, Sovetskii pisatel', 1965). P. 185

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid* p. 5-8.

of Moscow's architectural journal *Stroitel'stvo i arkhitektura Moskvy*, introduced a number of preservation innovations including an appreciation for street-level perspective, historic districts, and the concept of an architectural ensemble that considers the relationship of a building to the streetscape and its neighbors. The plan was important for a number of reasons, not least of which was maintaining Moscow's position as the most forward thinking socialist city, in the words of Brezhnevite propaganda, a "Soviet model city." It was also important as a forum where the many competing needs of modern urban life could be juxtaposed and weighed in balance, bringing into conversation elements that tended to stay "siloe" otherwise. Within this framework, historic preservation concerns are couched between the need for housing, amenities, and most contentiously, more industry.

Dedicated preservation efforts had become fairly sophisticated by the early 70s. There were a number of "Mosproekts" committed to architectural restoration and historical survey.<sup>14</sup> In 1972, proposed demolition of two eighteenth century buildings near the Kropotkinskaya metro station triggered a preservation effort that utilized the full range of tools available to those who would halt the destruction. This second case, the fight for the Belye Palaty (literally, "white tents" and most commonly and hereafter referred to as the white wards), serves as a prime example of successful social mobilization in a Soviet context. While architectural historians worked to survey the buildings hoping to assemble a stronger preservation case, students from Moscow State University (MGU) volunteered their services, journalists interviewed residents, residents lobbied their raikom and the ispolkom (local governance committees) and those with friends in high places made pleas to send the issue higher up the chain of command. The primary sources surrounding this case show the human element of preservation. As those involved sought

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<sup>14</sup> V. Ia Libson, "Staroe i novoe. Rekonstruktsiia stolitsy i pamiatniki zodchestvo," *Stroitel'stvo i arkhitektura Moskvy*. January (1972): p. 26–29.

to keep the buildings, they came face to face with other Muscovites and they articulated the diverse opinions of residents on preservation—many cared very little about it, while others outspokenly supported protection.

The final chapter will consider the growth of Soviet historic preservation within the context of international political and professional dynamics. The significance of the Western alternative in planning, architecture, and preservation rears its head in the sources. This becomes most evident in the case of Posokhin's controversial reputation. Being ushered into the highest levels of CPSU leadership, Moscow chief architect, Mikhail Posokhin, was groomed to have a perspective on things that included great power dynamics. His position involved a series of trips across the United States and extensive exposure to various forms of planning practice in the West and in Japan. Posokhin documented his impressions of the United States broadly in journal entries that were published posthumously and the content of his impressions gives clues to his understanding of the urban challenges faced by the Soviet Union. His diaries also demonstrate the surprisingly fruitful professional interactions between the Soviet Union and the United States during this period. Posokhin's trips were not entirely unique; Vladimir Ivanov and A. Khalturin were both frequently present at international architectural conferences, such as the first meeting of ICOMOS in Poland in 1965.<sup>15</sup> The Nixon visit to the Soviet Union in 1972 precipitated a large-scale exchange of preservation professionals, National Parks Service employees and architectural historians.<sup>16</sup> Soviet engagement with international preservation practice was not limited to the United States. In the late 60s and early 70s, they began to take a more active role in

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<sup>15</sup> Alexandra Zaryn, "The First General Assembly of ICOMOS - 1965 Cracow, Poland," [http://www.icomos.org/publications/JS5\\_1.pdf](http://www.icomos.org/publications/JS5_1.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> US-USSR Joint Working Group on the Enhancement of the Urban Environment. US Historic Preservation Team, *A Report by the US Historic Preservation Team of the US-USSR Joint Working Group on the Enhancement of the Urban Environment, May 25-June 14, 1974*. (Washington, DC: US Dept. of the Interior, 1975).

UNESCO's World Heritage programs, a part of the UN that Soviet leadership had been leery of up until then.<sup>17</sup> Many within the historic preservation movement were critical of this West-faced approach.

By the late 60s the conversation about Moscow's urban future intractably revolved around the human element—the city as it is experienced.<sup>18</sup> Within this broad acknowledgement of subjectivism, there were competing voices, articulating arguments for or against more comprehensive preservation regulations in light of “basic human needs.” All sides purported to support preserving Moscow's extensive architectural and cultural heritage, but each group identified the greatest threat differently. By exploring these motivations, this paper hopes to demonstrate elements of the emergence of Soviet preservation practice that were not simply the result of incipient nationalism.<sup>19</sup> The Soviet Union was legislating and institutionalizing preservation practice parallel to Western European, and especially American developments. In Moscow, both the lower tiered professionals, hobbyists, and academics, and the officeholders, diplomats, and *apparatchiks* attempted to mitigate the unforeseen negative consequences of urban modernization. They were doing so within a strictly communist theoretical framework, one of historical societal stages, where progress could be marked by the success of state institutions,

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<sup>17</sup>In fact, the passing of a World Heritage Convention in 1972 can largely be attributed to the Soviet's willingness to “play ball” with UNESCO. Christopher Osakwe, *The Participation of the Soviet Union in Universal International Organizations : A Political and Legal Analysis of Soviet Strategies and Aspirations inside ILO, UNESCO and WHO* (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1972).

<sup>18</sup>M. V. Posokhin, *Gorod dlia cheloveka* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Novosti, 1973); Soloukhin, *S liricheskikh pozitsii*. “Stroitel'stvo i arkhitektura Moskvyy.,” *Stroitel'stvo i arkhitektura Moskvyy*, 1960-1986. All of these sources deal in the “city as experienced” paradigm. See the section on the General Plan for more detailed analysis.

<sup>19</sup>Iu. A. Bychkov, *Zhitie Petra Baranovskogo* (Moskva: Sovetskaiia Rossiia, 1991). This source is a good example of the way that the legacy of a pioneering generation of preservationists is marshaled for a specifically orthodox and nationalist cause. Bychkov writes an explicit hagiography of a preservationist who saved much of the architectural heritage of old Russia during the Soviet period. In the introduction, Bychkov notes the irony that Baranovskii was an atheist, but dismisses this peculiarity as a divine mystery.

meant to represent the people. Those in power had an awareness of the private property model employed by the United States and attempted to utilize the advantages of a Soviet state mechanism that could supposedly manage resources with a free hand.

### ***Moskva Controversy, 1962***

Perhaps the nature of this debate within various Moscow societies can be best explained with the following episode. In March 1962 the journal *Moskva* ran an article as a part of a “roundtable discussion” series on the future of Moscow city planning titled, “How Now to Build Moscow?” The impassioned piece argued boldly for a reconsideration of recent trends in planning practice, focusing in on a number of issues. The article was positioned as a “conversation starter” within the Institute for the General Plan and the arguments within it were supposed to represent the debates going on between the members of Moscow’s planning professionals. Much has been made of this article in secondary scholarship. According to Colton, “Nothing would rate with ‘How Now to Build Moscow?’ until after 1985.”<sup>20</sup> The article addressed pressing problems faced by Moscow planners, including air pollution, the destruction of historic monuments, overcrowded public transit, and the monotonous ubiquity of the five story prefabricated apartment buildings (*pyatietazhki*).<sup>21</sup> The piece was co-authored by four people: A. Korobov—a painter, P. Reviakin—a professor of architecture, V. Tydman—an engineer, and N. Chetunova—a writer. P. Reviakin, generally considered the primary impetus behind the *Moskva* article, would go on to be a editorial board member of VOPIK along with Tydman as well as with other prominent Russian intellectuals, such as Dmitry Likhachev and Leonid Leonov.

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<sup>20</sup> Colton, *Moscow: Governing the Socialist Metropolis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995), P 421.

<sup>21</sup> Reviakin et al., “Kak dal’she stroit’.”

The article elicited controversy and led to multiple scathing rebuttals published in *Pravda* in May of the same year. An article published in the USSR's most distributed newspaper on May 11, 1962 took nearly an entire page to respond to the *Moskva* piece and concluded with the signatures of over twenty planning officials, heads of various "Mosproekts" and prominent communist architects. *Pravda*'s circulation, in the tens of millions, meant that a rebuttal on its pages would elicit significantly greater interest in the original article than the fairly meager circulation of *Moskva*, a "thick" (*tolstyĭ*) journal with limited subscriptions among the more educated. The *Pravda* rebuttal called out the lack of planning and architectural expertise among the original authors, noting that Reviakin "a professor of architecture specializing in watercolor landscapes, hasn't been a practitioner for many years."<sup>22</sup> The *Pravda* authors ridicule fanciful moments from the *Moskva* article, which had postulated a future where, "the loads now carried by polluting trucks may be substituted with helicopters" in the bright communist tomorrow, thus making the destructive highway expansions bitterly unnecessary. Previous analysis of "How Now to Build Moscow?" has focused on its singular forthrightness and criticism as an exception to prove the rule that de-Stalinization was being seriously circumscribed by the early 1960s. In Colton's words, the strong official rebuttal to the article "reduced dissenters from the mainstream of planning and development policy to "graveyard-like silence."<sup>23</sup> In Stephen Bittner's interpretation, this article and the resultant "honesty" came to a head a bit later, in 1965, when a meeting of the Moscow Section of the Union of Architects for coordinating architectural preservation efforts in the city led to a stirring speech by Reviakin, in which he claimed that "the first principles of preservation are openness, accountability, and attention to the will of the

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<sup>22</sup> V. Andreev, *et al.* "Protiv Vrednoi Putanitsy v Voprosakh Gradostroitel'stva," *Pravda*, May 11, 1962. P. 4

<sup>23</sup> Colton, *Moscow*. P. 423

public— meaning the scientific, artistic, and professional publics, and also the general public.”<sup>24</sup> Bittner states: “Less than three years after similar comments nearly resulted in his expulsion from MOSA, Reviakin was widely applauded...One speaker demanded that newspapers publish the text of Reviakin’s speech.” The results of the MOSA conference, according to Bittner, were uninspiring—the GlavAPU (Architectural-Planning Administration) and Mossovet did not comment on the proceedings and nothing came of them. This was due in large part, however, to the contemporaneous and long-expected formation of the All-Russian Society for the Preservation of Historical and Cultural Monuments (VOOPIK) with much fanfare in 1965-66.<sup>25</sup> The voluntary public association was modeled, in part as mentioned before, after the venerable All-Russian Society for the Protection of Nature (VOOP) and the preservation associations of other Soviet Republics, such as Georgia and Latvia.<sup>26</sup>

The *Moskva* controversy highlights a broader problem posed to anyone attempting to explain Soviet society and its relationship to state power.<sup>27</sup> *A priori* assumptions about the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the communist party system of governance occlude the frequent reality of social participation. The problem can be framed as the competition of various intelligentsias to be the mouthpiece of the imagined “public will.” The appeal of the ability to speak “for the people” leads to the development of social scientific data and professionalization

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<sup>24</sup> Stephen V. Bittner, *The Many Lives of Khrushchev’s Thaw : Experience and Memory in Moscow’s Arbat* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008). P. 165

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> John Farrell, “If These Stones Could Only Speak: Historical and Cultural Preservation in a Soviet Context, 1955--1966” (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2004). Farrell covers the Russian desire to “get what Georgia had” on pp. 241-250. In the same section he deals with the *Moskva* article.

<sup>27</sup> For various articulations of power models and the state there are many rich sources to draw from, not the least of which include: James C Scott, *Weapons of the Weak Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), and Michel Foucault, *Power/knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980).

of the professions, a process that proceeded within the Soviet Union as it did elsewhere. To assume that as soon as a social movement gains official opprobrium and widespread support, it has necessarily been ‘co-opted’ by the Soviet state is to ignore the fact that the state changed to accommodate the social interest. Another component of the problem becomes the desire to trace a process of growing or diminishing freedoms inside the Soviet Union. The following chapters will investigate cases from this period, when historic preservation had received the support of the new leadership and was more fully incorporated into the constellation of communist values that the Soviet Union championed at home and abroad.

### **The General Plan of 1971**

Maps of the city of Moscow look similar to the diagrams of cellular structure that are shown to grade school children in biology class. Presenting itself as a series of concentric circles, the final ring road running an elliptical orbit around the gravitational nucleus of the Kremlin, the city represented demonstrates a singular sense of order, different both from the gridirons of American cities and the ad hoc expansions of Western Europe’s metropolises. The Soviet “model city” and “hero city” (*gorod geroi*) of the Second World War, Moscow functioned as the benchmark of socialist planned urban growth in the second half of the twentieth century. As such, it represented a microcosm, within which the tensions that ran throughout the entire Soviet project played out on a local scale. Memory, identity, and the needs of a rapidly changing social milieu came into direct conflict in the creation of the 1971 General Plan for the City of Moscow. The following section will explore the institutional mechanisms for generating the city plan, the primary players and interests involved, as well as the long-term effects of its implementation.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>This section relies heavily on the issues of “Stroitel’stvo i arkhitektura Moskvyy.” Between 1966-1972. In particular the special issues from 1966 and 1971 that rolled out the TEO and the General Plan.

As an ideological project obsessed with its own notion of scientific rationalism, the Soviet Union fell prey to endless timetables and itineraries for arriving at the communist stage of history. The 1971 General Plan was a relatively late contribution to this field, at a time when the Soviet Union had already been through a handful of five-year plans, and citizen expectations were tempered by the disappointing results of past proclamations.<sup>29</sup> In the realm of city planning, the first major Soviet achievement was the Master Plan of 1935. The 1935 plan was developed under the leadership of Lazar Kaganovich at the height of Stalinism. Moscow in the thirties experienced dramatic changes and traumatic losses of historic architecture, especially historic churches, 93 of which were obliterated (most famously, the demolition of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in December 1931). This was an era of radical disconnect from the past, when communist ideology in the Soviet Union engendered an unabashed rupture with history, often referred to as communist prometheanism. The 1935 plan was put on hold during WWII and the first two years after the war were consumed with recovery from damages. The late 1940's saw a five year plan, followed by a ten year plan that continued along the course established in the 1935 vision through 1961. The ten year plan of the fifties was strangely lackluster, as Timothy Colton points out: "It was devoid of population statistics, maps, gaudy projects, and the usual purplish lyrics about socialist splendiferousness"<sup>30</sup> This ten year plan was the last to be implemented under the rule of Stalin, and the significant political shifts that occurred in the aftermath of Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalinism (many of which were underway before

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<sup>29</sup> By 1971, the city of Moscow was on its ninth five-year plan. (1971-1975) The absurdity of these periodizations was frequently lambasted in samizdat publications of the time.

Vladimir Osipov, *Tri otnosheniia k rodine: Stat'i, ocherki, vystupleniia* (Frankfurt/Main: Posev, 1978).

<sup>30</sup> Colton, *Moscow*, 354.

Stalin's death) meant that a new plan in 1961 would have tremendous potential for change, potential upon which rising star architects and planners hoped to make good.

Developing the plan was a torturous affair. Originally commissioned by the Central Committee of the CPSU in 1961, it took five years to complete the "Technical Economic Foundation" (TEO in 1966) and an additional five to complete the plan and receive Central Committee ratification in 1971. At that point, the twenty-five year purview of the plan was already eleven years underway, so that its reach extended only fourteen years into the future (1985) with prognostications extending to 2000. Confusingly, some sources indicate that the start date was shifted up to 1965.<sup>31</sup> In the course of events, the collapse of the communist party rule in the U.S.S.R. would overshadow most of the plan's predictions. This was not the case for the institutions that were created to manage planning and construction, which function to this day. These include a variety of state construction and utilities companies, architectural and planning institutes, as well as state institutions for restoration practices and preservation interests. One such institute, Mosproekt-2, is responsible for major post-Soviet projects such as the rebuilt Cathedral of Christ the Savior and is currently headed by M.M. Posokhin, the son of M.V. Posokhin.

Bureaucratic complexity and its ensuing headaches, a hallmark of Soviet life, manifested in the realm of planning through the formation of GlavAPU (Chief Architectural Planning Directorate). GlavAPU came into existence with the ascension of Mikhail Posokhin to the position of chief planner in 1960. Posokhin was granted CPSU party membership with the position in 1961 as well as control of the civil construction section of Gosstroj (State Construction Committee).<sup>32</sup> According to *samizdat* detractors, the entire office was made up of "vandals" and

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<sup>31</sup> Mikhail V. Posokhin, "Molodoi gorod Moskva," *Iunost* ' 2 (1972): 83.

<sup>32</sup> Colton, *Moscow*, 458.

“bandits.”<sup>33</sup> Ostensibly, GlavAPU helped to coordinate, on a municipal level, the efforts of Mosproekt studios. Born out of the Moscow Design Institute, founded in 1951, there were initially 5 Mosproekts focusing on housing, the city center, the green belt, health and recreation facilities, and industrial construction respectively. The number of Mosproekt studios grew to at least thirteen by the early 1970s, some of which were dedicated entirely to restoration work. One of the most significant preservation groups was the 7th studio of Mosproekt-3, headed up by Vladimir Libson.

*Stroitel'stvo i arkhitektura Moskvy* began monthly publishing in 1951 and has continued to function as a central organ of Moscow planning, architecture, and construction policy ever since. (In the 1980's the name was changed to *Arkhitektura i stroitel'stvo Moskvy*). Like many Soviet era academic publications, a significant number of its pages were dedicated to pandering to party leadership and the astounding achievements of socialism. Familiarity with the literature engenders an ability to screen out panegyric political proclamations, which always bookend a speech or article. While it is tempting to completely dismiss the accolades lavished upon Bolshevik heroes and the timbre of glorious achievements in search of a deeper disposition, it would be unwise to neglect the mixture of genuine respect and cynical servility to power found in Soviet writing. When the TEO was completed in November 1966 the journal released a dedicated issue, detailing its accomplishments and forecasting the central problems to be dealt with by the new plan. Again in July-August 1971, a special issue of the journal outlined the General Plan in detail. It is interesting to consider the differences in tone and subject between the two landmark issues. Ostensibly, they are dealing with the exact same material, but certain developments between 1966 and 1971 led to the inclusion of different subjects in the final plan, one of the most prominent of which was the issue of historic monuments and preservation

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<sup>33</sup> Vladimir Osipov, “Poslednii den' Moskvy,” *Vestnik RSKhD* 111 (1974).

practice. This growth in preservation concerns in the confines of the journal was representative of an increasing demand amongst Muscovites for the protection of old buildings that represented Russian heritage and culture. The role that the journal played as an “ambassador” to the professional planning and architectural community of the city makes it a valuable barometer of shifts in “official” positions on preservation. These practical shifts were demonstrations of the way that the party was successfully integrating preservation interests into its program.

The commissioning of a Technical Economic Foundation for the development of the new general plan reflected the incorporation of social scientific analytic methodology into planning practice in the Soviet Union in the post-war years. Data-based decision making was not a novel approach, but the systematization of the methods for collecting data were increasingly relied on by the professionals charged with municipal tasks. This is reflected in the creation of a statistics publishing house in Moscow in 1948. By the mid-sixties, copious amounts of empirical data were being collected and published annually in compendiums of *Moskva v tsifrakh* (Moscow in numbers.)<sup>34</sup> This trend caught on in restoration practice as well. In an article on the state of restoration methods in Moscow published in January 1972, V. Ia. Libson writes: “It must be mentioned that in the past, addressing questions of coexistence of old and new buildings, we relied almost exclusively on the tact and experience of city builders and architects...they had but few rules or methods.”<sup>35</sup> He goes on to outline the problem of not knowing exactly what historic properties existed and the imperative to pursue archeological work to determine the extent of Moscow’s heritage holdings. This had been a concern voiced by many restorationists for decades. While the work of cataloging Moscow’s Russian heritage is not granted space in the 1966 TEO outline, it features prominently by 1971.

<sup>34</sup> Statisticheskoe upravlenie goroda Moskvyy, *Moskva v tsifrakh 1917-1977 gg. : statisticheskii sbornik* (Moskva: Statistika, 1977).

<sup>35</sup> Libson, “Staroe i novoe. Rekonstruktsiia stolitsy i pamiatniki zodchestvo,” 27.

Before 1966, articles in *Stroitel'stvo i arkhitektura moskvy* about historic monuments and places could be found, although the pages of the journal were predominantly filled with floor plans for housing developments and new theater halls, as well as self-congratulatory pieces on the great achievements in “greening” initiatives and the extension of the Moscow Metro system. In 1966, the journal’s articles were divided between seven categories: (1) City Planning, (2) Architecture and Design of Housing and Communal Buildings, (3) Construction Methods, Construction and Technology, (4) Construction Materials, (5) Economics, (6) From International Experience.<sup>36</sup> By 1969 a new category was added: Monuments of Russian Architecture. The fact that they were exclusively Russian had to do with the journal’s local scope—the major Soviet journal for architecture and planning, *Arkhitectura SSSR*, includes a greater variety of cultures and projects from across the Soviet Union.

City management and construction practice must be considered as an economy of scarcity, an arena where many competing interests are in tension, vying for attention. This is especially true in a rapidly growing urban environment. The late Soviet leadership of Moscow was undoubtedly concerned first and foremost with providing socialist housing for a population that grew from four million in 1950 to eight million in 1980.<sup>37</sup> One million of this total came from a significant expansion in municipal borders that took place in 1959, putting additional stress on the limited administrative resources available.<sup>38</sup> Despite the massive population influx,

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<sup>36</sup> Moskovskii gorodskoï sovet deputatov trudiashchikhsia et al., “Stroitel'stvo i arkhitektura Moskvy.” From the Table of Contents provided with every December issue.

<sup>37</sup> Anecdotal evidence from a number of sources point to the housing needs being the strongest counterpoint articulated by city leadership when confronted with preservationist demands. Bychkov’s *Zhitie Petra Baranovskogo* recalls a meeting he attended with E. Furtseva in 1965 where she deflected Baranovskii’s requests by highlighting the demand for more housing: “We’re approaching communism, and people have nowhere to live!” Bychkov, *Zhitie Petra Baranovskogo*.p. 6

<sup>38</sup> Colton, *Moscow*, 758.

there was a slight uptick in square footage per resident provided by the new prefabricated methods of construction. The dearth was experienced amongst services that were unable to keep pace with the rate of housing construction. “As tenants moved furniture into apartments, they found themselves among little besides houses and dirt lots. The area had no baths or laundries, only two barbershops, a dire shortage of classrooms, and no club, library, movie house, playground, or clinic.”<sup>39</sup> In light of these shortages, the inclusion of preservation interests in the mix of Mossovet concerns reveals a deep seated preoccupation and fear about the loss of more heritage, a preoccupation that was increasingly finding a voice, not only among historians, hobbyists and professional restorationists, but in the decision making seats of power.

Vladimir Libson was the author and practitioner most responsible for spearheading restoration and preservation interests in the pages of these journals and elsewhere. Libson was the son of a Jewish lawyer from Vitebsk, who was executed outside of Moscow during the purges in 1938.<sup>40</sup> He cut his restorationist teeth working on the reconstruction of a Pavlovsk mansion that had been destroyed by the Germans in WWII. He went on to head Mosproekt-3, growing the restoration studio’s size from 15 to 130 members over the course of 30 years. He died along with the Soviet Union in 1991. Libson’s efforts helped to cement restorationist practice and develop a space for restoration amongst the major Moscow construction organizations. He worked within the system, in support of the Mossovet’s city planning goals for the purposes of restoration. Some of the major projects that he oversaw include the remodeling of the Bolshoi Theatre and the Petrovo-Dal’nii manor on the western outskirts of the city. The literature on preservation efforts has sorely neglected the work of men like Libson, preferring to

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 533.

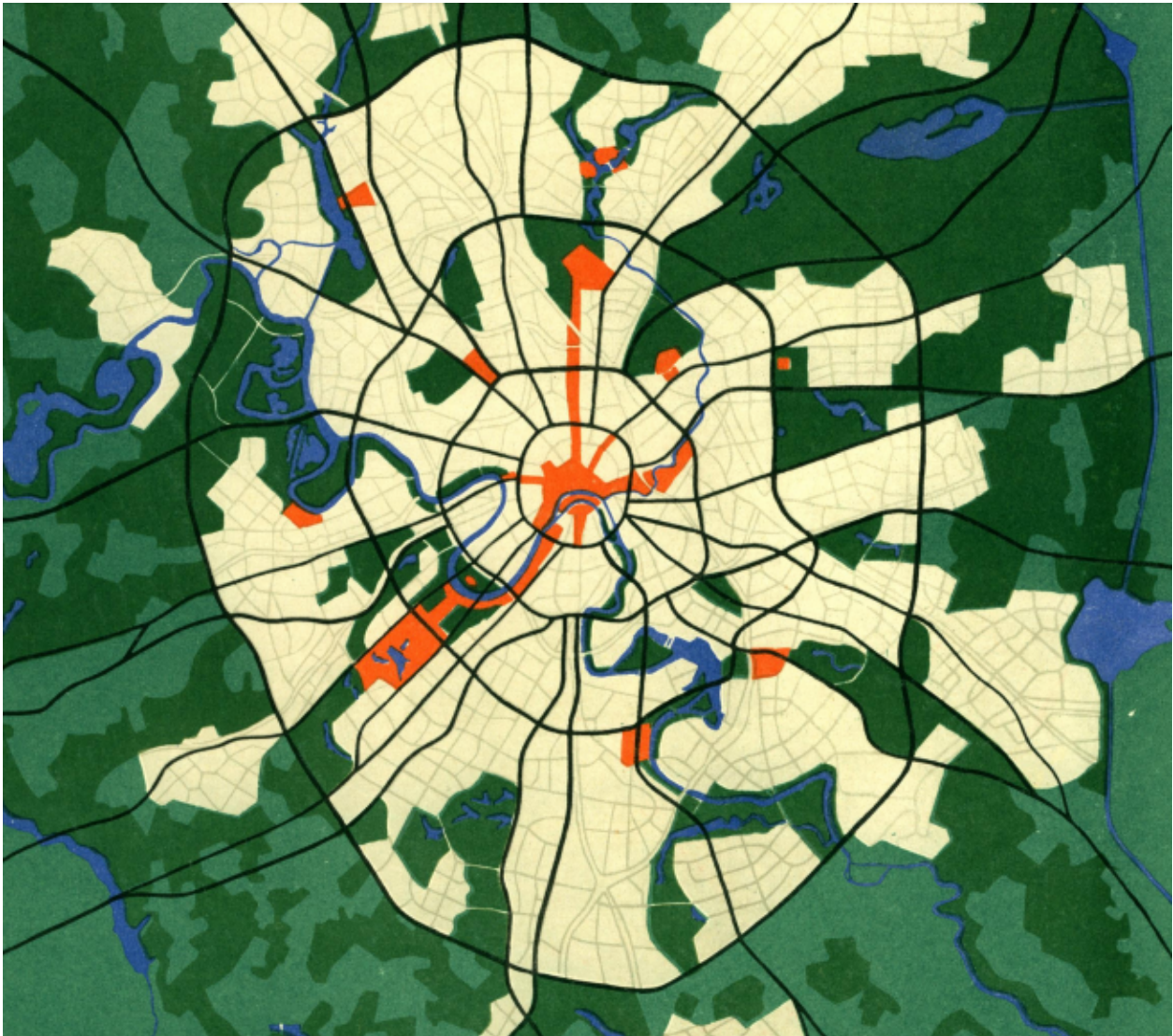
<sup>40</sup> “Kniga Pamiati. Libson Iakov Nikolaevich,” *Spravochnik: Kniga Pamiati*, accessed February 26, 2016, [http://www.uznal.org/book\\_of\\_memory.php?bukva=11&name=28&surname=31&repression=0](http://www.uznal.org/book_of_memory.php?bukva=11&name=28&surname=31&repression=0).

memorialize those who resisted Soviet leadership in favor of Russian nationalism.<sup>41</sup> Libson's role as a major proponent of historic preservation and a Jew functioning within the system at this time runs counter to many of the narratives about Soviet life in the era of the Jackson-Vanik amendment, when migration politics was headline news around the world.

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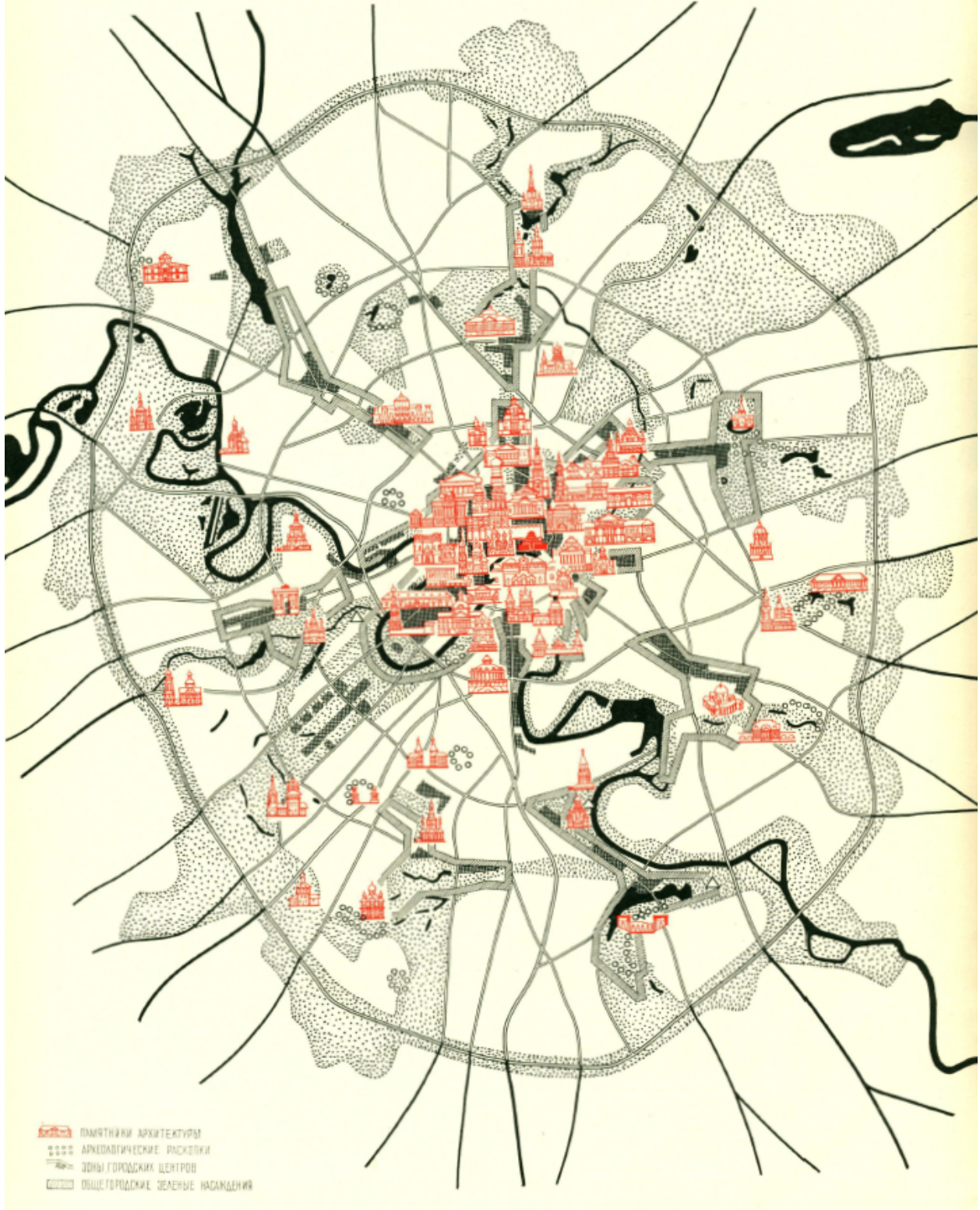
<sup>41</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is the most famous example of this sort of dissidence, both inside and outside of Russia. See this collection of essays he edited from the time period, many of which mention preservation. Mikhail Agursky and et al, *Iz-pod glyb : sbornik statei: Moskva, 1974* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1974).

## Maps from the General Plan and the TEO



**Map from 1966 TEO-** Orange areas are designated as "city center. Dark green indicates protected "greening" areas. (Figure 1)

ПАМЯТНИКИ АРХИТЕКТУРЫ, КУЛЬТУРЫ, ИСТОРИИ.  
ЗОНЫ ПРИРОДНОГО ЛАНДШАФТА



**Preservation Map from 1971 General Plan-** Individual structures are illustrated in red. Dotted regions indicate protected greenspaces and the thick grey lines indicate historic districts and corridors. (Figure 2)



**Transportation Map from 1971 Plan-** The dark red lines are proposed new highway construction. Many of the city’s preservation battles took place over structures that lay along the so-called “third ring” created by the dark red line intersections near the city center. (Figure 3)

### “The Wonderful Treasures of the Past”

The General Plan of 1971 addresses the complex needs of preservation in Moscow, beginning its analysis with a tally of the architectural heritage of the city:

The General Plan includes proposals for the active inclusion of architectural, cultural, historical, and natural landscapes into the architectural-spatial composition of the city. It has solidified definitions and created classification boundaries for these places and structures; and it has proposed recommendations for ongoing increased functionality. At the present moment there are over 405 ensembles and distinct architectural monuments under government protection— totaling over 1000 structures. In addition to this, 455 objects are marked for future inclusion as architectural monuments, and are currently in the process of being researched more fully. These will include some structures built over the years of Soviet power.<sup>42</sup>

Preservation in Moscow at this point was incorporating a number of new methods, many of which were emerging simultaneously all over the world. First was the expansion of preservation considerations to include not only the historic building, but also the context within which it stood. This expansion of the parameters of preservation greatly increased the preservationist’s scope when determining landmark status. It was in developing the General Plan of 1971 that the Soviet Union began to adopt the concept of historic districts and protected corridors as well. These can be seen in the preservation map issued with the plan in *Stroitel’stvo i Arkhitektura Moskvy*. (See **Figures 2-3**) Historic districts emerged as a planning level preservation tool in the West, largely in reaction to development pressures initiated by zoning laws. The Soviet Union had its own form of development pressure, but the tool of the historic district worked in a very similar way. Historic districts allowed for a consideration and regulation of aesthetic propriety on a street and neighborhood level. However, in practice the question would remain open as to how aesthetic considerations should be implemented. To this point, Libson writes about a

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<sup>42</sup> Moskovskii gorodskoi sovet narodnykh deputatov, “Zamechatel’nye tsennosti proshlogo,” *Stroitel’stvo i arkhitektura Moskvy*. 7–8 (1971): 37.

controversial case surrounding the construction of the gargantuan *Rossiia* hotel behind Red Square, near the heart of the city:

A paradoxical example. Despite the enormous size of the *Rossiia* hotel building, from the perspective of *Razina* street, it ‘solos’ the freshly renovated and relatively small architectural monuments. The rhythmically calculated facade of the hotel here creates a pleasing backdrop for the polychromatic and richly silhouetted ancient structures. Even though they have been deprived of their natural context, the new surroundings create an emotional charge of greater effect.<sup>43</sup>

Whether or not the “emotional charge” created by the new context was purely due to the aesthetic experience, or if the knowledge of what had been lost in the construction of the hotel played a role, is left opaque. The battle over the *Rossiia* hotel construction and the attempt to protect the area behind Red Square known as *Zariad’e* were well known throughout the city and the union. Although a portion of the historic fabric of the area was lost, ultimately the scale of the hotel was reduced and all of the most prominent structures and churches were saved. The complaint that many lodged against the hotel was that it didn’t fit in with the surrounding medieval architecture of the Kremlin and St. Basil’s Cathedral.<sup>44</sup> By incorporating context, juxtaposition, and contrast into the planning considerations associated with preservation, Soviet professionals were addressing the shortcomings of previous preservation practice being addressed on the international scale as demonstrated in nearly identical recommendations included in the Venice Charter of 1964, which led to the formation of ICOMOS, the preeminent

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<sup>43</sup> Libson, “Staroe i novoe. Rekonstruktsiia stolitsy i pamiatniki zodchestvo,” 29.

<sup>44</sup> Svetlana Mai, Rimma Aldonina, and Novikov, “Kokhinor i reissinka,” 2010, <http://koxinor.mambor.com/index.htm>. This wonderful web archive has full texts of many of the choir’s songs, as well as short bios of members, photos, videos, and artwork. One of the songs, called “*Rossiia*” makes a pun on the name of the hotel, saying that the real *Rossiia* is across the way from the awkward sprawling building in the Kremlin and St. Basil’s Cathedral

international organization for historic preservation.<sup>45</sup> The Venice Charter wasn't published fully in the Soviet Union till the late 70s. However, there was a broad familiarity with its principles much earlier.<sup>46</sup> This was most likely because Russian members of VOOPIK and MOSA had been present at the Second Congress in Venice in 1964. Vladimir Ivanov, a native of Rostov (Yaroslavl') who had been working on monument restoration in the Kremlin and served as the first deputy chairman of VOOPIK from 1966-1983, went to Venice and was subsequently elected as a vice-president at the first General Assembly of ICOMOS in 1965.

Muscovites of this time were accustomed to complaining about urban renewal and the rapid pace of construction. This was probably most clearly demonstrated by the success of *Kokhinor i Reishshinka*—a satirical choir group that formed within the Moscow Union of Architects (MOSA) in 1953 and continued to stage performances through the 1990s. Initially, their parody choir songs were performed for insider audiences, members of the architectural professional community at events that are known in Russia as a *kapustniki*. *Kapustniki* were meant to appeal only to a small group and to further delineate the difference between those who “get it” and those who don't. The organizers of *Kokhinor i Reishshinka*'s initial aims expanded as they realized how broad the appeal of their work was. The choir was known for the humorous nature of their songs, but engendered loyalty among their fans for the quality of their performances under the musical direction of Igor' Pokrovskii—an award winning architect who was known to be “pathologically musical.”<sup>47</sup> The choir would lampoon the city leadership frequently in songs that winked at the ineptitude of the entire planning structure—the performed

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<sup>45</sup> 2nd International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, “International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (The Venice Charter 1964),” 1964, [http://www.icomos.org/charters/venice\\_e.pdf](http://www.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.pdf).

<sup>46</sup> Kateryna Goncharova, “The Place of the Venice Charter Principles in the Context of National Cultural Revival in Ukraine after 1991,” *Change Over Time* 4, no. 2 (October 1, 2014): 286.

<sup>47</sup> Mai, Aldonina, and Novikov, “Kokhinor I Reishshinka.”

in front of Khrushchev in the late 50s.<sup>48</sup> They didn't spare themselves either, oftentimes directing their barbs at the uninspired designs that the choir's own members had created. Upon hearing their excellent performance, Soviet pop singer Leonid Utesov said: "If only they built like they sing."<sup>49</sup>

Masked discontent with the state of historic preservation regulation in the city in the era of the plan can be seen in the song *okhrana*, a word that translates as guard or protection. The song parodies a melody from a popular animated television show from 1969 based off of a Brothers Grimm story, *Bremenskie muzykanty* (Bremen Town Musicians).<sup>50</sup> The lyrics of the song claim that what Moscow's churches really need is protection from their protection (*okhrana, daesh' okhranu*). The song also pokes fun at the fact that Muscovites, uproarious about the destruction of churches, have little concern for the spiritual role of the buildings:

Everyone loves our churches and palaces,  
The temple is being used to pickle cucumbers,  
Consumers get delivered to their table  
Product with historic brine.<sup>51</sup>

The subtlety of the pun of historic and vegetable preservation, lost in translation here, had audiences in stitches across the Soviet Union. Finally, the lyrics of the song hint at an additional prejudice that existed towards recent arrivals to the city:

We'll put up fences here and there,  
Maybe it'll save things from the hellions.  
A simple native Muscovite  
Wouldn't have carried off that tenth century treasure.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid. A video interview with members of the choir includes a description of the occasion.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Michael Privorotsky, *Bremenskie Muzykanty- Okh, Rano Vstaet Okhrana*, accessed March 1, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H73yptUbExc>.

<sup>51</sup> Mai, Aldonina, and Novikov, "Kokhinor I Reishinka." Text of the song *okhrana*.

In this case the wink is at the prejudice that recent migrants were the ones responsible for the city's destruction.<sup>52</sup> It was clear to the choir members at least, that native Muscovites were just as culpable as the *limitchiki* (a term for unregistered residents of the city), if not more, for the decimation of "old Moscow."

While the General Plan of 1971 was only ever partially implemented and it did not end up providing a successful roadmap to bright communist horizons, it did put on display the growing role of preservation practice in the municipal structure as well as the contradictions inherent in an evolving understanding of rapid urban development and architectural conservation. The impulse to preserve was not simply the by-product of growing nationalist fervor. It relied heavily on the integration of scientific research methodology and restoration practice. As the following chapter will show, the men and women who actually did the work of preservation had a complicated relationship towards the authorities, but they were not dissidents. Men like Libson, central in generating city historic preservation policy, belonged somewhere in the middle of the spectrum that ranged from complete communist prometheanism to rabid Orthodox conservatism.

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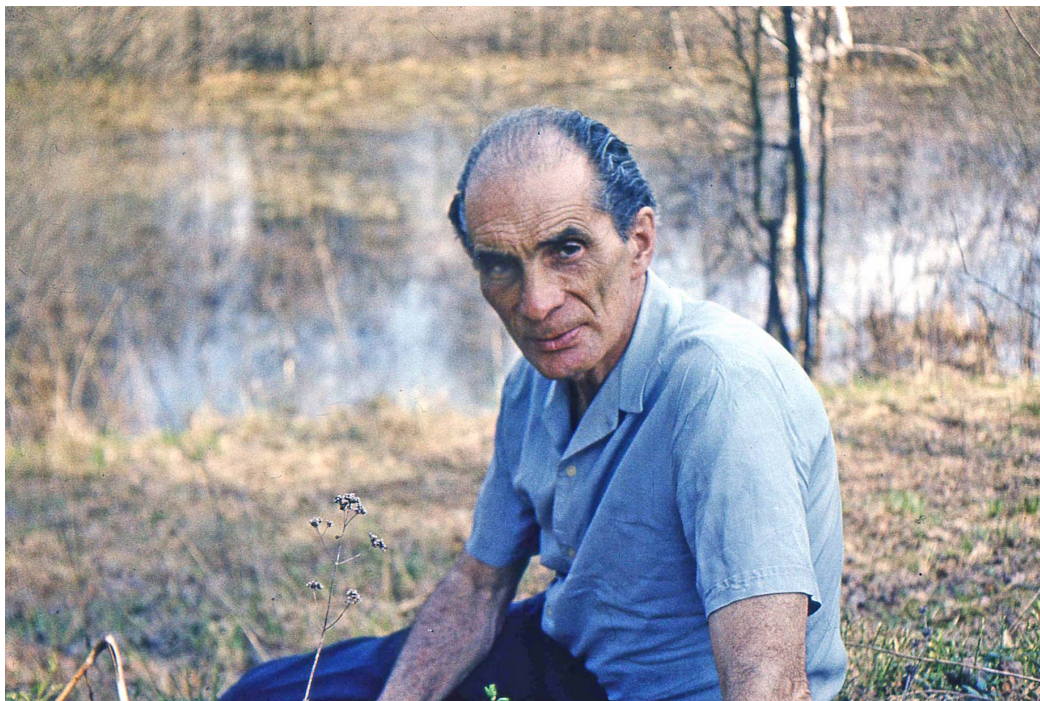
<sup>52</sup> Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Broad Is My Native Land : Repertoires and Regimes of Migration in Russia's Twentieth Century* (Ithaca ; London: Cornell University Press, 2014).

**Photos and Sketches of Preservation and Preservationists**



**The White Ward building north facade in 1971 before renovation (above) and after (Fig. 4)**





**Vladimir Libson picnicking in Moscow suburb (Fig. 5)**



**Dina Vasilevskaia (Fig. 6)**



Elena Trubetskaia (far left) with members of Golitsyn family in 1974 (Fig. 7)



Sketch of the two wards in the *strelka* “slice” on Kropotkinskaia (Fig. 8)

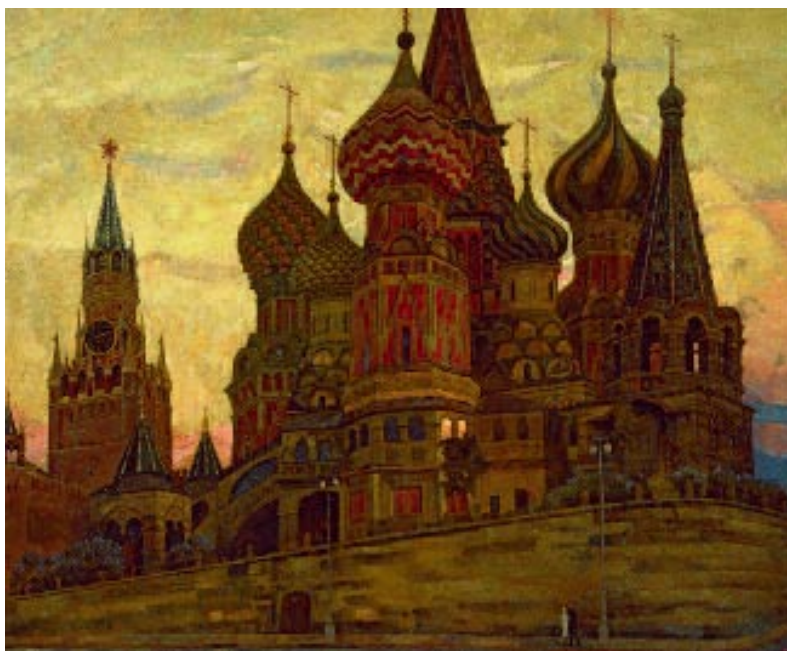


Detail of historic window uncovered in researching the white ward (Fig. 9)



Lopialo sketch of what the two structures might have looked like, submitted to city officials

(Fig. 10)



Painting by artist Andrei Gorskii of St. Basil's cathedral (Fig. 11)

3 апреля 1972 г.

Т Е Л Е Г Р А М М А

МОСКВА КРЕМЛЬ ГЕНЕРАЛЬНОМУ СЕКРЕТАРУ ЦК КПС.С.  
ТОВАРИЩУ ЛЕОНИДУ ИЛЬИЧУ БРЕЖНЕВУ.

5 апреля 1972 года на основании решения Ленинского Райисполкома от 10 февраля этого года должен начаться снос двух капитальных каменных жилых домов по Кропоткинской улице № 3 и 1/2 - построек XVIII века, представляющих исключительную историко-архитектурную и градостроительную ценность.

Многочисленные обращения государственных и общественных организаций в различные инстанции до сих пор не дали результата - пересмотра решения о сносе.

Просят Вашего личного вмешательства в деле сохранения истории и народа заповедного комплекса.

архитекторы : Трубецкая  
Васильевская  
Хаславская  
Казакевич  
Крейн  
Третьякова  
Мехова  
Ильенкова  
Рубен  
Оморова  
Муслимова  
Васильева  
Клименко  
Андреева

The telegraph sent to Brezhnev in defense of the buildings (Fig. 12)



**Kokhinor i Reishhinka choir performance, 1976 (Fig. 13)**

**Figures 1-3:** Moskovskii gorodskoĭ sovet deputatov trudiashchikhsia, Iсполnitel'nyi komitet, "Stroitel'stvo i arkhitektura Moskvy." *Stroitel'stvo i arkhitektura Moskvy*. 1966, 1971.

**Figures 4,6,7,8,9,10,11,12:** "Arkhnadzor: arkhiv: krasnoe i beloe-2: sorok let nazad spaseny palaty na strelke ostozhenke i prechistenki," April 12, 2012.  
<http://www.archnadzor.ru/2012/04/12/krasnoe-i-beloe-2/>.

**Figure 5:** libson.narod.ru

**Figure 13:** Mai, Svetlana, Rimma Aldonina, and Novikov. "Kokhinor i Reishhinka," 2010.  
<http://koxinor.mambor.com/index.htm>.

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### **The Red and White Wards: Soviet Preservation in Practice in the Spring of 1972**

On Leap Day, February 29<sup>th</sup> 1972, Elena Trubetskaia received a notice stating that the Mossovet ispolkom for the Leninskii raion (region) housing directorate “urgently requests that structures be photographically surveyed prior to their demolition on Kropotkinskaia Street, numbers ½ and 3.”<sup>53</sup> The chief of the regional ispolkom, V. Korochkinym, signed the missive, which included marginal notes by prominent restorationist, V. Ia. Libson and the perfunctory “payment guaranteed” postscript.<sup>54</sup> Libson’s scrawl indicated that measurements and research were to be carried out on the orders of GlavAPU. Elena Trubetskaia was an employee in Libson’s Mosproekt-3 No. 7 restoration studio. She was also a member of one of Russia’s most storied families, and a prime example of the fate of the Russian nobility in the Soviet period. Elena’s parents, Vladimir Golitsyn and Elena Sheremeteva, brought together two of the wealthiest and oldest families of Muscovy. In marrying Andrei Trubetskoi, their daughter Elena replicated the most famous union of the Trubetskoi and Golitsyn families, when Yuri Trubetskoi married Irina Golitsyna in the 1660s in the early Romanov period under tsar Alexis.<sup>55</sup> She was assigned to the project on Kropotkinskaia along with Dina Petrovna Vasilevskaia.

Kropotkinskaia Street was known as Prechistenka before the revolution and returned to its previous name in 1991. It runs from the southwest corner of the Kremlin parallel to the Moskva river towards the Novodevichii Monastery, which sits along one of the river’s many

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<sup>53</sup> See “Palaty na prechistenke” by E.V. Trubetskaya pp. 460-482 for Trubetskaia’s complete recollections and diary entries related to the incident.

<sup>54</sup> Colton, *Moscow*. does a fine job of summarizing the significance of Moscow municipal organization. An ispolkom is a form of executive committee, empowered to make local decisions regarding construction, education, zoning code, etc.

<sup>55</sup> Douglas Smith, *Former People : The Final Days of the Russian Aristocracy*, First edition. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012). Smith’s book thoroughly chronicles the travails of the Sheremet’ev and Golitsyn families in the Revolutionary era, demonstrating how those that survived managed to find a place in the new Soviet system.

oxbows. The buildings in question were located on a sensitive corner, across from the infamous “Moskva” swimming pool, built on the foundation pit of the Palace of Soviets, a Stalin era project of gargantuan size, never completed. In 1972, there were three buildings located on the slice made by the Kropotkinskaia and Ostozhenka streets’ convergence. The corner was chosen to become the location of a new monument to Friedrich Engels, which was supposed to be erected by the time of the much-touted Nixon visit in May 1972. The corner building, known as the Lopukhinskie Palaty, was already on the list of historic landmarks, and rendered safe, but the two buildings on its flanks were not protected, and thus vulnerable to ispolkom ordinances.

Libson’s studio speculated that at least one of the two unprotected buildings were from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, although not one of three had been surveyed before. “Both imperiled buildings were chock-full of communal apartment dwellers who had modified the original structures with endless and *ad hoc* barriers, stairways, sheds and cellars...”<sup>56</sup> Trubetskaia describes the reactions of the residents to the arrival of architects on March 1st with measuring equipment and cameras:

The residents were intrigued, of course, by Libson’s purposeful figure. He ran all around with a photographer. They were startled and asked us what we were doing in their house and why. We answered that we were conducting research. Those more prone to worry started to feel like something was amiss. They ran to the Housing Office (ZhEK) and the District Council (raisovet) but couldn’t get a clear answer from anyone. Rumors that four ‘somebodies’ were running around measuring everything quickly penetrated to the most remote apartments amidst even the lonely and deaf old ladies.<sup>57</sup>

Trubetskaia describes some of those who helped from the onset, knocking away stucco facades, in hopes of finding evidence of antiquity. She recalls architect Ivan Savel’ev who: “worked like a bulldozer, and would gleefully chip away the stucco in places indicated for him. He had two

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<sup>56</sup> IU Aleksandrov, V Enisherlov, and D. K Ivanov, *Moskovskii albom: vospominaniia o Moskve i moskvichakh XIX-XX vekov* (Moskva: Izd. zhurnala Nashe Nasledie : Gos. firma

“Poligrafresursy,” 1997), 461.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

weaknesses: first—he only ever worked until lunch...the second—he frequently managed to get three sheets to the wind in the white light of day.” Her diary entries are full of such colorful descriptions, both of the residents of the buildings and of those that assisted in the ensuing months as they battled to preserve them. A fellow worker from Libson’s studio, Aleksei Alekseevich Klimenko, recalled how he got involved with the project:

I was 30 years old. In 1972 I was working as an architect in Mosproekt-3 restoration studio under Vladimir Libson. We formed a ‘islet of freedom’ there, going to Averintsev lectures and visiting Sakharov in Nizhnii Novgorod...our job was to seek out historical plans, various archival material and carry out on-site research... We learned to develop ‘x-ray vision.’ I worked on probes and excavation. We were like surgeons, peeling back the surface skin to get to the valuable core.<sup>58</sup>

Klimenko’s observation reflects the intellectual appeal of preservation work articulated by many of the practitioners in the field in this period. The application of a robust scientific methodology lead to satisfactory “discoveries” that could add to the body of protected buildings and bit by bit allow for the “rebirth” of Moscow.<sup>59</sup> Klimenko points out the fact that the value of these buildings would not have been apparent to the casual observer: “Both of the buildings seemed ordinary, neglected, dusty and dirty edifices from the Pushkin era (early 19<sup>th</sup> century). For the residents—they were slums. The courtyard of the corner building was strewn with crates and cardboard, apparently leftover from stores that had previously occupied the first floor.”<sup>60</sup> Historic

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<sup>58</sup> It is important to note that Klimenko’s quote here comes from an interview conducted in 2012 for the commemoration of the 40 years since the event. The excerpts from Trubetskaia and Vasilevskaia are much older, Trubetskaia’s diary entries were first published in 1994 but were ostensibly being composed during the early days of 1972. It may be significant that Klimenko was visiting Sakharov and not Osipov. Sakharov represented an internationalist strain of dissidence, as opposed to Solzhenitsyn. “Arkhnadzor: Arkhiv: Krasnoe i beloe-2: sorok let nazad spaseny palaty na strelke Ostozhenke i Prechistenki,” April 12, 2012, <http://www.archnadzor.ru/2012/04/12/krasnoe-i-beloe-2/>.

<sup>59</sup> V.Ia. Libson, *Vozrozhdeniye sokrovishcha Moskvy* (Moskovskii rabochii, 1983).

<sup>60</sup> “Arkhnadzor: Arkhiv: Krasnoe i beloe-2: sorok let nazad spaseny palaty na strelke Ostozhenke i Prechistenki.”

value was a professional secret and the recollections of many of those involved are shot through with the excitement and thrill of secret knowledge: “We urgently needed to prove that both houses were extraordinary structures, constituting a treasure...we needed to find something that we could show to the leadership that would astound them.”<sup>61</sup> Dina Vasilevskaia recalls: “I simply adored my job. I felt like a real life Sherlock Holmes, especially when everyone else went home for the day and I was left one on one with an old building, methodically uncovering its secrets.”<sup>62</sup>

Klimenko was a VOPIK certified tour guide and he had been offering tours to students from Moscow State University’s (MGU) philology department. He capitalized on his connections and put out an ad around the university. As Trubetskaia explains:

...Klimenko rallied the troops from MGU...authoring a short call “to help.” Sure enough, that first Saturday and Sunday, March 4 and 5, ten or so first and second year students showed up. They had scrounged up picks, hammers and scalpels, fashioned a makeshift ladder with the help of the site manager from a neighboring development project and began to climb around the side façade of the Red Wards.<sup>63</sup>

They did not have scaffolding initially and many of the workers used improvised ladders to scrape off the stucco from the second and third floor exteriors. The volunteers were put to work removing portions of the façade to reveal the historic material beneath and quickly began to find evidence of significant age. “Almost immediately we uncovered large-format bricks...with lime mortar and wiped seams typical of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>64</sup> Things progressed less smoothly with interior research, due to inconsistent aid from the residents, who often made the researchers’ lives more difficult by locking their doors and obstructing access. “Anna Vasilievna, from

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Aleksandrov, Enisherlov, and Ivanov, *Moskovskii albom*, 462.

<sup>64</sup> Aleksandrov, Enisherlov, and Ivanov, *Moskovskii albom*.

apartment 17 wouldn't let us inside and came out to the long darkened hallway to wail. She bemoaned the loss of her 'special' cat."<sup>65</sup>

According to Trubetskaia there were 18 families residing in the Red Wards, 15 families in the White Wards and about 30 families in the corner structure, the Lopukhinskie Palaty. Within a week, the Housing Office began to issue relocation notices and they "poked the anthill." The resident's reactions were not uniform: "some families seemed indifferent to the situation, relatively calm and even somewhat joyful. Others—the majority—reacted with horror. It was worst for the elderly, longtime residents who had been born and raised in these buildings. We didn't really have time to chat and dispensed with a few relatively polite phrases, not knowing ourselves what would come of it all."<sup>66</sup> Vasilevskaia characterized the situation among the residents as a "living hell."<sup>67</sup>

The competing imperatives of housing and culture were being debated in a number of arenas ever since the Khrushchev ascendancy. The party leadership was more than a decade into an ambitious housing construction boom that was the tent pole of the promised benefits of a socialist society. Real achievements in domestic square footage per person were being championed loudly by the leadership; however, many both inside and outside the planning apparatus were critical of the lack of amenities to accompany their new bedroom neighborhoods.<sup>68</sup> Whether decrying the lack of theaters and cultural gathering spaces, kindergartens, or the shrinking number of historic cultural landmarks and green spaces, the

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> "Arkhnadzor: Arkhiv: Krasnoe i beloe: sorok let nazad spaseny palaty na strelke Ostozhenke i Prechistenki," April 11, 2012, <http://www.archnadzor.ru/2012/04/11/krasnoe-i-beloe/>.

<sup>67</sup> "Arkhnadzor: Arkhiv: krasnoe i beloe-2: sorok let nazad spaseny palaty na strelke Ostozhenke i Prechistenki."

<sup>68</sup> Colton, *Moscow*. See in particular, Colton's chapter entitled "Basic Needs and Amenities." Colton delivers detailed data about the increases in housing sq. meters per person, as well as the number of theater seats, cafeterias, and hospitals per person by city region.

voices of discontent were rarely appeased by any of the concessions made by the leadership, as the system seemed incapable of living up to the standards of its own rhetoric.

Within this context, where a basic level of discontent was the norm and official systems of complaining (*zhalovanie*) were considered ineffective, preservationists understood that a more diversified approach was needed to get the attention of the highest levels of leadership where traction for the issue could be found. Thus, a meeting hosted by restorationist L.A. David where the historic landmark officer, N.N. Sobolev was to deliver a report entitled “1972 Plan for the restoration of Moscow’s architectural landmarks,” was hijacked by the issue of the wards on Kropotkinskaia.<sup>69</sup> Veterans of preservation took to the podium for the cause: “Elder statesman Tydman demonstrated strong support. Like always, Libson spoke with passion about how we need to preserve the singular old Moscow, not destroy it.”<sup>70</sup> David concluded that: “...if everyone is so concerned for Kropotkinskaia, then we should write and send a letter from the Union of architects protesting the demolition.”<sup>71</sup> The following day, March 16<sup>th</sup>, a new sense of urgency consumed the team of researchers working on the site: “It is becoming increasingly clear that once again, they want to clear precious stone 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings from the center of Moscow. This means that we must once again fight for them, even though Dina (and she’s not alone) feels as though the effort is useless.”<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, the staff of Mosproekt-3 studio 7 continued to rally social pressure for the preservation of the buildings, enlisting a neighboring bookstore to petition for the use of the existing structures. The bookstore had been promised a

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<sup>69</sup> Of Sobolev, Trubetskaia says: “After his short address he sat red as lobster, notably silent. He had saved and was saving many buildings, but there were many that he couldn’t. Higher ups were prone to ignore his letters of protest if they proved inconvenient.” Aleksandrov, Enisherlov, and Ivanov, *Moskovskii albom*. P. 464

<sup>70</sup> For an example of how he may have made his argument, see Libson, “Staroe I Novoe. Rekonstruktsiia Stolitsy I Pamiatniki Zodchestvo.”

<sup>71</sup> Aleksandrov, Enisherlov, and Ivanov, *Moskovskii albom*. P. 465

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

larger space for a number of years and had been left in limbo due to construction delays. Brought onboard by Trubetskaia and Vasilevskaia, they informed the authorities that use of the wards would be perfect compensation.

Meanwhile, letters were crafted to many members of the highest levels of city and party leadership. The drafters put serious care into the framing of the letters, excerpting a recent interview with Posokhin published in the youth journal *Iunost*.<sup>73</sup> Posokhin's interview with editor V. Slavkin was directed towards a supposed "youth interest" in the Moscow of the future, the one that would emerge in 1990 at the end of the programmatic tunnel created by the General Plan of 1971. Posokhin goes out of his way to begin the interview with a reassurance that "Moscow will not be rebuilt entirely from the ground up. A Communist upbringing is one built on the foundation of the best products of thousands of years of culture. We must begin with this."<sup>73</sup> The supplicants highlighted a quote from the article, where he mentions the protection of historic corridors:

... The General Plan provides for the creation of historic districts protected by the letter of the law, as well as the organic integration of landmarks into planning projects. We decided to include in the new plan entire distinct streets and neighborhoods that could remain as perfect monuments—fragments of old Moscow. Right now we are working out the kinks on plans to preserve streets such as Kropotkina, Chernyshevskogo, Arbat...<sup>74</sup>

Such an overt statement of support from the city's chief architect made Trubetskaia and others confident in their request, however dismal the chances of success seemed to them.

Another employee of Libson's preservation studio, Villia Khaslavskaia, recounted her experience sending a telegram to Brezhnev with Trubetskaia on April 3rd.

We got the signatures of many of our coworkers. Many got caught up in the excitement of the project, but we decided to limit the signatures to those of us that had a real

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<sup>73</sup> Posokhin, "Molodoi gorod Moskva," 82.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

connection to the buildings. If they started calling individuals up by name, they would have something to say. The second criteria for signatures came up unexpectedly. Looking at the signatures—Libson, Domshlak, Bernstein...there were too many Jewish ones. We were worried that it might raise unnecessary concerns and wanted to avoid any unwarranted suspicion, so we limited the Jewish signatures, except for those of the directors.<sup>75</sup>

Khaslavskaia was nervous as they delivered the telegram, “it was the first and last time in my life that I sent anything to someone so high up.” The singularity of this expression of civic activism highlights the significance of preservation efforts in this period and beyond. The concern over the Jewish issue demonstrates an awareness that there were conflicts being played out over these issues on an ideological level, however, it demonstrated a desire to bypass them in order to save the buildings.

An important component of the battle to preserve the wards was developing accurate blueprints and sketches of the various eras of historical “accretion” represented in built environment of the “slice” between Ostozhenka and Kropotkinskaia. In this task, preservationists often relied on the aid of accomplished painters, illustrators, and draftsmen. Elena Trubetskaia, through her brother Illarion, was able to make a connection with prominent landscape artist Andrei Gorskii, who was known to support the preservation of ancient Moscow.<sup>76</sup> He agreed to come and make sketches of the buildings, as the original structures were slowly uncovered. His artistic depictions, based off the data being gathered by the volunteers and preservationists helped to provide a convincing and cohesive picture to the authorities. An artist and draftsman associated with VOPIK and a longtime collaborator with famous restorationists Baranovskii

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<sup>75</sup> “Arkhnadzor: Arkhiv: Krasnoe i beloe-2: sorok let nazad spaseny palaty na strelke Ostozhenke i Prechistenki.”

<sup>76</sup> Here it is important to again note Ilya Glazunov, who was not attached to the project at the wards, but did this same kind of illustrative work for preservationists frequently. Dunlop  
Appendix 2

and Grabar', Karl Lopialo, helped create sketches of the wards as well. The importance of these sketches comes across in the following excerpt from a letter that Baranovskii sent to Lopialo:

“There was a meeting at GlavAPU of the planning committee, and your compositions made a big impression and elicited more support for the cause than anything else.”<sup>77</sup> In this way, the research work of the employees of Libson's studio was transformed via artists into promotional material for the defense of the potential of the historic buildings, simultaneously broadening the range of professionals enlisted in the battle for preservation. **(See Fig. 10-11).**

Aleksei Klimenko had the opportunity to meet with Igor' Ponomarev, an engineer with high-level responsibilities overseeing many of the Moscow construction departments for city party leader Viktor Grishin. Ponomarev staged a dressing down of mid-level management for Klimenko's benefit. After waiting “five hours” to see Ponomarev, Klimenko entered his office to a scene:

Vladimir Nikolaevich Ivanov, vice chairman of the central committee of VOOPK, and Veniamin Aleksandrovich Nesterov, deputy chief architect of the city of Moscow were both in the room. When they finally let me in, there was Ponomarev, a large man, yelling at Nesterov: ‘See, these architects are complaining that you are destroying all the monuments in Moscow, dammit!’ There stood Venia—a veteran with a bunch of medals, a good looking dandy, popular with the ladies—taking it all while propped against the doorframe, looking like a scolded stray dog...Nesterov feared that he'd ask for his party membership card. Ponomarev concluded the chew out: ‘Stop wrecking old Moscow,’ and everyone else left...He stood before me a mountainous man and began, to my surprise, to complain about how hard he had it...‘You think its easy for me with this Posokhin? We've got 27 million firebricks and nowhere to use them. He won't take them!’ He threw his hands up and I noticed that his fly was down. I commiserated: ‘It's so bad there's not even time to zip our pants.’ He laughed at that and told me: ‘Go see Promyslov. I'll give him a call. He's the only one who can conclusively answer your request.’<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> A.M. Kozhevnikov, “Arkhitektor Karl Lopialo. Po materialam vystavki v MARKhI, posviashchennoi 100-letiiu mastera” (Moskovskii arkhitekturnyi institut Moskva:Rossiia, February 2015).

<sup>78</sup> “Arkhnadzor: Arkhiv: Krasnoe i beloe-2: sorok let nazad spaseny palaty na strelke Ostozhenke i Prechistenki.”

Klimenko recounted this episode at an event commemorating the battle to preserve the wards in the 2000s. It is paradigmatic example of the way that bureaucratic impotence and blame shifting functioned in the Soviet system—similar episodes litter the memoirs of late Soviet *apparatchiks*.<sup>79</sup>

Tragedy struck the preservation camp in early April as the decision came down that the corner building, the Lopukhinskie palaty, were being removed from protection and slated for demolition within two days. The building had been thought to be safe and therefore it was not being researched as urgently as the two on its flanks. On April 10<sup>th</sup> Trubetskaia's diary entry remarks that the highest levels of city leadership, Posokhin, Grishin, and Promislov, were visiting the site that day. On April 11<sup>th</sup> she exited the metro at 10 am to see the corner structure already halfway demolished: "Everything was cordoned off, crackling, buzzing, crumbling...they were tearing it down with wrecking balls (*klin-baba*). There were lots of people on the sidewalks near the bread shop, you could hardly squeeze through, although the trolleybuses were still running. I walked, tears streaming uncontrollably, vision shrouded."<sup>80</sup> Making her way to the top floor of one of the buildings she had helped to save, Trubetskaia watched the wrecking going on below: "How well they work at destruction! A quiet, good, and storied building dies in silence, sacrificing itself to save its older brothers. Eternal memory. As if in consolation, a passerby remarking on the neighboring demolition, said: 'But that building there they won't knock down. It's 800 years old and they're gonna put a museum in it.'"<sup>81</sup> The

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<sup>79</sup> Georgii Shakhnazarov, *Tsena svobody: reformatsia Gorbacheva glazami ego pomoshchnika* (Moskva: Rossika : Zevs, 1993); G. A. Arbatov, *Chelovek sistemy : nabliudeniiai razmyshleniia ochevidtza ee raspada*, *Moi 20. vek* (Moskva: Vagrius, 2002); A. S. Cherniaev, *Moia zhizn' i moë vremia* (Moskva: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1995).

<sup>80</sup> Aleksandrov, Enisherlov, and Ivanov, *Moskovskii albom*, 478.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

endearing mistake made by the passerby about the building's age is informative. In Trubetskaia's perception and telling, the preservation battle is one that isolates her as an expert from the unwitting laymen she serves. She removes herself from the throng to witness the destruction from a different vantage point. She sees herself as a protector of a heritage that most Muscovites are unaware that they want or need. The professional skills required to have the heightened vision of a preservationist allow them to romanticize the notion of historic value and provide them with ample opportunity to "fight the good fight."

Once the dust settled from the corner building and the preservationists realized that they were going to be able to save the remaining two, the pace of restoration and rehabilitation slowed. The pressing issue in late April and early May was the impending visit of American president Nixon. Posokhin issued an order that the preservationists quickly refinish and repaint the partially eliminated façades. One engineer assigned to the last minute rehabilitation projects noted to Trubetskaia: "I'm drowning in all these Nixon sites. I have no time at all!"<sup>82</sup> But the worst had been weathered. The buildings were going to be protected and restored to their 17<sup>th</sup> century floor plan and fenestration. It was a matter of when. Ultimately, restoration of the wards would not be completed until 1995, when they were reopened as museums. By that point, many things had changed in Moscow, but the wards remained a testament to the activism of studio 7 employees and the volunteer work of many concerned citizens. The museum today commemorates the preservation efforts as much, if not more than the 400-year-old buildings themselves.

That Nixon's visit to the USSR precipitated the episode with the wards is ironic, because one of the many stipulations of the battery of agreements signed during his visit, which ultimately came to be broadly referred to as the foundation of the Cold War *détente* of the 1970s,

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 468.

was that the two nations would “cooperate” in mitigating the environmental impact of modernization and “enhancement of the urban environment”<sup>83</sup> Amidst the controversial signings of the ABM treaty, the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty and the U.S.—Soviet Incidents at Sea Agreement, the less flashy Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Environmental Protection flew largely under the radar. However, it marked an important turning point in the development of historic preservation cooperation between the two superpowers. It demonstrated the Soviet Union’s confidence in its preservation and restoration programs and the desire to play a leading role in the international preservation community. No other person demonstrates this pivot in party policy and ideology better than Mikhail Posokhin. The following chapter will explore his experience as chief architect in light of his Russian upbringing as well as his many experiences visiting the United States in the 1960s and 70s.

### **Mikhail Posokhin: the city planner from Siberia on the world stage**

Mikhail Posokhin spent more than a decade at the top of the architectural heap in the Soviet system, but his career emerged from relatively inauspicious Siberian origins. Born in 1910 and raised in Tomsk during the early years of the Soviet Union to a seminary educated father and artistically inclined mother, Posokhin did not arrive at his ultimate profession until relatively late in life. Before arriving in Moscow in 1935 to pursue architectural studies under Shchusev, the famous designer of the Lenin Mausoleum, Posokhin spent time as a set designer for an acting troupe in Barnaul and spent five years at Kuznetskstroï, the mid-Siberian shock industrialization project now known as Novokuznetsk. There he worked in construction and

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<sup>83</sup> “Agreement On Cooperation In The Field Of Environmental Protection Between The United States Of America And The Union Of Soviet Socialist Republics,” May 23, 1972.

planning and gained skills that would ultimately serve him as chief architect of the city of Moscow.

As a boy he recalls his first encounter with “the grandeur of architecture” when he visited Tomsk’s central cathedral:

I saw for the first time, what seemed to me, an enormous expanse, in all its glory: the gilded iconostasis, the chandeliers, the priest’s robes, and the singing of the choir punctuated by the lector’s exclamations, the smell of incense and the sputtering light of candles. The whole scene was exceptionally grandiose. I experienced an architectural shockwave... We climbed the belltower and the ringer allowed me to strike the largest one... He advised me to open my mouth as wide as I could to keep me from losing hearing... Something incredible happened to my young self: the thick peal deafened me, tangibly filling the space inside the bell, expanding out over the whole city. It was an apotheosis.<sup>84</sup>

Posokhin’s spiritual encounter with church architecture as a boy was not dissimilar from that of his many detractors later in life. The same man who penned these words in the 1980s had been criticized from nearly all sides as a destroyer of Moscow’s spiritual heritage. Vladimir Osipov, the dissident nationalist, considered Posokhin “public enemy number one.”<sup>85</sup> Certainly, memoirs must be considered as attempts to control and rehabilitate political legacy. Many Soviet era bureaucrats practiced the art of apologetics in the form of memoir in the late 80s and early 90s.<sup>86</sup> However, there is no need to assume that Posokhin was fabricating this experience and his love for Russian churches in retrospect, to make sense of the widespread disdain and blame he received from his contemporaries. As a visible power holder in the Soviet system, he was an easy target for the frustrations of a citizenry that felt incapable of effecting change in the society that was supposedly their own. As the previous chapter demonstrates, the disconnect between citizen

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<sup>84</sup> M. V. Posokhin, *Dorogi zhizni : iz zapisok arkhitekatora*, Mastera arkhitektury (Moskva: Stroïizdat, 1995), 22.

<sup>85</sup> Osipov, “Poslednii den’ Moskvyy.”

<sup>86</sup> Beth Holmgren, *The Russian Memoir History and Literature* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2003).

activists' and preservation professionals' concerns and those of the highest levels of party leadership in planning can account for much of this distaste. However, one element of the Kremlin approach to planning and preservation in the late 60s and 70s should be considered further—the appeal to the West that was being made as a part of the “peaceful coexistence” policy.

A felicitous result of working on the most prestigious projects within the Soviet Union and Moscow in particular, Posokhin was granted numerous opportunities to travel abroad. His diary recollections of three separate trips to the United States were collected and published as a part of a posthumous volume in 1995. Posokhin did America in 1960, 1965 and then for a more prolonged period in the late 70s and early 80s while working on the new Soviet Embassy on Wisconsin Avenue in close conjunction with longtime ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin. His first visit was supervised by then head of Soviet construction industry, Vladimir Kucherenko. Ostensibly their trip was an information-gathering foray before constructing the new and controversial Senate Palace inside the Kremlin. In 1965, this time at the head of the trip, Posokhin and his team were investigating American city planning practices before the development of the new General Plan for the city of Moscow, which would be accomplished in 1971. The trips involved extensive visits to many American cities. Posokhin gives his impressions of New York, Philadelphia, Miami, Washington D.C., Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Detroit. Armand Hammer facilitated many of the Soviet experiences in the United States. Posokhin details a visit to his Los Angeles home, where Hammer had “portraits of Lenin and Ekaterina Furtseva over his mantle.” Hammer would go on to play a significant role in the construction of a World Trade Center on the banks of Moscow’s river in the 70s. The WTO was commissioned in conjunction with the US-Soviet 1972 grain deal, known in American lore as the

“Great Grain Robbery”. Posokhin oversaw the WTO construction as well. In order to see how historic preservation fit within the constellation of considerations that Posokhin balanced as Moscow’s chief architect, the role of the “American alternative” needs to be evaluated.

Throughout the trip, Posokhin demonstrated a surprisingly overt admiration for Modernist architects such as Mies van der Rohe and Louis Kahn and New Formalists, Minoru Yamasaki and Edward Stone. He recounts bits of advice received from each and offers flattering and warm depictions of their architectural studios and personal demeanors. He recalls Mies van der Rohe as “A large and athletic elderly man with a friendly smile.”<sup>87</sup> To Louis Kahn he attributes an affection for reinforced concrete structures, as demonstrated by the Salk Institute in La Jolla, California and the Capital Complex in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Kahn’s preference for concrete structures seemed complementary to Khrushchev era developments in Soviet architecture, where *zhelezobeton* (“metal-concrete”) was playing a central role in the large-panel prefab building construction methods that allowed for the massive housing explosion of the 1950s and 60s. Posokhin’s appreciation for Kahn extended to his claims about the importance of planning for the automobile and the use of viaducts to “layer” traffic flow in congested downtown environments. He also attributes to Kahn concern for the human element: “The specific perspective Kahn introduced, supported his guiding thought: that architecture and city planning must answer to the demands of the people.”<sup>88</sup> This preoccupation would dictate much of Posokhin’s own theoretical work— in 1973 he published a book *Gorod dlia cheloveka* (“Cities for people”) which justified the decisions made in the creation of the General Plan.

Upon recollecting his conversations with Victor Gruen—famously touted as the inventor of the American shopping mall and the architect behind master plans for American cities like

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<sup>87</sup> Posokhin, *Dorogi zhizni*, 175.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

Fresno, Kalamazoo, and Fort Worth— Posokhin relishes the fact that Gruen as much as admits to the inspiration provided by the GUM building on Red Square.<sup>89</sup> Posokhin digresses wistfully about the joys of Los Angeles’ Disneyland and his attempt at developing a Moscow version, alas, one that remained on the drawing board. “How I’d love to see a park of our own like that!”<sup>90</sup> A model for the Moscow Disneyland known as “Land of Wonders” (*Strana chudes*) was published in the same *Iunost*’ article that Trubetskaia and the other preservationists cited to argue for the saving of the wards.<sup>91</sup> Assessing the challenges faced by American planners, Posokhin astutely hits on the “problem” of private property, and the unsatisfactory solution of urban sprawl and transportation investment. These are areas where he sees the Soviet Union as having the advantage. Summarizing his visits, Posokhin claims:

We saw and learned many useful things on those trips. Despite fundamental differences in social structure, we saw American architects facing problems that were familiar to us...Our interest was raised by the requirement that a developer and architect must present their work for public discussion in advance...We weren’t able to practically assess the role of the public in the direction of American architecture, however, theoretically it was championed. Our architecture and planning, for many years, existed under the influence of the highest levels of leadership, which I attempted to demonstrate through examples from my own practice.<sup>92</sup>

Throughout his journey, Posokhin paid particular attention to the growth of planning education in the United States. His tours brought him into contact with the city planning departments at University of California, Berkeley, University of Illinois, and the city planning policy segment of the Ford Foundation. In the final analysis, he applauds the American system for developing so many planners, but believes that the bifurcation of specialties leads to misleading expectations about what is architecturally plausible and what is socially expedient. Nevertheless, he expresses interest in “keeping up” with growth of the planning sector in the United States, as it undeniably

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Posokhin, “Molodoi Gorod Moskva.”

<sup>92</sup> Posokhin, *Dorogi zhizni*, 186.

provided an advanced quality of life to its citizens. While Posokhin could congratulate the Soviet system for a more evenly distributed standard of living, he never attempted to deny great American wealth, nor could he have without appearing dishonest.

Posokhin framed the experience of historic architecture in the Soviet Union against the process of urban change in the U.S. In his recollections he quotes an excerpt from Gore Vidal's novel *1876* that describes Brooklyn, New York as a city with "a thousand churches." Posokhin comments:

This, about New York in 1876. Today it is 1989. A few smaller American cities retain specific architectural traces of the past, such as San Antonio in Texas, or the specially reconstructed Williamsburg... But this not nearly the same thing. New York feels modern, without a hint of the past, with the exception of maybe the Statue of Liberty— somewhat incidentally preserved as opposed to the old churches and houses. Big cities grow chaotically...<sup>93</sup>

Without a doubt, Posokhin has in mind, here, a contrast with the similarly epitheted city of Moscow and in many ways a defense of his work towards preservation in light of the American experience. He continues to quote international contemporaries, such as the planners of Mexico City, pointing out that: "fulfilling the task of a chief architect as a creative coordinator of planning in Mexico City was difficult for [them]—and not only for them."<sup>94</sup> Posokhin vacillates in quick succession between the universal characteristics of architecture and planning in the modern age and the particularities that can be discerned in various national quarters:

I am sometimes taken by the desire, especially after reflecting on my travel diaries, to compare and contrast the various architectural styles specific to different countries that are born out of their unique natural context, tastes, historical experience, and socio-political structure. But then, I am filled with doubt that such distinctions can be maintained due to the commonalities that are spreading across the globe, erasing national traits from architecture. However, this erasing can never be complete, even in

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 108.

contemporary architecture. And despite the global nature of the process, national roots are preserved through the protection of architectural landmarks (*pamiatniki*)<sup>95</sup>

Posokhin, reflecting on the state of professional architectural and planning on a global stage asserts the contradictory and complex possibilities of a built environment that tells different stories to different people: “The necessary functional component of architecture, as a requirement for human survival, is the very thing that leaves it vulnerable to frequent non-professional criticism.”<sup>96</sup> Posokhin, like the employees of his Department fighting for preservation, wants to point out the problem of uneducated public assessment. Taking a grand historic perspective, he samples from ancient and recent past examples such as the Parthenon, Brasilia, the Eiffel Tower, and the Battle of the Palaces in Tsaritsino.<sup>97</sup> Posokhin reserves his greatest love for the architectural achievements of Russia: “Can we really say that any city, even such ancient ones as London on the Thames or Paris on the Seine, has as grandiose and powerful of a sweep as the ensemble along the Neva?”<sup>98</sup> This sort of preference comes for Posokhin only with a true appreciation of the international context of architecture and after having studied the best of architecture from across the centuries.

## Conclusion

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> D. O. Shvidkovskii, *Russian Architecture and the West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). Shvidkovskii attempts to frame a thousand years of Russian architecture in concert with European architectural history, pointing out the similarities and connections between the two extending far back. Chapter V deals with the architecture of Bazhenov as a participant in the spat between Catherine and Paul over what architectural style would dominate Russia: Neoclassicism or Romanticism.

<sup>98</sup> Posokhin, *Dorogi zhizni*, 110.

In 1964, at the Second International Congress of Architects and Specialists of Historic Buildings in Italy, 23 signatories affixed themselves to the Venice Charter. Although Soviet representatives were present at the Congress, they were hesitant to put their names on the document. Party leadership in Moscow was not yet completely comfortable with the implications of “common values” as espoused by aristocratic Western Europeans. Representatives from Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia did sign.<sup>99</sup> The first meeting of ICOMOS in 1965, at the insistence of mastermind Piero Gazzola, would be held in Warsaw and Kraków in order to celebrate the extensive effort to maintain authenticity during post-war reconstruction. The Venice charter laid out a new set of “best practices” in maintaining and restoring historic architecture, acknowledging “People are becoming more and more conscious of the unity of human values and regard ancient monuments as a common heritage”.<sup>100</sup> It seemed that Soviet leadership had no choice but to cooperate in promoting historic preservation, both from the perspective of geopolitics and due to the growing volume of preservationist voices at home.<sup>101</sup>

The Venice Charter stipulated the importance of preservation of architectural mass and scale in the immediate proximity of historic structures. The second article of the Charter dictates that: “The conservation and restoration of monuments must have recourse to all the sciences and techniques which can contribute to the study and safeguarding of the architectural heritage.” This document marked a turning point in preservation practice that built upon the formation of UNESCO and the principles of the Athens charter of 1931. Preservation was becoming a flag around which a global community could rally. The Venice charter stressed the importance of

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<sup>99</sup> 2nd International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, “International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (The Venice Charter 1964).”

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Farrell, “If These Stones Could Only Speak” p. 243; Natalia Dushkina, “IKOMOS I Otechestvennaia Praktika Sokhraneniia Kul’turnogo Naslediia,” 2005, [http://icomos-spb.ru/index.php/component/joomdoc/dushkina\\_ikomos\\_otech\\_prakt.pdf/download](http://icomos-spb.ru/index.php/component/joomdoc/dushkina_ikomos_otech_prakt.pdf/download).

cultivating a professional cadre of restorationists. Article 9 states: “The process of restoration is a highly specialized operation. Its aim is to preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value of the monument and is based on respect for original material and authentic documents. It must stop at the point where conjecture begins...”<sup>102</sup>

The Soviets were not lagging behind in this case. In the following five years, most European countries that did not have state-sponsored preservation programs as well as the United States, began to take the work of preservation more seriously. In the U.S. this was exemplified by the passing of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966, mandatory budgetary allocations of the Transportation Act of the same year and the emergence of hundreds of local preservation laws, creating historic districts, local registers, and tax incentives to woo private owners of historic buildings to conserve precious pieces of the past. In the world of planning and architecture, this preservationist resurgence marked a corrective shift away from the excesses of oversimplified modernism. It marked a moment when professionals and policymakers again began to qualify and circumscribe the significance of the caesura of Modernity in all of its many forms. This movement was truly international in scope and manifested itself clearly in disparate planning and architectural environments around the globe. The Soviet Union is no exception to this story, *and yet*, it has rarely been considered in this light. This is largely because there are at least two major narratives of resurgent historicism in the late 1960s and 70s: one of a cosmopolitan, scientific, and professional nature, and the other of a particularist, nationalist, and religious nature. Postmodernism’s contribution in this realm was to acknowledge the contradiction and the complexity of the situation, the pluralism of purpose, often times within a single actor. By demonstrating how preservationists, planners and politicians articulated the

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<sup>102</sup> 2nd International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, “Internationa Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (The Venice Charter 1964).”

importance of their work in regards to the past and future of the Soviet Union, we can understand more fully the balance between professionalization of heritage management and growth of nationalist sentiment inside Russia. One of these trends would help to bring into positions of political power the creators of “New Thinking” and Gorbachev’s risky bid for a “common European home.” The other would lead to some of the most vocal oppositionist rhetoric of the 1980s and 90s.

Soviet historiography of the post-war era is source-rich in narratives of resurgent particularism. Especially in the period from 1966 onward towards the dissolution of the Union in 1991, signs of the times indicated a truly grassroots movement to reassert the primacy of “Russianness” including religious orthodoxy and tsarist heritage, especially in reactionary modes, acknowledging the strength of nationalist movements in many of the other Soviet republics, such as Georgia, or Latvia. In the ideological context of a marxist-leninist state-run society, where historical materialism dictated a progression of societal stages, Soviet theorists, planners and politicians had already closed the book on total “prometheanism” by 1966. It was no longer party policy to envision a communist “city on a hill” built completely anew. As stated explicitly by chief architect Mikhail Posokhin, “We should not take the [model communist city plan] to mean that Moscow will be rebuilt from the ground up. On the contrary, a communist upbringing (*vospitanie*) is one that relies heavily on the best cultural products of the people over the centuries.”<sup>103</sup> In practice this meant something very similar to the preservation model developed in the West, with the focus on urban context, street-level experience, historic districts and corridors, as well as a vigorous documentation and inductive research component.

It is worth noting that historic preservation appeals globally were initially always directed towards states. In most cases, only the state had the capabilities to carry out the massive

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<sup>103</sup> Posokhin, “Molodoi gorod Moskva.”

infrastructural projects that turned them into the “great destroyers” of historic fabric. The U.S. preservation establishment turned its eye fully towards private developers only in the Reagan era. The shifting of blame from the state to thoughtless private interests in Russia happened alongside the dissolution of the Soviet state in the 1990s.

Returning to the historical moment of the late 60s and 70s, while the importance of a growing assertion of “Russianness” on a societal scale was significant for rallying support of robust historic preservation institutions and legislation in the Soviet Union, the preservationists themselves were also very concerned with increasing professionalization and institutionalization of historic preservation as a scientific discipline. And while the text of the Venice charter was not fully published in the Soviet Union until the late 1970s, by the time that planners revealed the new General Plan for the city of Moscow in 1971, they had nearly fully integrated the principles of the charter into a system of protection of heritage that rivaled that of the West. So much so, that a report issued by the US Historic Preservation Team sent to the USSR in 1974 stated after summarizing Soviet preservation methodologies that, “Although these avenues of research are not yet a high priority area of interest for the US, the Soviet studies appear to provide valuable information, innovations, and guidelines for implementation.” The sources gathered for this project demonstrate with surprising clarity that Soviet preservationists and planners acted with an awareness of international developments in professional practice and promoted complex interpretations of the significance of historic architecture that would impress leading US preservationists, who would remark on: “the striking disparity between superior Soviet achievements in restoration of historic buildings and the problems with the quality of modern Soviet construction.”<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> US-USSR Joint Working Group on the Enhancement of the Urban Environment. US Historic Preservation Team, *A Report by the US Historic Preservation Team of the US-USSR Joint*

1972 was an important moment for historic preservation in the Soviet Union, as elsewhere. It marked the passing of a number of treaties, including the UNESCO Convention on World Heritage and the US-USSR Agreement on Environmental Protection. Posokhin's new General Plan for the city was issued in July 1971 and was expected to demonstrate successes in its first year as official policy. As Libson's studio employees used the language of Posokhin's Plan to save buildings in Moscow that were scheduled to be demolished in order to impress a foreign leader on his way to sign a battery of agreements that included provisions for the protection of historic urban fabric, one begins to see the contradictions and difficulties raised by a growing preservation movement. Posokhin is a central character here, overseeing the Institute for the Master Plan, and as the recipient of many of the pleas for preservation in the case of the two buildings on Kropotkinskaia. However, he is by no means the only significant character, actors from many different social spheres proved their agency over these issues. Soviet professionals and Soviet citizens left their mark on institutions and worked within the ideological

Moscow preservationists were struck by the paradoxes at the root of their work, frequently remarking on the contradictions of practice. To preserve a building, it was often necessary to destroy much of the facade, in order to unearth enough evidence to prove the building's antiquity. In the case of the two buildings on Kropotkinskaia, it was necessary to tear down one third of one of the buildings in order to return the structure to its period of historic importance. Preservationists also found themselves at loggerheads with some residents, whose interests did not always match their own. While hundreds of volunteers might show up on their one day off to help with the project, certain residents might do everything they could to impede

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*Working Group on the Enhancement of the Urban Environment, May 25-June 14, 1974.* On the problems of Soviet construction industries, see William Craft Brumfield and Blair A Ruble, *Russian Housing in the Modern Age: Design and Social History* (Washington, D.C.; Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

the work of the preservationists, locking doors and complaining to the authorities. These contradictions proved fertile soil for humor, as demonstrated in the popular satirical choir that formed within the Moscow Union of Architects, *Kokhinor i Reisshinka*.

By unearthing a significant amount of previously untouched primary material this paper helps to enrich the field of late Soviet historiography. Many diary entries, videos, sketches, photos, and drawings, especially regarding particular preservation battles of the late Soviet period, have been fastidiously added to the Internet in recent years by preservation activists in Russia. Family members of prominent preservationists have created online personal archives for men like Vladimir Libson, or preservationists Elena Trubetskaia and Dina Vasilevskaia. The *Kokhinor i Reisshinka* choir archive contains a wealth of primary material, virtually unreferenced in the English language scholarship. These windows into late Soviet life can, hopefully, balance out our understanding of the social experience of late Soviet life.

If we peel back the layers of analysis and look at the state of preservation practice in the Soviet Moscow between 1966-1974 we can see a complex network of social, political, and ideological factors animating architects and planners—and while some scholars and Soviet citizens have claimed that there were no “real communists” in the party by the late 60s, nevertheless, the debates surrounding planning took place within a historical materialist framework.<sup>105</sup> The debates also took place within a global framework, one where Soviet practice was admittedly on par with the West. Why then, has the issue of historic preservation institutions been relegated so frequently in the Western scholarship to a bit-role in narratives of emergent nationalism? My thesis reasserts the scientific and professional motivations of Soviet preservationists—cosmopolitan motivations, as demonstrated in their own words. Preservation

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<sup>105</sup> V. M. Zubok, *Zhivago's Children : The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009). Zubok attributes this quote to G. Arbatov a prominent advisor to Brezhnev and later Gorbachev.

practice in Moscow was meant to be an example, not only to the rest of Russia, but to all nations that practiced a centralized mode of socialist planning. With a confidence in this mission, the Soviet Union began to assert itself more vigorously in international forums for preservation. This does not invalidate the growing sense that what the Soviet Union had to offer on a global scale was best demonstrated in the particular achievements of the past, including a much richer pre-revolutionary past. Preservation in Brezhnev era Moscow followed an inversion of Stalin's famous model for the republics: "Socialist and Cosmopolitan in form, Nationalist in content." The contradictions between content and process in this setting, as in many Soviet institutions, would eventually set the table for the implosion of the party.<sup>106</sup> However, the preservation institutions, structurally and ideologically, maintain significant continuity across the 1991 divide. Historic preservation institutions have continued a vibrant existence in the Post-Soviet era, facing different challenges brought about by the introduction of global capitalism and private property. Many of the prominent actors in the contemporary Russian preservation scene cut their teeth in the Soviet milieu of the Posokhin era.

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<sup>106</sup> Stephen Kotkin, *Uncivil Society: 1989 and the Implosion of the Communist Establishment*, Modern Library ed., 1st ed., Modern Library Chronicles ; 32 (New York: Modern Library, 2009). Kotkin and Gross' book looks at this phenomenon in Eastern Europe's communist parties in the late 80s.

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