Post-Communist Moscow: Re-Building the “Third Rome” in the Country of Missed Opportunities?

In memory of Galina Starovoitova

DESPITE THE RECENT demise of the Soviet Union, democracy is increasingly less evident in the views and actions of Russia’s political elite. This is quite evident in Moscow’s construction of new public monuments to glorify historical figures or in the rebuilding of monumental Church buildings destroyed during the Soviet era. Aside from the enormous cost of such building programs at a time of a widening social gulf between the have and the have-nots, these buildings and monuments are conspicuous by their ugliness and their remarkable ability to ignore the historical models which some of them are supposed to replicate. The lack of attention to public opinion and the small circle of official public artists and architects reveals both the corruption rampant in Russian society and the profoundly anti-democratic tendencies that now predominate. [Moscow, public art, politics, collective memory, contested history]

As Michael Wise notes, “like stories written in stone, capitals across the globe embody national identity and historical consciousness” (1998:11). Although Peter the Great had moved the Russian capital to the city on the Neva, a certain bicentrisim existed in pre-Revolutionary Russia. Some people preferred St. Petersburg, others—Moscow. Petersburg had the reputation of a cold, standoffish, bureaucratic,
but refined and European city. Moscow was considered warm, hospitable, generous, disorderly, but genuinely Russian. The government and court may have been located in St. Petersburg, but Moscow still retained status as the second capital, the city where the tsars were crowned.

In Soviet times this situation changed drastically. In 1918, the capital was moved back to Moscow, and Petersburg (at the time known as Petrograd), was renamed Leningrad in 1924. Never a favorite of the Soviet authorities, the city was gradually relegated to the position of a regional center. As a result of Soviet super-centralization, Moscow became not only the political, but also the unquestioned intellectual, scientific, and cultural center of the country. In the provinces the capital was not loved. Most felt that Moscow and its residents were growing fat on the country's labor. Nevertheless, those with political, creative, or other ambitions aspired to settle in Moscow, although for this they needed to overcome many obstacles, including the difficulty of obtaining residence permits. The cry of the soul of a character in Chekhov's play *Three Sisters:* "To Moscow, to Moscow," could with much more reason embody the situation that existed in the Soviet period.

Despite the growth in political influence of the regions, the exclusive position of Moscow remains in Russia today. True, in 1997, Yeltsin declared St. Petersburg the "cultural capital of Russia," but this was mere lip service. Nothing concrete followed, and as he often does, the president has already long forgotten his own words. Now, as in the Soviet period, Moscow is not loved in Russia. Instead the city is envied and accused of egoism and selfishness, yet is still a desired place to reside. Not by accident, a considerable number of deputies of the State Duma (parliament) from the provinces have permanently settled in the capital, doing so by hook or by crook.

A Normal City?

In many respects, Moscow is becoming a normal city, filled with forms of life and social activity that were previously invisible or forbidden. The market economy has brought new types of buildings, such as commercial banks and offices, luxury hotels, restaurants, shopping malls, vending stalls, boutiques, casinos, private clubs, etc. Street artists, just like those in Paris and London, have appeared throughout the city, each one eager to paint a passerby's portrait. Thanks to the importation of consumer goods, durables, and foodstuffs, Muscovites have gained access to commodities, which were previously in short supply. Vendors in private shops and stores are urgently trying to learn proper retail etiquette, and they sometimes even crack a smile when helping customers. Hotel personnel are gradually getting used to the idea that their job is to cater to their patrons, rather than keeping vigil over their guests' moral behavior or political sympathies.
Western goods and standards of service are introducing Muscovites to a quite different and much more comfortable lifestyle. They are quickly learning that in addition to the telegraph, there exist the previously unknown fax and e-mail technologies. Aside from ordinary telephones there are cellular phones and pagers. It is possible to change from one television program to another without leaving one's chair. For consumers' convenience, bread can be sold wrapped in cellophane. Coca-Cola bottles are manufactured with twist-off caps, eliminating the need for openers (typically never around when needed). Tableware can be conveniently and comfortably washed not by hand but with a special sponge. There exist VCRs, microwave ovens, and credit cards. All of these were previously unknown to Muscovites, except for glimpses in Western films occasionally shown in the Soviet Union. And nowadays, a growing number of Muscovites have begun to hanker for yogurt for breakfast, a foodstuff that they had never heard of in Soviet times.

In direct correspondence with the famous Marxist postulate, that being determines consciousness, all of these innovations are changing not only the everyday lifestyle of urban dwellers, but also their perception of normal life and of what is essential for it. Not all who vote for the communists wish to return to the paradise of real existing socialism, with its lower quality goods and services and their constant shortages. Incidentally, the very word "service" came into widespread usage only in post-Soviet times and is now replacing the analogous Russian word obsluzhivanie. Servis is associated with good quality and positive feelings, while obsluzhivanie connotes the negative, because in Soviet times service was almost always extremely bad (Sikevich 1996:105). At the same time, Muscovites are becoming more experienced and discriminating consumers. They have come to understand that garish labels by no means guarantee high-quality goods.

Eating at cafes and restaurants is no longer a problem. While in the 1980s there were only 300 restaurants in the city, by 1997 their number had increased to 1200 (Itogi, 4 November 1997:36), and by the beginning of 1998 to more than 1500 (Den'gi, 28 January 1998:38). Although the mayor of Moscow has complained that this was still ten times less than in major European cities, remarkable progress is evident. Moreover, (in contrast to the past) waiters now rejoice each time that customers sit at their table. Not so long ago it was practically impossible to find a place where one could get an inexpensive snack. To satisfy this demand, the idea of fast food was imported from the West. McDonald's came first, and created quite a stir as a symbol of Western standards of service and of Western way of life. Pizza Hut, Steak House, Baskin Robbins, and others followed suit. In addition, vendors selling hot food and beverages also appeared on Moscow's streets. Signboards advertising hot dogs, often accompanied by the Russian goriachie sosiski (hot sausages) as explanation, became quite common.

This rapid Western expansion into services that had previously not existed in Moscow provoked a desire for something decidedly Russian. Thus, another fast food chain appeared called Russkoe Bistro (Russian Bistro), and
aimed at competing with McDonald’s and similar cheap restaurants by offering fast food Russian cuisine. The first outlet of the new chain was solemnly opened by Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov, and President Yeltsin was one of the first patrons. Ironically, the word bistro is of French origin, but this was disputed on curious grounds. Allegedly, the Russian Cossacks who came to Paris after their victorious campaign against Napoleon were always in a hurry when they demanded food service, often saying bystro, bystro (quickly, quickly), thus giving a name to the idea of the small snack bar, or bistro. The service at Russkoe Bistro is still far below that of McDonald’s and other comparable fast food chains, and individual food items, as listed on the basic menu, are in fact not always available. As the general director of Russkoe Bistro has admitted, it is only “ceasing to be Soviet” (Obshchaia gazeta, 27 November–3 December 1997:14). Every Russkoe Bistro sells vodka, however.

Most potholes on Moscow’s streets have disappeared, while traffic jams have become as commonplace as in New York or Paris. Every year the number of cars in Moscow increases by about three hundred thousand (Nezavisimaia gazeta, 31 October 1997). The total has already reached two million; in addition, about two hundred thousand more bring daily visitors to the city (Simptom, n.8, [44] 1996:15). However, pedestrians and drivers have yet to learn to respect one another, and the former do not have the right of way. Besides, Moscow is ill prepared to accommodate the increase in traffic, and the huge rise in the number of cars has not only resulted in traffic jams, but also in growing pollution. Moscow after dark has become a city full of bright streetlights, marquees, and bustling nightlife. Russian-language editions of Playboy, Penthouse, and Vogue fill newspaper kiosks. Even more serious publications, such as the New York Times, the International Herald Tribune, and Le Monde have become available. However, another prominent
feature of Moscow's life is insecurity connected with widespread gangsterism and violent crime.

From 1995 through the first half of 1998, the level of inflation in Russia lessened considerably. Nevertheless, Muscovites still trust the dollar much more than the ruble, and as the 1998 financial crisis has proven, not without good reason. Among the most frequent signs seen on the streets of the city today is *Obmen valiuty*, often accompanied by the English equivalent, *Currency Exchange*. Advertisements for consumer goods have partly taken the place of advertisements for ideas and, as in the West, they present the world as one large shop window packed with consumer items. Moreover, ads for cigarettes, hard liquor, and Coca-Cola are encountered on Moscow's streets more often than on the streets of any Western city. Winston cigarettes are advertised as "the ultimate freedom" and L&M as "the rendezvous with America." A neon billboard, measuring about two-hundred square meters, advertises Coca-Cola on Novyi Arbat Avenue. It is even larger than similar billboards in New York's Times Square and London's Piccadilly Circus (*Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 21 November 1997). These achievements of modern Western civilization have preceded other Western traditions, such as respect for the law and the timely payment of wages, in coming to the Russian capital.

The craving of Muscovites for Western lifestyles is reflected in advertisements. Strictly speaking, advertisements as Westerners understand them have existed in Moscow for about the past ten years. Only after the failure of the August 1991 putsch did the ever-present masterpieces of Soviet *agitprop* (agitation and propaganda), such as "The Party is our helmsman," "The people and the Party are one," or the especially absurd "Lenin is more alive than any living person," disappear from city streets and buildings. In Soviet times, a huge slogan on one of the buildings on Mayakovksy Square proclaimed: "Glory to the Great Soviet People—A Builder of Communism!" Nowadays, the slogan has been replaced by an advertisement that contains just one word: "Philips." But Soviet advertisements were pure agitation and propaganda, even when they advertised goods and services. These types of Soviet advertisements, such as "Fly Aeroflot," in essence substantiated the lack of choice, because in the USSR Aeroflot was a monopoly, and it was impossible for ordinary Soviet citizens to fly on Western airlines. Western advertisements, apart from their direct goals, acquired some other functions in Moscow. They demonstrate the possibility of choice in goods and services, and at the same time tempt Muscovites to embrace consumer society. It has become fashionable, for example, to use English words. The writing varies: some in Latin characters, others in Cyrillic (often accompanied by an incorrect transliteration); some with two variations at once. This occasionally has a humorous effect. A few years ago, along the respectable Kutuzovsky Prospect (Avenue), where I once lived, I noticed a new, modest cafe under a strange name: *Drim*—a word written in Cyrillic, but which does not exist in the Russian language. No one in the cafe, even among the wait staff, knew
what this word meant; and it took some time for me to realize that Drim was in fact a Russian transliteration of the English word, “Dream.”

Purists and many in the power elite of Moscow have long protested the preponderance of foreign words in advertising, but still without real success, because the appearance of these words was far from accidental. On the one hand, this is connected with the necessity to define new Western realities; on the other, to the desire to display in advertisements an aura of the Western way of life. Thus, on the streets of Moscow appeared English words such as “SHOP” often written in Cyrillic, as an analog for the Russian MAGAZIN. In the naming of stores, which in the eyes of their owners (though often not in practice) correspond to Western standards, the English words “supermarket” and “minimarket” are seen more and more often, as well as new, compound hybrid words, in which one part is Russian and the other the English word “super” or “market.” Since dress is still an important status mark in Russia, the French boutique has also come into fashion and represents a salon, in which expensive clothes, shoes, etc. are sold. The reaction to “Western dominance” in advertising is noticeable in the attempted return to pre-Revolutionary names, almost forgotten during Soviet times: lavka (a small shop), traktir (in the past, a cheap restaurant, a snack bar where hard liquor was sold, but today often a respectable restaurant serving Russian cuisine), trapeznaia (in the past a refectory, nowadays a cafe), and others.

New Rich, New Middle Class, New Poor, and Others

Russia is still in transition, and nowhere is this more evident than in its capital, despite the fact that in a way Moscow is even less Russia than New York is the United States, or Paris is France. Even the Moscow authorities admit that “Russia is not Moscow yet.” The job market situation in Moscow is much better than in the rest of Russia and in many of the countries of the CIS. By April 1997, only 48,387 city dwellers were registered as unemployed. One should take into account, however, that official Russian statistics significantly underestimate the unemployment figures. According to some estimates, even in 1997, the true number of the unemployed in Moscow was close to seven percent of all able-bodied people (Simptom, n.11, [59] 1997:8–9). Also, every fifth employee in Moscow lives in the environs or in towns of the Moscow oblast’ (administrative region) (Pul’s, n.36, [120] 1996:12). Every day about five-hundred thousand of these people commute to the capital (Simptom, n.1, [49] 1997:67). But, if and when they lose their jobs, they are registered as unemployed not in Moscow, but in their place of permanent residency (L’vov 1997:144). Still, so far Moscow has avoided the perils of high unemployment, and many workers from Ukraine, Moldova, and even from some regions of Russia come to Moscow
eager to take, sometimes illegally, the available jobs, especially in construction, that Muscovites do not want.

Moscow is much wealthier than the rest of Russia. Contrary to what occurs in many other regions of the country, until August 1998 pensions and wages to budget-dependent groups were usually paid without delay in the city. The provision of budgetary resources per Muscovite is three times higher than for any Russian citizen living outside the capital (Bernstein, 1997:2). Large state investments in, and deposits to, Moscow’s financial and credit institutions contributed to the rapid formation of this new sector in the city’s economy. In the early period of market reforms, the State Central Bank provided low-interest loans to Moscow banks, giving them access to cheap credit. High inflation rates in the initial years of reform were propitious to their activities. Capital was accumulated easily and quickly by a privileged few. It is no wonder that Moscow’s tax base constitutes about twenty to twenty-five percent of the state’s total revenue, even though the city accounts for only six percent of the country’s population. Although Moscow’s GNP represents 13.1 percent of the country’s total (Nezavisimaia gazeta-regiony, [1] October 1997:2), about eighty percent of Russia’s financial capital and the lion’s share of foreign investments are concentrated there (Moskovskie novosti, 14–21 December 1997:18). Thus, of the 6.7 billion dollars in foreign investments in Russia during the first half of 1997, 5.5 billion dollars (eighty-three percent) was invested in Moscow. In addition, most of the Russian monopolies and corporations have their headquarters in the capital, and pay municipal and other taxes there.

However, while Moscow is the most affluent city in Russia, it is also the most expensive. By the beginning of 1998 it actually became one of the most costly cities in the world. While in 1997, the price of office space in New York City was about sixty dollars per square meter, in Moscow the cost was around a hundred dollars or more. In this respect, Moscow was second only to London. At the beginning of 1998, a modest dinner for two at an inexpensive restaurant cost at least sixty to seventy dollars. No wonder less than one percent of Muscovites eat at restaurants regularly (Itogi, 4 November 1997:8). A taxi ride from Sheremet’evo airport to downtown, a distance of about seventeen miles, cost seventy dollars. Although by 1998 the official average monthly income per person in Moscow ($250) was more than twice the average of the rest of the country, the subsistence minimum in the capital was also more than twice as high (Simptom, n.5, [41] 1996:48; Pul’s, n.36, [120] 1996:25; Trud, 5–11 September 1997; Moskovskii komsomolets, 18 September 1997; Nezavisimaia gazeta, 22 October 1997).

Income differentiation in contemporary Moscow, just as social variety, is much greater than in the Soviet period and continues to grow. In 1992, the incomes of people in the top ten percent of earnings were 7.3 times higher than those in the lowest ten percent; in 1993 the difference was 13.3 times; in 1994 it was 28.3 times; in 1995, 31.6 times, and in 1996, 45 times. In the rest of Russia, the average difference was 10.5 times in 1995, and 13 times in 1996 (Pul’s, n.36, [120] 1996:5; Simptom, n.5, [41] 1996:49; L’vov,
In 1996–97, official publications of the city government estimated that two to three percent of Muscovites could be characterized as very wealthy, while an additional ten to twelve percent were considered highly wealthy. Fifteen to eighteen percent of Muscovites were considered middle class in terms of income, while fifty-five to sixty percent were poor, with the remaining population (eighteen to twenty percent) living below the poverty line (Pul's, n.36, [120] 1996:6–7; Simptom, n.11, [59] 1997:42).

The so-called New Russians consist of the emerging class of businessmen, bankers, and executives, the corrupt officials whose lifestyles do not correspond to their reported incomes, and the mafiosi. They keep their money in Swiss and British bank accounts, and are acquiring villas on the Cote d’Azur and in Spain or Switzerland, or in London’s Belgravia district, and send their children to Western private schools and universities. In addition, there are those who benefited from the shift of the Moscow economy from reliance on industry and manufacturing to banking, services, and information. Scores, perhaps even hundreds of thousands of people who found employment in financial institutions and other private companies, real estate, advertising, mass media, and the press, or who managed to open small businesses, began to enjoy high living standards, especially in comparison to the average Muscovite. They opened bank accounts, acquired credit cards, and spend their vacations in Turkey, Cyprus, or even in West European countries. These people constitute a new middle and upper-middle class. Usually they are young, in the twenty-five to forty year old age group, with specific attitudes and life-styles, which make them quite different from the old middle class. Moscow’s yuppies prefer spending over saving and investment, partly because economic and political instability do not encourage the latter. They are used to fast money and conspicuous consumption, and spend as if there were no tomorrow. Many of them are not over scrupulous in achieving their goals, and demonstrate a certain social insensitivity. More than one of these people tried to persuade me that those who failed to adjust to the new conditions should blame no one but themselves. A former director general of one of the Russian TV programs, Ksenia Ponomareva, publicly boasted that every Sunday when she gave her children about $170 as pocket money, she told them that it was more than their schoolteachers earned in an entire month (Milovzorova 1998:11). Another characteristic of the new middle class is their remarkable indifference to politics. Sixty percent of the city’s young people with higher education did not vote in the December 1995 parliamentary election (Moscow News, 17–23 September 1998:3).

Still, all of these people constitute but a minority of Moscow’s nine million inhabitants. They live side-by-side with about 2,200,000 elderly pensioners (Simptom, n.9, [57] 1997:18), who spend their declining years in financially trying circumstances. In 1995, the average pension of a retired person amounted to a mere forty-five percent of the subsistence minimum (L’vov 1997:102). In addition, there are many hundreds of thousands of disabled persons in Moscow; about two-hundred thousand of whom are still able to work, but only forty thousand of whom managed to find jobs
The lifestyle of well-to-do Muscovites also contrasts with that of the millions of employees in those sectors of the economy which were adversely affected by reforms, namely, in the military-industrial complex—about twenty-five percent of Moscow’s industry (L’vov 1997:118)—in machine building, metal working, and the automotive industry, as well as in public health, education, and the sciences. Industrial enterprises in the city are now producing less than half what they produced in their heyday (Trud, 5–11 September 1997). In the Soviet period, the notion of community was more associated with where people worked rather than where they lived. Industrial and other enterprises served as additional social-welfare agencies which provided their employees with housing, health care, sporting facilities, recreation, nurseries and kindergartens, even with deficit foodstuffs, goods, and services (Andrusz 1996:64). At present, their role as paternalistic social providers is rapidly diminishing.

Moscow is saturated with colleges, universities, and research institutions. Eighty-four universities and other institutions of higher education (fifteen percent of Russia’s total), with about 477,000 students and about eighty-thousand faculty are located in the capital. In addition, by 1996, about 240,000 people were employed in various research institutions. Although from 1991 to 1995, the number of scholars, scientists, researchers, and their staffs decreased by fifty-three percent, they still constitute more than thirteen percent of Moscow’s labor force, while in Russia this sector makes up, on the whole, three percent (L’vov 1997:118–119). Almost all of Moscow’s universities and research institutions are now facing formidable financial difficulties, and many of them are barely getting by. Their personnel were accustomed to what in Soviet times amounted to middle and upper-middle class incomes, while in 1996, their average wages amounted to only sixty-three percent of the city’s average (L’vov 1997:119). Nowadays many of these people live slightly above or near the poverty line and are characterized as the “new poor” (Simptom, n.5 [41] 1996:52).

In January 1998, Professor Alexei Komech, Director of the Institute of Arts Studies and a highly respected art historian and critic, told me that his salary was 1,200 rubles (about $200) a month, while his daughter, a minor clerk in one of Moscow’s hotels, earned 1,300 rubles. Another prominent Russian scholar explained to me the mood of people like himself: “In Soviet times, we lived like in a prison, but at least the state provided us with bedding. Then, the doors of our prison were opened, but on the sly somebody stole our bedding.” Actually, this man belongs to the Russian scientific establishment and is doing rather well. However, in the Soviet period, in terms of income he belonged to the upper-middle class, and now his income cannot match that of the new middle class. Still, the real income of many of those considered to be among Moscow’s “new poor” is actually higher than is shown by official statistics, due to the widespread practices of tax evasion and employment in the “shadow economy.” Many people take second jobs and/or find additional sources of income. Thus, almost fifteen percent of
Muscovites rent out their apartments and in turn rent smaller ones in more remote districts, in this way increasing their family income by several hundred dollars or more per month (Nezavisimaia gazeta—krug zhizni, [10] September 1998:5). This became possible because there are one or two million non-residents temporarily living in Moscow today. Generally, these people are well to do, but not so rich that they can live for long periods in the very expensive and generally poor-quality Moscow hotels. Thus, deprivation sometimes is not absolute, but rather relative. Many people are disappointed because, in their opinion, their social and professional status do not always correspond to their income and they have to seek out additional means of support.

Moscow’s nouveaux riches have to share the city not only with the new poor, but also with the new and numerous underclass: the beggars, the homeless, tramps, and more than twenty-thousand prostitutes (at least several thousand of whom are aged eleven to fourteen years, or younger), who charge anywhere between a hundred dollars to several thousand dollars for their services—rates higher than anywhere else in post-communist Europe (Komsomol’skaia pravda, 26 March 1997). Homeless, vagrants, and beggars also existed in the Soviet period, but at that time they were dealt with in typically totalitarian fashion. Tuneiadstvo (idleness, habitual avoidance of work) and living anywhere without a propiska (a residence permit issued by the police) were considered criminal offenses in the Soviet Union (articles 198 and 209 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR). Vagrants were simply sent to prisons and forced-labor camps. In addition, the state took away prisoners’ lodgings in state-owned apartment houses. Moscow had a special law: Those released from imprisonment were forbidden to settle closer than one hundred kilometers from the capital. In the post-Soviet era tuneiadstvo and vagrancy ceased to be criminal transgressions, but the dwellings of those imprisoned are still seized by the state or municipal authorities. It is true, that in 1995, the Constitutional Court decreed that an individual, once free from imprisonment, could petition the court for municipal lodging. In practice, however, this procedure is very complicated, and the unwillingness of the Moscow authorities to provide former prisoners with housing is so great, that in the last two years only 104 people have availed themselves of this right (Nezavisimaia gazeta—krug zhizni, [9] July 1998:3).

In Moscow, the homeless at present number in the tens of thousands. Among them are many former prisoners (around a third of the total), alcoholics, and people who have chosen a vagrant lifestyle. The majority, however, consists of people who lost their dwellings as a result of family conflicts or the fraudulent real estate deals that became widespread after Russian citizens gained the right to privatize state or municipally-owned apartments. Among the homeless are many disabled, elderly, and orphans. Only about one quarter of all vagrants have lived previously in Moscow or in the districts near the capital. Fifty-five percent of the vagrants came to Moscow from other regions of Russia, while twenty percent came there from other CIS countries. The relative prosperity of Moscow attracts not only the upwardly mobile, but also those who have sunk to the bottom. The homeless
are a public eyesore to the Moscow authorities, who do all that is possible to get rid of these "asocial people." Vagrants and beggars arrested on the streets of the capital may be detained for thirty days without a warrant (*Moskovskii komsomolets*, 16 October 1997). In the first six months of 1998 over forty-one thousand people were detained in Moscow on suspicion of vagrancy and begging. Of these, the police sent three thousand for medical treatment and more than eight thousand were forced to leave the city. In the same period, 935,000 people were fined for violations of residence rules, although these rules are unconstitutional. At the time of the city's 850th anniversary celebration, the homeless were simply evicted from the city because, in the official explanation of the Moscow authorities, "their untidy appearance makes an unfavorable impression on the residents and guests of the capital" (Gessen 1998:60). In the same way Soviet authorities evicted all "asocial elements" from Moscow at the time of the 1980 Olympic Games. The only difference is that, in Soviet times, "asocial elements" consisted mainly of dissidents (I remember this very well, because I myself was evicted from Moscow in 1980). Despite all the efforts of the Moscow authorities, the number of homeless and vagrants is not decreasing. Thus, the municipality had to open common lodgings (doss houses) in the city, but they are too few, too expensive, and are located only in the most outlying districts, while the homeless are drifting downtown where they can more easily procure subsistence. At the same time, Moscow police and even several clergy are hindering private charitable organizations from rendering medical aid to them (*Itogi*, 13 July 1998:4).

In addition, there are many refugees and voluntary or involuntary migrants in Moscow, mainly from the southern regions of the Russian Federation, especially from Chechnia, or from other CIS countries, such as Azerbaidjan, Georgia, Armenia, and Tadjikistan. According to official statistics, these people number only fifteen thousand, but more reliable sources place their number at a hundred thousand or more. (*Pul's*, n.36, [120] 1996:9; *Simptom* n.1, [49] 1997:67). Even members of the Russian government admit that these people are persecuted by the Moscow authorities, who want them to leave the city, and are harassed by the police as easy prey for extortion (*Moskovskie novosti*, 12–19 April 1998:11). The rule of the Constitutional Court which made a propiska system invalid is practically ignored in the capital. According to experts, there are also over a hundred thousand illegal emigrants from Southeast Asian countries alone (China, Laos, Vietnam) living in the Moscow region. Without residence permits they cannot get a real job, so these people's sources of income are often of a criminal nature—working for ethnic mafia clans or drug dealing (*Moscow News*, 1–7 October, 1998:7).

Ordinary Muscovites also do not harbor kind feelings for the refugees, migrants, and visitors from the South. More than fifty-seven percent of them are of the opinion that the migrants negatively affect the labor market, and more than seventy percent claim that the migrants are to a large extent responsible for the shortage of affordable apartments. More than seventy-
seven percent are sure that most of the migrants are involved in criminal activities (L’vov 1997:155). Those who want to rent out their apartments often do so with the following proviso: “People from the Caucasus and Asians are not welcome.” None of these groups, new rich, new poor, the underclass, and the migrants, intermingle; each lives its own life and is more spatially segregated than in the Soviet period.

Moscow’s Different Faces

Moscow also boasts the highest degree of political activity in Russia. Democrats, liberals and Westernizers, populists, Slavophiles and monarchists, communists and neo-fascists—all of them have their own vision of Russia’s past, present, and future, and each is trying to implant their vision on Moscow’s landscape. In Russia, the future always begins with rewriting and restructuring the past. Thus, Moscow has become the battlefield on which different political forces and social groups produce, modify, and appropriate competing national representations. Historical facts, myths, and symbols are invented or reinterpreted, and monuments and public spaces are destroyed, erected, and reconstructed in an attempt to shape the country’s collective memory and to demarcate new sites of power. So far, post-communist Moscow has failed to come to any symbolic, cultural, or stylistic unity. All over the city, the original, pre-revolutionary names of streets and squares have been restored. The names of many communist dignitaries, like Dzerzhinsky, Kirov, Sverdlov, Zhdanov, or Kalinin, and even of Karl Marx, have been removed from the city’s downtown landscape. Sometimes, even the cultural icons were not spared. Thus, Pushkinskaia ulitsa (Pushkin Street) became once again Bol’shaia Dmitrovka. However, like everything else, the names’ replacement is incomplete and inconsistent. There are still Leninsky Prospect, Revolution Square, and October Square in Moscow, and at the same time, Sakharov’s name is given to one avenue, in a vain attempt by the authorities to appropriate a hero of democratic Russia.

Nowadays, Moscow is a city of imitation, fakes, and bad-taste eclecticism. The symbolic boundaries are not unambiguous; they are still contested and sometimes even blurred. At the street level, this is apparent in the numerous two-sided posters which show a picture of an Orthodox church accompanied by the words “The heart of Russia” on one side, and an advertisement for Marlboro cigarettes or imported hard liquor on the other. At a higher level, this is evident in the old-new state symbol, the double-headed imperial eagle, which, after more than sixty years, is once again brazenly displayed on the roof of the State Historical Museum located at the entrance to Red Square, while Lenin’s mummy still rests in his mausoleum and the red stars still crown the steeples of the Kremlin towers. The double-headed eagle was borrowed from Byzantium in the fifteenth century and
symbolically anointed Moscow as the Third Rome. Nevertheless, it is actively exploited today by Yeltsin’s leadership and, ironically, is bitterly opposed by the same communists who are longing for the restoration of the Russian Empire. It is also uncomfortably perceived by many non-Russians in the city and the country. As one Russian expert on ethnic relations observed, when it comes to the invention of new civic symbolism not associated exclusively with hegemonic ethno-cultural tradition, the record of Yeltsin’s government is quite poor (Tishkov 1997:266). For a short time, Belyi Dom (the White House), in August 1991, the seat of the Russian Parliament and the center of resistance for the putschists, had a good chance to become one such symbol. However, after the events of October 1993, the building has been occupied by executive bureaucrats and lost its democratic appeal.

The political opposition is faring no better. The ideological collapse of communism in Russia simultaneously resulted in the end of totalitarian symbolism. In fact, the latter did not disappear completely, but became discrete. The sacred places and memorials of the Bolshevik Revolution and the monuments to the communist rulers and luminaries have lost a significant part of their charisma. In the Soviet period, they served as shrines of compulsory national adulation; nowadays they retain a positive symbolic meaning only to the communists and their supporters. The Lenin Mausoleum, in the Soviet period an officially-sanctioned shrine and a symbol of shared ideology which bordered on religion, nowadays remains a place of pilgrimage and a focus of political identity for only a minority. To the rest it has become just an architectural monument or tourist attraction, not much different from Madame Tussaud’s museums. To satisfy the need for additional symbols, the opposition, instead of attempting to create new ones, is trying to appropriate the symbols that it totally negated in the recent past. This is most apparent in their meetings and demonstrations, during which portraits of Stalin, who almost destroyed the Orthodox Church, peacefully coexist with icons. Likewise, protesters carry red banners of the Soviet Union alongside the yellow-black-white tricolors of the Romanov dynasty, while Revolution Square and the nearby steps of the former Lenin Museum, without showing any hint of the paradox that surrounds this contradictory and oxymoronic display, have become the favorite places for selling extreme nationalist and fascist publications!

No wonder contemporary Moscow has several different faces. The official face of Moscow as Russia’s capital is presented in the palace style of the Yeltsin leadership, with its exorbitant splendor that seems inappropriate for a poor country and a regime which claims to be democratic. The indispensable attributes of this style are ceremonial arrivals and departures; feverish construction of expensive presidential residences in the country, in which he relaxes at best for several weeks a year and not infrequently uses only once; sumptuous banquets, aristocratic hunting and fishing trips; palace orchestras and chamber concerts, numerous courtiers; and in politics—palace
intrigues and an appointment system based mainly on personal devotion to Yeltsin.

What suited the tsars and general秘密aries seems ill fitting for a supposedly democratic president, who incidentally enjoys being called a tsar by his aides and cronies. In May 1993, Yeltsin personally approved the reconstruction of the former Senate building in the Kremlin into his own official residence. Special government officials were dispatched abroad to familiarize themselves with the residences of foreign heads of state in Europe and the United States and came to the conclusion that the official residence of Russia’s president should be far grander than any of these. The size of the Oval Office in Yeltsin’s new residence, with an area of more than 150 square meters and a fifteen meter-high ceiling, was designed explicitly to dwarf its Washington, DC counterpart. (Komsomol’skaia pravda, supplement “V Moskve,” 14 May 1997). Despite the budgetary crisis, the work on the residence occupied four thousand people and forty firms, including a number of foreign ones. It proceeded at a feverish pace, and resulted in the serious mutilation of an architectural monument. The business manager of the president’s staff, Pavel Borodin, claimed that the cost of reconstruction was 180 million dollars, however, a confidential report of the Deputy Minister of Finances of the Russian Federation which was leaked to the press estimated its cost at more than 280 million dollars. This is more than one-half of the total funds allocated in 1997 for the Russian Ministry of Culture (Obshchaia gazeta, 15–21 May 1997:8) After this project, the authorities began the restoration and decoration of the interior of other Kremlin palaces. The state budget generously provides for the Byzantine ideas of the ruling elite about state aesthetics, which consists of the use, as much as possible, of bronze and malachite, brocades, satin, statues, and heraldic eagles (Dragunsky 1998:61). In their striving for ostentatious luxury, other statesmen of the new Russia aspire to imitate the president. In the late perestroika period, Yeltsin publicly criticized the much-resented Soviet practice that any more or less prominent position in the Communist Party hierarchy, the government, and administration was connected with many perks, like the right to have a country cottage and a prestigious car with a driver at state expense. This stand certainly contributed to his popularity. However, in the post-Soviet period the old practice has been revived and even extended with the full consent of the Russian president.

Another facet of Moscow is best expressed by the old-new slogan: enrichissez-vous. This is the motley Moscow of conspicuous consumption. The number of fancy shops far exceeds demand, because they often duplicate each other, and no more than five or six percent of Muscovites can afford purchases there in any case (Lokotova 1998:58). This is the Moscow of prestigious foreign cars, with chauffeurs and bodyguards. The number of expensive automobiles in Moscow exceeds the total in many Western capitals. This is the Moscow of renovated and newly-constructed office buildings, private clubs, and expensive condos. Numerous new and glossy magazines (Profil’, Den’gi, Domovoi, Mir i Dom, and others) are filled with advertisements for deluxe apartments in the so-called “elite houses” where
one square meter of dwelling space costs more than two-thousand dollars. They also advertise the services of design firms that promise to remodel and furnish apartments in any style, from German to Japanese. Since anti-Americanism has again become fashionable in Russia, these firms are especially recommending the evroremont (remodeling in the European style), which together with furnishings may cost up to $120,000 for even a one-room apartment (seventy square meters) in an elite house (Roshek 1998:55).

In downtown Moscow, the social space of ordinary people is effectively shrinking. Islands of new urban landscape are emerging in the capital. They are designated for the rich and powerful and reflect their aesthetic predilections and notions about up-scale life, but they often seem quite artificial. In the recent past, Stoleshnikov Lane was one of the liveliest and most popular places in the center of Moscow, frequently visited by people of different social strata. After its reconstruction, which has turned the lane into an exclusive place of expensive shops, it became desolate. Since idle “window shopping” is still not characteristic of Muscovites, there is virtually nothing to do there for anyone who is not planning to spend at least a few hundred dollars. The wealthy also do not frequent the lane because it is designated for pedestrians, and it is very difficult to find a parking place on nearby streets. If the aim was the reanimation of street life through its pedestrianization, the city planners have achieved the opposite.
Another new phenomenon for the city is its nascent suburbanization. Contrary to the United States, neighborhoods on Moscow’s outskirts were not highly desirable due to the underdeveloped infrastructure, poor quality of housing, and a lack of shopping and recreation facilities. In the Soviet period, the suburban areas surrounding the capital were generally reserved for the working class and the underprivileged. Those who could do so, preferred to settle in the city. Middle- and upper-class Muscovites, especially those with young children, liked to move to the countryside in the vicinity of Moscow, where they owned or rented dachi (wooden summer houses), only for the short summer months. In Russia, the building of cottages was permitted in July 1992, after a special presidential decree. In suburban Moscow they are often built in well-guarded clusters. Now, one can witness the birth of another suburban Moscow, where single-family brick and stone houses and mansions cost from several-hundred thousand to several million dollars. Articles in magazines that advertise real estate urge their readers not to spare money if they want to build a country house: “For good money you will be taken care of in the best way; for less money you will also be taken care of, but something will be disregarded; for little money you will simply be cheated.” (Sukhova 1998:15). Twenty to thirty thousand such houses have already been built in the most scenic locations (Moskovskie novosti, 14–21 December 1997:8). Not infrequently, their construction is in blatant violation of Russian legislation which forbids construction of villas in the vicinity of reservoirs that supply the capital with drinking water (Moskovskie novosti, 26 October–2 November 1997:12). However, connections and bribes are stronger than regulations. An example had already been set by members of the political class. Bankers, pop stars, and mafiosi followed suit (Komsomol’skaia pravda, 2 January 1998:6).

Still another face of Moscow is shaded in gray hues. It represents the grim communist past and the hardships of the transition period. This is the Moscow of wholesale markets where the numerous poor, who cannot afford to shop at retail stores, find the majority of their foodstuffs and consumer goods. This is the Moscow of elderly women trying desperately to supplement their meager income by petty trade on the streets, all the while intimidated by police who extort bribes from them, and at the same time turn a blind eye to the activities of real criminals. This is the Moscow of crowded communal flats occupied by several individual families, who have to share the same entrance, kitchen, bathroom, and toilet. 318,000 people still have to live in these flats (Grueva 1998:62). This is the Moscow of deteriorating four- to ten- or more story apartment buildings built from prefabricated cement slabs, depressing in their monotony. The housing shortage is still an acute problem. One-fifth of Moscow’s apartment houses consist of khrushcheby, five-story houses of very low quality construction, whose building was initiated under Khrushchev (they are ironically called khrushcheby by Muscovites because this word sounds similar to the Russian word trushcheby, or slums). Their construction contributed to the tedious standardization of the city’s outlying districts, where many streets and even whole neighborhoods are identical in appearance.
In principle, families with modest means are entitled to low-rent public housing. But only those who have less than a minimum dwelling space (five square meters per person) are eligible for better housing. Still, by 1996, 346,600 families in Moscow were on waiting lists, and fourteen percent of them had been waiting for ten years or more (L'vov 1997:96; Nezavisimaia gazeta—Politekonomiia, [2] January 1998:2). However, the construction of living quarters for the poor strata has all but come to a stop. In the past, up to sixty-seven percent of the city’s budget was allocated for this purpose, while today only three percent (L'vov 1997:99–100). State and city officials and bureaucrats are provided with public housing, and of the highest quality. For the rest of the population, the municipal government has built too many apartment buildings in the outlying districts of the capital, where Muscovites were supposed to be able to purchase apartments at favorable rates. Upon closer investigation, however, the advantages of these apartment buildings are revealed to be fictitious. In 1997, the supposedly low cost of municipal lodgings was fixed at $630 per square meter, but similar apartments on the open market were fetching $500 to $550 for the same space. Consequently, there were forty-thousand unsold and empty apartments; only one-tenth of those built have been purchased (Kamensky 1997:48–49). To solve the problem, the Moscow government now wants to provide subsidies and to develop a system of mortgages, Western ideas that are virtually nonexistent in Russia (banks provide only short term mortgages at very high interest). Some experts doubt that many Muscovites would be capable of purchasing apartments even with these favorable conditions (L’vov 1997:100).

One more facet of contemporary Moscow is determined by the interests and the tastes of the city’s political class. Having embraced a market economy, Moscow has collided with the problems that follow the absence of commercial and office space. Construction and real estate appear to be an extremely lucrative business. However, if the construction boom had been precipitated by market demands, it is the corrupt municipal authorities who are profiting more from it. The proprietary and entrepreneurial functions of the Moscow municipal government are still vast. It remains the principal owner of city land, as well as the main customer and primary builder. In the absence of clear legal criteria and the impossibility of appeal to a court in case of unlawful and arbitrary decisions, relations of investors and developers with the city authorities heel in favor of the latter. Any development project needs approval, and sometimes more than one, by over thirty different administrative agencies. There is no other way to save it from countless demands and changes but to resort to bribes and/or to the assistance of bureaucrats, who may help in overcoming various barriers. In practical terms, all major construction orders by the city authorities go to a very limited number of privileged architects and project bureaus. Thus, very big and complex projects that need professional expertise and review are often given the green light without them. In fact, monopolism, clannishness, and dependence on bureaucracy are very strong in Moscow’s architectural establishment. In order to receive a project from the city, one should be
sufficiently servile, obedient, and on good terms with the authorities. Capitalism in Moscow, at least in most cases, has turned out to be bureaucratic and crony capitalism. In March 1998, Boris Nemtsov, then a first vice-premier of the Russian government, complained that, "characteristic features of the power structure in the capital are a total control of bureaucracy over property, a monopolization of the construction industry, and a complicated procedure for obtaining licenses and permits for all kinds of business" (Nezavisimaiia gazeta, 17 March 1998).

This state of affairs, together with an enormous concentration of capital in the city, has allowed Yuri Luzhkov, the authoritarian mayor of Moscow and one of the most influential politicians in Russia, to play the populist-nationalist card and use the construction boom to carry out, in short order, the large-scale reconstruction of the city. To a large extent this reconstruction ignores the social aspects of urban development. Fifty-five percent of investment is concentrated in the historic center of the city, although it occupies only two percent of the metropolitan region’s area (Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies Meeting Report, vol. XV, [16] 1998). At the moment, Moscow desperately needs development of a modern infrastructure. Its engineering systems are obsolete, and its telephone service is worse than in many developing countries. The problem of snow and ice removal from city streets and squares remains unsolved. Many districts lack hot water for several weeks each year. Nevertheless, a priority has been given to highly publicized grand projects, each costing hundreds of millions of dollars, which have irreversibly changed the face of downtown Moscow. The political aspects of this Luzhkov-style reconstruction, which is being carried out with the full consent of Yeltsin’s leadership, is obvious.

The built environment and urban forms do not just represent or reflect social order; they actually constitute much of social and cultural existence. On the one hand, every Muscovite must know and feel that construction is carried out by those in political power, and that only those in power can make the city comfortable for each person. This is why the reconstruction of the city and the construction of new buildings is so provocative and antidemocratic, as if municipal and state authorities are literally screaming: “We rule!” It is through their exercise of power that selected architectural models become dominant in the capital. The Moscow mayor and his cronies peremptorily decide which architectural style befits the capital and which does not. It is well known that Luzhkov dislikes architecture of glass, concrete, and metal. Thus, to please him the architectural establishment has come out against the “mechanistic implementation of Western architectural style” (Segodnia, 2 March 1996:8), and now demands an adherence to the so-called “traditional Moscow style,” even though no one has ever defined this style in any convincing way.

Moscow is not a multi-textured city architecturally. It has very little of what could be called an authentic tradition. Its characteristic feature is not the perpetuation of tradition, but rather its frequent interruption. Contrary to St. Petersburg, very few ensembles of buildings have been preserved in Moscow. Its general layout and cityscape are much more authentic than its
architecture. Nevertheless, it is the adherence to Moscow traditions that, above all other characteristics, is taken into account by bureaucrats when they decide, often arbitrarily, whether to approve or reject architectural projects (Rezvzin 1997:52). In their interpretation these projects should represent an inspiration of *derzhavnost* ("a mighty statehood"). In practice, the contemporary "Moscow style" is a kind of post-modernist vernacular in which bad and eclectic elements of Russian architecture of the second half of the nineteenth and of the beginning of the twentieth centuries are quite conspicuous. The Moscow post-modernist architecture seeks its aspiration in the allegedly Russian symbolism (gables decorated with arches, tent-like and helmet-like exterior ornamental features set over roofs, kolkoshniki—a series of corbelled-out, round, or pointed arches arranged in receding tiers as a purely decorative feature, et cetera). As one architecture critic, Grigory Rezvzin, bitterly complained: "In Moscow, to submit a project taller than a three-story house that lacks a tower is tantamount to applying for emigration or declaring oneself a dissident in the period of stagnation" (Nezavisimaia gazeta, 25 January 1997).

All this is hardly accidental. The Russian style, whether in its pseudo-Russian variety of the second half of the nineteenth century, or in the neo-Russian one that goes back to the beginning of the twentieth century (Berton 1990:175 ff.) was never noted for its artistic merits. Its characteristic features were stylization, excessive decorativeness, and a negligence of the utilitarian side of construction. No wonder that contemporaries dubbed "chests with kolkoshniki" such specimens of this style as the Cathedral of Christ the Savior and the Imperial Historical Museum. In a book on Russian architecture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries published in the 1970s, the pseudo-Russian style was characterized as simply "chauvinist" (Borisova and Kazhdan 1971:79). However, in this style the ideological side always prevailed over the artistic one, and this is just what makes it so attractive to the Moscow authorities preaching the ideas of traditionalism and derzhavnost. In fact, the official concern with forms of local cultural identity is not new in Moscow. It was quite conspicuous during the reign of Tsar Alexander III, and even more so in the Stalin era (Tarkhanov and Kavtaradze 1992; Papernyi 1996:51 ff.).

Any traditionalism, even the most imitative and tasteless, works much better for an assertion of the ideology of derzhavnost than avant-garde. Members of the Russian avant-garde in the early post-revolutionary period, even those who had been devoted to the communist cause, learned the hard way that it was impossible in the Soviet Union to be avant-garde while simultaneously reflecting in their art official ideology and aesthetics. I am afraid that this is also impossible in post-totalitarian Russia. The Russian iconoclast avant-garde perished when it became evident that the revolutionary utopia would not be able, or willing, to deliver its dream and promise (Mirimanov 1997:223 ff.). The possibility of a new avant-garde is very slim at present, because nascent capitalism in Russia is not encouraging freedom of artistic expression and experimentation. To a significant extent,
Nevertheless, contemporary Moscow architecture contains some new and almost beguiling characteristics, which proves that Russia is still in transition, and that nothing there is certain. In addition to "local tradition," contemporary Moscow architecture attempts to adopt a mutated postmodernism. The style is attractive because it resists the homogenizing drive of modernization by promoting regional forms and embellishments (Frampton 1995). It is, however, ill-suited for any official rhetoric. Its style is more hybrid than eclectic. It is more convincing as critique because it is connected with irony and ambiguity (Ley 1989:55). Thus, a contradiction has emerged in contemporary Moscow architecture: The image of the mighty state is asserted by means of its relativist deconstruction. The two different aesthetic principles, hierarchical and anti-hierarchical, normative and anti-normative, are combined without the comprehension that they are opposites.

Only one face is conspicuously absent in present day Moscow—that of the middle class liberals. These people played an active role in the defeat of communism and the downfall of the August 1991 putsch, a role which at that time led a well-known Russian publicist to name Moscow "the city of decent people." Today, their impact on Moscow's landscape is minimal. Under these circumstances, the "closing down" of the public space in downtown for democratically-minded Russian citizens is taking on symbolic meaning. Marked by impeccably bad taste, the new constructions are becoming a memorial to their time.

Architecture as Visual Ideology

The cultural language of urban space and place can never be reduced to aesthetics; it always has political implications. Since the 1930s, Soviet architecture and construction have acquired an archaic language but remained future oriented. The situation has become more complicated in the post-Soviet period. Two tendencies, one pragmatic and the other political, are the most conspicuous in the ongoing reconstruction of Moscow. The first is connected with the city's adjustment to the new conditions of the market economy; the second with the growing prominence of statism and nationalism as the important components of state-supported and promoted ideology.

Loss and replacement are inevitable in the development of any city. However, the underlying reasons for these changes vary. In the Soviet period, totalitarian ideology and politics determined the reconstruction of the capital. Everything in its design that appealed not to the undifferentiated masses but to socially and culturally defined groups of people, everything in its environment that intimately linked individuals with particularly cherished neighborhoods and historical areas, had to be excluded and suppressed. The communists never trusted intimacy and individualism. "Following the
political dogma of the time, it was in public that the Soviet citizen had its true being; private life was the concern of the NKVD [the police].” (Tarkhanov and Kavtaradze 1992:136). The Soviet rulers treated old Moscow as a class enemy. They hailed as victories of socialism the demolition of countless churches, monasteries, and convents, of many cemeteries, of the elegant mansions in the Arbat area and the folkish quarters on the other side of the Moscow River (Zamoskvorechie). Small curved streets and lanes, as well as cozy little parks, were also destroyed without mercy and often without any need. As a sad consequence of this practice, UNESCO excluded Moscow from its list of cities with historical architecture. An absolute priority was given to public constructions: to the fortress-like building blocks and the wedding cake-like skyscrapers of the early 1950s prominent in the Moscow skyline, to the huge squares of inhuman scale (like the last memorial to the officially cherished Soviet architecture, the October Square with its dismal, “Third Reich-style” buildings), and to excessively wide and open avenues (like Novyi Arbat, built in the 1960s in the style of arch-provincial modernism and nicknamed by the Muscovites “the dentures of the city”). Solid facades of houses that faced main streets were ornamented with exceeding splendor, but the ceramic tiles used in their decoration began to peel away from the walls immediately after their construction, and their courtyards were often dirty and neglected. With regard to its layout and architecture, Moscow to a large extent ceased to be a traditional Russian city, but did not become a European or American city.

In some respects, the Soviet practice is being continued. Neo-empire and neo-classical buildings gave way to those built in other styles, but simultaneously one witnesses a regeneration of the Grand Style and characteristically Soviet obsession with gigantic projects. Likewise, the Soviet disrespect for the historical urban environment is also characteristic of the current wide-scale reconstruction of the Russian capital. The Moscow authorities justify their ban on construction of any buildings in contemporary styles in the historic center (the latest trustworthy style to them is the so-called “modern,” the Russian variety of art nouveau) by their concern for the preservation of its historicity, but in practice not infrequently this noble intention turns into farce. The inscription on the panel in the visitors’ area of the German Bundestag in Bonn proclaims: “To build in a democracy means to build for and with the citizens, not against them” (quoted in Wise 1998:36). Germans, like Russians, are facing the problem of overcoming their totalitarian past in architecture, especially after they made the decision to make Berlin once again the capital of a unified country (on this see Ladd 1997; Wise 1998). They are still involved in a prolonged and animated debate about official built forms and appropriate monuments amid remains and uncomfortable memories. German leaders and intellectuals concerned with representation of the democratic German state are trying to avoid anything that could be conceived as a declaration of state power. They are at pains to distance themselves from architectural symbolism and an artistic legacy tainted by association with Prussian militarism, Nazi totalitarianism,
and East German communism. Even classicism has become taboo. However ambiguous their success in this endeavor may be, there were open contests for major public projects in Berlin, in which leading foreign architects took part or served as jurors. The decision to reuse some historically burdened public buildings in Berlin was accompanied by their refurbishment, aimed at stripping them as much as possible of the ghosts of the past. Likewise, Germans are very cautious and considerate in demolition and rückbau (reverse building). Except for Spandau Prison and the Wall, so far only the building that housed East Germany’s Foreign Ministry has been demolished. However, calls for the resurrection of Bauakademie, the Prussian state architectural school built by the famous architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel, that stood on the spot from 1835 until 1961, remain in vain. A campaign to tear down the Palace of the Republic, erected in East Berlin in 1976, and to replace it with a replica of the Hohenzollern Royal Palace, which had been blown up by the communists in 1950, did not succeed, allegedly because of the absence of funds but also because East Berliners want to preserve the palace for nostalgic reasons. All this is a far cry from the realities of contemporary Moscow.

In the early years of perestroika, exhibitions were mounted at the Manezh Gallery of major city projects. Muscovites used to record their opinions in ledgers placed at the gallery. The authorities would peruse these ledgers, but then go ahead with their own projects, studiously ignoring everything they had read. But at least a modicum of democratic decorum was maintained, and the projects were open to public scrutiny. Nowadays, the city government does not permit even that. Authoritarian decisions have replaced independent experts, public opinion, and open-bidding competition. The reconstruction of Manezh Square in the very heart of Moscow may serve as a good example. Its ensemble was destroyed by a partially underground multi-level shopping center. A hill-like construction with a glass cupola crowned with a sculpture of the dragon-slaying St. George (the pre-revolutionary emblem of Moscow) was built in the middle of the square, obstructing the view of the surrounding historical buildings and the Kremlin wall. The square itself has been turned into a plaza with numerous balustrades (incidentally, not a characteristic of Moscow architecture), balusters, marble spheres, iron street lamps in a retro style, and other architectural excesses. In front of Alexandrovsky Park, which borders the Kremlin Wall, there appeared a ditch that was supposed to represent the Neglinka River, hidden under the earth since the nineteenth century. Bronze sculptures of fish, ducks, bears, and other creatures from Russian children’s fairy tales give the area a Disneyland-like appearance.
It is curious that the reconstruction of Manezh Square has resulted in a certain desecration of the Kremlin area, which includes the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the Eternal Flame. Rather than the intention of the nationalist-oriented Moscow authorities, this appears to be an unexpected consequence of the amateurism and incompetence of the court architects and artists. Nevertheless, the changing role of Manezh Square in mediating the relationship between the state and the individual is remarkable in itself. In the Soviet period, it symbolized the ability of the state to control and regulate the behavior of individuals. People were forbidden to even walk on its huge, empty expanse. Twice a year, on November 7 (the October Revolution Holiday) and on May 1 (Labor Day, another official holiday in the Soviet Union) it was used as a gathering space for masses of people before they would parade in the officially staged demonstrations on Red Square. In the time of perestroika and even later, Manezh Square acquired a new, civic and even anti-government function serving as a stage for all kinds of opposition demonstrations and rallies. However, in 1997, Mayor Luzhkov forbade all political demonstrations and other activities on Manezh Square. Nowadays it is only open for official state and city festivals (Moskovskii komsomolets, 26 July 1997). The construction of the shopping center and plaza completes
another transformation of the square. Having served for a short time as a civic space, it has become a place where a chosen few can enjoy spending lavishly while the rest can look through the shop windows.

Nevertheless, many ordinary Muscovites rather like the change. The fact that the reconstructed square was imposed upon them, that nobody asked their opinion or consent, does not trouble them much. They were used to this from Soviet times. Now, they have a feeling that the benevolent power has returned the Square to them. In the past, they were allowed to gather there only twice a year, only in columns, always watched, always ordered when and where to move. Now, Manezh Square has become an accessible public place. Ordinary people are free to stroll about the plaza and take photographs, and their children happily run and play among the bronze animals. Why should they pay attention to the complaints of intellectuals that these bronze monsters, ugly by themselves, do not belong on the square? And the underground mall, with its ornaments, elevators, marble floors, and gilded fountain is unlike anything they have been used to. Although it is difficult to characterize its decor other than “restaurant kitsch,” how many average Russian citizens can discriminate between kitsch and genuine art after decades of the dominance of socialist realism? Who cares that most of these seemingly expensive ornaments are made of plastic? It is exciting just to visit the plaza and the underground mall, having gained access to the new mass culture in the expectation that in the future they too will be able to enjoy the advantages of consumer society. Luzhkov calls this democracy; it could better be described as populism, but at the moment populism is quite a popular political card in Russia.

The reconstruction of Manezh Square is but one of several monumental projects initiated by the city government. One of these, which is already underway, is the construction of a new business center in the Presnia district, on a loop of the Moscow River. On sixty-five hectares of land they intend to build sixty-thousand to seventy-thousand square meters of modern office space (Simptom, n.9, [45] 1996:53). In order to attract investors, or rather to force them to invest in the new project, the Moscow authorities have resorted to a very simple, but apparently effective, measure. From now on, any construction of large office buildings in the city center is forbidden (Moskovskii komsomolets, 23 October 1997). The very name of this project, “Moscow City,” which was given by the same authorities who protest the growing usage of foreign words in advertising and political parlance, is highly symbolic. Russia’s own Manhattan should embody the new, prosperous, capitalist Moscow. However, just as capitalism in Russia is still burdened with the Soviet heritage, the Moscow City project is an odd combination of American traditions of the 1960s and Stalinist gigantism. Worst of all, the cluster of hundred-story and taller skyscrapers, of questionable artistic value, which one critic wittily likened to a dozen sharpened and blunt pencils, will be built only four kilometers from the Kremlin. The historical landscape and skyline of the capital will be finally and irrevocably destroyed.
To Destroy in Order to Rebuild Anew

Conservation policy always operates within a particular political environment which determines the degree of importance attached to it (Thornley 1995:55). In Soviet times, it was common practice to idealize the historical relics of Moscow as the best specimens of the "great tradition of Russian city-building," but in practice to mercilessly destroy this tradition (Papernyi 1996:51–53). In post-Soviet times the tradition is praised as before, but at the same time the remaining historical and cultural monuments are destroyed and distorted. The building of the replica of the Chapel of Saints Boris and Gleb on Arbat Square was accompanied by the demolition of the highly regarded, nearby "Nightingale House" (Novinskyi Boulevard, 6), an eighteenth-century building with a rich cultural heritage. While at one end of Stoleshnikov Lane a chapel was built in memory of a church which had been destroyed in Soviet times, at the other end still another eighteenth-century building was demolished. The building was a specimen of just this type of architecture that the Moscow authorities allegedly cherish and want to protect from modernist incursions. Besides, the building was famous. Pushkin, the greatest of Russian poets, was frequently present there (true, usually against his will; in the nineteenth century a police headquarters was located here which kept an eye on the politically suspect poet). Evidently, the only reason for the destruction of the building was that there was no time to get it in order for the 850th anniversary jubilee of Moscow (Nezavisimaia gazeta, 13 November 1997). For the same reason, a house built by the celebrated Russian architect Bazhenov was razed the week before the jubilee (Moskovskii komsomolets, 22 October 1997:3).

The destruction and distortion of historic and cultural sites is going on under the pretext of their conservation and restoration. Actually, the ardor for historic conservation in post-communist Moscow should not be surprising. When the present looks bleak, popular sentiment looks backward and it is tempting to give priority to maintaining what seems to be the good in the past (Thomas 1995:207). However, despite established international standards, the Moscow authorities understand conservation as "radical alteration of architectural monuments with the aim of improving and restoring their original design" (Nezavisimaia gazeta-kulisa, [5], March 1998). They are not at all embarrassed either by the incompatibility of these two goals—radical alteration and restoration of the original design—or by the position of modern restoration theory which recognizes that historical alterations have their own, independent value. Conservation practice in Moscow is guided by a strange principle: "Make everything as it was, but better and as quickly as possible." This results in a gross violation of the design of many historic buildings. Another widespread practice is the so-called "demolition with subsequent reconstruction." Historical buildings declared dilapidated are torn...
down and replicas are built in their place. Since this practice ignores historical alterations, the architectural styles of the replicas are rather arbitrary. One of the main goals of the reconstruction is to get as much profit as possible, and the city authorities have a stake in it; so these people easily agree with the distortion and even destruction of architectural monuments. Clients' demands for the maximizing of useful space in new buildings, utilization of new construction materials, etc., are a driving force for the construction of replicas that are only remotely reminiscent of the originals. A peculiar architectural theater is now emerging in Moscow. Decorations are beginning to dominate not only the facades of individual buildings, but also the city in general (Nikulina 1998:91–93). In fact, a forgery is taking place. Conservation is substituted with stylization and sheer falsification. Besides, conservators are under heavy pressure from the authorities, who unceremoniously interfere in their work and do not provide them with sufficient time.

Despite numerous protests, the hasty reconstruction of Moscow's center is proceeding in blatant violation of Russian legislation on the protection of historic and cultural monuments, but the mayor of Moscow ignores this. The Administration for the Protection of Moscow Monuments is subordinate to the city authorities, and usually sanctions, not infrequently postfactum, all their projects (Nezavisimaia gazeta, 11 December 1997). The rare protests by individual members have no effect at all. When one of them brought to Luzhkov's attention the fact that his intention to demolish a historical building on Stoleshnikov Lane was against the law, the mayor replied: “The law is not your business” (Nezavisimaia gazeta, 4 September 1997). In this practice, the Moscow authorities have started to believe that they have power not only over the cityscape and architectural styles, but also over history. A splendid specimen of eighteenth-century Moscow classicism, the Shcherbatov House (Kuznetsky Most Street, 4), was razed to its foundation and built anew (Nezavisimaia gazeta, 4 September 1997). A part of the Gostinnyi Dvor gallery, the only building in the capital built by the famous architect Jacomo Kvarengi, collapsed as a result of a poorly thought-out reconstruction aimed at building an additional story. This reconstruction was undertaken on Luzhkov's personal orders, despite warnings and resistance from conservators (Nezavisimaia gazeta, 16 October 1997). At the same time, Moscow is being lined with what are called novodely (literally, built anew), i.e. distorted and inaccurate replicas of churches and other monuments destroyed in Soviet times. The situation now is that the original and its replica are seen as equivalent. Curiously, these replacements have been readily adopted by Russian nationalists, who declare their devotion to the national historical and cultural heritage. The fervor of church rebuilding reveals once more the imitative character of post-communist Moscow. The hastily rebuilt churches are inserted into the semiotic context of an urban landscape developed during the Soviet era. Thus, their semantics are quite different from the original ones. This situation contains a double danger not only to the historicity of the capital, but even to the still very precarious democratic climate of the country. First of all, it is a continuation of the old
Russian tradition that not society, but only those in power decide what is best. Second, mass consciousness is becoming prone to the false idea that history can be corrected and improved, and that everything can be destroyed and rebuilt anew.

Besides, the frenzy of rebuilding religious edifices has clear political connotations. The post-modern crisis of identity has acquired specific forms in Russia. The sense of alienation and disorientation is connected not so much with technological advances and corresponding structural changes, but with the sudden collapse of the previous sociopolitical order and with the difficulties in creating a viable replacement. Russians are experiencing a national identity crisis, and the ideological and political struggle on this issue is ongoing. The state has lost a significant part of its awe and aura, but they were not transferred to political parties, monopolies, or other institutions. Uncontestable authority has become vacant, the political establishment needs allies and considers the Orthodox Church a force capable of filling the void. Orthodox Christianity has almost acquired once again the status of state religion. The new interpretation of Russian history allocates to the Church an even more prominent role than to the tsars. The goal is to unite the Russian nation (conceived not in civic, but in narrow ethnic terms) around imposed Orthodox symbols. Under the pretext of repentance, the rebuilding of churches became the propaganda vehicle for post-communist leaders attempting to link the problematic present with the newly created historical canon, allegedly stripped of controversy. This is apparent in the controversial reconstruction of a great landmark of pre-revolutionary Moscow, the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, which was blown up in 1931 to clear land for the never-realized construction of the Palace of the Soviets. But the original five-onion-domed Cathedral, built by the architect Konstantin Ton (1794—1881) on a bank of the Moscow River just downstream from the Kremlin, did not possess great artistic merit. Ton was a proponent of the officially-sanctioned but dissonant style which combined distorted motifs of Russian church architecture of different periods with Byzantine forms (Borisova and Kazhdan 1971:9). No wonder, that his contemporaries dubbed the cathedral “a huge samovar.” It was dedicated to the victory of Russia in the Napoleonic War in 1812, and the tsarist government, in promoting Russian nationalism and patriotism, attached great importance to its construction. None other than Tchaikovsky was commissioned to write a piece of music for the Cathedral’s consecration. He did so without great enthusiasm and inspiration, admitting afterwards that his 1812 Overture hardly had artistic value and was “very loud and noisy” (Cleave 1995:65).

The construction of the original Cathedral was lengthy and painstaking. Begun in 1839 it was completed in 1883. The replica was built in great haste in only a few years. During the debate on the expediency of the restoration of the Cathedral, the Moscow authorities assured the public that the Cathedral would be reconstructed to the exact design of the original. In fact, the new edifice, which critics have labeled “a cake on a tray,” was from its initial drawings a great deviation from the original. The complex includes
two huge dining and conference halls, a museum, underground parking lots, garages, elevators, and other services, and even the Church of the Transfiguration, named after the Transfiguration Cathedral of the Alexeyevsky Convent which had been torn down to make way for the original Christ the Savior Cathedral. In addition, the replica is built of reinforced concrete—totally different from the material of the original Cathedral and instead of white stone it is reveted with marble, which is alien to Moscow architectural tradition. However, the innovations are not limited to this. If there was anything of artistic value in the original Cathedral, it was the high reliefs on its facades and the interior murals by the sculptors Romazanov, Loganovsky, and Klodt, and by the painters Makovsky, Prianishnikov, Surikov, Vereshchagin, and Markov. Work on the reliefs continued for twenty years, the murals on the cupola took six years to paint. In the haste of construction, connected with the desire to complete the replica for the 850th anniversary of Moscow, the city authorities accepted the suggestion to temporarily place on the Cathedral walls figures of saints made of plastic. Executed in different styles, they in no way resemble the nineteenth century reliefs (Moskovskii komsomolets, 30 January 1998). Then, in true Soviet tradition, it was decided to make the temporary permanent and to manufacture in plastic the remainder of the Cathedral’s reliefs. The protests that followed the decision revealed that the substitution of plastic for marble was done not so much to lower the Cathedral’s costs and hasten its completion, but to increase the honorarium for the author of the “rationalization project,” the sculptor Tsereteli, and the people closely connected with him. Offers from several sculptors to create works of marble at lower cost were turned down by Moscow’s mayor (Nezavisimaia gazeta-kulisa, [2] January 1998; Moskovskie novosti, 15–22 February 1998:20–21).

The construction of the original Cathedral in tsarist times and its replica in post-Soviet times, similar in their ideological significance, have other remarkable parallels. In the nineteenth century the national character of the Cathedral was propagandized as understood in the framework of the official ideological formula: “Orthodoxy, autocracy, and peoplehood.” This formula implied the centuries-old and unshakable power of the monarchy in Russia, sanctified by the Church and supported by the people. The government propagandized the myth that the Cathedral was built on “the people’s kopecks (copper coins),” although eighty-five percent of the construction was paid for by government subsidies. In fact, the “peoplehood” of the Cathedral, which the advocates of its reconstruction especially like to stress, is but another myth. It always served for the ceremonial functions of the state. In 1913, when the Romanov Dynasty celebrated its 300th anniversary, a monument to Tsar Alexander III was erected on the eastern side of the Cathedral. It was distinguished only by an unusual monumentality, thus emphasizing the greatness and power of the autocracy. During the construction of the replica of the Cathedral, the Moscow authorities propagated similar groundless ideas. Advertisements throughout the Moscow subway proclaimed: “Let us gather the means for the Cathedral of Christ the Savior—Sanctuary of Orthodoxy and monument to
the military glory of Russian arms.” The decision to restore the Cathedral was above all a political one. A former vice-premier of the Russian government, Boris Nemtsov, confirmed this unambiguously when he wrote: “This was a grandiose political idea... this is a monument to Luzhkov. He knows this very well” (Nemtsov 1997:101). Actually, the very location of the Cathedral in the center of Moscow, and its size, indicate that on a national scale the position of the Orthodox Church is connected with support from the post-communist official order more than with its place in human hearts. Opinion polls indicated that about two-thirds of the population either opposed or were indifferent to the rebuilding of the Cathedral (Cleave 1995:65). Many people pointed out that there was absolutely no rush to carry out this project, and that in a time of economic hardships the authorities and the Orthodox Church should have had other priorities. Their objections were dismissed out of hand. Officially, the reconstruction was financed by voluntary donations and fund-raising activities and did not depend on the state budget. But information that has leaked to the press makes this hard to believe. Soldiers were used for unskilled and unpaid work; heating and electricity were provided free of charge; state-owned companies were ordered to make significant financial contributions. Besides, the authorities exerted pressure on private companies, forcing them to subsidize construction. Thus, Stolichnyi Bank presented fifty kilograms of gold, and Philips delivered $400,000 worth of lighting equipment (Moscow News, 1–7 August 1996).

Consecration of the original Cathedral, in 1883, proceeded in extraordinarily solemn fashion. In attendance were the Emperor, the Empress, the Heir, and other members of the Romanov family, foreign princes, and diplomats. Although a special corner was set aside for veterans of the 1812 War, only a few of them were still alive. The consecration of the replica also took place in the presence of dignitaries and no ordinary people were allowed to attend (Izvestiia, 20 August 1997). As in tsarist times, the post-Soviet Cathedral of Christ the Savior is intended for celebrations involving state officials and other dignitaries. Services are held only on special occasions, while everyday mass will be offered in the Transfiguration Church, the lower chapel of the Cathedral. Among officials, there is a complete lack of comprehension of the difference between the original Cathedral and its replica. The mayor has already declared the replica a monument of federal historical and cultural significance. Moreover, the Moscow authorities have announced their intention to transmit to UNESCO a request to include it on the list of monuments of world significance (Nezavisimaia gazeta, 4 September 1997). This idea is absurd, as no replicas appear on the UNESCO list, with the exception of the historical center of Warsaw, which had been destroyed by the Nazis after the suppression of the 1944 insurrection and reconstructed after the war.

The reconstructed Cathedral of Christ the Savior is only the most noticeable amongst similar projects and undertakings in Moscow in the past few years. All are remarkable by the unwarranted haste of their construction,
their aesthetic blindness, and their blatantly politicized character. Another good example is the Chapel of Saints Boris and Gleb, constructed on Arbat Square to commemorate a cathedral originally built in 1527, reconstructed in 1763–1767, and torn down in 1930. This construction does not have any aspiration to rebuild an historical monument. The new chapel is half the size of the original cathedral and does not include the refectory and bell tower. The style of the original was predominantly Baroque, while the feeble replica is built in the style of classicism. The old cathedral architecturally dominated Arbat Square. The new chapel was not even built on the site of the original (curiously, after the construction of the replica, this place still bears a historical marker), and its scale is entirely out of place with the contemporary architectural design and scale of the square. It looks like a plaything against the background of the cheerless walls of the huge Ministry of Defense building. The construction of the chapel cost about one million dollars and was obviously done to appease the Orthodox Church. By order of President Yeltsin, maintenance costs of the chapel, including pay for the priests and choir, are taken from the budget of the Ministry of Defense (Moskovskie novosti, 10–17 August 1997), despite the fact that separation of Church and State is written into the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

The next project in line is a secular one, but it has basically the same underlying goal of influencing the present by pretending to illuminate the past. The mayor has decided to restore the towers and walls of Kitai-gorod, a second belt of fortifications that in former times encircled Moscow. Originally constructed in the 1530s, they were repeatedly rebuilt until they were dismantled in Soviet times. In scale, this project is comparable to the reconstruction of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, but as in that case the replica will be much different from the original. In some places the wall and towers will be rebuilt as they supposedly appeared in the sixteenth century (historical data on their appearance is scant and inadequate), while in others they will appear as they did at the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth centuries. In several places the wall and towers will not be rebuilt on the same sites their predecessors occupied (Nezavisimaiia gazeta, 10 October 1997; Obschchaia gazeta, 13–19 November 1997). The tower already constructed across from Teatral'naia Square may serve as an example, in that it is not a replica of the tower that had previously stood there, but of another, located in a completely different place and of a totally different size. It seems that the main reason for the substitution was to better accommodate a restaurant (Pod'iapolsky 1998:13).
Russia is more a verbal country than a visual one. From the nineteenth century Russian culture has acquired a clearly literature-centered character. Now officials are trying to change this in Moscow. The principles of the current Moscow style are mendacious. Instead of history, its negation is inscribed into the cityscape. Incorrect replicas or even blatant forgeries of destroyed monuments are rebuilt from the bottom up, next to which even the original monuments lose their authenticity. At best, a replica may appropriate the style of a lost original, but its message is different. In a way, the replica becomes more real than the original, because it is contemporary. Instead of declared respect for the city's landscape and architectural harmony, one witnesses their disruption. The disfigurement of Moscow's historical face, which began under Lenin, reached its climax under Stalin, and continued under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, has been resumed in the post-communist period, this time by authorities who claim to be democratic. Instead of contemporary architecture, Moscow gets its imitation. In the situation in which the sacred geography of communist Moscow is substituted, or rather supplemented, by the sacred geography of pre-revolutionary Moscow, there is little room for the development of genuinely new architectural forms and styles. In essence, the reconstruction boom in Moscow is somewhat akin to Soviet architecture, inspired by the desire to demolish and to rebuild everything in order to create a new, communist world. The only difference is that nowadays everything is demolished and rebuilt in order to create a new, capitalist world with a Russian face. Moreover, just as in the past the communist rulers decided what the new world must be, so today do the
Russian leaders decide what the Russian face of the new capitalist world should look like.

Monumental Sculpture as Politics

A continuation of the Soviet tradition is noticeable not only in architecture, but also in the arts. Stylistics are sometimes changed, although a certain continuity is also visible, but aesthetics still bear remarkable similarities with the period when social realism was the only officially sanctioned school of presentation. This is quite evident in the attempts to regenerate monumental state art as well as in the state’s financial support for, and patronage of, such worthless and obscurantist painters as Glazunov and Shilov, notorious for their ultra-nationalist views. Recently, a new museum has been opened in Moscow dedicated to Shilov’s paintings. Still, the newly acquired freedom of artistic expression, an availability of privately-owned galleries, and an access to the world art market, provides Moscow painters with better opportunities than in the Soviet period when non-conformist artists were persecuted.

The continuity with the Soviet “Great Style” is most visible in monumental sculpture. Every monument embodies symbols (Lefebvre 1991:86) All Soviet rulers, beginning with Lenin, considered monumental art as, above all else, a means of propaganda aimed at molding people’s attitudes and allegiances. It was not accidental that the first Bolshevik government, the Council of People’s Commissars, on April 12, 1918 issued a special decree on monumental propaganda, just a few months after seizing power. In the Soviet period the aesthetic side of monuments was not completely ignored, but was defined in the framework of social realism. Monumental sculptures were raised to the level of allegory. Suffice it to say, that there were about twenty-thousand public sculptures of Lenin in the Moscow oblast’, in addition to countless monuments to him in the city itself. Huge monuments to communist luminaries and to historical and cultural events and figures included in the official pantheon were scattered all over the city. They were put in the most visible places, like the smug, bronze Lenin statue in October Square that does not even correspond to the latter’s dimensions, or the giant aluminum Gagarin sculpture, allegedly rocketing into space from the square that bears his name, or the monument to space exploration nicknamed “the dream of an impotent.” They never face the people; they were deliberately elevated. They face only mythologized history or posterity. They lack the artistic and emotional power to move, nor was this their function. These monuments were built not for cultural or historical reasons, but solely for political purposes, and when politics changed, the sculptures, like people, were sometimes destroyed, replaced, or removed. Thus, in 1918, the monument to General Skobelev was destroyed and replaced by the monument to Freedom; and in 1947 the latter was replaced by a monument.
to Prince Yuri Dolgoruky, officially recognized as the founder of Moscow. The authorities disliked an excellent monument to Gogol because, in their opinion, it “distorted the image of the great writer, presenting him as a pessimist and a mystic” (Pravda, 14 May 1936). Therefore, in 1951, the monument was substituted by an inferior one immediately nicknamed “a standing idol” by Muscovites. The Triumphal Arch was moved from one square to another three times.

With regard to public monuments very little has changed in the post-Soviet period. They still serve as vehicles for the legitimization of political and cultural power. It is well known that monuments say more about the agenda and artistic preferences of those who ordered their construction than about the persons or events they are intended to commemorate (Wohl 1996:1). While the characteristic feature of the contemporary Western cultural tradition connected with society’s democratic and egalitarian principles is the decline of public monuments and statues, they are mushrooming in Moscow and have become a vehicle for statist and nationalist visual propaganda. Their function is not to preserve collective memory but to shape and establish its hierarchy. Another contemporary tendency, that of miniaturization of sculptural monuments to make their scale more humane, is also alien to post-communist Moscow. Contemporary Muscovite iconography is certainly acquiring illiberal and authoritarian characteristics and celebrates things that are removed from ordinary people: imperial rule, military victories, the pomp and circumstance of the Church, the omnipotence of the state, etc.

Perhaps nothing symbolizes this better than the Victory in World War II Monument on Poklonnaia Hill. In fact, this hill had its own symbolic meaning connected with the War of 1812, which is revealed in the very name “Poklonnaia,” an adjective formed from the noun meaning “bow.” Napoleon waited in vain on this hill for the Muscovites to come, hats in hand, to surrender the city. Nevertheless, the hill was leveled almost to the ground during construction of the monument, and was turned into a knoll crowned with a bayonet of cyclopean size. The disproportionately small allegorical sculpture of the goddess Nike that surmounts the bayonet looks like a fly on a needle. And, of course, the monument includes a sculpture of St. George, whose iconography has become almost obligatory in the capital and is promoted by the authorities as a symbol of continuity with pre-Revolutionary tradition. The Warrior-Saint, astride a prancing horse, manages with a very thin lance to hack up a corpulent serpent, which is supposed to personify fascism. Falling to pieces in composition, this pompous and ugly monument, however, is more than a mishmash of classical Greek, Orthodox Christian, and Soviet symbols. It is also a reserve of the still officially cherished militaristic spirit. Detached from the city and its inhabitants, it is actually an anti-memorial in which the victors are not properly respected, because instead of presenting them as ordinary people they have been turned into demi-gods, and the victims are not properly mourned because they have been presented as totally separated from living human beings.
The same spirit was revealed in the monument to Marshal Zhukov. The approaching fiftieth anniversary of victory in World War II brought about a desire to find an appropriate national war hero. Stalin was absolutely unacceptable to the majority of Russian citizens, as well as for those in power. The war hero pretensions of Khrushchev and Brezhnev received only contempt even when they were in power. The choice then was the most famous Soviet World War II commander, Georgi Zhukov. His career had its ups and downs and it seemed that every Russian citizen, communist and anti-communist, nationalist and liberal, could find something to sympathize with in his biography. The Deputy Supreme Commander in Chief, i.e. the deputy to Stalin during the war, Zhukov was demoted soon after the victory. The official version held that he was punished for excessively enthusiastic marauding in occupied Germany, while the widely held popular version was that Stalin was jealous of his fame. Soon after the dictator’s death Zhukov was appointed Minister of Defense, however he was later dismissed and dispatched into political non-existence by Khrushchev, apparently for insufficient servility and independent opinions. In Brezhnev’s time, Zhukov was again treated kindly, lived out his remaining years in esteem, and published his memoirs, quite loyal to the Soviet authorities, but devoted mainly to self-glorification. However, the selection of heroes is always partisan and arbitrary. It turned out that not everyone was pleased with the elevation of Zhukov to the role of national-patriotic symbol. Opponents of the Zhukov monument brought attention to the fact that the marshal was not a great strategist, and did not possess adequate military education. The successes of his military actions were attained simply by enormous expenditure of manpower. They claimed that Zhukov combined contempt for his soldiers’ lives and a cruel attitude towards his subordinates with a facility for pleasing Stalin. Some insisted that Zhukov ascribed to himself undue credit for the planning and
success of many military operations. The arguments of their opponents are remarkable by themselves. A group of generals from the Military Academy of the General Staff, which included Igor Rodionov, who would later become Minister of Defense, charged that those opposed to the construction of a monument to Zhukov were aspiring "to strip the Russian people of historical memory and national self-consciousness" (Nezavisimaia gazeta, 5 March 1994). In spite of the protests, the monument was built, although not on Red Square as originally planned, but at the entrance to it. In artistic respects, the equestrian statue of the marshal cast in bronze and elevated on a huge pedestal, repeats the worst of social realism. Still, the official post-Soviet pantheon acquired its hero.

![Peter the Great monument. (Anatoly Khazonov)](image)

However, no monument built in the last few years in Moscow has received such vehement protest as the monument to Peter the Great on the Krymskaia Embankment. Many critics have pointed out that the very idea of the monument’s erection in the capital seemed dubious. It is well known that the tsar had no love for Moscow, and Muscovites felt the same about him. The argument that accompanied the construction of the monument, that it was part of the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Russian Navy, was far fetched. Moscow, which of course is landlocked, had little connection with this particular event. Peter founded the first Russian shipyard and the first Admiralty far to the north—in Arkhangelsk. Many objections were raised about the creator of the monument, the sculptor, capitalist, and millionaire Zurab Tsereteli. In the opinion of many competent art critics and impartial experts, Tsereteli is a third-rate sculptor, possessed of astonishingly bad taste. Nonetheless, he has managed to gain favor with
influential politicians and to surround himself with allies and cronies in the Moscow artistic establishment. In November 1997 he was even elected to the post of President of the Russian Academy of Arts.

For reasons that one can only guess at, Tsereteli enjoys the almost unlimited support of Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, who announced that "journalists should not dare to judge the artistic merits of Tsereteli's works" (Komsomol'skaia pravda, 5 March 1997). Such support has permitted Tsereteli to nearly monopolize the creation of the most prestigious, not to mention the most profitable, monumental sculptures in the capital. So thorough is this monopoly that Muscovites, famous for their sharp tongues, began to joke about the "Tseretelization" of the city.14 When the matter of money comes up, Tsereteli assures his audience that he will pay for everything out of his own pocket. In fact, he later presents the government with enormous bills. In the end, the reason for the support of Tsereteli by the Russian authorities is not very important. What is important is that the principle of free competition of different artistic styles is still alien to the mentality of the Russian power elite who simply follow the old Soviet tradition. Alexei Klimenko, an art critic and a member of the Experts Advisory Council to Moscow's chief architect, testified that when members of the council criticized the chief architect for allowing such a monstrous monument (Peter the Great) to be built without a competition or even discussion, the latter shrugged and replied: "What could I do? The project was signed by Yeltsin" (Moscow News, [7] 20–26 February 1997:15).

The public outcry against the monument to Peter was stronger than against any of the many other ugly recent monuments in Moscow. There was even an attempt to organize a citywide referendum for the demolition of the monument when it was still under construction. The authorities foiled the attempt. In the winter and spring of 1997 they pretended to waver. Yeltsin suddenly cast doubt on the expediency of building the monument, and Luzhkov appointed a special commission in order to determine its future. As it turned out, this was only a maneuver to silence the protests.15 Most members of the commission were Tsereteli's allies and some of his opponents were bribed either by Tsereteli himself or by the authorities through lucrative artistic contracts (Nezavisimaia gazeta, 3 September 1997). A corresponding ideological base accompanied the building of the monument. Tsereteli announced the monument to be "a symbol of the new, young Russia, as it enters into a new era of its history." In the tradition of Soviet propaganda, he further stated with a fair amount of demagoguery: "Moscow and the whole Russia, as if under a canvas, strive to a new life in a new epoch, and this great move forward should lean on the glorious historical accomplishments of our forefathers" (Nezavisimaia gazeta, 18 August 1996:2). This bravado made Tsereteli's position stronger and won him more supporters and followers, since it had translated pure artistic debate into the sphere of ideology. The ninety-four-meter-high monster monument, which Muscovites have nicknamed "The Terminator," was officially unveiled during the celebration of the capital's 850-year jubilee. The style is pure sham; its artistic merits depressingly feeble. For a modern monument
it is excessively detailed, rising as a chaotic mish mash of small, poorly discernable details, out of proportion to the huge size of the statue of the Tsar who, shrouded in absurd, classical-renaissance dress with leggings, looks like a caricature.

Even the cheap symbolics of the monument are inconsistent and self-contradictory. Peter stands on the deck of a ship filled with models of houses, architecturally representative of St. Petersburg. However, the monument is officially tied to the 300th anniversary of the Russian Navy and at that time the city did not exist. Strangely enough, the Tsar treads on these houses. This would seem to be proper if the houses were an allegory of Moscow, a city he hated, but not of the new capital he so dearly loved. Even the choice of the site for the monument, on a quiet and cozy cape of the Moscow River, is an aesthetic affront, because it has irretrievably ruined the splendid view of the Kremlin and of the city center from the Krymsky Bridge. This was one of the best views of the capital that remained after the insensitive Soviet reconstruction of downtown Moscow. No wonder that the monument to Peter the Great is widely perceived not only as characteristic of the very dubious yet officially sanctioned artistic values, but also as a symbol of Russia’s new statehood. It demonstrates the continuing omnipotence of the state and the weakness of civic society in post-communist Russia. The public has received another lesson: It is impotent, its opinion does not matter.

Another recent appearance in Moscow is a second monument to Dostoevsky,\(^6\) erected in 1997 in front of the Russian State (formerly Lenin) Library, in the shadow of the Kremlin. This site does not have any connection with either the life or works of the writer, and as usual the monument is not blessed with artistic merits. The competition to design and
build it was carried out strictly as a formality, as the winner's name was mentioned with full confidence in the corridors of the Moscow municipal government well before the competition's conclusion. (*Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 25 April 1997).

The monument itself was constructed under great secrecy and haste. Workers on the project joked that, "It was made from shit and water" (a colorful Russian way of saying that it was made of a very thin, fragile, and non-durable brass alloy). Remarkably, in St. Petersburg another monument to Dostoevsky was unveiled in 1997. The placement of the monument in the northern capital was more appropriately chosen, on Vladimirsky Square, where the writer lived at the start of his literary career and also at the end of his life. Still, this sudden love for Dostoevsky is hardly accidental. Indeed, one may wonder what it is about his works that has made him so popular with Russia's power elite, in the country where there are still many insulted and injured, and many crimes still go unpunished: Is it "the Russian idea," anti-Westernism, or his allegiance to messianic Orthodoxy?

There is significance not only in the monuments the post-Soviet authorities chose to raise, but also in those they prefer not to build. While they are going to rebuild the monument to Alexander III, a tsar notorious for his reactionary politics, the monument to his father, Alexander II, is conspicuous by its absence in Moscow. Among the highlights of the reign of this tsar-reformer were the abolition of serfdom, the introduction of local self-government, judicial, military, and financial reforms, and the dissolution of the Third Department (political surveillance body). Before the Revolution, eight monuments to this most liberal Russian tsar, who had paid for his reforms with his life, were erected in Russia, one of them within the Kremlin walls. All were demolished after the Revolution. The only ones which remained are those standing in the capital squares of Finland and Bulgaria. All appeals to the Moscow mayor's office to build a new monument to Alexander II in the city where he had been born, which he loved and frequently visited, and where he publicly proclaimed his agrarian reform, have so far been unsuccessful. The answer given is that the city treasury is empty (*New Times*, September 1997:3). Even more remarkable is the absence in Moscow of a memorial to the victims of political repression. When the democratic movement in Russia was on the rise, Yeltsin by special decree promised to create such a memorial. It seems that he has now forgotten his promise. In the meantime, without undue pomp, a modest yet interesting and moving memorial to the victims of Soviet power by the sculptor Shemiakin has already been created in St. Petersburg. In Moscow there is still only a granite stone in Lubyanka Square (in Soviet times, Dzerzhinsky Square), brought from the Solovetsky Islands, the site of the first forced labor camp of the Soviet GULAG created already under Lenin, to mark the place where the planned Moscow monument is to stand. The place is itself noteworthy. It is located on the same square as the former headquarters of the KGB, the Soviet secret police, which doomed millions of people to suffering, torture, and death. The monument to the victims was supposed to be built on the square of the perpetrators. Ironically, the notorious building on Lubyanka
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Square is now occupied by the Federal Security Service (FSB), the direct successor of the KGB. Perhaps it is for the best that a memorial to the victims of repression does not yet stand in the Russian capital. Monuments to victims pose even more artistic, conceptual, and political problems than monuments to heroes. It may be that the modest granite stone on Lubyanka Square is a more suitable symbol than a pompous and cold monument—one could not expect anything better in Russia's current political and artistic climate. But these were not the concerns of the Russian authorities when they decided to quietly put on hold the promise to build the monument.

Moscow Is not Russia yet, but ...

Thus, culture again becomes ideology, and ideology becomes politics. The old imperial double-headed eagle and Saint George defeating the dragon have functionally replaced the hammer and sickle, and red stars of the Soviet era, but in some places they even share the same reverence and respect. Statism was always an important ideological factor in Russia. Its current merger with nationalism seems almost natural. While a declared goal of the Russian leadership is to build a multiethnic civic nation, its actual policy suggests something quite different (Khazanov 1997:138–139). The triumph of the new power and its search for self-expression through the control of public space, monumental propaganda, and pageants reached its apogee in September 1997 during the celebration of the 850-year anniversary of Moscow. (Its artificiality is evident by the fact that 850 is not even a round number.) With its pompousness, ostentation, and inevitable haste, the event was a repetition of Soviet-era syndrome of mass celebrations (Grueva 1997:56–59), in many respects, reminiscent of the 1947 celebration of eight centuries of Moscow's existence. Then, Soviet power also manifested itself through visual propaganda, hurriedly constructing huge buildings and erecting monumental sculptures. At that time, buildings in the center of the city were also repaired and repainted. Fifty years later, in the best tradition of Potemkin villages, building facades were quickly repaired and beautified, but only downtown and only those edifices that faced the street. In addition, the repair and beautification had been done in such a way that the paint chipped and peeled by the end of the first winter.

In aesthetic terms, the 1997 celebration, with its large pageants broadcast live on television across the whole country, mass processions with thousands of participants, sumptuous choreographed rites, military symbols, and abundant fireworks, was an attempt to resurrect the Soviet-era "Grand Style." However, only the political and financial elite and their families were invited to attend the most prestigious events. The ordinary taxpayers were entertained with cheap performances. All of this also recalls the Soviet era. The tribute to capitalism consisted of a new style in advertising. Slogans like
"Moscow is Russia's true value" were placed on advertisements for Italian plumbing equipment and Belgian toilets. Likewise, at the close of the festivities, church bells began ringing throughout the city at the same time that billboards for Menatep Bank and Samsung Electronics lit up the night sky. More interesting were the ideological aspects of the festival. I very much doubt that its organizers knew Ernest Renan's celebrated saying that to be a nation its members have to forget many things, but they followed his dictum in practice. In the performances organized on the occasion of Moscow's pseudo-anniversary, Russian history unexpectedly appeared as an endless, unbroken sequence of golden centuries. It turned out that all was well and good during the reign of the grand princes, the tsars, the emperors, the communists, and the post-communist leadership. In all, it was an exercise in affirmative history spiced with a certain kind of nostalgia that Margaret Atwood, a Canadian novelist, characterized as "the past without the pain." The message was clear: The murky waters of the past should be apotheosized, not enlightened and debated anymore, in order to assert historical continuity and to fabricate a new political reality. It was as if the seemingly buried concept of the Third Rome had never been forgotten. In a song specifically commissioned for the event, Moscow was called the "prophet" and "messiah." The official narrative was a clear démarche against national retrospection and the still numerous liberal-minded people in Moscow who adhere to Western values. In an interview, Luzhkov exalted Moscow as having preserved "spiritual conservatism." In Luzhkov's view, Moscow was distinct from Russia's seaside cities (an obvious reference to St. Petersburg), in which constant foreign influence resulted in the erosion of the national mentality and common statist values (Trud, 5-11 September 1997).

But that is not all. Once again, we are witnessing the widespread use of Russian mythopoeia: Pre-Revolutionary Russian symbols and reinvented episodes from Russian history are used and manipulated to provide the authorities with an aura of legitimacy. The festivities and television, must have shown to all who watched that a consumer society has already arrived in Moscow, and will soon make its appearance throughout the rest of the country, if only other regions would follow Moscow's example. But this "new" society should be a specifically Russian, great power, nationalist and Orthodox consumer society. As Gogol once lamented, Russia's privileged fate is to skip the present and dream its way into the future.

Construction of the memorial at Poklonnaia Hill came to no less than two hundred million dollars. The cost of the monument to Peter the Great is, at minimum, fifteen to twenty million dollars. The reconstruction costs for Manezh Square and its commercial center are kept from public scrutiny, as if a state secret, but are estimated by experts to be 350 million dollars minimum (Moscow News, 2-8 July 1998:9). The renovation of the capital, in anticipation of the anniversary, cost about sixty million dollars, with a further fifty million dollars spent on the celebration (Izvestiia, 9 September 1997). In market economies, expenditures usually correspond to income. In post-communist Moscow, however, things are done a bit differently. The
construction of churches and monuments, reconstruction of the downtown, and the celebration of the artificial anniversary were carried out with a sweep that goes beyond all reasonable limits. In Moscow today political populism is accompanied by aesthetic populism. Moscow's mayor, with a clear conscience, ravages the municipal coffers for the glorification of his own political ambitions, and for the satisfaction of his own (extremely low) cultural standards.

Postscriptum

This article was already in preparation when, in August 1998, Russia entered into a financial and political crisis. This was especially felt in Moscow, demonstrating that its ostentatious luster and relative prosperity rested on a very shaky foundation. City authorities were forced to put a hold on many of their pet projects. For the first time in recent years the capital began to implement delays in the payment of wages to workers. Savings, which people had secured not under their mattresses but in Russian banks, vanished or depreciated. For the city, which receives eighty percent of its foodstuffs from over the border, the sharp reduction of imports and their skyrocketing costs also turned out to be very painful. There was, however, a fall in the price of rent and real estate. Foreign corporations are curtailing their activities in Moscow and are reducing the number of employees, or are simply abandoning the capital altogether.

The new middle class has been especially hard hit. Several Russian observers even began to predict its demise. Various estimates suggest that fifty-thousand to one hundred-thousand Muscovites or even more have lost their jobs and many more were sent home on unpaid leave. Among the sacked workers are those from industry and trade, but especially many of those who worked for banks, advertising and tourist agencies, real estate, newspapers, magazines, and television. Layoffs affected managers and bank tellers, economists and real estate agents, journalists and accountants, small businessmen and copy editors. Those who were employed by foreign firms were hit particularly hard, as were those who offered a wide range of services to the colony of foreigners living in Moscow. (In the summer of 1998, there were around one hundred-thousand foreigners living in Moscow). In addition to the rise in prices and inflation, many Muscovites experienced significant salary cutbacks (from one-third to one-half or even more). The lifestyle of these people has changed drastically. They have had to abandon trips abroad, stop visiting expensive restaurants and bars, and cease shopping in chic boutiques. As in the early 1990s, many young professionals are again trying to emigrate.

However, among the many victims are not only the new middle class, but also the old one, as well as all other strata of society. Until the recent crisis,
Muscovites were divided into those who won out (in material respects) from reforms, and those who lost out from them. Now the losses have hit everyone, with the possible exception of those few who, being close to the national leadership, possessed enough insider information to profit from the abrupt and not always explicable leaps in the exchange rate of the ruble. Customers have disappeared not only from fancy shops, but also from Dorogomilovsky, Kievsky, Bagrationovsky, and other open-air wholesale markets where Muscovites of meager means used to purchase Chinese, Turkish, and other cheaply made merchandise delivered by peddlers called chelnoki (shuttles). These shuttle traders, who at present number at least several million, are afraid that new government regulations will deny them their hard-earned livelihood. All is not yet lost. Moscow has paid a very heavy price for the futile attempts to turn the city into the Third Rome, the New Jerusalem, or “the capital of all progressive humanity.” Today, it still has the potential to become the capital of a large country—perhaps not a very beautiful city, but with its own style and the means to provide a decent existence for its residents. It remains to be seen, however, if and when this potential is realized. After all, Moscow is the capital of Russia, and Russia is the country of missed opportunities.

Notes

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1 This paper reflects the situation that existed in Moscow before the financial and political crisis that erupted in Russia in August 1998.

2 Russian statistics are still not very reliable, and those on Moscow are no exception. Whenever possible I prefer to use data published by the Department of Press and Information of the Moscow Municipal Government in such editions as Pul’s and Simptom. These publications, although not classified, are published only in 680 copies each to provide information for the deputies of the City and State Dumas, as well as for the Russian government, for Moscow’s high officials, and for the editors of some newspapers. I am most grateful to those people in Moscow who assisted me in obtaining these editions.

3 Moscow mayor Luzhkov boasts that Moscow contributes an even 43 percent to the state budget (Obshchaia gazeta, 16–22 October 1997), but this is apparently an exaggeration.

4 Actually this figure should be somewhat higher because of the widespread practice of tax evasion and employment in the “shadow economy.”

5 By 1997, the number of those employed in small businesses (no more than 7 or 8 employees) in Moscow has reached 1.3 million people. In addition, a significant number of people are employed in these businesses without registration, in order to

Actually, this may be another myth. Some scholars are of the opinion that this emblem was borrowed by the Moscow Grand Prince Ivan III from the Habsburgs.

The neo-Russian style had experienced a certain influence of *fin-de siècle* styles like the Vienna Secession and the *art nouveau*, especially in the use of new materials and designs. At the same time, its champions rejected the "cosmopolitanism" of their Western counterparts and to some extent strove to carry on traditions of the pseudo-Russian style. In its turn, the neo-Russian style exerted a certain influence upon the Soviet architecture of the 1930s and 1940s (Borisova and Kazhdan 1971:143 ff.; Kirichenko 1978:148 ff.).

Of 720 religious edifices in pre-Revolutionary Moscow only 286 have survived (Raninsky 1998:36).

In the Soviet period, more than twenty-five Moscow cemeteries were destroyed or removed to other places.

Actually, the construction had been finished by 1882, but the consecration of the Cathedral took place on May 26, 1883.

The third element of this tripartite formula is often translated as "nationality," but the word "peoplehood" better reflects its implied meaning.

"How many soldiers' blood did he spill on foreign soil!" wrote Joseph Brodsky already in his 1974 poem "On the Death of Zhukov." In this respect, however, Zhukov did not differ much from other Soviet marshals and generals, who never spared the lives of their soldiers.

Many rumors persist in Moscow about the sources of his wealth, but very little is known for certain. What is well known, however, is that Tsereteli owns virtually all the bronze smelting plants in Russia.

Unfortunately, the opponents of Tsereteli were joined by some Russian nationalists who provided the purely artistic dispute with a xenophobic touch by pointing out the sculptor's Georgian origin. One TV report referred to Peter's monument as a Georgian statue made of Russian metal.

In April 1997, when it seemed that the monument would be dismantled, one of the members of the Russian government told me that this hope was in vain. He explained: "The monument had already swallowed too much money, and there is nowhere from which to get the funds to demolish it. Besides, no one in the government wants to argue against Luzhkov." It soon turned out that my interlocutor had assessed the situation better than the opponents of Tsereteli had.

A previous and more modest but much better monument to Dostoevsky by the sculptor Merkulov had been built on Tsvetnoi Boulevard. In 1936, it was moved to the writer's museum on Novaia Bozhedomovka Street.

My friend, Galina Starovoitova, a member of the Russian parliament and one of the most outspoken democratic politicians in the country, was going to raise this issue in the State Duma. However, she was assassinated in November 1998.

In December 1998, the State Duma resolved to restore on Lubyanka Square a monument to Dzerzhinsky, a founder of the Soviet secret police, which had been removed immediately after the failure of the August 1991 putsch. Under such circumstances, the monument to the victims on the same square with the monument to the hangman would be another, and even greater insult to their memory.

This is what I myself witnessed in January 1998.

I am grateful to Russell Zanca, who drew my attention to this saying.
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