Imperial Ancestry:
The Soviet Union's Relationship with the Past

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18 March 2022

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Acknowledgments

This thesis was certainly one of the harder undertakings of my college career, but with that being said, it has certainly been the most rewarding endeavor. None of this would have been possible if it was not for the help and support of an incredible group of students, faculty, and friends. First and foremost, you would not be reading this thesis if it was not for the exceptional guidance and support of my faculty advisor and mentor, Dr. Adrienne Edgar. I simply cannot express how much her support has and will continue to mean to me. I began preparing and researching for this thesis in the spring of 2021, and Dr. Edgar was with me every step of the way. I will always be extraordinarily grateful for her immense patience, her advice, and her supervision. I would also like to express my sincerest gratitude to Dr. Volker Welter, who provided me with guidance and direction, as well as encouraged me to take an honors thesis to begin with, albeit within the Department of Art and Architecture. In addition, I would like to thank my incredible course instructor, Dr. Bradford Bouley, who provided not only great feedback but also much-needed moral support. I would like to thank the Hoover Institution at Stanford University for allowing me to view their extensive collection of propaganda posters and photographs from tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union. The University of California at Santa Barbara's Office of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities was instrumental in providing financial support to visit the archives so for that, I owe them my thanks. I would like to extend my gratitude to Vincent Ton, Emily Searson, Illiana Lievanos, and James Scherrer, all of whom provided excellent feedback in the writing and review process. I would like to thank my family for their encouragement and support. Lastly, I would like to thank all of my history instructors, from elementary school to college, as they fostered and encouraged my love for history from the beginning.

Introduction

In the aftermath of the October Revolution of 1917, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and its successor state, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, underwent a period of radical change that resulted in major social, economic, and political upheaval. A key aspect of this revolutionary process was the rejection of the tsarist and imperial past, which resulted in a selective and methodical iconoclasm.[1] Imperial monograms and coats of arms were ripped from buildings and stripped from military uniforms, in a process that historian Richard Stites called "deromanovization."[2] Nearly overnight, the imagery symbolizing 300 years of Romanov rule disappeared from Russian life. During this "deromanovization," some tsarist-era statues were transported to a discrete location and hidden away from public view. However, many other statues were completely destroyed. In the absence of tsarist imagery, the internationalism of socialist political theory sought to fill the void. After the regime change, the Soviet government under Vladimir Lenin rejected and destroyed images of the past, instead preferring international proletarian solidarity.

The Soviet government was tasked with the creation of a redefined image for their state. Would the pantheon of Soviet ancestry focus on the tsars, who ruled Russia for centuries, or on the revolutionaries who so heavily influenced the new regime's leaders? Should school children learn about the tsars, like Peter I and Ivan IV, or about leaders of the revolutionary movement, like Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels? Although it took nearly 14 years for this debate to be settled, the answer was that both the tsarist past and the Bolshevik present was able to coexist within the Soviet society of the 1930s. Once it became clear that the global revolution of the

[1] When I refer to selective iconoclasm, I refer to the destruction of images and statues. This iconoclasm was selective insofar as some statues were destroyed, while others were kept intact, and many remain standing to this day. The criterion for removal was vague, and I am unable to provide a definitive list of guidelines dictating why certain statues were removed while others were spared.

[2] Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 65.

working classes to overthrow the yoke of capitalism would never materialize, especially after the failure of the German Revolution of 1918, the Soviet government had to make a difficult decision. Figures like Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, although martyrs of the revolutionary movement, were foreign and completely unfamiliar; whereas the familiar faces of the past represented everything the Soviets opposed.

From 1917 until 1931, Soviet authorities thoroughly rejected the past in favor of an internationalist approach. However, this approach proved difficult in creating a shared common history and did little to lend legitimacy to the USSR. Despite this, the Bolsheviks still managed to transform the cultural landscape of the Soviet Union. According to Richard Stites in his book, *Soviet Popular Culture*, "the main forces in this cultural crusade were the avant-garde and the Proletarian Culture movement (Proletcult)."[3] The avant-garde in tsarist Russia had a limited lifespan, but during that time it was able to flourish. Movements like Constructivism, Futurism, Cubo-Futurism, and Suprematism represented an internationalist approach to culture and reached their heights during this era. These avant-garde movements, which lacked nationalist symbolism, should not be given short shrift, but the state-sponsored traditionalist style of socialist realism eventually became the predominant artistic ideology.

After Vladimir Lenin died in 1924, Joseph Stalin seized the reigns of powers; the USSR slowly shifted towards a nationalistic approach which complicated the evolving relationship between the Bolsheviks and the history they sought to destroy only a few years before. By 1931, the figures of the past were revived and rehabilitated back into Soviet society. Similarly, the visual arts witnessed a revival of classicism. The style of socialist realism became promoted by the USSR in 1932 and encompassed all aspects of Soviet society, from theater and music to art

[3] Richard Stites, *Soviet Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society in Russia since 1900* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 38-9.

and architecture. The Soviet government's increasing totalitarianism and control over the visual arts effectively made the USSR into the world's first "propaganda state."[4] Figures like Kazimir Malevich, Wassily Kandinsky, Moisei Ginzburg, and Vladimir Tatlin fell out of favor with Soviet officials, due to the leadership's traditional and classicist tastes in art. This gradual shift from world revolution to socialism in one county is what historian Nicholas Timasheff referred to as the "Great Retreat."[5] The retreat did not stop with the Soviet's relationship with the past, as there were also dramatic changes in regard to the family, the school, and the church. To many of Stalin's contemporaries, this regression from internationalist socialist values to Russocentric nationalism was considered a betrayal of Marxist thought.

As previously mentioned, it would be misleading to claim that this shift was the complete rejection of internationalist communism. In actuality, communist ideology was synthesized with nationalism to create the ideology of national Bolshevism and the concept of the *Sovetskii Narod* (Soviet people). Russocentric nationalism was effective in creating a shared common history, while internationalism was able to bring the peripheral soviet socialist republics (SSRs) closer into line with the RSFSR. Some historians postulate that the shift was a pragmatic decision derived solely from the need to prepare the USSR for war, especially in the face of rising fascist and national socialist threats, in particular those emerging from Germany and Japan.[6] However, I believe this view is incomplete; the deviation from internationalism began once Stalin came to power, becoming blatantly visible in 1931 and onwards. This thesis traces the evolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' evolving view of the tsarist past from 1917 until 1945. I

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[4] David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 77-8.
[5] Nicholas S. Timasheff. *The Great Retreat: The Growth and Decline of Communism in Russia*. New York City, NY: Arno Press, 1946. p. 21.
[6] Steven Maddox, "These Monuments Must Be Protected! the Stalinist Turn to the Past and Historic Preservation during the Blockade of Leningrad," *The Russian Review* 70, no. 4 (2011): pp. 608-626, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41290030, p. 611.

will explain how the Soviet usage of Russian national and classical motifs in society changed. Specifically, I will focus on the changing opinions toward the Romanov tsars and their servants, the pre-Romanov past, and the revival of classicist architecture within Soviet society. I will present a more complete understanding of this Soviet policy shift which, although many historians argue it was a decision mainly made for war, I believe was a pragmatic policy enacted to create a shared common history and gain legitimacy in order to present the USSR as a worthy successor to the Russian Empire.

In Chapter One, I will look at the Soviet regime's initial relationship with the past through the analysis of a decree issued by the Council of People's Commissars. The chapter will also trace the rehabilitation of the Romanov tsars as well as the generals and admirals who fought under them. In the end of the first chapter, I will present evidence that examines the Soviet leadership's unpreparedness and self-sabotaging actions in the lead up to the Second World War which seeks to refute claims that the rehabilitation and revival was in order to mobilize for war. The second chapter will look at the rehabilitation of pre-Romanov figures, mainly those from the Muscovite state and right before the Romanov rise to power after the Time of Troubles. Chapter Two will also focus on the reintroduction of Russian history in Soviet schools and how the Soviets sought to increase their legitimacy in the eyes of the people. In this second chapter, I will look at one particularly important byproduct of the fusion of nationalism and internationalism; the concept of the *Sovetskii Narod*. The third and final chapter will discuss the initial supremacy of the avant-garde within the Soviet artistic community. I will then examine the pivot in 1931in regard to the revival of classicist architecture as a tool to gain legitimacy. The conclusion includes an epilogue that will touch on the revival of the tsarist past after the collapse

of the Soviet Union in 1991, as well as explaining more recent aspects of the tsarist revival under the presidency of Vladimir Putin.

Historiography

The Russian Revolution and its consequences have been extensively examined and studied, including immediately after the event itself. As early as 1946, historians have tackled the communist retreat. However, as in any subject, areas of disagreement among contemporaries arose. The main areas of contention regard the timeframe and purpose of the rehabilitation and revival. In particular, which year did this rehabilitation start: 1934 as proposed by early Soviet historians, or 1931, as other historians have more recently postulated? Some scholars have adopted a false dichotomy in relation to this rehabilitation. While nationalism was allowed to permeate to the forefront of Soviet society, communism and internationalism was not completely shunned. There were clear attempts at creating a unified Soviet people; the *Sovetskii Narod* was an internationalist concept. Many historians overlook genuine attempts at internationalism and view the retreat as a complete betrayal of the early aspirations of the Bolsheviks. Rather, the revival should be viewed as the most pragmatic path to achieving a communist society built upon the proletariat and class struggle. This thesis will present a clearer narrative than the ones that have been previously discussed by historians.

Soviet director Sergei Eisenstein's 1928 historical silent film, *October: Ten Days That Shook The World*, depicted the dramatized events of the October Revolution. The film was commissioned by the Soviet government to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the revolution and is based on the 1919 book *Ten Days That Shook The World* by the American socialist and journalist, John "Jack" Reed. The film gloriously depicts the demolition of a tsarist-era statue. Outside the realm of cinema, photographs depict eager Bolsheviks holding the severed marble head of a statue of Alexander II. Others depict crowds standing around a mass of burning tsarist icons and the tearing down of statues of tsarist generals. The photographs would lead one to assume that iconoclasm after the revolution was a sporadic and chaotic event. However, in spite

of Eisenstein's depiction of these events, the destruction of these symbols was much more complex than one could imagine.

Relatively little attention has been paid to the iconoclasm that occurred after the collapse of the Russian Empire and the Provisional Government in February and October of 1917, respectively. While there is plenty of scholarship that mentions the iconoclasm and destruction of the symbols of the old regime, it typically has been discussed as a brief aside on the way to an author's much broader claims and analysis about the revolution writ large. Historian Aaron Cohen discusses the fate of imperial monuments and the iconoclastic behavior associated with their destruction and removal in a thorough and complete manner. Cohen argues that the "actual demolition of tsarist monuments was neither spontaneous nor populist. The real monument to Alexander III in Moscow...was brought down not in 1917 by ordinary people or iconoclastic revolutionaries but in 1918 by the city soviet."[7] This was due, in part, to the size of many of the monuments. It would be nearly impossible for average citizens to remove certain statues without the use of elaborate scaffolding and proper tools. The iconoclasm was mainly perpetuated by Bolshevik authorities as they were the only ones who had the capabilities of removing the monumental relics of the Russian Empire. These iconoclastic measures were not unpopular, as many citizens were not sad to see symbols of tsarist oppression be removed. The selective iconoclasm in the Soviet Union that Cohen discusses was due to the fact that "the criteria for removal of statues in those cities reflected the agenda of artists, critics, and art preservationist campaigners from late imperial Russia who convinced Bolshevik politicians to accept their authority in art matters."[8] Cohen wrote that the tearing down of statues and monuments "in early revolutionary Russia was thus a political and aesthetic struggle rooted in imperial Russian civic

[7] Aaron J. Cohen, "The Limits of Iconoclasm," *City* 24, no. 3-4 (March 2020): pp. 616-626, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13604813.2020.1784584?journalCode=ccit20, p. 616.
[8] Ibid. p. 617.

culture. Early Bolshevik anti-monument policy...ended up conservative because art preservationists had more power than maximalists in a revolutionary culture that was still unstable and undetermined."[9] To Cohen, the recent symbols of the old regime were destroyed because of the reputation and connotation behind them, while monuments of earlier eras were actually preserved because of desirable aesthetic properties. While I agree that the iconoclasm was far from a spontaneous and indiscriminate demolition, I would argue that the guidelines Cohen proposed are flawed. In particular, the statues of Mikhail I and the peasant martyr Ivan Susanin from 1835 were removed, despite depicting figures from early Romanov rule. The statues were built before the Crimean War, which has generally been identified as a cutoff point for when tsarist rehabilitation was ended. Similarly, the large equestrian statue of Alexander III, the penultimate Russian tsar, was preserved throughout the Bolshevik period and stands in St. Petersburg today.

The rehabilitation and revival of the past that I discuss at great length has also been written about among historians as early as 1946, only a year after the end of the Second World War, during which the rehabilitation was still well underway. The previously mentioned "Great Retreat" was coined by Nicholas Timasheff in his 1946 book of the same name. Timasheff argues that the retreat began in 1934, as a result of the Bolshevik's failure to produce a communist utopia.[10] The Bolshevik regime, despite its bold aspirations, eventually came face to face with more modest realities, producing a change in course. This shift emerged from the need to stabilize Soviet society and increase popular support in order to mobilize for war. Timasheff highlights three areas of Soviet society that underwent a retreat: the family, the school, and the church. He explains how abortion was discouraged beginning in 1935 and "unregistered

[9] Ibid. pp. 616-7.
[10] Timasheff, *The Great Retreat*, p. 21.

marriage" was abolished in 1944.[11] The Soviet school system was completely revamped, beginning with the reintroduction of academic degrees in 1934. Timasheff also explains how the Russian Orthodox Church was revived and rehabilitated during the Second World War in order to rally the population against the Nazi invasion. "The Great Retreat" was a formative book regarding the shifting opinion taken by the Soviet Union in the mid-1930s. Timasheff's book looks at Soviet social, economic, and political life as undergoing a rehabilitation– an observation that cannot be disputed. However, he does not focus on the Soviet relationship with the past.

Additionally, Timasheff's book has been criticized in recent years, especially given the age of the text itself. The book's subtitle, "The Growth and Decline of Communism in Russia" is of particular concern, as the USSR was still nearly half a century away from collapse and it seemed premature to discuss events still in motion. In their article, "The People Need a Tsar: The Emergence of National Bolshevism as Stalinist Ideology," David Brandenberger and A.M. Dubrovsky traced the emergence of national Bolshevism as a component of Soviet state ideology from 1931 to 1941. They believe that historians like Nicholas Timasheff failed to properly diagnose the cause of this newfound nationalism. They identified 1931 as the starting point for the rehabilitation of historical figures and the revival of the past, as opposed to Timasheff's findings, which indicate 1934. Brandenberger and Dubrovsky link "the ideology's emergence to a preoccupation with state building and legitimacy within the party hierarchy which is visible in the latter's views on history during the 1930s."[12] Brandenberger and Dubrovsky demonstrate this complex rapprochement between the tsarist past and the Bolshevik present through Joseph Stalin's request to remove a reprinting of I.E. Repin's gruesome painting "Ivan the Terrible's

[11] Ibid. p. 217.
[12] D. L. Brandenberger and A. M. Dubrovsky, "'The People Need a Tsar': The Emergence of National Bolshevism as Stalinist Ideology, 1931–1941," *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, no. 5 (1998): pp. 873-892, https://www.jstor.org/stable/153897, p. 883.

Murder of His Own Son," from Professor Andrei V. Shestakov's 1937 textbook, *A Short History of the U.S.S.R*.[13] This incident shows how opinions towards historical figures, no matter how cruel they appeared, were beginning to shift. The article argues that "national Bolshevism began as phenomenon reflecting the party hierarchy's preoccupation with state building and legitimacy...pragmatism, rather than genuine Russian nationalism, led to this ideological about-face and meant that national Bolshevism could be publicly promoted alongside a slowly-fading internationalist ethic for much of the 1930s."[14] The decline of internationalist solidarity was explained when Brandenberger and Dubrovsky detailed how Soviet calls to topple the reactionary regime of C.G.E. Mannerheim in Finland failed in mobilizing the Red Army. However, the calls to create a *cordon sanitaire* around Leningrad, by way of toppling Mannerheim's regime, proved more than effective in rallying the troops.[15] Brandenberger and Dubrovsky focus on the rehabilitation as a tool to gain legitimacy and introduce popular mobilization, whereas Timasheff views it as the Soviet's realization that they could not achieve the communist utopia they so desperately strove to implement.

Brandenberger continued his analysis of the shift towards Russian nationalism in a separate work. In the book *National Bolshevism*, he explains how the notion of national Bolshevism was a "sea change in Soviet ideology– a tacit acknowledgement of the superiority of populist, nativist, and even nationalist rallying calls over propaganda oriented around utopian idealism."[16] Brandenberger writes, "this ideological coup should be seen as the catalyst for the formation of a mass sense of national identity within Russian-speaking society between the late 1930s and early 1950s."[17] Brandenberger identifies 1856 as an important year, as it was after the

[13] Ibid. p. 881.
[14] Ibid. p. 883.
[15] Ibid. p. 881.
[16] Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, p. 2.
[17] Ibid. p. 2.

Russian Empire's disastrous defeat in the Crimean War that no tsarist icons could be rehabilitated.[18] The reason for this cutoff was primarily due to the fact that many figures that sought to uphold the old order clashed with revolutionaries immediately following this time period. Many "Old Bolsheviks" were born either during the reign of Alexander II, who was assassinated by radical revolutionaries, or during the reign of his son, Alexander III. The clash between tsarist leaders and revolutionaries was notably showcased by Vladimir Lenin's brother, Aleksandr Ulyanov, who was executed after plotting to assassinate Alexander III in 1887, and by Vera Figner, who was imprisoned after successfully planning the assassination of Alexander II. Furthermore, Brandenberger explains how the Soviet regime felt as if it was the successor to the Russian Empire, as shown in the classroom instruction of how the Five-Year Plans and industrialization were similar in nature to the radical westernizing reforms of Tsar Peter I.[19]

While the destruction of monuments symbolized the rejection of the past, the building of new monuments reflected the rehabilitation of the old regime in Soviet society. Steven Maddox wrote about another trend in Soviet society, which was the restoration and preservation of existing tsarist-era statues during the Second World War. Many historians paid little attention to this fascinating chapter in the Soviet rehabilitation of the past. In the article, "These Monuments Must Be Protected!," Maddox argues that "the exceptional actions taken to preserve Leningrad's historic and cultural monuments resulted from the convergence of the city's long tradition of historic preservation and the Stalinist state's rehabilitation of Russia's past in the decade leading up to the war."[20] Throughout his article, Maddox shows that, during the siege of Leningrad from 1941 to 1944, the Soviet government took extensive steps to preserve, protect, and restore tsarist monuments from the daily bombing raids by the Luftwaffe. This protection was done in

[18] Ibid. pp. 92-3.
[19] Ibid. pp. 134-6.
[20] Maddox, "These Monuments Must Be Protected!" p. 609.

numerous ways, from painting the domes of cathedrals with non-reflective paint to temporarily removing the ornate spires of larger tsarist or Orthodox buildings, and encasing statues in layers of sand within a framework.[21] As the Nazis made their way into the Russian countryside, the Soviet government went to extraordinary lengths to protect these monuments. Teams of architects in Leningrad were sent out during the bombings to carefully document their cultural heritage. These architects were so valued by the government that they were given first-tier ration cards, entitling them to double the bread of an average Leningrader, and as much as front-line armaments manufacturers.[22] As the siege progressed, more and more architects and professional workers were killed by the bombs or died of starvation. Eventually however, the tide of the war turned, and the Red Army repelled the Nazis, pushing them back to Berlin and allowing the residents of Leningrad to walk the streets to begin rebuilding. Maddox claims that, as the threat of war dramatically increased during the 1930s, the Stalinist regime embraced the past to bolster nationalism and rally the nation for the outbreak of war. Maddox concludes that "the importance of Leningrad's historic monuments as embodiments of nearly two and centuries of tsarist and Soviet history necessitated their protection."[23] Maddox heavily emphasizes the amount of cultural heritage that could have been destroyed if it was not for the preservation efforts of the Soviet people, which of course is paradoxical considering the "deromanovization" campaign of the early Soviet regime. Maddox's work studies an often-overlooked aspect of this rehabilitation and revival. While the rehabilitation was most evident in the construction of new monuments, Maddox highlights the interaction between the Soviets and the past that was not destroyed. Cohen explains how they went to great lengths, and often suffered great bodily harm, to protect the past that early Bolsheviks left unscathed. It is easy to reduce this rehabilitation to the writing

[21] Ibid. pp. 614-5.
[22] Ibid. p. 619.
[23] Ibid. p. 626.

of new history textbooks in the 1930s, but it is important to not overlook the protection of the past during the most violent conflict in human history.

After an analysis of the previous scholarship in regard to the Soviet Union's imperial ancestry, the main areas of dispute I have identified and seek to clarify is the year at which the rehabilitation occurred and the reason as to why the rehabilitation began. While I agree with Nicholas Timasheff that the Soviet government realized they were unable to create the utopia they once hoped for, there is clear evidence that 1931 was in fact the turning point. However, it would be erroneous to claim that the Bolsheviks abandoned communist internationalist principles, because they did not. Soviet society was still communist, but their tenets were fused with those of Russocentric nationalism. The fusion of nationalism and communism, although seemingly paradoxical, combined the most useful aspects of both ideologies into national Bolshevism. David Brandenberger presents ample evidence that the opinions towards the past within the Soviet Union were shifting away from internationalism and towards nationalism by 1931. Furthermore, I agree with Brandenberger's claim that the rehabilitation was in part due to the Soviet's obsession with legitimacy. However, Brandenberger also claimed that, in addition to legitimacy, the rehabilitation was due to popular mobilization for war. I take issue with this claim as I remain unconvinced that the Soviet government was preparing for war in 1931.

Chapter One: The Rehabilitation of the Romanov Tsars and Their Servants

The epoch of Peter I was one of the greatest pages in the history of the Russian people.

– Aleksei Nikolayevich Tolstoy, 1937 [24]

As the Russian Civil War raged across the nation from 1917 until 1923, the new ruling party of Russia and eventual victors of the war set about transforming the landscape of their new empire. In anticipation of May Day celebrations in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist

[24] Anatolii Danat, "'At Aleksei Tolstoi's.' *Skorokhodovskii Rabochii*, 15 September 1937" in *Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda*, edited by Kevin M. Platt and David Brandenberger, Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006. p. 72.

Republic (RSFSR)– the predecessor to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic and largest constituent state within the USSR– the Council of People's Commissars published a decree. The decree was entitled "On Monuments of the Republic," and was released on 12 April 1918.[25] This document, which became widely referred to as Vladimir Lenin's Plan for Monumental Propaganda, is key to understanding the early policy set by the RSFSR/USSR regarding their relationship with the preceding regime for the following decade and a half. The decree was issued by the highest governing executive body within the Soviet Union, the Council of People's Commissars– also known as the *Soviet narodnykh kommissarovor* (Sovnarkom). On 14 April 1918, two days after the decree was issued, it appeared on the front pages of the Soviet Communist Party's official newspaper, *Pravda*, and on the major daily Russian publication, *Izvestia*. The decree stated that "monuments erected in honour of the tsars and their servants and of no historical or artistic interest, should be removed from the streets and squares, some stored away, and others put to some utilitarian use" and be replaced with "new ones reflecting the ideas and mood of revolutionary working Russia."[26]

The decree tasked the Arts Boards of Moscow and Petrograd, the People's Commissars for Education and the Property of the Republic, and the Fine Arts Department of the Commissariat for Education with determining which monuments should be removed. These commissions were instructed to "mobilize artists and organize a broad competition for the design of monuments to celebrate the great days of the Russian Socialist Revolution."[27] Notable revolutionary monuments that were constructed in response to the decree include Aleksandr

[25] Vladimir I. Lenin, "Decree of the Soviet of People's Commissars, 'On Monuments of the Republic'," Soviet May Day Decree, 2002, https://www.marxists.org/subject/mayday/soviet/decree.html.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.

Mateev's *Monument to Karl Marx* (1918), Viktor Sinaiski's *Monument to Ferdinand Lassalle* (1918) and Nikolai Andreev's *Monument to Danton* (1919).[28]

The document goes on to elaborate that coats of arms, emblems, and street names should also be changed or removed to better reflect the revolutionary atmosphere of Russia. Following the release of this statement, photographers captured the Bolsheviks tearing down the double-headed eagle along with other tsarist symbols across Russia. Lenin made no attempt to conceal his anger at the perceived lack of progress made to the extent of the iconoclasm. In a telegram to the People's Commissar to Education, Anatoly Lunacharsky, Lenin wrote "I am surprised and indignant at your inactivity."[29] In another letter, this time to P.P. Malinovsky, the Acting People's Commissar for the Properties of the Republic, Lenin wrote "Why is it that...work has not begun in Moscow...on a *proper* removal of tsarist monuments [or] on the removal of tsarist eagles?"[30] Lenin even suggested at one point to use the unemployed in his systematic removal of tsarist imagery.

However, while Lenin ordered the destruction of tsarist-era statues, many were not destroyed. The Bronze Horseman, a large equestrian statue depicting Tsar Peter I, was left undamaged in Petrograd; and later during the siege of Leningrad by the Nazis in the Second World War, the statue was enclosed in a sand-filled wooden sarcophagus to protect it from bombs, as seen in Figure #1.[31] A large equestrian statue of Alexander III, a highly conservative and reactionary tsar, was left unharmed for several years. It was later relocated to the Marble

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[28] Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor, *Art of the Soviets: Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-Party State, 1917-1992* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 17-24.
[29] Ibid. p. 19.
[30] Vladimir I. Lenin, "TO P. P. MALINOVSKY," Lenin: 75. to P. P. Malinovsky, accessed November 15, 2021, https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1918/may/13.htm.
[31] "St. Petersburg (Leningrad) during the Great Patriotic War and the Siege (1941-1945)," History of St. Petersburg during World War II, accessed November 13, 2021, http://www.saint-petersburg.com/history/great-patriotic-war-and-siege-of-leningrad/.

Palace in Saint Petersburg, where it remains today.[32] During the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution, the statue was placed into a cage and carted around as an effigy of the old regime, as seen in Figure #2.[33] It appears that some statues were saved because of their artistic merits or historical contribution to society. The Bronze Horseman in Saint Petersburg certainly was a historically significant monument that the Bolsheviks realized warranted protection, while the equestrian statue of Alexander III was a useful tool to mock the tsar. However, the statues that were preserved, no matter the reason why, seemed to be in the minority. There remains far more evidence of the systematic repurposing and iconoclastic destruction of tsarist statues and imagery. A prominent statue that was destroyed includes a large statue of Alexander III sitting upon a throne directly outside of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior; the head was severed, and scaffolding was placed around the statue to aid in its destruction.[34] Figure #3 shows the Alexander III statue shortly after its unveiling in 1912. The statue of Alexander II "the Tsar-Liberator," which sat outside the Kremlin, was also destroyed.[35] A monument to Tsar Michael I, the first Romanov ruler of Russia, and Ivan Susanin, a Russian peasant who symbolized the peasantry's devotion to the tsar, also fell victim to Bolshevik erasure.[36] An obelisk that marked the Romanov Tercentenary in 1913 had the double-headed imperial eagle removed and was repurposed into an obelisk for the revolution.[37] Statues of tsars were not the

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[32] "ПАМЯТНИК АЛЕКСАНДРУ III: Сады Русского Музея," Сады Русского Музея, March 2, 2020, https://igardens.ru/monument_alexander_iii/.
[33] Ibid.
[34] The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Photography Collection, The New York Public Library. "Statue of Alexander III in Moscow; Demolition of the statue of Alexander III." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed November 13, 2021. https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47db-a80d-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99.
[35] Amos Chapple, "Before Lenin: The Monuments of Tsarist Russia," RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty (Before Lenin: The Monuments Of Tsarist Russia, February 25, 2021), https://www.rferl.org/a/before-lenin-monuments-tsarist-russia/31119743.html.
[36] "Foundation Anniversary of the Monument to Tsar Mikhail Romanov and Peasant Ivan Susanin," Boris Yeltsin Presidential Library, October 29, 2021, https://www.prlib.ru/en/history/619120.
[37] "Unveiling of a Restored Obelisk Commemorating the House of Romanov's Rule." President of Russia, November 4, 2013. http://en.kremlin.ru/events/administration/19559.

only statues at risk of destruction. Tsarist generals and admirals were also fair game, as shown in a photograph depicting the destruction of a statue of General Mikhail Skobelev.[38]

The decree issued by the Council of People's Commissars set the ideological framework of Soviet society for 14 years. However, beginning in the early-1930s, the Soviet's view of their past began to alter, and certain imperial-era figures were rehabilitated and began to make a resurgence within Soviet society. A few years after Joseph Stalin came to power, the tsarist past was no longer viewed with the level of contempt it had been under Vladimir Lenin. The Soviet authorities began to view their past as a useful tool that could be exploited to rally the population. This reintroduction and rehabilitation of what Lenin called "tsars and their servants" is visible throughout the 1930s, specifically in the rehabilitation of Tsar Peter I "the Great." The writer Aleksey Nikolayevich Tolstoy wrote a multi-volume novel, *Peter I*, which helped restore the image of Russia's most influential tsar.[39] This is in stark contrast to Tolstoy's early works under Bolshevik rule. Between 1917–18, A.N. Tolstoy wrote "Peter's Day" in which he portrayed the tsar as a cruel and despotic tsar who reigned with contempt.[40] In this story, Tolstoy wrote that Peter's "incoherent, drunken words with their obscure meaning deepened the sense of fear among the guests."[41] Tolstoy concluded that Peter expressed that, "a cap with horns might be more suitable for me than a crown."[42] From these quotes, Peter is depicted by Tolstoy as an alcoholic and a barbarian. However, beginning in 1929 with Tolstoy's first volume of *Peter I*, he began to see the tsar in a new light, one that was completely in opposition to his writing just over

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[38] The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Photography Collection, The New York Public Library. "Demolition of the statue of Alexander III; Demolition of the statue of Skobelev." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed November 13, 2021. https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47db-a80e-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99.

[39] All of Aleksey Nikolayevich Tolstoy's works on Peter I from 1929–34 are eponymously named *Peter I*.

[40] Kevin M. Platt. "Rehabilitation and Afterimage." in *Epic Revisionism*, p. 49.

[41] A.N. Tolstoy, "Den' Petra," *Sobranie sochinenii v desiati tomakh*, 10 vols. (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1982–1986), 3:99 in *Epic Revisionism*. p. 49.

[42] Ibid. p. 49.

a decade earlier. In the volume from 1929, Tolstoy wrote that "At lunch [Peter's] spirits again seemed to rise. Some noticed a new habit in him– a dark, steady gaze. In the middle of discussion or jokes, he would suddenly fall silent and begin to stare at someone– impenetrably, inquisitively– with an inhuman gaze."[43] Peter I was viewed as a complex figure, and as a tsar who had to balance both the tradition of the past with his bold vision for the future. Tolstoy wrote, in his unfinished third volume from 1943–45, that Peter "spoke little but listened attentively…his round-checked face with its small, smiling mouth appeared genial."[44] Tolstoy elaborated that "Peter Alekseevich was feeling satisfied today that all his people were here sitting around the table arguing and carrying on about the great matter at hand [the construction of St. Petersburg], not giving a thought to how dangerous it was or whether it would be crowned with success."[45] By the time of his death in 1945, Tolstoy no longer portrayed the tsar as a despotic dictator but as a progressive leader who sought to increase Russia's prestige in all aspects of society.

However, not every Soviet politician during the 1930s approved of the rehabilitation of these figures. In a 1937 interview, A.N. Tolstoy stated that "not a single truthful film has ever been made about Russian history until now."[46] Tolstoy claimed that Trotskyist agitators tried to slander his work and reduce the budget of his films. "Fascist stooges," Tolstoy recalled, "attempted to impose on us their anti-Soviet, anti-historical understanding of Russian history, in particular regarding the Petrine epoch."[47] Lev Trotsky represented the internationalist-wing of the Communist Party who believed in permanent revolution, while Joseph Stalin led the nationalist-wing of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Stalin and Trotsky's

[43] Tolstoy, "Petr I: Kniga pervaia," *Sobranie sochinenii*, 7:358 in *Epic Revisionism*. p. 49.
[44] Tolstoy, "Petr I: Kniga tret'ia," *Sobranie sochinenii*, 7:701–2 in *Epic Revisionism*. p. 50.
[45] Ibid. p. 50.
[46] Anatolii Danat, "'At Aleksei Tolstoi's.' *Skorokhodovskii Rabochii*, 15 September 1937" in *Epic Revisionism*, p. 71.
[47] Ibid. p. 71.

relationship fractured when Stalin supported socialism in one country, a policy oriented towards strengthening communism in the USSR, rather than globally. Conversely, Trotsky favored permanent revolution and uncompromising internationalism. Tolstoy, a Stalin Prize-winning author, concluded that "the Trotskyites and RAPP (Russian Association of Proletarian Writers) critics denied the greatness of the Russian people…they simply erased the entirety of the Petrine epoch from history."[48] From this interview, we can see that the official line had shifted under Stalin, toward not only embracing traditional Russian history, but actively attacking those who disagreed with Russian chauvinism and instead preferred a more international approach to Soviet culture and society. RAPP was one of the agencies that aligned more with the ideology of permanent revolution, which is why Tolstoy displays such harsh attitudes towards RAPP and the Trotskyites in the interview. In his view, they seek to stop his rehabilitation and glorification of the past, as they saw it as a betrayal of an internationalist revolution.

The shift in the official opinion towards Peter I can also be seen in Professor Andrei V. Shestakov's 1937 textbook, *A Short History of the U.S.S.R.* In the textbook, Shestakov wrote that "Peter waged an unceasing war against the backwardness of Russia and reformed the country on European lines."[49] Although the textbook was published in 1937, Shestakov began working on an acceptable manuscript as a direct result of the reintroduction of the history curriculum within Soviet schools in 1931.[50] The need for a coherent textbook was compounded by Joseph Stalin's 1931 letter scolding the editorial board of the historical journal *Пролетарская революция* (*Proletarian Revolution*). In the letter, Stalin lambasted the staff for the publication of an "anti-Party and semi-Trotskyist article, 'The Bolsheviks on German Social-Democracy in the

[48] Ibid. p. 72.
[49] Andrei V. Shestakov, *A Short History of the U.S.S.R.; Textbook for 3rd & 4th Classes*. Moscow: Co-operative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the U.S.S.R., 1938. p. 79.
[50] The reintroduction of the historical curriculum and its significance will be discussed further in the second chapter.

Period of Its Pre-War Crisis.'"[51] Furthermore, Stalin stated that he was dissatisfied with the "books on the history of the C.P.S.U.(B.)," which, "despite all their merits, contain a number of errors in matters of principle and history."[52] After this letter, politicians within the ranks of the CPSU, most notably Pavel Postyshev, urged historians to create a reliable textbook. It is from these events in 1931, that Shestakov delivered a manuscript that answered the party leader's calls.

In his text, Shestakov dedicated several sections of the textbook to extolling the value of Peter's reforms, not only social reforms but also military, administrative, and educational reforms. "Under the reign of Peter I," Shestakov wrote, "Russia made great progress; nevertheless, it remained a country in which serf oppression and the tyranny of the tsar reigned supreme."[53] There were clear parallels drawn within the textbook that highlighted similarities between Peter's Russia and Stalin's Soviet Union. The reforms undertaken by Stalin, such as the Five-Year Plan, clearly drew upon Peter's modernization efforts and helped lend legitimacy to the Soviet state. At the same time, Shestakov walks a fine line between praising the tsar and criticizing him for the deeply inegalitarian society Peter helped perpetuate and prolong. However, Peter was very clearly not a figure that was viewed as tyrannical as his descendants, as the textbook does not seek to portray Alexander I, whom the book refers to as the "gendarme of Europe," in a positive light.[54] [55] Nicholas I and Alexander II are not portrayed positively either; the latter's decision to liberate the serfs was heavily critiqued in the book since no land was given to the serfs upon their emancipation.

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[51] Joseph V. Stalin, "Some Questions Concerning the History of Bolshevism," Letter to the Editorial Board of the Magazine "Proletarskaya Revolutsia", 2008, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1931/x01/x01.htm.
[52] Ibid.
[53] A.V. Shestakov, *A Short History of the U.S.S.R*. p. 81.
[54] Ibid. p. 100.
[55] It is of note that although the textbook refers to Tsar Alexander I (r. 1801–25) as the "gendarme of Europe," most modern contemporaries award this title to his younger brother and successor, Nicholas I (r. 1825–55).

The greatest amount of historical rehabilitation occurred during the Second World War– known in Russia as the Great Patriotic War. Throughout the wartime period, numerous tsarist figures became namesakes of Soviet military orders. Admiral Pavel Nakhimov, who served under Tsar Nicholas I during the Crimean War and who was fatally wounded at the Siege of Sevastopol, was rehabilitated and became the namesake of the Order of Nakhimov (1944) at the start of the Second World War, as seen in an undated propaganda poster issued by the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS).[56] In a similar TASS poster from the same time period, Admiral Fyodor Ushakov, who fought during the Russo-Turkish Wars under Tsarina Catherine II, became the namesake for the Order of Ushakov (1943).[57] The Order of Suvorov (1942) took its name from the famed general Count Alexander Suvorov, who was also honored in propaganda posters during the wartime period.[58] General Mikhail Kutuzov, another iconic tsarist general, who served under Catherine II, Paul I, and Alexander I, was the namesake for the Order of Kutuzov (1943).[59] These orders were some of the highest military awards in the Soviet Union and were created starting in 1942, a year after the USSR joined in the Second World War.[60] In addition to the creation of military orders, Alexander Suvorov and Pavel Nakhimov became the namesakes of the Suvorov Military School and the Nakhimov Naval School, both being military

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[56] Orden Nakhimova. Otvazhnyi voin, slavnyi patriot...V serdtsakh Sovetskikh moriakov zhivet Nakhimova nemerknushchaia slava..., 1941/1945?, Poster collection, Hoover Institution Library & Archives, https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/24604/orden-nakhimova-otvazhnyi-voin-slavnyi-patriot-v-serdts.
[57] Orden Ushakova. V boiakh nepobedim byl Ushakov. "Morskim Suvorovym" zovetsia on po pravu..., 1939/1945?, Poster collection, Hoover Institution Library & Archives, https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/24688/orden-ushakova-v-boiakh-nepobedim-byl-ushakov-morskim-suv.
[58] Suvorovskie mesta… Tam, gde pobezhdali v bitvakh nashi dedy, vnov' proslavlen russkii bogatyr'-soldat. I Suvorov, gordyi nasheiu pobedoi, pozdravliaet doblestnykh vnuchat., 1939/1944?, Poster collection, Hoover Institution Library & Archives, https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/24637/suvorovskie-mesta--tam-gde-pobezhdali-v-bitvakh-nashi-de.
[59] Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, p. 133.
[60] The Moscow Kremlin Museums, "Military Awards of Russia. in Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of Victory in the Second World War," MILITARY AWARDS OF RUSSIA. IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF VICTORY IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR, accessed January 11, 2022, https://www.kreml.ru/en-Us/exhibitions/moscow-kremlin-exhibitions/voennye-nagrady-rossii-k-75-letiyu-pobedy-vo-vtoroy-mirovoy-voyne/#.

boarding schools that exist to this day in the Russian Federation. These schools were founded after a Sovnarkom decree on 21 July 1944.[61]

The Soviet Foreign Minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, in his June 1941 speech informing the Soviet people of the Nazi German invasion, stated "Long ago our people responded to Napoleon's campaign against Russia with a patriotic war and Napoleon was defeated and came to his end."[62] Months later, in November of 1941, Joseph Stalin's speech at the Red Square used exclusively Russian figures to rally the population. Stalin said, "Let the manly images of our great ancestors— Alexander Nevsky, Dimitry Donskoy, Kuzma Minin, Dimitry Pozharsky, Alexander Suvorov and Mikhail Kutuzov— inspire you in this war! May the victorious banner of the great Lenin be your lodestar! For the complete destruction of the German invaders! Death to the German invaders!"[63] Once again, we see the top party leadership of the USSR drawing parallels between the struggles of the Russian Empire and the USSR. This recurring theme specifically focuses on the clash of Muscovy's historic enemies, the Teutonic and Livonian Orders during the Northern Crusades, as well as the invasion of Imperial Russia by the French Empire under Napoleon Bonaparte, and the USSR's enemies in the Second World War, the Nazi Party.

During the Second World War, the rehabilitation of tsars and their servants served a key role in the mobilization of the Soviet people, especially as the Nazi forces rapidly advanced across the Russian countryside. However, as far back as 1931, it is clear to see that Russian national and classical figures were being rehabilitated and reintegrated into society. The main

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[61] "Nakhimov Naval School," St. Petersburg Official City Guide, accessed January 11, 2022, http://www.visit-petersburg.ru/en/showplace/197037/.
[62] Vyacheslav M. Molotov, "Radio Address of the Vice-Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R. and People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs. V.M. Molotov. June 22, 1941.," accessed November 12, 2021, https://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/great-patriotic-war/pdf/22-06-1941-molotov-radiospeech.pdf. p. 3.
[63] Joseph V. Stalin, "Speech at the Red Army Parade on the Red Square, Moscow.," Speech at the Red Army Parade on the Red Square, Moscow. November 7, 1941, accessed November 12, 2021, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1941/11/07.htm.

question one must then answer is, why? David Brandenberger states that the rehabilitation was introduced to aid the mobilization of the Soviet Union as the fear of war grew closer. However, I disagree with his claim for several reasons. Primarily, the actions of Joseph Stalin in the decade before the Second World War show a man unconstrained by any fears of war. The Great Purges of 1936–38 saw great Soviet generals and admirals executed after performative show trials, effectively decapitating the Red Army's leadership. After the two-year purge, the Red Army executed or dismissed: 3 out of 5 marshals, 13 out of 15 generals, 8 out of 9 admirals, 50 out of 57 army corps generals, 154 out of 186 division generals, all 16 army commissars, and 25 of 28 army corps commissars.[64] Most damaging to the Red Army was the executions of Marshals Mikhail Tukhachevsky, Alexander Yegorov, and Vasily Blyukher. These purges removed experienced commanders and replaced them with new and untested substitutes. If Joseph Stalin was predicting a war, why would he not be bolstering the leadership of the army instead of actively sabotaging it?

There is also plenty of evidence that Joseph Stalin was completely taken aback by the Nazi invasion in 1941. It seems unlikely that he was preparing for war in 1931, before the Nazi Party became the dominant party in the Reichstag. Admiral Nikolay Gerasimovich Kuznetsov, the People's Commissar of the Navy, wrote in his memoirs that "by early 1941 information began to seep through to us on Hitler's far from peaceful intentions."[65] Admiral Kuznetsov elaborated that Stalin "was unnerved and irritated by persistent reports (oral and written) about the deterioration of relations with Germany. He brushed facts and arguments aside more and

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[64] Stéphane Courtois and Mark Kramer, The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). p. 198.
[65] Nikolay Gerasimovich Kuznetsov, "At Naval Headquarters" in Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Structure of Soviet History: Essays and Documents,* second ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 346.

more abruptly."[66] Stalin was either unwilling or unable to accept that war with Nazi Germany was not only inevitable but imminent.

In his book, *A History of the Soviet Union*, Peter Kenez wrote that Joseph Stalin was a difficult man to read, as he did not write down his thoughts. But after the Nazi invasion of 1941, his behavior was nearly transparent.[67] The invasion of the Soviet Union was not a surprise to any informed person of the day, as Adolf Hitler defeated his enemies in Western Europe with ease and began looking eastward. The German Army goose-stepped right into the Low Countries and took France within six weeks. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which allowed for the partition of Poland between the two signatories, showed firsthand the German war machine's capabilities and their ambitions. What is so surprising about this lapse in Stalin's judgment was the fact that the USSR possessed one of the world's most complex and reliable foreign intelligence networks, which had informed Soviet commanders of an imminent invasion in mid-1940.[68] It makes no sense that Stalin, a man who saw enemies hiding behind every corner, froze when the Nazis betrayed the pact. It appears that Stalin trusted Adolf Hitler's word when the *Führer* said he would not open a second front before defeating the United Kingdom. Stalin was more concerned over British spies in his government than the visible enemies at his gates. When the Nazis invaded on 22 June 1941, over 4 million Wehrmacht soldiers and five thousand Luftwaffe airplanes entered into the USSR. Some accounts claimed that after hearing this news, Stalin retired to his dacha to drink and was not seen for days. While the drinking aspect of the story is unconfirmed, Stalin was indeed absent from his post when reports of war first reached military officials. When Kuznetsov called Stalin to inform him of the invasion, the person on the other

[66] Ibid. p. 348.
[67] Peter Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to its Legacy*, third ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 137.
[68] Ibid. p. 138.

end of the telephone said, "Comrade Stalin is not here and I don't know where he is."[69] The admiral explained that a Nazi invasion had occurred and the telephone operator responded with, "I can't help you in any way," before ending the call.[70] Eventually Kuznetsov was able to speak with the irritated and dissatisfied Georgy Malenkov, the future leader of the USSR after Stalin's death. It was later revealed that Malenkov did not believe reports of the bombing. When his people needed him, Joseph Stalin was not planning military maneuvers, but rather missing in action. From these reports and accounts, it is difficult to claim that Stalin, a man who was shocked by the events of 22 June 1941, could have somehow predicted that a Nazi invasion was impending a decade earlier in 1931.

However, one could look at propaganda posters from the early 1930s and make a good faith argument that the USSR did identify the Nazis and fascists as a threat very early on. The first propaganda poster under analysis was issued by the State Publishing House of the RSFSR (Gosizdat), and dates from 1930. This poster, noted as Figure #4, depicts a skull wearing a helmet with the caption "War against the USSR" and a swastika. Within the skull are a businessman and banker shaking hands with the Roman Catholic Pope.[71] The bottom of the poster reads "Proletarians of all lands, stand and fight to overturn capitalism!"[72] The helmet worn by the skull appears to be a World War One helmet, but not a helmet utilized by the Central Powers. The helmet is not a *pickelhaube* or a *stahlhelm*, both classic examples of the German military. Therefore, I believe it would be a dubious claim that it represents Germany, either in its imperial or Nazi variation. The second poster, a product of the Union of the State Book and Magazine Publishers (OGIZ-IZOGIZ), dates from 1931 and depicts a businessman with

[69] Kuznetsov, "At Naval Headquarters" in Suny, *The Structure of Soviet History*, p. 350.
[70] Ibid. p. 350.
[71] Kapital litsom k SSSR...Voina protiv SSSR..., 1930, Poster collection, Hoover Institution Library & Archives, https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/23409/kapital-litsom-k-sssr--voina-protiv-sssr-. Translated by Dr. Adrienne Edgar.
[72] Ibid.

swastikas for cufflinks attempting to throw a bomb at a factory.[73] The poster, marked as Figure #5, reads "Long live the united battlefront of the revolutionary proletariat against international fascism."[74] The poster clearly is a caricature of a stereotypical businessman, as it is in line with other anti-capitalist posters of this time. The third poster, depicted in Figure #6, is also from OGIZ-IZOGIZ and is dated to 1935. This poster depicts a hand with a swastika cufflink holding a dagger and plunging it down upon the workers of the world.[75] Similarly, as with the last two posters, the swastika does not represent the Nazi Party in this context. The lack of other Nazi symbolism; the *Reichsadler*, the *Parteiadler*, the Schutzstaffel's runic bolts, or the *Totenkopf* furthers these claims. Nevertheless, these three posters, all created before the outbreak of the Second World War, could be interpreted to be evidence that the Soviet Union was preparing for a war with the national socialist and fascist forces of the world.

However, these claims would be reading too much into the posters, as their primary function was to serve as an attack on the capitalist societies of the world, not as propaganda in anticipation of war against these totalitarian political movements that began to emerge in the 1920s. According to Joseph Stalin and other Bolshevik intellectuals at the time, fascism and social democracy were intertwined, and essentially two sides of the same capitalist and imperialist coin. In his text *Concerning the International Situation*, Joseph Stalin wrote that "Fascism is not only a military-technical category. Fascism is the bourgeoisie's fighting organization that relies on the active support of Social-Democracy. Social-Democracy is

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[73] Mezhdunarodnyi proletariat sorvet antisovetskii pokhod imperialistov..., 1931, Poster collection, Hoover Institution Library & Archives, https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/23400/mezhdunarodnyi-proletariat-sorvet-antisovetskii-pokhod-imper.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Da zdravstvuet edinyi boevoi front revoliutsionnogo proletariata protiv mezhdunarodnogo fashizma., 1935, Poster collection, Hoover Institution Library & Archives, https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/23434/da-zdravstvuet-edinyi-boevoi-front-revoliutsionnogo-proletar. Translated by Dr. Adrienne Edgar.

objectively the moderate wing of fascism."[76] This negative view of social democracy derives from the socialist split between the social democrats and the revolutionary Bolsheviks within the Second International during the First World War.[77] To Stalin, fascism was the militaristic right-wing of capitalism, whereas social democracy was the moderate left-wing of capitalism that sought to avoid revolution through concessions. Rather than looking at these posters as a prediction of the dangers of fascism in the coming years, it must be viewed as a metaphor for capitalist forces seeking to erase the gains made by the Soviet Union since the end of the Russian Revolution.

Similarly, the official party line within the Soviet Union regarding fascism and national socialism was characterized by remarks made at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International (Comintern) in 1935. Georgi Dimitrov, the General Secretary of the Comintern, stated that "The most reactionary variety of fascism is the *German type* of fascism. It has the effrontery to call itself National Socialism, though it has nothing in common with socialism. German fascism is not only bourgeois nationalism, it is fiendish chauvinism."[78] Dimitrov goes on to say that "Fascism is the power of finance capital itself. It is the organization of terrorist vengeance against the working class and the revolutionary section of the peasantry and intelligentsia."[79] From these quotes, it is clear to see that the official party line was that fascism was an evolved form of capitalism that uses fear and force to keep the workers of the world and the proletariat under the yoke of capitalism. This view would explain why the three propaganda

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[76] Joseph V. Stalin, "Concerning the International Situation," Concerning the international situation, 2008, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1924/09/20.htm.
[77] It should be noted that "social democracy" was a catch-all term in the 19th century to refer to socialist ideologies. The post-1917 rift led the revolutionary Bolsheviks to create the Communist International (Comintern). The reform-oriented social democrats of Western Europe later formed the Socialist International.
[78] Georgi Dimitrov, "The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Struggle of the Working Class against Fascism," The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Struggle of the Working Class against Fascism, accessed January 12, 2022, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/dimitrov/works/1935/08_02.htm.
[79] Ibid.

posters link the upper classes of society and businessmen with swastikas. These posters do not refer to the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) nor fascism of the Italian variant, but rather focus on fascism as a new form of capitalism.

The relationship between the Bolshevik regime and the imperial past from 1917 to 1945 is best described as dynamic. The initial disdain towards the past was not sustainable, as the ghosts of the past served as convenient and pragmatic rallying points throughout Soviet society. Although the imperial and nationalist past was shunned after the 1917 Revolution, there were still inconsistencies. The "deromanovization" campaign had vague criteria determining which statues remained and which were removed. This dichotomy is clearly visible in the way that the Alexander III equestrian statue was preserved while the statue of Alexander III seated upon a throne was destroyed. Similarly, the policies toward non-royal figures who lived in the imperial period were equally convoluted. Lenin once recommended that a statue of Count Lev Tolstoy replace the site of the former monument to the Tsar-Liberator, Alexander II, shown in Figure #7.[80] Despite his aristocratic and noble background, Lev Tolstoy was rehabilitated by the Soviet state, as far back as 1928 in celebration of the writer's 100th birthday. Additionally, the emerging artistic movement, socialist realism, sought to incorporate the pantheon of great Imperial Russian writers, including Count Lev Tolstoy, Alexander Pushkin, Anton Chekhov, and Ivan Turgenev into their ranks.[81] In another twist of irony, the destroyed statue of the non-royal figure, General Mikhail Skobelev, was replaced with a statue of Prince Yuri Dolgorukiy of the Rurikid dynasty. However, despite the inconsistencies, once Russian nationalism and the Russian past were fused with communist internationalism, there would be no returning to a solely internationalist society of the post-1917 Revolution and early 1920s. The acceptance of these pre-revolutionary figures

[80] Chapple, "Before Lenin: The Monuments of Tsarist Russia."
[81] Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, p. 78.

in peacetime made the deluge of overtly nationalist and Russian chauvinistic undertones in society during the period of the Great Patriotic War inevitable.

Chapter Two: The Rehabilitation of Pre-Romanov Figures

The main flaw of A.N. Tolstoi's play about Ivan the Terrible is that Ivan is not shown as a major, talented political actor, the gatherer of the Russian state, and an implacable foe of the feudal fragmentation of Rus' and the reactionary boyars.

– Aleksandr Sergeyevich Shcherbakov, 1941–43 [82]

The rehabilitation of pre-Romanov figures was more complex than the rehabilitation of tsars of the House of Romanov and their servants. This complexity was particularly evident in the case of Tsar Ivan IV, who was a rather divisive figure even before the Russian Empire fell. In this chapter, I will analyze the shifting opinions towards the pre-Romanov past, as well as its subsequent rehabilitation by the Soviet state. This chapter will look at how early figures in Russia's history underwent a rehabilitation and revival in society and explain why these figures were pulled from the history books and used in the creation of an emerging form of Soviet nationalism.

Russian history prior to the Romanovs must be condensed for the sake of brevity. Before the ascension of Michael I as the first tsar of the Romanov dynasty, Russia had been ruled by tsars from the Rurikid dynasty. Michael's election as tsar by the Zemsky Sobor in 1613 was preceded by the Time of Troubles, a fifteen-year political crisis initiating immediately after the death of Feodor I, the last Rurikid tsar, in 1598.[83] Prior to becoming the world's largest nation, Russia was a collection of duchies, principalities, and even republics that vied for power for centuries. Oftentimes, these nations were often tributary states under the yoke of the Mongol

[82] A.S. Shcherbakov. "Memorandum to Stalin concerning A.N. Tolstoi's Play *Ivan the Terrible*" in *Epic Revisionism*, p. 183.
[83] The Zemsky Sobor was the parliament of the Tsardom of Russia.

Empire. It was under Grand Prince Ivan III of Moscow, commonly known as "Ivan the Great," that the Russian lands gained independence from the Mongol Khanate of the Golden Horde. In 1547, Grand Prince Ivan IV of Moscow, the grandson of Ivan III, succeeded in declaring himself Tsar of Russia. Under Ivan IV, also colloquially known as "Ivan Grozny" or "Ivan the Terrible," Russia became a centralized and unified state, ending the centuries long competition between Muscovy, Novgorod, and Vladimir, amongst other states.[84]

By the time of the October Revolution in 1917, there were no statues associated with the Rurikid dynasty to destroy. In fact, statues of Ivan IV were far and few between; several news outlets reported that the first statue of Ivan Grozny was erected in 2016 in the city of Oryol.[85] The lack of statues honoring Ivan resulted from his brutal policies, such as the implementation of the *oprichnina*. The *oprichnina* was a state policy that involved the repression of the boyars and the creation of a secret police force. It was for these reasons in part, as well as the killing of his own son, that Ivan was essentially persona non grata within Romanov Russia and early Soviet society.[86]

However, like many ghosts of the past, Ivan IV began to undergo an extensive rehabilitation process in Soviet society. The first instance of the controversy surrounding Ivan IV's depiction was surrounding the play *Ivan Vasil'evich* by Mikhail Bulgakov in 1936. In this comical play, which was banned in May 1936, an inventor accidentally builds a time machine that transports Ivan IV to the USSR while two Soviet citizens are transported to Ivan's palace and antics ensue. The historian Maureen Perrie argues that Ivan's depiction in the play was "not

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[84] *Grozny* in Russian means *fearsome* or *menacing*, while *terrible* in this context refers to *likely to cause terror*, not *bad*.

[85] Andrew Roth, "Russia Just Gave Ivan the Terrible His First Statue Ever," The Washington Post (WP Company, December 1, 2021), https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/10/14/ivan-the-terrible-a-bloodthirsty-conquerer-gets-his-first-statue-in-russia/.

[86] The murdered tsarevich, Ivan Ivanovich, was the son of Ivan IV and his first wife, Anastasia Romanovna. Anastasia was the great-aunt of Michael Romanov, who would eventually become tsar in 1613.

as a stereotypical tyrant, but as a complex and contradictory character."[87] While Ivan was portrayed as hot-tempered, he was also shown to be benevolent and generous. Despite the humor of the play, many historians thought the play was banned due to the similarities between Stalin's Great Purge and Ivan's *oprichnina*. However, Perrie writes that "if Bulgakov did intend to suggest a parallel between Ivan and Stalin, the analogy was a complex and subtle one. It was apparently undetected by the censor in 1935, when the authorities were unable to find anything in the play to justify its prohibition."[88] In Maureen Perrie's assessment, she states that the banning was not due to Bulgakov's depiction of the tsar, nor was it banned due to the analogy between Ivan and Stalin. Rather, the banning was a consequence of the attack on formalism within the Soviet visual and performing arts.[89] Therefore, one should look at the banning of Bulgakov's play as a rejection of the play's stylistic elements, not because of its depiction of Ivan, indicating a change in the official party opinion.

The rehabilitation of Ivan was most prominent in the creation and editing of Professor Andrei V. Shestakov's *A Short History of the U.S.S.R.*, in which extensive edits were needed to shield Ivan from criticism. In 1937, as Shestakov's textbook was being prepared for mass printing, Joseph Stalin made several notable alterations. In particular, Ilya Yefimovich Repin's painting, *Ivan the Terrible and His Son Ivan*, which depicts Ivan holding his son whom he had murdered in a fit of rage, shown in Figure #8, was struck from the manuscript of the textbook.[90] The following italicized sentences were removed from the final copy of A.V. Shestakov's textbook. Stalin edited the sentence; "As a child, Ivan grew up among despotic boyars, who insulted him and fostered all his character flaws. *As a youth, Ivan would ride through Moscow on*

[87] Maureen Perrie, "The Terrible Tsar as Comic Hero." in *Epic Revisionism*, p. 148.
[88] Ibid. p. 149.
[89] Ibid. p. 152.
[90] Kevin M. Platt and David Brandenberger. "Terribly Pragmatic: Rewriting the History of Ivan IV's Reign, 1937-1956." in *Epic Revisionism*, p. 158.

horseback, scaring and running down peaceful residents for amusement; he sentenced one of his closest boyars, Andrei Shuiskii, to be torn apart by dogs."[91] However, it was not only Stalin that sought to rehabilitate Ivan. Andrei Alexandrovich Zhdanov, the head of the Propaganda and Agitation Department (Agitprop) and the Second Secretary of the CPSU, also had plenty to contribute to Shestakov's work. Zhdanov reworked the sentence; "Kazan' was sacked and burned*; on his orders, they killed all the residents of Kazan'*."[92] Zhdanov also revised the negative description of the oprichnina; "The oprichnina had their own special uniform. *The oprichnik, clad in black from head to toe, rode on a black horse with a black harness*."[93] These three removed sentences all sought to accurately depict the events of Ivan IV's Russia; however, the leadership of the Soviet Union did not want to harm the image and legacy of Russia's creator.

This evolving opinion on Ivan quickly became the party line. S.V. Bakhrushin, K.V. Bazilevich, and B.G. Verkhoven soon followed suit and praised Ivan in their publications.[94] Similarly, the composer Tikhon Khrennikov was approached by Aleksandr Shcherbakov in the early 1940s to write an opera that honored Ivan IV. In his memoirs, Khrennikov wrote that Shcherbakov said, "You know Comrade Khrennikov, you ought to write an opera entitled 'Ivan the Terrible.' I've just come from Iosif Vissarionovich's…Comrade Stalin believes that he [actually] wasn't terrible enough [*dostatochno groznym on ne byl*]."[95] Shcherbakov goes on to say that "one has to wage an unceasing and merciless battle to eliminate one's enemies if they are interfering with the development of the state. That is Stalin's position."[96] From this quote, we can see that Stalin not only endorsed Ivan's rehabilitation, but also endorsed the brutality in which Ivan dealt with his enemies. Of course, this conversation between Khrennikov and

[91] Ibid. p. 158.
[92] Ibid. p. 159.
[93] Ibid. p. 159.
[94] Ibid. p. 159.
[95] Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, pp. 57-8.
[96] Ibid. p. 58.

Shcherbakov also highlights Stalin's similarities with Ivan Grozny, as both men wage ruthless wars of repression against "enemies of the state," ignoring the many innocent people caught in the crossfire.

Aleksey Nikolayevich Tolstoy, the Soviet author who helped bolster the image of Peter the Great, also wrote the two-part play *Ivan the Terrible*. Unfortunately for Tolstoy, there was a festering internal debate about the rehabilitation of Ivan within the CPSU. In an undated memorandum, that appears to be from 1941–3, Aleksandr Shcherbakov recommends that "A.N. Tolstoi's confused play about Ivan the Terrible cannot be considered acceptable for performance or publication by virtue of its failure to rehabilitate the image of Ivan IV…it is necessary to ban the performance of A.N. Tolstoi's play *Ivan the Terrible* in Soviet theaters and also prohibit the publication of the play in the press."[97] It appears that Tolstoy was unable to properly depict Ivan's positive qualities within the play. According to Shcherbakov, "Ivan IV was an outstanding political figure…he completed the establishment of a centralized Russian state…fundamentally eliminated the country's feudal fragmentation…he passionately supported such progressive endeavors as the introduction of the printing press in Russia."[98] Shcherbakov even goes so far as to deem Ivan Grozny's reign as progressive, which was unheard of at the time, as a monarchy at its core is a conservative and reactionary institution. Despite this, Shcherbakov states that "Ivan's struggle with the boyars was a conflict between the two fundamental tendencies of the day: the progressive determination of Tsar Ivan to create a unified Russian state, and the reactionary drive of the boyars, who insisted on their patrimonial *mestnichestvo* interests and the feudal order."[99]

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[97] Shcherbakov. "Memorandum to Stalin concerning A.N. Tolstoi's Play *Ivan the Terrible*" in *Epic Revisionism*, pp. 180-7.
[98] Ibid. pp. 180-1.
[99] Ibid. pp. 183-4.

The famed Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein also directed a film series *Ivan the Terrible* (1944-58). This film series depicted the iconic Russian national figure in a more positive light, which was a far cry from Eisenstein's prior film, *October: Ten Days That Shook the World* (1928), which, as previously mentioned, showed the dramatized destruction of tsarist monuments after the 1917 October Revolution in the opening scenes. The first film in the *Ivan the Terrible* series was met with praise and was generally well received by the more nationalist members of the CPSU. However, according to Joseph Stalin, Ivan IV was not depicted positively enough in the sequel. In a meeting with Eisenstein in 1947, Stalin lambasted Eisenstein for several missteps within the second installment of the film. Joseph Stalin told the director, who had won the Stalin Prize for part one, that he had "shown this oprichnina to be like the Ku-Klux-Klan."[100] Eisenstein interrupted and clarified that the Ku Klux Klan wore white hoods, but the *oprichnina* donned black hoods. Vyacheslav Molotov, who was also present at the meeting, rebuked this and claimed it was immaterial. Stalin continued, "Your tsar has come out as being indecisive…Everybody prompts him as to what is to be done, and he himself does not take any decision…Tsar Ivan was a great and a wise ruler."[101] Joseph Stalin continued to pick apart and criticize Eisenstein's film, saying "Ivan the Terrible was extremely cruel. It is possible to show why he had to be cruel. One of the mistakes of Ivan the Terrible was that he did not completely finish off the five big feudal families."[102] Stalin not only endorsed Ivan's cruelty but felt that Ivan was not brutal enough in this reign of terror against the boyars and those who opposed his policies. While party officials completely understood the extent of his brutality, these malignancies were overlooked due to

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[100] G. Maryamov, Kremlevskii tsenzor (Moscow, 1992), pp. 84-92 in "Stalin on the Film Ivan the Terrible." Seventeen Moments in Soviet History, February 23, 2016. http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1943-2/the-cult-of-leadership/the-cult-of-leadership-texts/stalin-on-the-film-ivan-the-terrible/.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.

Ivan's state building reputation and centralization of the Russian government, which in turn led to his reintegration into society.

Ivan Grozny was not the only pre-Petrine figure that was rehabilitated during this era, as other earlier figures from the Muscovite past enjoyed newfound appreciation as well. Saint Alexander Nevsky, the Prince of Novgorod and Grand Prince of Vladimir and Kiev, was rehabilitated through numerous works immediately preceding and during the wartime era. Alexander Nevsky, who was canonized by the Eastern Orthodox Church in 1547, was a major figure in the history of medieval Russia and the Kievan Rus'. In 1242, during the Northern Crusades, Nevsky and his Novgorodian forces defeated the Livonian and Teutonic Orders at Lake Chud' in what became known as the Battle on the Ice. In 1725, Catherine I created the Order of Saint Alexander Nevsky as an order of chivalry; although after the Bolshevik revolution, the order was, like all tsarist-era orders of chivalry, disbanded. However, in 1942 the order was revived as the Order of Alexander Nevsky, removing his canonized title in accordance with the Soviet anti-religious campaign.[103] In 1938, Sergei Eisenstein directed the critically acclaimed *Alexander Nevsky*. The film, which was originally titled *Rus'*, was made the same year as the twentieth anniversary of the October Revolution and was officially sanctioned by the Soviet government to "lend a sense of legitimacy and pedigree to the Soviet state."[104] The film was met with much fanfare and praise. I.A. Sudnikov, a worker from Soviet Central Asia, said that "Our country's best directors have created an unusually brilliant, truthful image of the Russian people, defending their right to independence against the middle ages' mongrel knight feudal lords, the relatives of today's fascists."[105] The quote from Sudnikov sheds light on the

[103] The Moscow Kremlin Museums, "Military Awards of Russia. in Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of Victory in the Second World War."
[104] David Brandenberger. "The Popular Reception of S.M. Eisenstein's *Aleksandr Nevskii*" in *Epic Revisionism*, p. 234.
[105] Ibid. p. 242.

political context of the movie, which made thinly veiled references to Soviet animosity towards the Nazi regime. The Soviet actor Lev Fenin played a bishop of the Teutonic Order in the film, whose mitre was adorned with swastika-like symbols. The Teutonic Order's troops also wear helmets in the film that resemble a *stahlhelm*, the standard Nazi military helmet. If the blatant Nazi parallels were not enough, the Teutonic knight's also wear helmets that have *Reichsadler*-like eagles perched atop them. In 1938, German-Soviet relations were tense, and the outbreak of the Second World War was only a year away. On 23 August 1939, Joachim von Ribbentrop and Vyacheslav Molotov signed the Treaty of Non-Aggression between Nazi Germany and the USSR. This pact saw the removal of *Alexander Nevsky* from Soviet cinemas, as Soviet officials did not want to jeopardize the pact, although it made a triumphal return after the two nations went to war in 1941.[106]

In his enthusiastic review of *Alexander Nevsky*, I.A. Sudnikov continued, saying "It would not hurt to move toward the production of films on the subject of 'The 1812 Invasion of Napoleon Boneparte,' 'The Sevastopol' Campaign of 1856,' 'The Battle of Kulikovo Field,' 'The Battle on the Kal'ka,' 'The Invasion of Batyi' 'Tamerlane's March,' etc."[107] Sudnikov's sentiments were clearly shared by others within the Soviet Union, as many films were released that helped glorify the Muscovite past. In 1939, the film *Minin and Pozharskii* was released, which told the story of Kuzma Minin and Dmitrii Pozharskii's struggle against Polish troops during the Polish-Muscovite War of 1609. The Russian Prince Pozharskii formed a volunteer army along with Minin, who was a local merchant, during the Time of Troubles. Together, they repelled the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's invasion of Russia in 1609. As previously discussed, these films were in addition to *Peter the Great,* which was released in two parts

[106] Ibid. p. 243.
[107] Ibid. p. 242.

(1937–38), and *Ivan the Terrible* (1944–46).[108] Pozharskii and Minin also appeared on wartime posters, as seen in Figure #9. Ivan Martos's 1818 "Monument to Minin and Pozharsky" plays a prominent role in the propaganda poster.[109] The statue, which was not destroyed by the Bolsheviks in 1917, is the background image featured on a 1941 propaganda poster issued by the Soviet art magazine *Iskusstvo*.

In November of 1941, several months after the start of the Great Patriotic War, Joseph Stalin's speech at the Red Square used exclusively Russian pre-revolutionary figures to aid in the war effort. He said, "Let the manly images of our great ancestors— Alexander Nevsky, Dimitry Donskoy, Kuzma Minin, Dimitry Pozharsky, Alexander Suvorov and Mikhail Kutuzov— inspire you in this war! May the victorious banner of the great Lenin be your lodestar! For the complete destruction of the German invaders! Death to the German invaders!"[110] Stalin used both figures from the early Muscovite past and the Romanov tsarist past as a pantheon of great Russian heroes who should be the guiding light of the population. Dmitry Donskoi was another famed Rurikid Grand Prince of Moscow who was famous for defeating the Tatars at the Battle of Kulikovo in 1380 and openly challenged Mongol authority in the Russian-speaking lands. Stalin does not mention Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Karl Liebknecht, all German Marxists, nor Rosa Luxemburg, a Pole. Stalin draws upon tsarist generals and Rurikid princes and focuses on the long history of Russia's mostly German enemies. To Stalin, the Nazi Party and the Teutonic and Livonian Orders are very similar in terms of their historical contexts: hostile Germanic forces waging war against the Russian people and launching an invasion of the Russian lands.

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[108] Although production for the second installment of *Ivan the Terrible* was finished in 1946, the film was not released until 1958, as Stalin was displeased with Eisenstein's depiction of the tsar. Production on the final part of the trilogy ceased after the second part's banning and was permanently shelved after Eisenstein died in 1948.
[109] Nashi sily neischislimy., 1941, Poster collection, Hoover Institution Library & Archives, https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/23852/nashi-sily-neischislimy.
[110] Stalin, "Speech at the Red Army Parade on the Red Square, Moscow."

The November 1941 speech by Stalin inspired propagandists to create posters incorporating Stalin's quote with the figures of the past. In Figure #10, a 1942 poster by Pogarskii, shows Dmitrii Pozharskii brandishing a sword while Red Army soldiers charge beneath him.[111] The caption quotes Stalin and reads: "In this war, may you draw inspiration from the valiant example of our great ancestors."[112] However, the appreciation for the Muscovite past did not end with Hitler's defeat in 1945. The Rurikid founder of Moscow, Prince Yuri Dolgorukiy, appeared on a 1946 poster by V. Ivanov; the prince is standing above a Soviet engineer, as shown in Figure #11.[113] The caption reads "Glory to the Russian people– a people of epic heroes, a people of creative talents."[114] The statue of General Mikhail Skobelev in Tverskaya Square was destroyed after the October Revolution and replaced with a monument to the Soviet Union, per Lenin's plan for monumental propaganda. This monument was supposed to be temporary and was eventually replaced by a bronze statue of Dolgorukiy in 1954.

The continuing reintegration of the Muscovite past after 1945 shows that the leadership of the Soviet Union had no desire to scale back their revival of the Russian past after the Nazis had been driven back to Berlin. Nor were they willing to cease the fusion of nationalism and communism. The rehabilitation was not due to reasons of mass mobilization or population rallying in preparation for war. In 1946, the Soviet Union attempted to rebuild and recover from a war that absolutely devastated the nation. Over 25 million Soviet citizens lost their lives from 1941 to 1945. The RSFSR lost 12% of its population, the Byelorussian SSR lost over 25%, and the Ukrainian SSR lost over 16%. Yet, the Soviets continued adulation of the Muscovite and the imperial past clearly indicated that the rehabilitation was not due to the war. In the previous

[111] Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, p. 155.
[112] Ibid. p. 155.
[113] Ibid. p. 195.
[114] Ibid. p. 195.

chapter, these claims were scrutinized as evidence proved Stalin was not expecting a major war with fascist powers in 1931, rather the images presented show how the world's only communist nation at the time interacted with the capitalist world. Instead of looking at the policy shift as a matter of mobilization, we must look at it as the failure of internationalist Marxist political theory to effectively educate the youth of the Soviet Union and create a cohesive shared history in the post-Revolutionary landscape.

The idea of a Russocentric education as a valid form of mass identity within the Soviet Union was initially rejected after the revolution. The early Bolshevik government was influenced by internationalist proletarian solidarity; however, this was not indicative of the Soviet population as a whole. Historian Larry Holmes explained that "many students knew little about the history of the class struggle, Marxism or the Soviet period."[115] Students thought the All-Union Leninist Young Communist League (Komsomol) was an "international organization of the homeless," while others theorized that Persia and China were preparing to join the USSR.[116] The further up the chain of academia one went, the result did not improve. Students at Moscow State University thought that Mikhail Bakunin "was a French revolutionary who had led the Chartist movement; and that imperialism was the best path to socialism."[117] To average and educated Soviet citizens alike, the pantheon of great Marxist intellectuals was unfamiliar or, in many instances, completely foreign.

The People's Commissariat for Education (Narkompros) reintroduced the history curriculum within Soviet schools in September 1931 and decided to develop history textbooks.[118] The Commissariat for Education criticized the early Bolshevik education policies and began to

[115] Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, p. 23.
[116] Ibid. p. 23.
[117] Ibid. p. 23.
[118] Ibid. pp. 30-1.

break with the social studies curriculum. They demanded "textbook-based instruction, year-end exams, and measures to reinforce the authority and competence of educators."[119] In 1934, Narkompros published a secret report on the state of historical education within Soviet schools. According to the report, "students displayed little understanding of historical events…students failed (with their teachers) to use classroom maps effectively…had poor understanding of the sequence of historical events…[and] possessed little sense of historical perspective."[120] When history was reintroduced, the students tended to prefer the imperial past as opposed to the complexities of the present. This was likely because the tsarist and Muscovite past was simply more exciting and engaging than the political science and theoretical concepts of Marxist-Leninist history. An article in *Za Kommunisticheskoe Prosveshchenie* argued that "effective historical instruction was best pursued through the presentation of animated, interesting descriptions of the past. Colorful discussions of major figures, events, wars, revolutions, and popular movements were endorsed as the most effective way of illuminating the nature of class, the state, and historical progression."[121] The exclusion of historical figures in favor of abstract theories confused the very people it was supposed to inspire.

It is from this desire to create a unifying and engaging history curriculum that led to the publication of A.V. Shestakov's 1937 textbook, *A Short History of the U.S.S.R.; Textbook for 3rd & 4th Classes*. Although the Commissariat of Education reintroduced history textbooks in 1931, Shestakov's was the first one to effectively supplant the social science oriented and abstract approach for a linear, narrative-driven approach. Printing houses could not keep up with the demand generated by the textbook, which praised figures from the past. Under Lenin, these figures had not been shown in any light other than deeply conservative, inegalitarian, and

[119] Ibid. p. 31.
[120] Ibid. p. 32.
[121] Ibid. p. 35.

anti-proletarian. Within Soviet classrooms of the 1930s, there was a clear instructional narrative that medieval principalities, like Muscovy, evolved into the Russian Empire, which then evolved into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. This curriculum further legitimized the rule of the Bolsheviks that overthrew the Romanov reign over the Russian lands.

While the shift from internationalism to national Bolshevism was in many regards a betrayal of Communist ideology, it was a necessary shift that saved the Soviet Union. A nation with no national pride or civic nationalism is incapable of surviving during difficult times. The Russian Empire failed to rally the nation during World War One, leading to their swift collapse after their repeated defeats against the German and Austro-Hungarian militaries. Stalin and the upper echelons of the CPSU's leadership were keenly aware of this and made a pragmatic decision. The early Bolshevik's flagrant disregard for the Russian past became a liability and was highlighted during the war scare of 1927. The war scare began after numerous foreign policy developments alarmed the Soviet government. In the beginning of 1927, the Soviet embassy in China was raided and the United Kingdom broke diplomatic relations with the USSR. Later that same year, the Soviet envoy to Poland, Pyotr Lazarevich Voykov, was assassinated and France recalled the Soviet ambassador, Christian Rakov. [122] The Chairman of the Comintern, Grigory Zinoviev, who was executed in the Great Purge in 1936, wrote "war is not only probable, it is inescapable."[123] The Soviet press seized these developments and published alarmist articles that led to the feeling in the Soviet Union that war was only a heartbeat away. However, the suspicion of war did not create popular support, it actually had the opposite effect. "A decade of propaganda and agitation based on notions of class consciousness, working-class solidarity, and loyalty to the party…had failed to affect vast swaths of Soviet society," wrote David

[122] John Sontag. "The Soviet War Scare of 1926-27." *The Russian Review* 34, no. 1 (1975): pp. 66–77. https://www.jstor.org/stable/127760?seq=2#metadata_info_tab_contents. p. 70.
[123] Ibid. p. 70.

Brandenberger.[124] Instead of national pride, all that remained was defeatist rumors and anti-Soviet outbursts. The war scare put into perspective the dire need to create a mass identity of a unified Russian people to prevent the same issue of immobilization and unpatriotic attitudes present in 1917.

The passing of the decree "On the Teaching of Civic History in the Schools of the USSR" by the Central Committee and Sovnarkom in May 1934 essentially ended the decade-long internationalist official party line and ushered in a new era by reintroducing history into the curriculum. The subsequent era was not based on the struggle of the workers of the world, but on the greatness of the Russian people. The developing view of Russian chauvinism sought to unify Communism and nationalism. Historian Norbert Gaworek explained that "Many aspects of Russia's past, which previously had been glossed over or denounced, were now emphasized and glorified. Russia's heritage and Russian nationalism became the new social bond on which Stalin relied to ensure order and legitimacy."[125] Legitimacy became one of the major goals of Soviet policy throughout the 1930s.

While the imperial and Muscovite past was rehabilitated and revived within Soviet society, there was not a complete rejection of internationalism or communist ideology. Rather, party leadership fused these oftentimes competing ideologies. One of the most visible results of this fusion was the concept of the *Sovetskii Narod* (Soviet People). The *Sovetskii Narod* was first introduced in 1935 by Nikolai Bukharin, the former editor-in-chief of *Pravda*, who wrote an article in *Izvestia*.[126] The idea recognized the ethnic diversity within the USSR and sought to

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[124] Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, p. 21.
[125] N.H. Gaworek. "Education, Ideology, and Politics: History in Soviet Primary and Secondary Schools." *The History Teacher* 11, no. 1 (1977): pp. 55–74. https://www.jstor.org/stable/492726?seq=8#metadata_info_tab_contents.
[126] Krista A. Goff, Lewis H. Siegelbaum, and Anna Whittington, "Making a Home for the Soviet People: World War II and the Origins of the Sovetskii Narod," in *Empire and Belonging in the Eurasian Borderlands* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019), p. 147.

promote membership within the broader context of a collective Soviet people. As the 1926 census showed, the USSR was only 52.9% Russian, followed by 21.2% Ukrainian, with the ethnicities of Central Asia comprising 7.1%, and the peoples of the Caucasus making up 3.5%.[127]

Despite this attempt at integration, historian Anna Whittington noted that "Casual slippage between Soviet and Russian discourse highlighted Russians' privileged position, suggesting newly reemphasized imperial hierarchies. Despite limited space for non-Russian heroes in local newspapers and the school curriculum, Russians almost exclusively represented ethnically neutral citizens, and they played senior partner and older brother to their non-Russian counterparts."[128] Stalin's aforementioned speech in November of 1941 is a prime example of the Russian dominance of the Soviet people concept. Joseph Stalin used exclusively Russian pre-revolutionary figures to rally the Soviet population, which was 48% non-Russian. Despite Russian dominance, the Soviet people concept was a revolutionary idea that allowed the USSR to function like it never had before. Whittington explained that the *Sovetskii Narod* "created increased unionwide uniformity through the study of Russian and a new pantheon of shared heroes."[129] She concluded that this internationalist concept allowed the periphery to become "a central site of the production and experience of Soviet identity, as citizens became familiar with both one another and the country's vast geography. The rhetoric of the Soviet people melded ethnic and civic modes of identification to remind citizens of their common belonging to the state."[130]

Beginning in the 1930s, the tsarist and pre-Petrine past was rehabilitated and revived within the Soviet Union. The cause for the rehabilitation was not due to the preparation for war,

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[127] "Nationalities in 1926 and 1937," Seventeen Moments in Soviet History, September 28, 2015, http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1939-2/the-lost-census/the-lost-census-texts/nationalities-in-1926-and-1937/.
[128] Ibid. p. 154.
[129] Ibid. p. 160.
[130] Ibid. p. 161.

as Chapter One explains, but rather due to the simple reason that the Soviet state sought both legitimacy and a shared common history. The best and most pragmatic way to solve this was to devote less time on the abstract teachings of revolutionary ideology and begin to reintroduce figures from the Russian past that resonated with Soviet society while also developing the notion that the USSR was the rightful and direct heir to the Russian Empire and the Grand Principality of Muscovy. This new curriculum that was introduced was then linked with Marxist-Leninist thought, which proved to be much more effective than either a) not teaching history at all in public schools, or b) continuing to teach concepts that clearly confused all strata of the Soviet youth, from school-aged children to advanced university students. It is from these reforms to the educational system that the concept of the *Sovetskii Narod* emerged. This notion was heavily anchored to Russocentric nationalism and communist internationalism, which could not only instill pride in Soviet citizens but also weather the most difficult days of the Second World War.

Chapter Three: The Revival of Classicist Architecture

> Aren't you ashamed to vote for printing 5,000 copies of Mayakovsky's "150,000,000"? It is nonsense, stupidity, double-dyed stupidity and affectation. I believe such things should be published one in ten, and *not more than 1,500* copies, for libraries and cranks. As for Lunacharsky, he should be flogged for his futurism.
>
> – Vladimir Lenin, 1921 [131] [132]

As Romanov tsars, medieval Muscovite princes, and famed generals were being rehabilitated during the early 1930s for the purposes of building legitimacy within the USSR, Soviet authorities soon set their sights on art and architecture. While art and architecture were not rehabilitated per se, the disciplines certainly witnessed a revival within Soviet society. The

[131] Vladimir I. Lenin, "To: A. V. LUNACHARSKY," Lenin: 150. to A. V. Lunacharsky, accessed February 22, 2022, https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1921/may/06.htm.
[132] Lenin's letter is in regard to Vladimir Mayakovsky's Futurist poem "150,000,000" and highlights his conservative and traditionalist tastes in regard to the arts. He deeply disapproved of the People's Commissar for Education's request to order the printing of 5,000 copies of the poem.

reintroduction of classical art and architecture within Soviet society was far from a clear and linear path, rather numerous art forms had to emerge in the vacuum left by the October Revolution and ultimately fade away into obsolescence in Soviet life before this classical revival could fully take force within society. This chapter will focus on this revival through the examination of early avant-garde art forms within Soviet society as well as looking at numerous buildings that highlight the departure from these aforementioned forms. I will have to preface that Soviet art and architecture was not monolithic, and many of the soviet socialist republics within the USSR had different stylistic variations that reflected local traditions. For the sake of brevity, I cannot focus on these other SSRs, such as the German influences in the Baltic or the Turkic and Islamic heritage of Central Asia. As with Chapters One and Two, this chapter will solely focus on rehabilitation and classical revival as a force contributing to the creation of national Bolshevism within the largest constituent state of the Soviet Union, the RSFSR.

During the early years of Bolshevik rule, it was thought that a revolutionary nation practicing a revolutionary ideology warranted and deserved an innovative and monumental art style. In the Soviet Union, art and politics became invariably linked. Matthew Bown and Brandon Taylor wrote that "Painters, sculptors and architects were at many points in Soviet history closely directed by decisions and decrees emanating from broader party policy…it can be argued that cultural activity was nurtured, coaxed and coerced by fundamental political decisions."[133] The authors also highlight how political decisions closely echoed changing opinions toward art theory. For instance, the "Red Terror" of Lenin's government occurred at the same time as the avant-garde's supremacy, while the New Economic Policy was the era of figurative art. Similarly, proletarian art dominated during the era of collectivization, and the

[133] Bown and Taylor, *Art of the Soviets*, p. 3.

growing nationalization of the Communist Party ushered in the style and method of socialist realism.[134]

As I explained in Chapter One, Sovnarkom's decree, "On Monuments of the Republic," not only destroyed tsarist-era statues of the old regime, it also tasked Soviet artists with the creation of new monuments. Lenin's Plan for Monumental Propaganda was, in artistic terms, a modernist plan. It was a mix of Cubism and abstraction which, according to Bown and Taylor, "resulted in a muted geometrisation of figurative content."[135] The statues designed in accordance with the plan represented a clear departure from the traditional style of sculpture and design present in tsarist-era art. Although Lenin personally had conservative tastes in art, his plan nevertheless greatly aided the modernist and Constructivist movements, albeit for a relatively short period of time. These avant-garde styles flourished as there was no prescriptive state policy that dictated that statutes had to be built in a classical or traditionalist form. Figure #12 shows Boris Korolev's abstract statue of Karl Marx from 1919–20, which was erected in response to Lenin's plan and clearly show a clear departure from the realm of traditional sculpture.[136]

The sculpture foregoes traditional aspects of art. The face appears contorted while emerging from a geometric mass. Traditional sculptures would show Marx's body in the round, whereas Korolev makes only his face recognizable. According to Bown and Taylor, "Korolev was, of course, using Cubist vocabulary of form in this work."[137] Similarly, Figure #13 shows Nikolai Andreev's sculpture of French Revolutionary Georges Danton, inspired by the elements present in Cubism, Futurism, and primitive art. This combination style abandoned "any

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[134] Ibid. p. 3.
[135] Ibid. p. 16.
[136] Ross Wolfe, "Boris Korolev, Abstract Sculptures of Bakunin and Marx (1919-1920)," The Charnel House, May 12, 2014, https://thecharnelhouse.org/2014/05/12/boris-korolev-abstract-sculptures-of-bakunin-and-marx-1919-1920/.
[137] Bown and Taylor, *Art of the Soviets*, p. 25.

psychological study of Danton to the expressive means of his revolutionary determination."[138] Andreev's reduction of Danton's facial features into heavily textured and generalized forms "stressed the dynamism of his vision."[139] These abstract monuments to leaders of socialist thought generated a lot of discussion within Soviet society, albeit none of it positive.[140] Nikolai Kolli created the image and monument of the *Red Wedge*, shown in Figure #14, representing the Red Army triumphing over the counter-revolutionary White Army during the Russian Civil War.[141] This image of the red wedge was later used as the inspiration for Lazar "El" Lissitzky's poster *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge*, shown in Figure #15.[142] The image of the red wedge was much more successful in its message. The geometric forms used by Kolli clearly illustrate the intention of breaking the old order. This is in contrast to the abstract sculptures of Andreev and Korolev that clumsily use distorted forms which leave the viewer questioning the stylistic choices rather than appreciating the messaging of the sculptures, which were to memorialize the victories of socialism.

One of the most famous monuments associated with Lenin's Plan for Monumental Propaganda was actually never constructed at all. The monument was designed by Vladimir Tatlin, a Soviet architect and artist and the head of Moscow's *IZO*, the Department of Fine Arts of the People's Commissariat for Education. Tatlin was tasked with designing a monumental building for the Revolution. Tatlin's tower, officially called *The Monument to the Third International*, was supposed to serve as the headquarters of the Comintern, although the project was eventually rejected, and only miniature scale models were ever built. Figure #16 shows a

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[138] Ibid. p. 24.
[139] Ibid. p. 24.
[140] Ibid. p. 24.
[141] Russia Beyond. "How Russian Avant-Garde Artists Created Urban and Street Art in the Country." Russia Beyond, August 16, 2018. https://www.rbth.com/arts/328979-russian-avant-garde-street-art.
[142] Dan Andries, "Art Institute Highlights Revolutionary Art from Soviet Union," WTTW News, January 18, 2018, https://news.wttw.com/2018/01/11/art-institute-highlights-revolutionary-art-soviet-union.

model of Tatlin's tower, which was a rejection of the classical and traditional figurative monument and planned to stand at over 1,300 feet, constructed of iron, steel, and glass.[143]

The building was completely laden with symbolism and certainly would have been the most monumental project of Lenin's plan. Tatlin's design was meant to eclipse the Eiffel Tower in size, while the materials celebrate the evolving possibilities of technology. The tower contained four geometric volumes, made from glass, that were to revolve at different speeds. The lowest level was a cube that made a yearly revolution, while the next level was a pyramid which made a monthly revolution. The third level was a cylinder, revolving daily, and the fourth level was a hemisphere that revolved hourly.[144] The tower was to have a tilt of 23.5 degrees, which is the Earth's tilt on its orbital axis. Combined with the four volume's unique revolutions, the tilt served as a revolutionary cosmology. These design aspects linked the movement of the Earth with the symbolism of a global revolution against capitalism. The Soviet writer Nikolai Punin wrote in 1920 that "A monument must live the social and political life of the city and the city must live it. It must be necessary and dynamic, then it will be modern. The forms of contemporary, agitational plastic arts lie beyond the depiction of man as an individual. They are found by the artist who is not crippled by the feudal and bourgeois traditions of the Renaissance, but who has laboured like a worker on the three unities of contemporary plastic consciousness: material, construction, volume."[145] Punin extolled the virtues of Tatlin's work and explained why it was not only a revolutionary monument but a monumental building that rejects the traditionalism of the past.

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[143] "Inventing Abstraction," MoMA, accessed February 19, 2022, https://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2012/inventingabstraction/?work=226.
[144] Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, *Art in Theory: An Anthology of Changing Ideas 1900-1990* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2011). pp. 311-12.
[145] Ibid. p. 313.

The supremacy of the avant-garde during the early reign of the Bolshevik party was not solely due to Lenin's Plan for Monumental Propaganda.[146] Rather, many Soviet architects designed modernist and constructivist buildings independent of any propagandistic elements. Moisei Yakovlevich Ginzburg designed a famous block of apartments in a modernist, functionalist style along Novinsky Boulevard in Moscow from 1918–29. The apartments, pictured in Figure #17, were for high-ranking employees of the People's Commissariat for Finance, or Narkomfin.[147] One main characteristic of this apartment complex was that it stressed a collectivist living style. There was no kitchen, as there was a communal restaurant on-site. The apartments were very small and there were no children's rooms. Konstantin Melnikov constructed the Rusakov Workers' Club (Moscow, 1927–28), another famous work of constructivist architecture, which is shown in Figure #18.[148] Melnikov's design demonstrates the volume of the club lecture hall as the hall's seating cantilevers out from the façade. Ilya Golosov, another Soviet modernist architect designed the Zuev Workers' Club in Moscow in 1925, shown in Figure #19.[149] Golosov's building prominently features a glass cylinder contrasting against the rest of the walled-in and closed façade. There were many other constructivist buildings erected throughout Moscow and the Soviet Union, the majority of which served as public and official buildings. The architects wanted to infuse the avant-garde into everyday Soviet life, which is

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[146] It should be noted that when I refer to the avant-garde, I am referring to movements such as Cubism, Futurism, Constructivism, Suprematism, and other experimental art forms. The term avant-garde is a retroactive label, which encompasses the aforementioned styles.

[147] "Narkomfin Apartments Moscow, Russia Architects Ginsburg, M. Milinis, i. 1928-1929 Photograph Photographer- Robert Byron," The Charnel House, July 19, 2015, https://thecharnelhouse.org/2015/07/19/moisei-ginzburgs-constructivist-masterpiece-narkomfin-during-the-1930s/narkonfin-apartments-moscow-russia-architects-ginsburg-m-milinis-i-1928-1929-photograph-photographer-robert-byron8/.

[148] "Rusakov Workers' Club," Rusakov Workers' club, accessed February 20, 2022, http://theconstructivistproject.com/en/object/11/rusakov-workers-club.

[149] "Zuev Workers' Club," Zuev Workers' Club, accessed February 20, 2022, http://theconstructivistproject.com/en/object/12/zuev-workers-club.

why many modernist buildings were houses of culture or workers' clubs, as it would be places of congregation for the masses.

One may wonder how modernist art and architecture somehow relate in any way to the internationalist proletarian ideology displayed in the early days of the Soviet Union. These modernist buildings and styles are devoid of nationalist or classicist elements that place them in one particular place at a particular time. Buildings with columns and colonnades were and still are indicative of Greco-Roman classicism. Pointed arches and vaulted ceilings are an indication of Gothic architecture that is present in the German-speaking lands. Similarly, the Russian Revival style is well-noted for the ornate and vibrantly colored domes atop churches, such as the Church on Spilled Blood in St. Petersburg and the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in Petergof. With the style and mannerisms of modernist architecture, this national provenance is absent. A modernist building in Los Angeles looks nearly identical to a modernist building in London, Moscow, Paris, or Dessau. Modernist architecture is minimalist, it lacks ornamentation, and places a heavy emphasis on form following function. A style that lacks clear locational characteristics is itself indicative of internationalism, so it makes sense that a regime that supports the workers of the world uniting in opposition to overthrow capitalist oppression uses architecture that does not depict nationalist traditions. As historian Catherine Cooke explained, "The modernists' work was internationalist, seeking aesthetic principles and languages that made no appeal to particularities of a given national culture."[150]

However, these avant-garde artists thrived as the Soviet state did not directly manage the styles of the buildings being constructed. At the same time as the avant-garde, there were still supporters of traditional styles in the arts. The Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia (AKhRR) was the most prominent artistic organization within the Soviet Union, and it was a

[150] Bown and Taylor, *Art of the Soviets*, p. 88.

proponent of traditional realism within the arts. However, the realist depiction of life within the Soviet Union, specifically at the 47th Exhibition of the Association of Travelling Art Exhibitions in 1922 "suffered critically from its backward appearance…striking workers, hungry families and revolutionary deeds."[151] In *Tvorchestvo*, a Russian art magazine, D. Melnikov wrote that "This was not the realism we were waiting for after the liquidation of Futurism."[152] This dour depiction of life in the Soviet Union is what contributed to the support of the avant-garde in Soviet society. Nevertheless, the 47th and last exhibition, which took place in 1922, firmly established its opposition to the avant-garde in society. As the USSR consolidated its power, especially after the era of the New Economic Policy, the official party line favored realism. The realism supported by the AKhRR led to the creation of socialist realism only a few years later. At the same time, avant-garde movements fell out of style and its artists lost the confidence of the CPSU leadership. Many avant-garde artists left the USSR altogether, including but not limited to Wassily Kandinsky, Naum Gabo, Marc Chagall, and Natan Pevsner.[153]

The first sign of a shift in the official architectural style of the Soviet Union emerged after the death of Vladimir Lenin in January 1924 after a long period of failing health. The decision was made to build a mausoleum that would permanently house the embalmed body of the Bolshevik leader. The winning entry was by Aleksei Shchusev, whose design was a melding of architectural styles. The mausoleum, shown in Figure #20, combined modernist simplicity and traditional ancestry.[154] The red granite mausoleum takes the form of an ancient Egyptian pyramid, mainly recalling the Step Pyramid of Djoser and the Tomb of Cyrus the Great. While the mausoleum is modernist in the lack of ornamentation and simplicity, its ancient and classicist

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[151] Ibid. p. 53.
[152] Ibid. p. 53.
[153] Matthew Cullerne Bown, *Art under Stalin* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1991). p. 30.
[154] "Lenin's Mausoleum," Lenin's Mausoleum (Wikimedia Commons, October 17, 2017), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mauzoleumlenina_(cropped).jpeg.

origins show the direction that Soviet architecture was inching towards. Although the style is changing, the scope of Lenin's plan for monumental propaganda stayed the same. The stylistic medium may have evolved and changed, but every architect stayed true to Lenin's hopes for revolutionary monuments for a revolutionary nation.

The shift from the avant-garde to a classical revival within architecture was exemplified after the competition to build the Palace of the Soviets in Moscow. In December 1931, the Russian Revival style Cathedral of Christ the Savior was demolished to make way for the Palace of the Soviets, which was intended to house the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.[155] A major competition to design the building was announced, which attracted dozens of architects from many countries, each bringing very different architecture styles to their design entries. However, before discussing the paradox of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior and the Palace of the Soviets, I must first discuss why the cathedral, which took over forty years to build, was demolished.

After the 1917 February Revolution, there was speculation by Communist officials that the Russian Orthodox Church would simply wither away and collapse due to lack of financial support by the tsar and the bourgeoisie. However, the church did not collapse; instead, it reasserted its dominance within early post-tsarist society. The church reestablished the Moscow Patriarchate, which had been abolished in 1721 under the reign of Peter I. In November 1917, Vasily Ivanovich Bellavin was elected Patriarch of Moscow and of All Russia, taking the name Tikhon of Moscow. Patriarch Tikhon was horrified by Bolshevik attacks on the church and excommunicated several high-ranking Communist politicians.[156]

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[155] Vladislav Mikosha, "Фото," Фото "Разрушение храма Христа Спасителя", 5 декабря 1931, г. Москва - История России в фотографиях, accessed November 13, 2021, https://russiainphoto.ru/search/photo/years-1840-1999/?tag_tree_ids=23298&query=%D1%85%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BC%2B%D1%85%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%2B%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BB%D1%8F&paginate_page=6&page=6&index=5.

[156] Dimitry Pospielovsky, *A History of Soviet Atheism in Theory and Practice and the Believer: A History of the Marxist-Leninist Atheism and Soviet Antireligious Policies*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1987), p. 27.

In light of the church's newly asserted independence, the Soviet government began a concerted attack on all religions and churches after they seized power from the Provisional Government in October 1917. Sovnarkom issued a decree on the separation of church and state in February 1918. The decree read, in part, "Church and religious societies have no right to own property. They do not have the rights of a legal person. All property in Russia now owned by churches and religious organizations is henceforth the property of the people."[157] At the 8th Party Congress of the Russian Communist Party, Article 13 was adopted, which stated that "As far as religion is concerned, the RCP will not be satisfied by the decreed separation of Church and State [alone]...Party aims at the complete destruction of links between the exploiting classes and…religious propaganda, while assisting the actual liberation of the working masses from religious prejudices and organizing the broadest possible education-enlightening and anti-religious propaganda."[158] It was clear to see that by 1918 that the church was no longer tolerated by the new ruling party of Russia, and that state atheism was going to fill the chasm left by Eastern Orthodoxy.

After 1917 and throughout the 1920s, most churches were permanently closed, icons were desecrated, and thousands of members of the clergy were executed or imprisoned. Historian Nicholas Timasheff theorized that the attack on the church sought to compensate for the economic concessions of Vladimir Lenin's New Economic Policy, which fused aspects of socialism and capitalism into a mixed-market economy. After the death of Patriarch Tikhon in 1925, the Russian Orthodox Church was forbidden from nominating a new bishop to fill the position, that was until 1943 when the Russian Orthodox Church was rehabilitated during the

[157] Sovnarkom, "Decree on Separation of Church and State," Decree on separation of Church and State, accessed February 16, 2022, https://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/events/revolution/documents/1918/02/5.htm.
[158] Pospielovsky, *A History of Soviet Atheism in Theory and Practice and the Believer*, p. 25.

Second World War. According to Timasheff, the Russian Communist Party attempted to destroy the Russian Orthodox Church for three reasons:

1. Religion is incompatible with the Doctrine professed by them [the Communists]; the Doctrine explains "all" in terms of pure materialism, but Religion challenges this explanation and recognizes the primacy of the spirit.
2. Religion is embodied in Churches, in Russia first of all in the Russian branch of the Greek Orthodox Church, and since this Church existed under the old regime and was intimately connected with the Imperial State, its persistence in Communist society signified a partial survival of the pre-Revolutionary order.
3. In terms of the Doctrine, the Church is one of the tools of oppression of the proletariat by the masters. Its members cannot but regret the high social status they enjoyed before the Revolution and display efforts to regain it. In consequence, the Church cannot but be counterrevolutionary.[159]

The cathedral, which represented everything the Bolsheviks despised about tsarist society, was set to be replaced by Boris Iofan's classically inspired design entry built in the style of socialist realism. The first All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934 explained that socialist realism "demands from the artists a true and historically concrete depiction of reality in its revolutionary development…combined with the task of educating workers in the spirit of Communism."[160] Ivan Gronski, the editor of *Izvestia*, stated that "socialist realism is Rubens, Rembrandt, and Repin put to serve the working class."[161] Socialist realism was the infusion of traditionalist and classicist styles of art and architecture but dealing with subjects that represented the proletariat and life in the Soviet Union. The plan for the Palace of the Soviets, shown in Figure #21, had a façade encircled in pillars and was adorned with relief sculptures.[162] Iofan's design is a classically inspired monument that is crowned by a massive statue of Vladimir Lenin. Rising to a height of over 400 meters, it would have been the world's tallest building.[163] The Palace was never built as the Nazi invasion in 1941 ended all plans for its completion. By 1939, only the

[159] Timasheff, *The Great Retreat*, p. 225.
[160] Bown, *Art under Stalin*, p. 90.
[161] Ibid. p. 92.
[162] "Palace of the Soviets." Architectuul, accessed February 23, 2022, http://architectuul.com/architecture/view_image/palace-of-the-soviets/13118.
[163] Bown, *Art under Stalin*, p. 39.

foundation was built, which was promptly repurposed after 1941 when shortages of steel affected the Soviet war effort.

As the most important building in the USSR, the Palace of the Soviets could have been designed as a modernist and internationalist building. There was certainly no shortage of modernist designs entered into the competition. The modernist architects Walter Gropius, Erich Mendelsohn, and Hector Hamilton all sent in entries. Perhaps the most famous design, other than that of the neoclassical winning design, was that of Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, the Swiss-French modernist better known as "Le Corbusier." Figure #22 shows Le Corbusier's design, which was a quintessentially modernist design.[164] Between 1931 and 1933, the official party line was shifting in the favor of a neoclassical revival within architecture. An official decree in 1932 modified the guidelines of the competition by adding that entries should use "the best elements of classical architecture."[165] In a February 1932 edition of *Izvestia*, A.N. Tolstoy wrote that the Palace of the Soviets should incorporate "the whole cultural inheritance of the past."[166] [167] The modernist architects never actually stood a chance once the party had decided in favor of classicism, which led to Iofan's design winning. Despite the many modernist entries, it was clear that the party was no longer interested in propagating the ideals of early Bolshevik thought. There was no longer the early conception of unadulterated internationalism, instead Soviet officials preferred to infuse classical aesthetics with socialist content.

The Palace of the Soviets was only the beginning in terms of the neoclassical revival. After the design competition, the vast majority of all public buildings were designed in the style

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[164] Ross Wolfe, "Le Corbusier's Project for the Palace of the Soviets (1928-1931)," The Charnel House, October 5, 2013, https://thecharnelhouse.org/2013/06/19/le-corbusiers-project-for-the-palace-of-the-soviets-1928-1931/.
[165] Bown, *Art under Stalin*, p. 39.
[166] Sona Hoisington. "'Ever Higher': The Evolution of the Project for the Palace of Soviets." *Slavic Review* 62, no. 1 (2003): 41–68. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3090466?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.
[167] Bown, *Art under Stalin*, p. 39.

of socialist realism. The era of High Stalinism, the post-war years leading up to Stalin's death in 1953, saw the construction of the Seven Sisters. The Seven Sisters are seven high-rise skyscrapers built from 1947 until 1953 in the socialist realist style that combines elements of Gothic and Baroque architecture. The Hotel Ukraina, the Kotelnicheskaya Embankment Building, the Kudrinskaya Square Building, the Moscow Leningradskaya Hilton, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Red Gate Administrative Building, and Moscow State University Building, shown in Figure #23, are towering reminders of the classicist past that was revived even after the end of the Second World War.[168]

The rehabilitation of the imperial past and the revival of classicist architecture were not different trends taking place within the larger context of Soviet society but are in actuality complementary processes. The shift in architecture directly mirrors the shift in the attitude towards tsarist history. Art and architecture in the USSR were invariably linked to political decisions. The reintroduction of the history curriculum and the rehabilitation of the tsarist and Muscovite past coincided with the demands that architecture and art followed the party's tightening grip on society. The early years of the 1930s highlight the departure from Lenin's initial policies, and how under Stalin, the classical and national motifs became not only reintroduced and rehabilitated but flooded back into society. The era of rehabilitation and revival had begun. While it is logical that a classicist Orthodox cathedral symbolizing the old order was demolished, it is highly paradoxical that it was set to be replaced with another classicist structure. This highlights the Soviet state's obsession with seeking legitimacy. They sought to intertwine their accomplishments with that of the tsars. The new, revolutionary monumental architecture harkened back to the days of the Muscovite and Petrine states.

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[168] "File:Lomonosov Moscow State University), October 2010.Jpg ...," Moscow State University (Wikimedia Commons, October 1, 2010), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lomonosov_Moscow_State_University),_October_2010.jpg.

The Soviet Union wanted legitimacy, and once it realized no worldwide socialist revolution would ever occur, they shifted to socialism in one country. It was not for lack of trying that this shift occurred; as I have explained, the Lenin years were filled with genuine attempts at internationalism. The avant-garde flourished within a vacuum, schoolchildren learned about foreign revolutionaries, tsarist monuments were destroyed, and the past was looked upon with contempt. Despite this, the ethnically Russian people within the USSR responded to nationalism and chauvinism better, which led to the pragmatic decision to revive the past, to embrace the past, and to depict the USSR as the rightful successor state to Romanov Russia. This shift was not due to the mobilization of the masses in preparation for war. All three chapters show how rehabilitation and revival occurred well before the outbreak of any war involving the Soviet Union and continued well after the Second World War had ended. Rather, this rehabilitation exemplifies the Soviet's quest for legitimacy and the failure of the internationalist party line to create societal cohesion.

Conclusion

The story of the rehabilitation and revival of Russia's imperial ancestry did not end on December 25, 1991, when the Kremlin lowered the Soviet Union flag for the last time. In actuality, the second phase of the relationship between Russia and its past was beginning. It is a story that, even to this very day, is still taking place. The collapse of the USSR saw the independence of fifteen nations, all of which were free to determine their own fates and what to do with the symbolism of their past. The relationship between the USSR and the Russian Federation is equally, if not more, complicated as the relationship between the Russian Empire and the USSR.

The Russian Federation began a period of "decommunization," that included the destruction of communist monuments. Notably, a statue of Felix Dzerzhinsky, the first director of the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage (Cheka), was demolished in 1991.[169] However, most monuments to the leaders of the Soviet state remain unscathed and exist to this day. There is a striking similarity between the removal of Soviet statues in 1991 and the removal of tsarist monuments in 1917. The hallmark of this similarity is the inconsistency of what is removed and what is allowed to remain.

At the same time, a similar process was occurring, but this one sought to revere the tsarist past. I call this process "reromanovization." The double-headed eagle, which was methodically purged from Soviet society in 1917, witnessed a triumphal return. Since 1993, the official coat of

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[169] Andrew Higgins, "In Russia, They Tore down Lots of Statues, but Little Changed," The New York Times (The New York Times, July 7, 2020), https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/07/world/europe/russia-statues-lenin-stalin-dzerzhinsky.html.

arms of the Russian Federation is nearly identical to that of the Russian Empire, complete with the Imperial Crown of Russia resting upon the eagles' heads. Russian cities, like Leningrad, Sverdlovsk, and Gorki were renamed to their pre-1917 origins of Saint Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, and Nizhny Novgorod. At the same time, some cities like the Vladimir Lenin-inspired Ulyanovsk kept their name, furthering the claim that, in many ways, the Russian Federation was unwilling to make a complete break with the Soviet regime. The double-headed eagle reliefs that once adorned the walls of the Kremlin were replaced, while the eagles atop the spires of the Kremlin's many towers were not. The red glass stars remain to this day.[170] The Romanov Tercentenary obelisk that was repurposed as a monument to the revolution was, in 2013, restored to its original condition.[171]

The omnipresence of Russia's pre-Bolshevik past is not just a product of revolutionary era reversion as monuments to the imperial ancestry have also been constructed in recent years. Figure #24 shows one such monument, a statue of Tsar Alexander III, at its 2017 unveiling.[172] At this statue ceremony, Russian President Vladimir Putin reminded the audience that Alexander III believed "a strong, self-reliant and sovereign state should lean not only on its economic or military might but on traditions, that a great nation must preserve its uniqueness, while a way forward is impossible without respect for own history, culture and spiritual values."[173] As previously mentioned in Chapter Two, the city of Oryol built the first statue to Tsar Ivan IV in 2016, sparking much controversy about his cruel reputation. After the end of the Second World War, the location that was once home to the Cathedral of Christ the Savior and the foundation for

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[170] Amos Chapple, "Red Stars over Moscow," RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty (Red Stars Over Moscow, October 25, 2018), https://www.rferl.org/a/the-story-of-the-red-ruby-stars-of-russias-kremlin/29563764.html.
[171] "Unveiling of a Restored Obelisk Commemorating the House of Romanov's Rule."
[172] Paul Harrison, "New Tsar Alexander III Statue Sparks History Debate," BBC News (BBC, November 20, 2017), https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42051352.
[173] "Putin Amazed by Fortitude Tsar Alexander III Displayed in Advocating for Peace for Russia," TASS, November 18, 2017, https://tass.com/society/976338.

the Palace of the Soviets became home to the largest swimming pool in the USSR.[174] In February of 1990, the Russian Orthodox Church was given the approval to rebuild the Cathedral, shown in Figure #25, and the completed church was consecrated in 1997.

At the same time the government of the Russian Federation was reviving the past, members of Russian far-right movements have also looked to tsarist history for inspiration. Figure #26 shows a group of far-right nationalists holding the black, yellow, and white tricolor of the Russian Empire under Tsar Alexander II. Similarly, Figure #27 shows the same tsarist flags and also a banner of a medieval Muscovite prince with other flags emblazoned with modified swastikas. These far-right ultranationalist movements are embracing the tsarist past in order to legitimize their movements. These groups are big tent movements that encompass numerous ideologies, ranging from neo-Nazism and ultra-Orthodoxy to monarchism, propagating anti-Semitism, anti-LGBT, and anti-immigrant beliefs.

The imperial ancestry of the Russian Empire and the Muscovite state, in addition to the classicist revival in architecture, witnessed a mass rehabilitation and revival during the early 1930s in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. This revival was a stark contrast to the 14 years of internationalist proletarian solidarity shown by the early years of Vladimir Lenin's RSFSR and USSR. The death of Lenin preceded the fragmentation of Bolshevik ideology into the Lev Trotsky-led internationalist-wing and the Joseph Stalin-led nationalist-wing. Stalin's socialism in one country came into conflict with Trotsky's notion of permanent revolution. Once these seeds of discontent had been sown, and after Stalin's consolidation of power, the nationalist faction of the CPSU began to rehabilitate the images of the past. Contrary to the belief of numerous historians, this shift in the official party line could not have been due to the need for the

[174] Marius Mortsiefer and Kerstin Pelzer, "Why Moscow's Most Iconic Church Used to Be a Swimming Pool: DW: 22.09.2016," DW.COM (Deutsche Welle, September 22, 2016), https://www.dw.com/en/why-moscows-most-iconic-church-used-to-be-a-swimming-pool/a-19566508.

mobilization for war. Chapter One disputes these claims by explaining the USSR's lack of preparation in 1941 for the Second World War. A nation unprepared for war in 1941 was, in no way predicting war a decade before. The evidence is compounded by the robust global intelligence network of the NKVD that would have seen any preparation for war by hostile foreign powers. The rise of the NSDAP in 1933 and the Imperial Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 simply cannot and do not account for the shift that took place between 1930 and 1931. This shift coincided with the reintroduction of history and the Soviet government's quest for legitimacy and their own desire to present themselves as a legitimate and rightful successor to the empire they had just overthrown. Legitimacy was gained both by recalling the architectural styles of the past, as well as linking the accomplishments of the Soviet regime with the actions of the tsars, both Romanov and Rurikid. Furthermore, the evidence shows that the rehabilitation and revival, especially in regard to architecture, occurred well after Hitler lay dead in the *Führerbunker* by his own hand. This rehabilitation and revival continued well into the 1950s. The explanation as to this shift was much simpler than mobilization; it was a pragmatic decision. Cohesion is a necessity in any society, even if the society is created by a revolution and built upon the concepts of a class struggle. The past served as an effective tool to unite society behind these figures, and Soviet Russian society certainly responded better to the imperial past than the unfamiliar and foreign pantheon of socialist thought. The solution was the fusion of internationalist communism and Russocentric nationalism into national Bolshevism. The emergence of the *Sovetskii Narod* was a direct consequence of the synthesis. A key aspect of this conceptualization was imperial ancestry, which was and will continue to be a familiar presence in both Soviet and modern-day Russian society.

On 24 February 2022, Russian ground forces launched a major offensive against the independent nation of Ukraine, a nation once part of the USSR. Their goals and motives are unclear: do they seek to liberate the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics like Vladimir Putin claimed, or is their goal to fully annex and integrate the Ukrainian lands they deem as theirs? Modern-day Russian revanchism is directly linked to the tsarist past, and this invasion could be but the first step in a plan to conquer the lands of the former Russian Empire. Vladimir Putin's historical revisionism in his February 2022 speech set the stage to lay claim to all former SSRs. In his speech, Vladimir Putin stated, "The culture and values, experience and traditions of our ancestors invariably provided a powerful underpinning for the wellbeing and the very existence of entire states and nations, their success and viability. Of course, this directly depends on the ability to quickly adapt to constant change, maintain social cohesion, and readiness to consolidate and summon all the available forces in order to move forward."[175] Russian nationalism is, for a second time in one hundred years, being turned into a powerful tool of propaganda during a major war.

[175] "Transcript: Vladimir Putin's Televised Address on Ukraine," Bloomberg.com (Bloomberg, February 24, 2022), https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-02-24/full-transcript-vladimir-putin-s-televised-address-to-russia-on-ukraine-feb-24.

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Figure and Image Gallery

Figure #1: “Bronze Horseman Camouflaged from German Aircraft during the Siege of Leningrad.” Photograph. 8 August 1941. *St. Petersburg (Leningrad) during the Great Patriotic War and the Siege (1941-1945)*. Accessed January 19, 2022. http://www.saint-petersburg.com/history/great-patriotic-war-and-siege-of-leningrad/.

Figure #2: “Statue of Alexander III in a Cage”. Photograph. *ЗАГАДКИ И ОТВЕТЫ ПАМЯТНИК АЛЕКСАНДРУ III*. Gardens of Russian Museum. Accessed January 19, 2022. https://igardens.ru/monument_alexander_iii/#iLightbox[gallery-1]/1.

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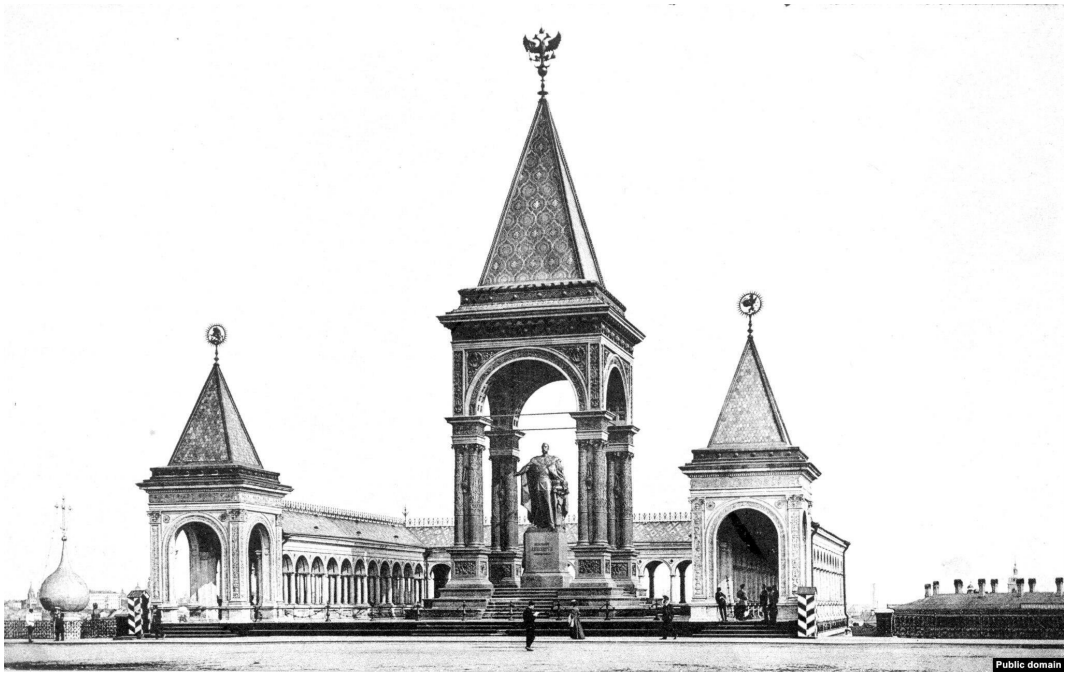

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Figure #8: Ilya Yefimovich Repin. “Ivan the Terrible and His Son Ivan on 16 November 1581,” 1883–85. State Tretyakov Gallery. Moscow.

Figure #9: V. Koretskii. "Nashi sily neischislimy." Propaganda Poster. 1941. Iskusstvo. *Poster Collection*. Hoover Institution Library & Archives. Accessed January 19, 2022. https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/23852/nashi-sily-neischislimy?ctx=a19e2e66089b18d9f1941f9620bf44d95c623024&idx=2.

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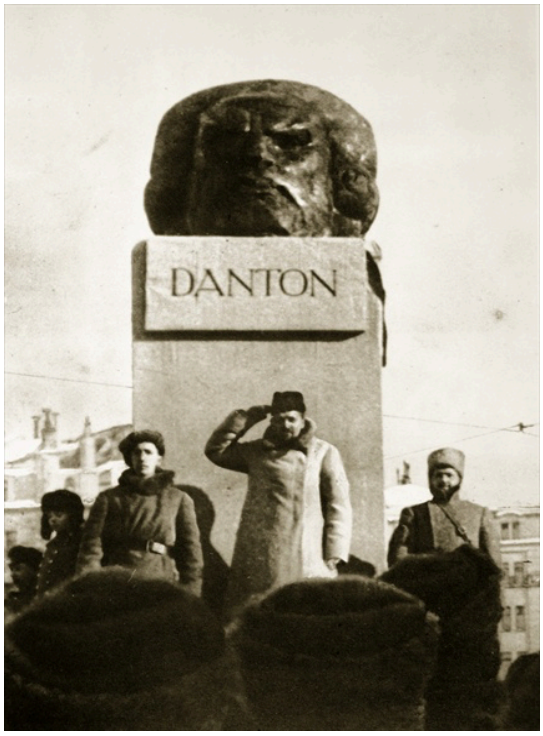
Figure #12: Boris Korolev. Sculpture. 1919–20. Sculpture of Karl Marx in Ross Wolfe, "Boris Korolev, Abstract Sculptures of Bakunin and Marx (1919-1920)," The Charnel House, May 12, 2014, https://thecharnelhouse.org/2014/05/12/boris-korolev-abstract-sculptures-of-bakunin-and-marx-1919-1920/.



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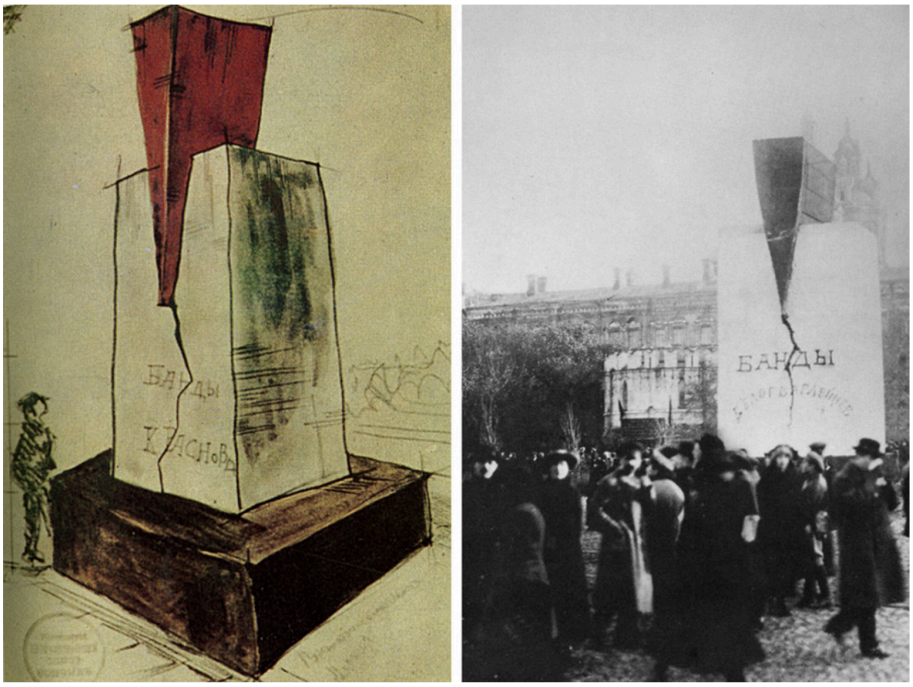

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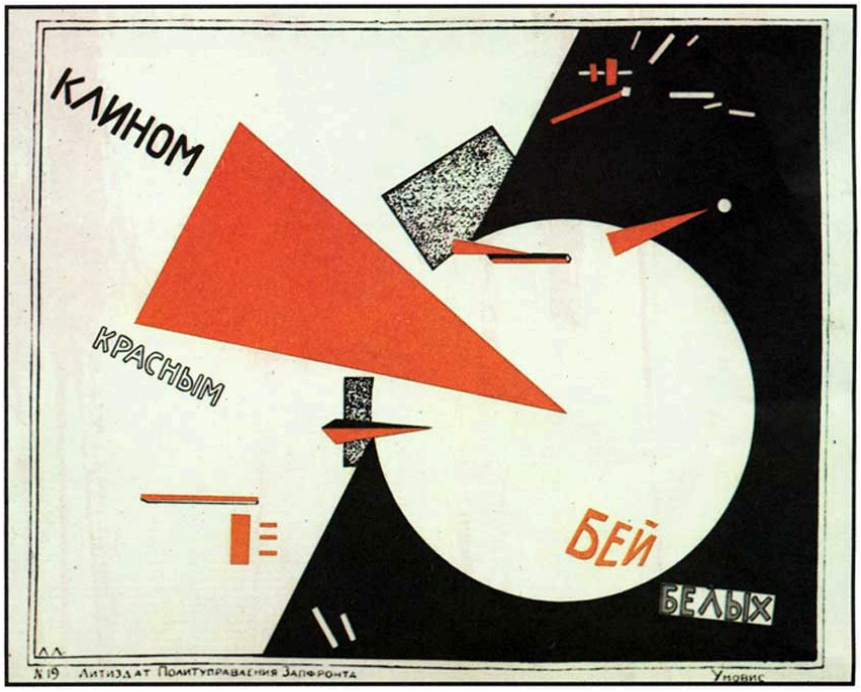

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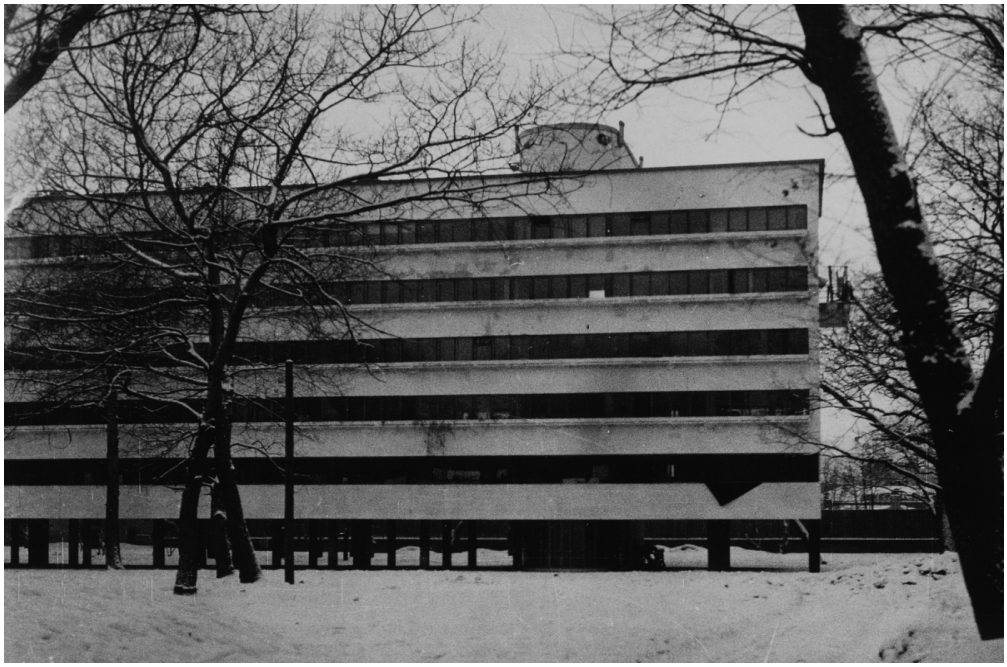

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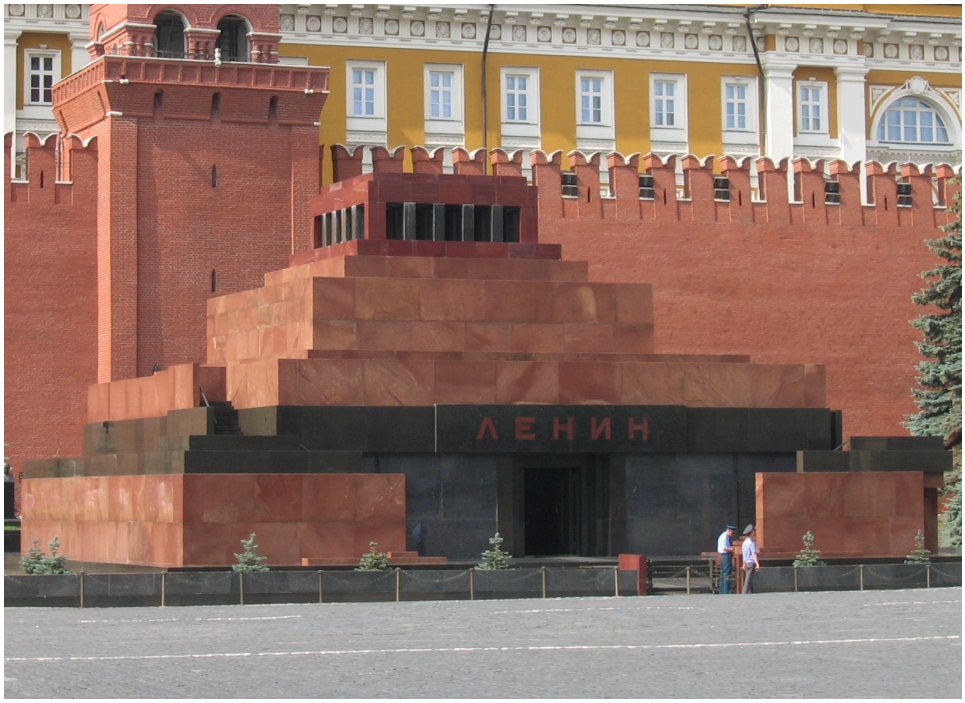

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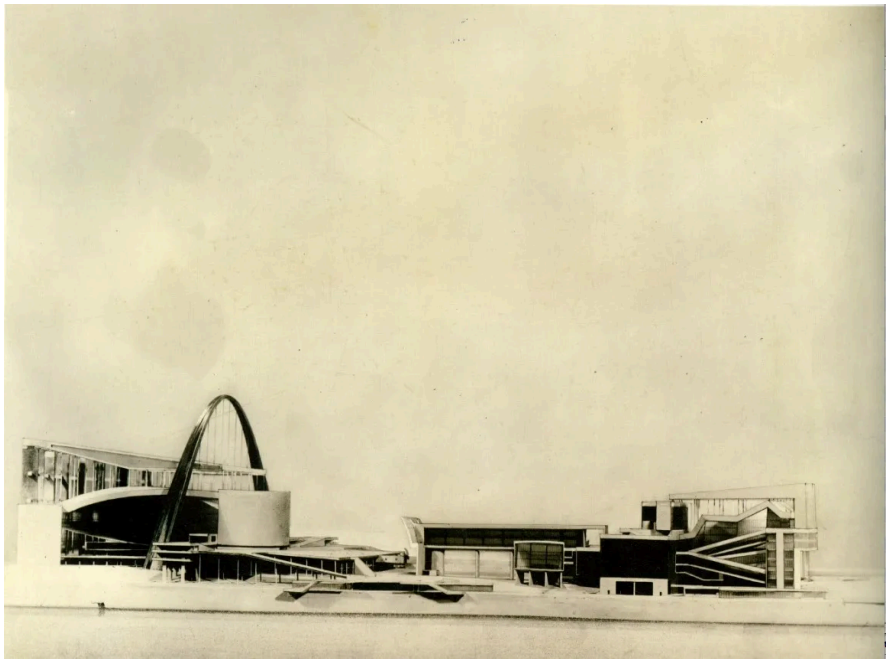

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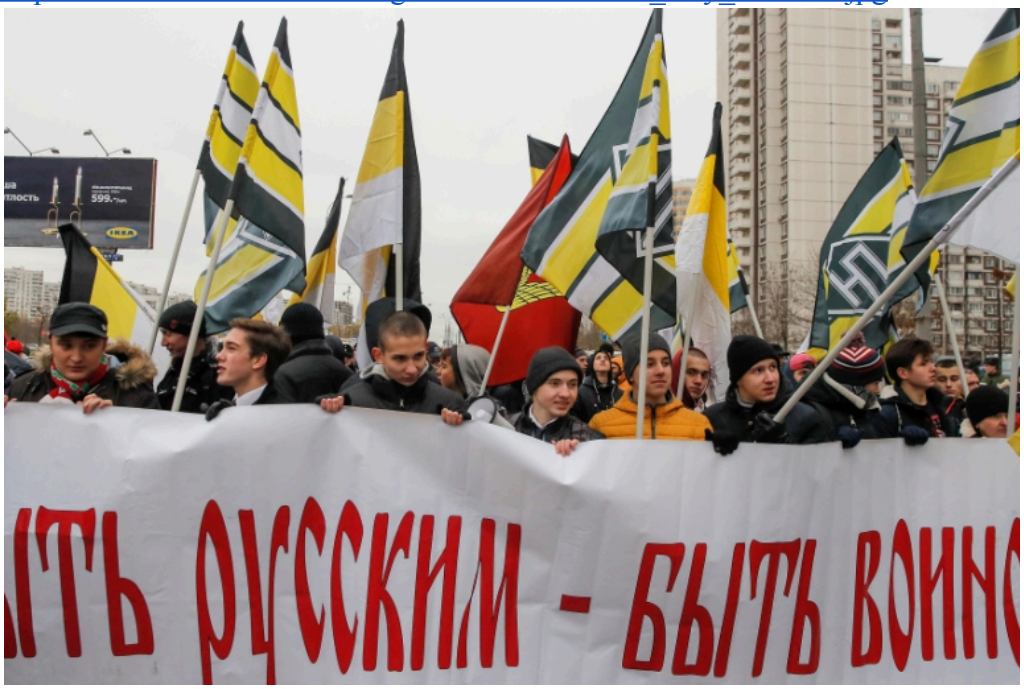

Figure #26: Reuters/Maxim Shemetov. Photograph. November 2017 in Mariya Petkova, "The Death of the Russian Far Right," The Far Right | Al Jazeera (Al Jazeera, December 16, 2017), https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/12/16/the-death-of-the-russian-far-right.

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