

The Palace of the Soviets was beyond doubt the most grandiose construction project in the entire history of the USSR. For its construction, the Cathedral of Christ the Savior was demolished, and four architectural competitions were held during 1931–1933 to select a design. Ultimately, Boris Iofan's proposal was selected. His design was revised after the competition following Stalin's remark that the palace should be a monument to Lenin. This led the main building, which was to contain the congress hall to be extended to 415 m in height (making it the world's tallest building), to feature a 100-m statue of Lenin at the top. However, construction was suspended soon after the completion of the foundation due to the German invasion, and it remained so even after the end of the Great Fatherland War.

In default of the actual building, images of the Palace of the Soviets were circulated extensively all over the USSR in both official media and popular culture. Soviet films, in particular, presented the palace as a symbol of a utopian future Moscow. In a comparison of such images from several Soviet films from the 1930s to the 1950s, I investigate how the depiction of the palace evolved and the implications of this for the changing political and aesthetic circumstances of the Soviet Union.

1. The unrealized Palace of the Soviets

Before the development of the Palace of the Soviets commenced, several other projects were already underway to build a new hall for the Congress of the Soviets and the symbolic center of the USSR, such as the Palace of Labor project (1923). However, none of these was ever fully realized. Stalin made the final decision to construct the Palace of the Soviets at some point during 1930-1931 (Хмельницкий 2007: 78). In February 1931, the Soviet government held a preliminary closed competition for the palace design to lay the foundation for an international open competition. During this competition, the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, the largest Orthodox Christian church in Russia, which was built in commemoration of the victory of Napoleon War and christened in 1883, was demolished to provide land for the palace. The preliminary contest had no victor, and on July 18, 1931, the government announced a final competition, in which there were 272 entries, including 160 amateur designs and 24 submissions by foreign architects (Хмельницкий 2007: 86). Among these were renowned European modernist architects, including Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, and Erich Mendelsohn. The choice of the council for the Palace of the Soviets was announced to be among works by the young Soviet architect Boris Iofan, the master of Classicism Ivan Zholtovsky, and Hector Hamilton, an unknown American architect.¹ However, no victor emerged. The council announced the opening of a second round, calling on architects to draw on the high points of classical masterpieces for their designs.² Until this

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Дворец советов СССР. М., 1939. С. 8.
С. 56.

point the official Soviet style was a type of functional modernism. However, this was contradicted in this declaration.

The second round of the competition began in February 1932, and 12 teams of leading Soviet architects, including the Constructivists the Vesnin brothers and Moisei Ginzburg, as well as the renowned scholars Vladimir Shchuko and Vladimir Gelfreikh, took part. None won this round, and the following round began in August 1932, with five teams participating. In this round, each work shared a neoclassical style, with the architects ignoring their own styles and principles. The council ultimately decided to adopt the plan presented by Iofan's team. This, however, was not the end of the discussion: Stalin insisted that the palace be taller than the Eiffel tower and that it should be a monument to Lenin.³ Following this demand, the statue of The Free Proletarian to be placed at the top of the palace was replaced with a design for a 100-m Lenin statue (twice as high as the Statue of Liberty), and the height of the palace was increased from 250 to 415 m (Fig. 1).⁴ Shchuko and Gelfreikh cooperated with Iofan and countless other painters, sculptors, and decorators to realize the building as a *Gesamtkunstwerk* or total work of art. This transformed the idea of the palace from a congress hall to the cathedral of a personality cult.



Fig. 1 Palace of the Soviets designed by Iofan, Shchuko and Gelfreikh in 1937

Once construction began, however, fundamental problems remained unsolved: how could such a huge building be built in the absence of any experience in constructing skyscrapers, how to place the statue of Lenin, and how to ensure it would be visible from the street (it would be too far up to see from the ground) (Терновец 1939: 22). In 1934, the Vesnin brothers and Ginzburg justly criticized the positioning of statues atop buildings that were not visible from the

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Совет строительства Дворца Советов при Президиуме ЦИК СССР, О проекте Дворца Советов // Строительство Москвы. 1933. №5-6. С. 2.

Архитектурно-технический проект Дворца Советов Союза ССР // Архитектура СССР. 1937. №6. С. 27-29.

street (albeit without direct reference to the palace) in an article published in *Architecture USSR*, the official journal of the Union of Soviet Architects (Гинзбург, Веснин, Веснин 1934: 67). However, the architectural historian Vladimir Paperny says in his book *Culture Two* (*Культура Два*) that the positioning of the Lenin statue was not a mistake. He writes that the multi-story structure of the palace embodied the hierarchical system of Culture Two (Socialist Realism) and that “a sequence of ascending, gradually narrowing tiers crowned with a human figure, one representing not merely the highest tier (100 m) but the transition to another level of representation” (Паперный 2006: 124). This means that the statue of Lenin, which belongs to the ideal world, should not or could not be seen by the worldly on the streets. Even after the foundation was completed, these problems remained unresolved (Терновец 1939: 22); however, the unexpected German invasion brought construction to a standstill. The steel piles and concrete present at the site were requisitioned for the defense of Moscow.

After the end of the war, Stalin ordered Iofan to revise the design for the palace, but this was never completed. In its place, seven high-rises, the so-called Stalin’s Seven Sisters, appeared in Moscow during the first half of the 1950s.⁵ They imitated the layered structure of the palace, escalating toward the center like a wedding-cake, and they surrounded the now-empty construction site. These high-rises are clearly distinguished from the palace, although they are crowned with spires derived from the Spasskaya Tower in the Kremlin, which was considered as Stalin’s headquarters and was his architectural symbol during the late 1930s (Fig. 2). That is, Stalin replaced what would be the world’s tallest and largest Lenin monument by seven monuments of himself, with only the foundation pit of the palace remaining in the center of Moscow.



Fig. 2. Stalin and the Spasskaya Tower are depicted next to each other in Nina Vatolina’s poster “Thank You Dear Stalin for Our Happy Childhood” (1939)

The death of Stalin triggered a drastic shift in Soviet architectural policy and design. In November 1954, Nikita Khrushchev officially criticized Stalinist architectural projects, especially their excessive ornamentation, which was considered a waste of resources and an emblem of disregard for public utility. The palace was singled out as the worst

⁵ The buildings and their construction periods are as follows: Kotelnicheskaya Embankment Building (1947–1952), Hotel Ukraine (1947–1957), Red Gate Square Building (1947–53), the main building of Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1948–53), Leningrad Hotel (1949–1954), the main building of Moscow State University (1949–1953), Kudrinskaya Square Building (1950–1954).

and most typical mistake of this aspect of the Stalinist project (Быков, Хрипунов 1958: 11). Consequently, construction of the building was officially discontinued,⁶ and the foundation of the palace was converted into the open-air pool Moscow (1958–1960), 130 m in diameter, built according to Dmitry Chechulin’s design. Thus, the world’s largest and tallest building was converted into the world’s largest open-air heated pool. This became a tourist sight in Moscow during the Khrushchev era, but after the collapse of the USSR, the pool was reclaimed, and the Cathedral of Christ the Savior was reconstructed here, completed in 2000.

2. Filming the palace in the late 1930s

The duplication and circulation of images of the Palace of the Soviets began even during the design competition. These were published in newspapers and even printed on matchboxes, chocolate packages, and other consumer items. Popular films adopted images of the palace as part of a depiction of the near future of Moscow. The earliest non-documentary film depicting the palace was Vasili Zhuravlov’s *Cosmic Voyage* (*Космический рейс*), produced in 1936. Its story begins in the future of Moscow, in 1946, when the Soviet Union would accomplish the first manned flight to the moon. However, the three protagonists, an old scientist of space engineering and the designer of the first rocket Sedikh, modeled on the father of rocketry Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, Marina, an assistant to Sedikh’s colleague Professor Karin, and the younger brother of a cosmonaut Victor, Andryusha, accidentally leave for the moon on a space rocket named Stalin. During the opening sequence and that of the rocket launch, the Palace of the Soviets appears in the background of the launching pad (Fig. 3). The building of the All-Union Institute of Inter-Planetary Communication, which seems to repeat the set-back structure of the palace, shows a sculpture of a rocket occupying its height instead of a Lenin statue (Fig. 4). In these sequences, the palace, placed at a distance from the camera, looks smaller than the launching pad and the institute building, and the rocket flies over it (Fig. 5). The palace was no more emphasized than any other Moscow landmark and it was literally surpassed by the rocket, the symbol of mechanical engineering.

⁶ To be more precise, Khrushchev planed a new construction project of the Palace of the Soviet on the Lenin Hills (present Sparrow Hills) in the South-Western Administrative Okrug, linked to his plan for decentralizing government offices to this area. Architectural competitions were held twice in 1956 and 1959, but there was no



Fig. 3. The Palace of the Soviets appearing behind the rocket launching pad, and the lower half of the building of the All-Union Institute of Inter-Planetary Communication



Fig. 4. The upper half of the building of the All-Union Institute of Inter-Planetary Communication



Fig. 5. The rocket flying over the palace

Two years later, Aleksandr Medvedkin's film *New Moscow* (*Новая Москва*) also depicted the palace, but it was

founded on completely different principles, namely, the aesthetics of Socialist Realism. This film was intended to praise and celebrate the transformation of the cityscape resulting from Stalin's Moscow reconstruction plan, the General Plan (Генплан), which was adopted in 1935. Alyosha, the main protagonist, a young engineer from Moscow, engaged at the beginning of the film in the construction of a new city in Siberia, is invited to the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition (VSKhV) in Moscow to exhibit his mobile model of the capital, referred to as the living model of Moscow. This model shows how the landscape of the center of Moscow had changed in recent times: old buildings had been demolished, and the new buildings, such as Hotel Moscow (1932–1935) and the Council of Labor and Defense (1932–1935), were constructed.

In this exhibition, the model is not shown but a film, which was probably produced by using the model exhibited in the foreground (Fig. 6). The film consists of two parts, "Today's Moscow" and "Tomorrow's Moscow," and it included a stately cityscape of future Moscow following the completion of Stalin's General Plan. After opening to a full-capacity audience, the film suddenly plays in reverse, and images of today's Moscow change into the past ones due to an operational error: new buildings disappear and old buildings, monasteries, and wooden shacks appear again in the capital, one after another. Likewise, the Cathedral of Christ the Savior reappears on the original foundation pit of the palace (Fig. 7-1, 7-2). Here Medvetkin inserts a documentary picture of the foundation under the excavation, which is in sharp contrast with the magnificent image of the completed palace that had appears later in the film.

Alyosha, finally arriving at the exhibition hall, repairs the projector, and the film begins to replay properly, moving from the past through the present and future sequences. The perfected Palace of the Soviets crowns the end of the future part, "Tomorrow's Moscow," as the dominant construction of the future capital (Fig. 8) accompanied with narration from Zoya (Alyosha's girlfriend), in which she describes the palace as "a symbol of the greatness and powerfulness of our homeland." After the presentation ends, she adds, "This construction project is led by the great Stalin!" A figure of Stalin with his right-hand man Lazar Kaganovich looking at the Moscow landscape is displayed over the stage (Fig. 9) assigning him the role of the leader who bringing this grandiose capital into existence.

In the final sequence of "Tomorrow's Moscow," the camera gradually moves from a new suburban neighborhood in the Southwestern Okrug toward the center of Moscow and the Palace of the Soviets, and it rises from the bottom to the top of the palace, halting at the Lenin statue. This sequence reaches its climax at this moment, meeting with applause from the audience in the exhibition hall. In this shot, several airplanes also fly above the building (Fig. 10); however, this is not intended to show the superiority of science but rather to accentuate the monumentality of the statue. This depiction of the palace embodies the vertical and centripetal characteristics of the aesthetics of Socialist Realism: the object that is placed at the highest point and in the most central position occupies the top of the symbolic hierarchy.

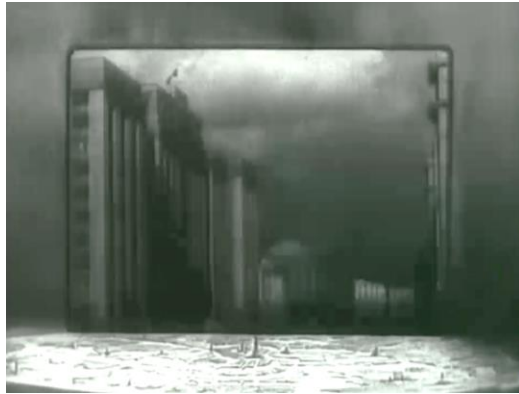


Fig. 6. Model of the future Moscow with the Palace of the Soviets in the central foreground



Fig. 7-1, 7-2. The foundation pit of the palace and the reappearance of the cathedral



Fig. 8. Palace of the Soviets in "Tomorrow's Moscow"

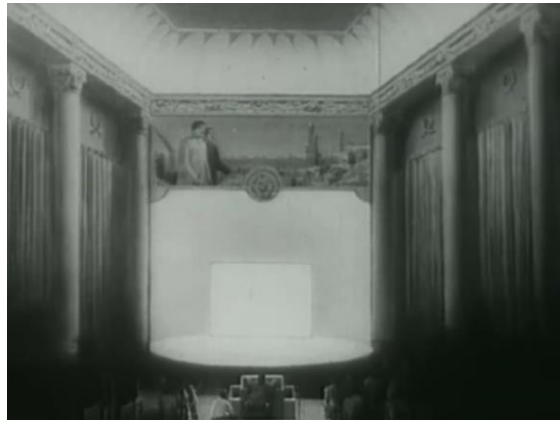


Fig. 9. Images of Stalin and Kaganovich above the screen



Fig. 10. Airplanes fly above the palace

However, the film failed to implement a major canon of Socialist Realism, namely, depicting reality in its revolutionary development. The sequence of “Tomorrow’s Moscow” presents an ideal future Moscow, but at the same time, it reveals that this ideal is only images produced by composing illustrations and miniatures, and it is not reality. This can be considered to be related to the revelation of technique (обнажение приёма) strategy, as theorized by formalist Viktor Shklovsky. Medvedkin no doubt admired Stalin and his reconstruction project, although the director of *Happiness* (1934) and *The Miracle Worker* (1936), works characterized by their formalistic and satirical style, could not entirely adapt his style to the contradictions of Socialist Realism.⁷

3. From the Lenin monument to the Stalin monument

The Palace of the Soviets is portrayed in a more complex way by Grigori Aleksandrov in his film *The Radiant*

⁷ The film *New Moscow* once passed censorship successfully, but then it was unexpectedly criticized in *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, particularly it was described as diffuse plot of comedy parts and opportunism, though the depiction of the future Moscow was praised. As a result, the film was abandoned just before its premiere. Cf. Алевич 1939: 4, Вадим 1997: 34-37, Марголит, Шмыров 1995: 64, Рыклин 1939: 6, Юренев 1959: 236-237, Widdis 2005: 104.

Path (Светлый путь), produced in 1940.⁸ Aleksandrov began as a pupil of Sergei Eisenstein and went on to become to becoming co-director with him. After achieving his own independence, he made a name for himself as a master of Soviet musical comedy films, and he won the Stalin Prize twice.

The main protagonist in *The Radiant Path*, Tania Morozova,⁹ played by Aleksandrov's wife Lyubov Orlova, works in a countryside hotel. She is initially an illiterate, unsophisticated girl who has a talent for rational organization (suggested at the beginning of the film in a sequence where she prepares breakfast). Following her encounter with Lebedzev, the engineer who becomes her future partner, and the forewoman Pronina, she goes to school and then becomes a factory worker. She begins working in a spinning mill and then a textile factory. She exercises her organizational ability and sets a new record for the number of looms operating simultaneously. Finally, she receives the Order of Lenin at the Kremlin as an outstanding Stakhanovite worker.

After the award is conferred in a ceremony in the Kremlin, Tania exits to an anteroom and, overcome with emotion, begins to sing and dance in front of a huge mirror. Then, suddenly, the story becomes a fairy tale: images of the former Tania appear on the mirror one after another, and she asks one of them to show her what would happen in the future. Her image opens the frame of the mirror like a door and invites the real Tania into the mirror world. As soon as she enters the mirror, the two of them drive off in a flying car toward the future Moscow.

Soon after, the site of the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition (VSKhV), which opened on August 1, 1939 in Ostankino,¹⁰ appears beneath the car, and Tania, now wearing a suit and having become a deputy of the Supreme Soviet, lands on the ground. In the next sequence, driving through the Mechanization Pavilion and past the 25-m statue of Stalin there (Fig. 11), Tania arrives at her destination, the Textile Pavilion (the Georgian SSR pavilion was chosen for the filming location). This scene was shot at the real exhibition site, but the following one, in the pavilion, was filmed against a backdrop. In the Textile Pavilion, Tania makes a speech in front of an audience as an ideal model of a Soviet worker, and the Palace of the Soviets rises in the background of the podium (Fig. 12). By contrast with *New Moscow*, which deliberately showed the palace as a simulacrum, in *Shining Path*, it is depicted as an existing construction in the ideal future world, following the Socialist Realism canon of depicting reality in its revolutionary development.

⁸ Aleksandrov has already adopted an image of the Palace of the Soviets in his musical comedy film *Circus* (1936) to design a huge stage set on the circus arena. It was a curious amalgam of Busby Berkeley's musical scenery and Socialist Realism monumentality.

⁹ Tania is modeled after a real woman named Evdokina Vinogradova (1914–1962), a legendary weaver who set a new USSR record and then a world record for the number of looms used at the same time. She got the Order of Lenin in 1935 and was elected as a representative of the Supreme Soviet. Aleksandrov and Orlova interviewed her for studying how to dramatize her life. Cf. Салис 2012: 235.

¹⁰ At first, the Exhibition was planned to open for the 20th anniversary of the Revolution and was devoted to the success of agricultural collectivization and mechanization. However, the construction of the exhibition missed the deadline twice, and on the pretext of the second delay, the Communist Party intervened in the planning of the exhibition. As a result, Mikhail Chernov, the head of the Exhibition Committee and the People's Commissar of Agriculture, was arrested along with the general planner, Vyacheslav Oltarzhevsky. The opening was postponed another year, and during this period (1938–39), the entire design of the Exhibition was changed dramatically. Wooden signboard-like pavilions were replaced by more monumental, neoclassical ones made of stone, with plenty of reliefs, statues, frescos, and murals. These 52 main pavilions were considered as typical models of Socialist Realism in architecture. The final sequences of *Shining Path* were shot right after the opening of the VSKhV in august, 1939. Cf. Каппа, Уманский, Лунц 1936: 3, Корнфельд 1939: 4–13, Салис 2012: 245.



Fig. 11. Mechanization pavilion and the Stalin statue



Fig. 12. Tania making a speech in a pavilion before the Palace



Fig. 13. Tania and the statue of Stalin

The depiction of the palace here is unnatural and arbitrary. First, the site of the palace was more than 10 Km from the exhibition site, so it would have been impossible to see it behind Tania. Moreover, curiously enough, the Lenin statue to be sited at the top of the palace is never shown; it is always just out of frame. Instead, a statue of Stalin stands to the right side of Tania on the podium (Fig. 13). If the director wanted to show a complete image of the palace that would include the statue of Lenin, it would be sufficient to portray the palace smaller, i.e., further from the pavilion. Nonetheless, this was not done. Why does Aleksandrov depict the palace, but without the statue of Lenin, even though it is a highly important part of the design?

This manipulation may be due to Aleksandrov's intention to emphasize Stalin, not Lenin, as the central figure in the future Moscow. The Palace of the Soviets, a symbol of the reborn capital in Stalin's reconstruction project, was needed, but the statue of Lenin, which might threaten Stalin's commanding position in both the literal and symbolic sense, should be omitted. In these sequences at the exhibition site, the image of Stalin is repeatedly emphasized in the real statue of Stalin at Mechanization Square, the Georgian Pavilion, and the statue of Stalin behind Tania (she often looks toward the statue during her speech, as if asking for confirmation from her leader). The All-Union Agricultural Exhibition was devoted to the great success of Stalin's first five-year plan and in particular, the mechanization and collectivization of Soviet agriculture. We can see from these sequences that Aleksandrov is deliberately depicting Stalin as a great leader on his own, not as a successor of Lenin, which entails removing the image of Lenin from the top of the palace. Ultimately, as in the film *New Moscow*, the palace is revealed in the climax of the story as a symbol of utopian Moscow in the near future, but the director diverts the center of significance from the palace as a monument to Lenin to monuments of Stalin. This is likely because Aleksandrov, one of Stalin's most favorite film directors at the time, concluded that his leader desired to surpass Lenin's authority and occupy the top of the imagery hierarchy himself.

4. Stalin's Seven Sisters in post-war Soviet films

After Soviet victory over the Germans, the project of the Palace of the Soviets was officially resumed, but the construction was postponed and never begun again. As described above, Stalin decided to construct seven monumental high-rises in Moscow from 1947 to 1954, replacing the palace. Images of the palace vanished from Soviet films and were replaced by the Seven Sisters as a symbol of New Moscow. Take for example, *Alyosha Ptitsyn Grows Up* (*Алёша Птицын вырабатывает характер*) in 1953, directed by Anatoly Granik; two of the Seven Sisters, namely, the Kotelnicheskaya Embankment Building and the building of Moscow State University, make a striking appearance in this film.

Alyosha, a third-grade Muscovite boy one day decides to become more responsible and to follow a strict schedule, giving up his childish habits. When he runs into his grandmother's long-time friend Sima and her granddaughter Sashenka on the street, he offers to guide them around Moscow, as they are from a local town and unfamiliar with the big city. First, they go to one of the most splendid Moscow metro stations, the Komsomolskaya (opened in 1952), the epitome of the underground palace style of station, designed in so-called triumphant style. Then he takes them to the Kotelnicheskaya Embankment Building, designed by Dmitry Chechulin and Andrei Rostkovsky, which had just

been completed in 1952. This high-rise appears in the film with a fanfare of trumpets, and Alyosha pompously introduces it to the overwhelmed Sashenka and us, the viewers (Fig. 14). Having gone up to the observatory in the tower, they enjoy a panoramic view of the capital. This sequence consists of a montage of real shots of Moscow from a bird-eye view combined with a set of the observation platform. Using binoculars, Alyosha and Sashenka identify the main building of Moscow State University (1949–1953), the largest and tallest (240 m) of the Seven Sisters, designed by the master of Socialist Realism Lev Rudnev and placed on the Sparrow Hills (at that time called the Lenin Hills) looking over the Moscow River (Fig. 15). Alyosha and Sashenka dream of becoming students at the university, gazing across at the university building, under construction during the shooting of this film. Last, the three protagonists arrive at their destination, Red Square. With a proud smile, their gazes follow up the Spasskaya Tower of the Kremlin to its top, which, as noted, was considered the architectural embodiment of Stalin himself and the prototype of the spiral motif at the top of the Seven Sisters buildings. At this moment, the bell of the Spasskaya Tower rings, signaling the time to say farewell.



Fig. 14. Alyosha introduces the Kotelnicheskaya Embankment Building



Fig. 15. The main building of Moscow State University, viewed through binoculars

In *Alyosha Ptitsyn Grows Up*, buildings closely associated with Stalin are deliberately selected, particularly the newest ones, those just completed or still under construction. Meanwhile, curiously enough, Granik never presents a

full view of Lenin Mausoleum at Red Square, Sashenka offers flowers at the Mausoleum, but the three visitors pass without any words, and the bulk of the monument remains off screen (Fig. 16). In other words, the director's intention was not to depict the pre-war Moscow of Lenin but rather the triumphant post-war Moscow of Stalin through the eyes of obedient tourists.



Fig. 16. The protagonists visiting the Lenin Mausoleum

Films like this, thematizing a virtual trip around Moscow, were often produced during the Soviet period, even after the death of Stalin and Khrushchev's 1956 denunciation. For instance, Georgiy Daneliya's best-known film *I Walk around Moscow* (*Я шагаю по Москве*), released in 1963 and expressing the atmosphere of the Thaw period, introduced viewers to new places of interest in Moscow that represented the Khrushchev era: New Alvert Street (still under construction at that time), Leninsky Avenue, the University metro station (opened in 1959), and the new movie theater Russia (1957–1961), designed by Daneliya's teacher at the Moscow Architectural Institute, Yuri Sheverdiyaev.¹¹ However, this open admiration for Soviet leaders and their monumental constructions was gradually disappearing from Soviet films. The Palace of the Soviets, for its part, seemed to be completely forgotten, with only the open-air pool Moscow appeared in several films, and only occasionally. One such film is *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (*Москва слезам не верит*), released in 1979 and directed by Vladimir Menshov, but this place no longer signifies anything other than being a popular spot in Moscow.

After the dissolution of the USSR, the history of the construction of the palace has been characterized as a cultural phenomenon under a totalitarian regime and demythologized such as in the works published by Dmitry Khmel'nitsky. At the same time the palace has reappeared in post-Soviet media but as a kitsch image, like a structure in fantasy or SF films rather than realistic or ideological one. For example, in the 2012 film *The Spy* (*Шпион*), an adaptation of Boris Akunin's alternative history novel *Spy Novel* (*Шпионский роман*) the palace is depicted as fully completed (Костюков 2017: 209-216).

The story of the film takes place in the USSR, in 1941. In the alternative telling, Germany does not invade the

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Soviet Union, and the construction of the palace is complete. However, from in this telling, two of the Seven Sisters, namely, the Kotelnicheskaya Embankment Building (Fig. 17) and the building of Moscow State University, also appear on the backdrop, a curious choice, considering that they were built in place of the palace after the war.



Fig. 17. Kotelnicheskaya Embankment Building



Fig. 18. The Lenin statue on the palace, facing the west

In the film, where it is presented with CGI, the Palace of the Soviets rises in a stately fashion at the center of Moscow, following the design created by Iofan, Shchuko, and Gelfreikh in 1937. However, it features several significant modifications. For instance, the direction that the statue of Lenin faced was altered. In the original design, the statue should face east, toward the Kremlin, but in the film, it faces the west, toward the main building of the Moscow State University (Fig. 18). Another notable modification is that on the uppermost layer of the palace, most likely under the feet of the statue, Stalin has his office, connected by an elevator to the lower floors. From here, the leader reigns over all of the USSR, commanding a view of Moscow (Fig. 19). The panoramic view is comparable to the all-seeing eye of God. By contrast, as the constructivist architects predicted, the statue of Lenin is hidden in the clouds and is barely visible from the ground level (Fig. 20). In the film, only Lenin's head and back are shown, in a bird's-eye view (Fig. 21), with the statue never being depicted from squarely in front. That is, here, it is not the statue of Lenin but the living Stalin that is depicted as the owner of the palace.



Fig. 19. Stalin's office and a panoramic view of Moscow



Fig. 20. Statue of Lenin hidden by clouds



Fig. 21. Statue of Lenin depicted from a bird's-eye view

Conclusion

The construction project of the Palace of the Soviets began according to Stalin's directives, following the intention to recognize Lenin as the greatest leader of Russia and to justify his succession to Lenin's status. However, in place of the sluggish pace of construction of the real building, images of the palace in mass media, particularly in popular entertainment such as films, played a remarkable role in conveying and diffusing these political messages. In pre-war Soviet films, such as Medvedkin's *New Moscow*, the palace was directly depicted and celebrated as a socialist edifice and the statue of Lenin, a literal giant, occupied its top, the most central and highest place in the future capital. By illustrating the ideal Moscow, the film called on Soviet citizens to voluntarily participate in its realization.

However, the symbolical meaning of the palace gradually shifted, corresponding to the political situation surrounding Stalin. Aleksandrov had already taken the focus away from the palace as a monument to Lenin in his film *The Radiant Path*, and he repeatedly emphasized Stalin statues at the VSKhV exhibition site instead. His film

publicized the success of the first five-year plan under Stalin and reflected Stalin's strengthened influence over Soviet politics. This shift of the political center is never definitively asserted in words but hinted at through the manipulation of images. The film presented ideological messages to the Soviet people almost unconsciously. The glorification of Stalin was taken an extreme in post-war films for children in particular. Granik's *Alyosha Ptitsyn Grows Up* shows Stalin's high-rises as a symbol of a new triumphal Moscow and of Stalin himself, completely ignoring the palace, still under construction. This implied that film makers no longer needed to depict Stalin as a royal pupil of or successor to Lenin.

The Palace of the Soviets was never completed, and these transitions in the image of the palace in Soviet films seem to represent the desire of the Soviet establishment more than its reality; they reflected a gradual shift of symbolic center from Lenin to Stalin. Depictions of this fictional, manipulated landscape with (or without) the palace had an educational function for Soviet citizenry. It presented clear instructions for how they should understand and appreciate reality as portrayed in the media under the Stalin and post-Stalin regime, namely, more than the real Moscow landscape.

ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Palace of the Soviets designed by Iofan, Shchuko and Gelfreikh in 1937 (Архитектура СССР. 1937. №6)
2. Nina Vatolina's poster "Thank You Dear Stalin for Our Happy Childhood" (1939)
3. *Cosmic Voyage* (1936)
4. *Cosmic Voyage* (1936)
5. *Cosmic Voyage* (1936)
6. *New Moscow* (1938)
7. *New Moscow* (1938)
8. *New Moscow* (1938)
9. *New Moscow* (1938)
10. *New Moscow* (1938)
11. *The Radiant Path* (1940)
12. *The Radiant Path* (1940)
13. *The Radiant Path* (1940)
14. *Alyosha Ptitsyn Grows Up* (1953)
15. *Alyosha Ptitsyn Grows Up* (1953)
16. *Alyosha Ptitsyn Grows Up* (1953)
17. *The Spy* (2002)
18. *The Spy* (2002)
19. *The Spy* (2002)
20. *The Spy* (2002)
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