# MOSCOW; AN URBAN PENDULUM SWINGING BETWEEN THE GLORIFICATION OF THE PROLETARIAT AND THE CELEBRATION OF ABSOLUTIST POWER UNDER THE CHANGING WINDS OF GLOBALIZATION

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*Abstract*— **The paper aims to explore the relationships between political ideology and spatial organization. Along this purpose, the changes in the politics and associated occurrences both in meanings of built forms and spaces are of prime interest. Therefore, the paper addresses the issue of aestheticisation of power through architecture with specific reference to the case of Moscow and the shift that occurred from the 1917 revolution to 1935 plan. It elucidates the process of political change and the series of events that prepared this transformation to be able to analyze how the cultural program achieved its goals of transforming the whole society and its perception about the political meanings through means of urban monumentalizm. For this aim, starting with the idiosyncrasies of Russian art and architecture in Moscow, the plausible roots of aesthetics of powers inherent in the traditional arts of Russia are investigated. Then, the philosophy behind the October Revolution is reviewed from the perspective of the relation between space and politics. Following an overview of its impacts on both architecture and urbanism, the paper argues on the possibility of a hidden globalist agenda behind post-revolution artistic policies that might have paved the foundations of the radical shift that occurred in 1930s. Under the light cast by these discussions, it analyzes the urban characteristics of 1935 Moscow Plan and architectural characteristics of the Palace of Soviets are put forward.**

## I.  INTRODUCTION: AESTHETIZATION OF POWER THROUGH MANIFESTATIONS OF URBAN MONUMENTALIZM

The direct relationship between power and architecture [1] is well-known and its ramifications on the use of architecture for political purposes [2] have recently been of prime interest. In that regard, the transformation of architecture and urbanism in Russia represents a unique case not only with its recursive cycles of interest in Western art and politics but also with its radical changes from a revolutionary socialist context to one of the favourite global markets. In this transformation the period between the October Revolution and the end of Stalin era plays the key role. Therefore, this paper looks at Russia and Moscow, in particular, as a context for

theorizing about state socialism and post-socialism, and their associated urban patterns. It will focus on the period between 1930-37 within a perspective of events and conditions preparing the 1917 Revolution and extending to the developments post-WWII bringing us to present day. Under the light of inherent conflicts and idiosyncrasies, it will elucidate the relationships among power, form and scale in Russian architecture. The section argues that aestheticisation of Stalinist power is achieved through means of urban monumentalizm despite intentions of Bolshevik Movement (prospective communist party) and their NEP (new economic policy of 1920s) to create a socialist community within a humane and modern urban setting. The section also addresses the hypotheses regarding the Western influences (particularly German connections and references) on the formation of post-revolution architecture and urbanism in a historical perspective. Accentuating the multi-directionality of its architectural history [3,4] in terms of styles, the chapter attempts to explore the grounds on which the successive transformation stages of Russian architecture in Moscow are founded. In this context, Brumfield's [5] notion of 'theatricality' of Russian urban environment and its relation to the mechanisms of control of masses by the authorities [6] is worth questioning to unveil the visible attributes of the architecture of the revolution. Thus, all these issues ranging from monumentalizm via use a heroic scale to rigid geometry or to new constructions techniques and their masterly orchestrated choreography through the devices of theatricality are discussed as seemingly independent elements laying the foundations of Moscow's 1935 plan and the Palace of Soviets which symbolized the paradigm shift in the history of Russian Revolution.

The paper starts with the analysis of intrinsic conflicts of in the traditional Russian art and architecture in Moscow in terms of their relationship to the aesthetics of powers. Afterwards, the philosophy of the Bolshevik Revolution is reviewed from the perspective of the relation between space and politics. Thus, its impacts on both architecture and urbanism are elucidated. Then, the paper continues with the discussion on the possibility of a hidden globalist agenda behind post-revolution artistic policies that might have prepared the grounds for the radical shift that occurred after 1930s. Therefore, it finally analyzes the urban characteristics

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of 1935 Moscow Plan and architectural characteristics of the Palace of Soviets.

## II.  IDIOSYNCRACIES OF RUSSIAN ART AND ARCHITECTURE IN MOSCOW

The history of Russian art harbours a variety of conflicts and recursive cycles between tradition and modernity as well as between eastern and western styles. Moscow epitomizes these conflicts due to the variety and diversity it accommodates. Colton [7] matches the characteristics of Moscow to L.Wirth's definition of what makes a city, that is to say; size, density and heterogeneity, and explains physical, geographic and historic features [8]. Bowring gives an account of data Moscow as well as its foundation [9]. He further puts an emphasis on its past as the "model communist city", its status at the centre of a messianic vision of Russia, the historical heart of the Russian Orthodox Church. Moreover, Berton [10] portrays the profile of this 'city of dramatic and exceptional history' in terms of geographical, demographical and economical data.

Regarding the main argument of this section on the paradoxical character of the post-revolution era and its urban-architectural context, Colton's [11] depiction of the city with its 'antithetical traits of; … picturesque and squalid, regimented and chaotic', in addition to Berton's [12] definition of its intrinsic conflicts as 'vividness' of the city, lays the foundations for Pare's [13] controversial arguments on Russian architecture. His criticism can be grouped into three interrelated aspects; he insinuates, firstly, that Russian architecture of the period of revolution was based on the existence of capital no matter how much it was denied. Secondly, that it was rooted in, if not emulated to, Western architecture as a model no matter how much it was developed as an alternative against it. Finally, that it was destined to glorify the authority or 'power' rather than the 'community' although it was set to be socialist system, and thus the city, for the working people [14]. Focusing on Moscow's idiosyncratic history, Kremlin, itself, in the 14th century appears, according to Berton [15], as an edifice symbolizing both secular and ecclesiastical powers. Berton further describes it as city of contrast referring to its silhouette of towers and asymmetrical massing of its buildings [16] during the 17th century. The following erosion of pyramid-shaped church typology, particularly under the western influences, and rise of florid formed churches instead is considered as the decline in the hegemony of Russian national forms by Berton [17]. Furthermore, another factor in creating the conflicts and discrepancies within the city is considered to be the establishment of the foreigners' colony; Nemetskaya Sloboda (which etimologically refers to the word German the connections of which with Russian art is worth emphasizing in regard to the issue of the aestheticisation of power) and its gradual expansion to the city [18].

## III.  AESTHETICS OF POWER IN RUSSIAN ART, ITS RELATION TO RATIONAL FORMS AND MONUMENTAL STYLE

Logan [19] refers to the key philosophical split of the European Enlightenment between the association of progress with critical self-reflection of rational individual based on principles of equality, liberty and participation and, on the other hand, the association of progress with scientific-technical reason to which subordination of the society is required as a process. He continues that once the reason is captured by some sort of power, whether it is technocratic or egalitarian {referring to Buck-Morss's [20] analysis of Stalinism}, it is hardly likely to be used as a tool for liberation. The strong connection between socialist tradition and urban planning [21] is clear in Andrusz's [22] suggestion that without the experience of power it would be impossible to design a blueprint of total transformation referring I. Berlin's interpretation of Marx.  Nonetheless, Myers [23] questions the importance given, as analyzed by Gutnov *et al*. [24], to the positive freedom in the social egalitarian tradition of *The Ideal Communist City*, in terms of its difference from the notion of 'equality' defined by liberalism. In other words, principles and strategies that can be explained only by rational terms are also fragile to be appropriated by power, and therefore, they may be eventually inclined to serve authoritarian approaches [25].

Thus, the vague and slippery ground, on which the values and ideals are based, is usually inclined to yield to the threat posed by fascination to fascism [26] particularly as a body of doctrine claiming to provide advantages of modernization in contrast not only to collectivism and materialism attributed to Bolshevism but also to the leveling and standardization attributed to Capitalism. A sustained exploration of fascist cultural forms would reveal the links once dismantled between fascism's cultural and political claims. Along this path, while Mosse's [27] study on 'Fascist Aesthetics and Society' maps out the key role performed by cultural forms in providing political consensus, Braun's [28] genealogy puts Expressionism, rather than Classicism, as prevailing artistic style, particularly in Nazism and Stalinism. Pickvance [29] explains the reasons behind the aforementioned slippery ground, with particular reference to Post-Socialism and its urban patterns, as the difference or mismatch between the model and the reality.

Gross [30], referring to A.Toynbee's note on human capacity to make plans, raises the issue of planning either for or against people in his comprehensive review of human history and evolution. Having considered the earliest settlements in Mesopotamia as the first recorded urban transformations, he refers to the irony of the expression "the people were …. according to the established plan…" deciphered from some inscriptions attested to the power and glory, in other words the authority, of God-Kings for whom they were built [31].  He further asserts that administrations, higher bureaucrats and hierarchical authority became the first precursors of modern totalitarianism through an elaborate system of rules, secrecy, rituals, awards and punishments.

Under the light cast by this viewpoint above, it is of interest

to understand the spatial dimensions of the process of the aestheticisation of power. The exhibition named "Art & Power" held in 1996 in Centro de Cultura Contemporanea in Barcelona as a part of series of Council of Europe was devoted to the art of 20th century displaying the artistic products (arts, crafts, architecture and films) subverted as means of propaganda so as to further the ideals of totalitarian regimes of Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini based on competing ideologies of Communism and Fascism was showing the different choices that artists faced about their relationship to authority and power. The connections between class structure and urban spatial organization were well established by Gutnov *et al.* [32]. The formal instruments of spatial aestheticisation of power were mainly based on monumentality. Prior to the analysis of these formal and spatial attributes, a brief overview of the evolution of power structure would set the stage for comprehension of their relationship.

## IV. RUSSIAN SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT AND OCTOBER REVOLUTION

Having mainly an agricultural economy as well as being the former center of Orthodox Christianity [33], the character of Russian socio-political context could be summarized as feudal almost until the end of 18th century. The mood of optimism brought by the removal of the Tsar from the throne in 1801, did not last very long and the country had been dragged into instability leading to a series of wars as well as exploitation of man power under severe circumstances. Berton [34] describes the context prior to the revolution as such; "considering the disasters of war and the extent of social unrest, a major upheaval was inevitable in Russia". Indeed, disillusionment with royal family, the state of the army caused the loss of confidence in the government. Three days after the Provisional government was formed the Tsar was abdicated. Pressure from Lenin and the unrest about the government's support to Allies brought discontent and finally Bolshevik coup took place following the October 1917. The Russian Revolution was a part of the revolutionary process whose aim was to reach a state of communism as prescribed in "The Communist Manifesto" by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. The Socialist Revolution made an enormous impact in the history of the world, challenged the existing balances and changed the whole international politics. The Revolution flourished the waves of hope for all the working classes, poor people and minorities all over the world.

Colton [35] asserts that the Marxist idea of 'integral socialism', at the core of Soviet regime, was a moral idea about human happiness or misery yielding the prescription that a bountiful life in modern times depended on social appropriation of individual wealth and consequently the control of all economic activity by the state on behalf of citizens. Thus, it was based on the distinctive political-economic principles whereby state owns all production; including land, superintendence on planning and administrative hierarchy, direct public provision of public goods and services, as well as lordship of all investments.

The Russian Revolution was founded on a world perspective whereby productive forces had outgrown beyond the frame-works of nation-state. A society which was based on social equality had to be established on the utilization of the resources of the international economy, and therefore, the ideology had to be implemented internationally for the welfare of all proletariat of the world. Yet, these ideas were eventually victimized by global powers and turned into the global utilization – and exploitation - of international human resources by capitalist system. Smith [36] suggests that since urban living has a particular significance in Marxism [37] as a progressive motive encouraging collective rather than individual identity, socialism gave rise to a higher expectation of a different kind of city and urban living different from those of Anglo-American textbooks. Central planning of the society and the city with state ownership of land would enable greater control than under capitalism [38]. Yet again, the idea of control and its concentration in a single authority facilitated various consequences that are quite parallel with capitalism. Besides, Smith [39] accentuates the difference between official organizations 'for people' between autonomous organizations 'of the people'. Hence, the organizations that were established with the revolution to allow fellow citizens to pursue their interests [40] turned out into mechanisms to manipulate all professional activities throughout the country.

After Lenin's death and Stalin's taking over One Party rule seems to have been injected to every area of life and society. Thus, the character of Socialist Revolution has gradually but radically started to change in the opposite direction. Characterized by the personality of its leader, the post-revolution era was marked by a significant paradigm shift from; power of working class to that of ruling class, from practices of daily life to abstract concerns of nationalism, from human scale to monumental scale, from human values to corporate values and finally from socialism to fascism.

These developments have paved the way to the integration of the socialist system with global system against which it was once established as a perfect model. The notion of globalization, which seems to have been embedded in the history of Russia, found a cultivated ground to flourish. Ignatieva [41], referring to Prosersky [42], defies globalization in Russia as historical phenomenon rather than the recent developments starting from 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In fact, Ignatieva [43] connects the cultural globalization process not only to the adaptation of Orthodox Christianity and Byzantium culture in the 10th century AD for the first time, but also to the era of Peter the Great and growing interest in the principles of European, and French (aesthetics of which symbolizes the power of monarchy) in particular, design. Post-Socialist policies constituted the last stage in the process by which the globalization managed to infiltrate into every aspect of life in Russia. The impacts of this shift in the physical environment and the spatial configuration of urban settings were immediately seen.

## V.  RUSSIAN ARCHITECTURE WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO MOSCOW

Following the review of the transformation of the nature of Russian politics, it is of interest to observe its reflections in architecture with specific reference to Moscow. Russian architecture, particularly after revolution, was ideologically driven as much as it was politically oriented. Sokolina [44] asserts that 'the iconographic political content of architecture was always the more dominant axiom than inherent laws of structural genetics'. Although Moscow was different than other cities and Russia was different than other countries, Moscow still is the most important place to understand the architecture of Russia [45]. As discussed above, Russian architecture displays a paradoxical character under the aforementioned conditions. Building on Berton's [46] argument on the so-called limitations of the traditional architecture in terms of material and technology, Brumfield [47] claims that Russian architecture has paradoxically achieved an impressive progress meeting the social and economic needs of the post-revolution. Pare [48] strongly doubts this argument on several grounds insinuating an underlying agenda throughout the successive stages in the evolution of architecture in pre and post-revolution eras. He draws our attention to the fact, among many others, that the new social, cultural, economical, political atmosphere was presenting unimaginable opportunities for foreign architects, majority of which were the exiles from German fascism, to have new jobs and commissions [49]. Moreover, according to him, the fictional image of backward technologies created to prepare a ground for experimentation with reinforced concrete, industry of which was mainly dominated by European corporations, although the appropriateness of this technique to the harsh Russian climate was questionable [50]. Foremost of all, neither the divide between theoretical approaches created between Rationalism and Constructivism [51] nor the division of the architectural associations in the country [52] were coincidental. Both were the events gradually leading towards elimination of opposite or at least some diversity of views about architecture and urbanism and eventually to the single view of the authority, in other words, that of Stalin himself, in regard to how spatial structure of post-socialist Russia should be formed. These two points will be re-addressed below in the following relevant two sub-sections in further detail.

However, this section will base its argument on the issues of; *modernity*, *monumentality*, *eclecticism* and relations with the existing *context* of Moscow in analyzing the impact of history of Russian architecture on the character of the modern architecture of Revolution as well as its aftermath.

The architectural history of Russian architecture, particularly in Moscow, delineates a very fluctuating character. Berton [53] defines the history of Russian architecture as a transformation from picturesque and complicated compositions towards oversimplified regularity and rigid symmetry. Following the conversion of local architecture into the simple compositions yet lacelike decorations of façade decorations of Baroque influences

during the 17th century [54], Moscow faced a period of stagnation and decline along with the move of the capital to St. Petersburg [55] until its rebirth around 1730s when the first signs of monumentalizm stated to be felt. Cracraft [56] provides a major case study of the cultural revolution in Russia initiated by Peter the Great in regard to how modern standards of architecture supplanted traditional norms in Russia following a massive injection of European expertise and indicates how, thereby, the modern Russian built world came into being. This process was accompanied with a growing interest in Greek and Roman revivals leading to the introduction of strict orders to urban environment through 1755 plan by the Commission of Planning for the first time. After the great fire of 1812, foreign architects were incited for the reconstruction process of the city which was only a means for; destruction of the historic city center and its replacement with rigid geometric arrangements [57]. This massive cultural destruction was somehow disguised by eclecticism which manifest itself with the stylistic language in the architecture of the Cathedral of the Christ the Redeemer [58]. In contrast to this dominant exuberance in the early 19th century, the industrial growth brought a lack of clear direction in architecture and the end of 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries were highlighted by the spirit of diversity. According to Berton [59], this was a deliberate attempt since there was no legal control in regard to building activity in Moscow. This argument brings us back to Pare's [60] stance that the plausible underlying agenda to prepare the coming years where the prevailing chaos about built environment could be manipulated easily.

Within this chaotic state and following a short flirting period with Art Nouvo, Russian architecture turned its face towards the West again, and to German architecture in particular [61]. The new architecture of steel, glass and concrete was offering new freedom in organizing volumes and spaces. Besides, principles of; rejection of ornament, organic unity, composition from inside out were all very convenient for the purposes of mass industrialization in building sector in Russia. Yet the irony of the fact that all these principles were those of Sullivan who was among the pioneers shaping the capitalist West with the very same principles brings us back again to what Pare [62] is drawing our attention. Hence, this process continued with a short Neo-Russian Revivalist period with comprehensive efforts in restoration works some of which were conducted by restorer and church builder Shchusev, who was ironically to become the great architect of the soon-coming Soviet Period. After a short period of Neo-Classicism, the loss of wars ended up with aforementioned revolution of October 1917 and Moscow became the Capital city once again after a long break. The evidences of bourgeois architecture were not destroyed with the revolution. On the contrary, there was a program of consistent restoration during the early phase of the revolution [63]. The alignment of architects with Avant-Garde artists and synthesis of architecture with arts [64] promised a very creative and productive era which, unfortunately, made a relatively late impact to the theory of world architecture [65]. However, this

**IJENS**

productive and intellectual period lasted very short, as Pare points out again, and architecture were forced to concentrated on the 'mundane' issues of housing and mass-production until 1930s [66] through re-organization of its associations. By then, foreign architects, particularly those in exile from Fascism of Nazi government of Germany were flooding into Moscow to help in the massive building projects of the Five Year Plan. Meanwhile the discussions between modern and neo-classicists went on quietly until all modern art form were condemned as 'formalist' and were censored through re-organization of architectural unions in 1936. Since then, what Frank Lloyd Wright called 'grandomania' prevailed Russian architectural context by means of monumentality, heroic scale, strict geometry etc. Along a period between the revolution until the Second World War, Modernism was laid in roots of Russian architecture. This was clear in scholarly works of Krasovkii and his emphasis on tectonics & aesthetics, in Apyshkov's insistence on rationality and Syrkin's definition of architecture as to characterize structure. Within that school of architectural understanding, the criteria of structural truth and all elements being interconnected were the essential principles that place them parallel to Modernism.

## 5.1. The Effect of Revolution on Urban and Architectural Environment

As an infliction point in history, 1917 revolution had major impacts on architecture in terms of style and on city planning in terms of organization. Referring to Demko & Regulska [67], Smith [68] delineates how ideal socialist city is organized. Through abolition of private property and privileged classes, principles of equality were reflected on non-discriminatory, spatially non-differentiated housing patters, accessible available public services of all kinds including transportation, health, education, production and recreation. Although Rugg [69] defines Moscow as partially changed as opposed to new cities in socialist realm. Ideal communist city plan was based on the spatial unit called mikroraion which was a self-contained settlement unit.

Szelenyi [70] says that these socialist experiments produced historically unique patterns of urbanizations although socialism eventually fell. The work of socialist planners would put physical shape to the fundamentals of socialism and act as a translation of and an embodiment of the new social order. Myers [71] suggests that R.Owen's plan, which shares many germinal elements with *The Ideal Communist City*, was produced in response to the mobilized protest to the discomfort and disease caused by the severe compression of human activities through industrialization and urbanization although it was dismissed by the government and set to be remembered s a product of 19th century utopianism. In regard to how much difference socialism made to urban development, Szelenyi [72] claims that urban planners in socialist cities could not only be more generous in the use of space but also pay more attention to aesthetics, rather than narrow economic considerations [73]. Nonetheless, these guidelines for the development of the city of Moscow had

been controlled by the authorities particularly between Lenin's Plan of monumental Propaganda and Stalin's ambitious master plan of 1935 [74] extending up not only to Khrushchev's reform of standards of residential construction and even to Brezhnev's city zoning and housing program of 1970-80 [75]. Therefore, these impacts were hindered from being permanent.

Colquhoun [76] asserts that 'the revolution released an explosion of creative energy, in which the paths opened up by the pre-war European *Avant-Garde*s were redirected towards the achievements of socialism'. Unlike the Tsarist era, early post-revolutionary years allowed a significant debate and foment of theories and ideas like *deurbanism* etc. Nevertheless, this creative energy was not long-lasting either [77]. Soon, as was and will be discussed, progressive architects were split into two ideological camps as; *rationalists* and *constructivists*.

The most important impact of the revolution on the urban environment was the establishment of the relationship between democracy and planning although there are conflicting views reflecting the extent to which it was achieved. Myers [78] distinguishes between the *democratization of planning* (through bringing citizens and their concerns directly into process of organizing collective space) and the *planning for democracy* (organizing collective space in a way to improve their engagement in meaningful political life). 1935 plan of Moscow served as a setting for the new monumental architecture (Figure 1) representing Socialist Realism. These monumental edifices were set amongst large and ornate People's Paris so as to accentuate the achievements of the regime. The plan "followed general principles of such 19th and early 20th century city plans such as Haussmann's Paris, Ringstrasse in Vienna and Burnham's Chicago" [79].

*The Ideal Communist City*, which is also a very clear text concerned with the practical transformation of the world, represents Soviet planners' vision of socialist future, though some aspects of which were too utopian, yet others were so apparently pedestrian that their importance could easily be overlooked. In other words, they were totally related to daily life (Myers, 2008). Mayo [80] claims that it was purely a spatial agenda beyond the use of architecture for legitimizing political authority. The latter is clearly represented by the architecture of Stalin era (Figure 1). Smith's [81] question of whether there is a distinctively socialist city could be answered with reference to the initial principles of the Ideal Communist City and its visions. However, he suggests that even if there is it is simply committed in principle by the regimes yet not always in practice.

## 5.2. The Role of Associations in the Organization of Architectural Profession

Recalling Pare's [82] argument regarding the sequence of events leading to the division of architects ideologically was a deliberate attempt to prepare the ground for the implementation of a cultural-spatial agenda that was in conflict with the revolutionary and socialist vision of the ideal
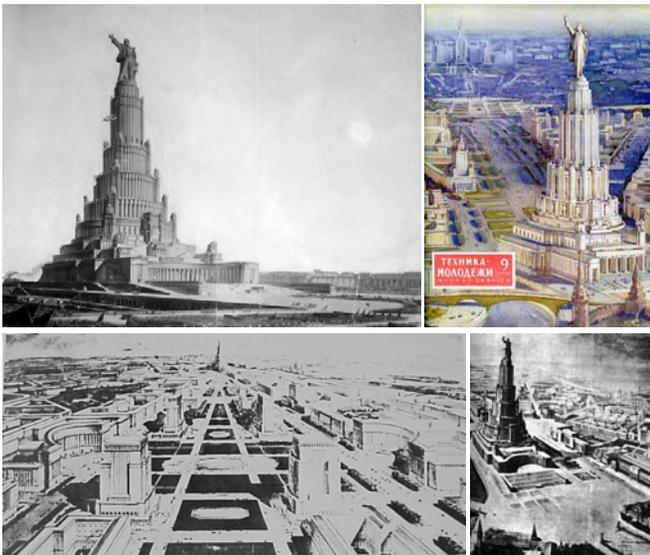
Fig. 1. Palace of Soviets as an epitome of aesthetization of power

communist city and its architectural ramifications. Thus, the division was plotted as an organizational instrument so as to directly control the physical environment and the spatial configuration on service of the needs of post-revolutionist politics and its associated economy.

In 1925 the Constructivists had acquired vigorous and articulate leaders like M.Ginsburg and A.Vesnin who argued against Ladovsky's ASNOVA group and set up OSA (Union of Contemporary Architects). At this point, the Constructivist argued that avant-garde should steer away from utopian rhetoric and focus on an architecture grounded in scientific method and social engineering. Sokolina [83] implies that architects were organized in different and opposing groups not only to fulfill main ideological and political dogmas but also to survive. By early 1930s, all associations of independent architects were terminated and the OSA (Union of Contemporary Architects) was established. Any kind of free interpretation of architectural experiences before the 1917 Revolution was restricted because they were not only unwanted by the new Soviet administration but also any Western architectural practices would lead to undesirable independent conclusions. This intellectually restricted era could be the reason behind the general view that Russian architecture showed no achievement of architectural expression or no coherent theory,

According to Brumfield [84], the intellectual gap had to be filled. Pare [85] stresses, here, the break with old forms, on the one hand, and, the emphasis of OSA's constructivism not on structure but on Taylorist engineers' realm on the other hand. Thus, the associated architects started to focus on (mass)housing with the claim of reconstructing daily life. Interestingly enough, Russian architecture began to find a place in the media coverage in Western countries since then [86,87] which is very similar to the current situation in regard to the activities of *star*chitects of our globalist era.

Eventually, the inevitable occurred and all architectural associations were unified under the single authority of VOPRA. Since 1934, the Stalinist bureaucracy imposed its rather conservative, anti-artistic anti-Marxist doctrine of 'socialist realism' onto every aspect of creative cultural life starting from architectural profession. The impacts of Modernism and International Style on Soviet architecture were crucial for Russian culture as a means to resolve the conflicts increased between the creative initiative and clumsy monopolistic economy, the need for housing and inflexible urban activities fulfilling the ambitions of the government to manifest the path of progress for Russian architecture.

### 5.3. Proposal for Palace of Soviets

While the political turbulence of architectural circles was at its peak, the idea of a The Palace of Soviets was being developed. It was intended as a colossal building project to glorify the power of Russian government. It was planned to be built on a focal site of 110.000 sq.meters. The proposed building was a cylindrical skyscraper with a height of approximately 415 meters. The diameter of the cylinder at the ground level was 160 meters. The building was rising from the ground as staggered cylindrical masses surrounded by several towers at the periphery of each cylinder. The whole building was actually a pedestal for the gigantic statue of Lenin with a height of 75 meters. It contained two main gathering halls with the height of 100 meters and capacity of approximately 20.000 people in addition to others as well as offices, restaurants and other amenities (Figure 1). The amount of steel and cement to be used in the foundations only was a significant proportion of the annual outcome in those years [88]. After the initial decision of a construction of a national governmental palace made in 1930 as a monumental landmark in honour of the Five Year Plan of 1928, a competition, to which 160 proposals were submitted, was held. A celestial symbol of former regimes, the site of the Cathedral of the Christ the Redeemer, was strategically chosen as the location of the new palace.

Among the participants, the design by Iofan was selected as the winner and Shchuko and Gelfreikh were proposed to revise the plans [89] the first revision was the change of the statue of liberated proletariat to be replaced by the gigantic statue of Stalin of 75 meters height. The eclecticism apparent in the design was defined by H.Meyer as 'new academism' which may not be meaningful to outsiders but to Russians. A peculiar version of neo-classicism [90] was selected as the required populist language of the current regime which also constitutes the reason behind the rejection of Le Corbusier's modernist proposal. Lunarcharsky, who was partially in favour of Le Corbusier's design, brought some justification to the selection with various numerical data. It was planned to start in 1935 but revisions were completed by 1937. Moreover, there were serious constructional difficulties major of which was the underground water for the preparations of foundations and the excavation they required. Meanwhile, obligatory and fulsome eulogies of Stalin himself dominated

the First Congress of the Union of Architects in 1937. Selection and rhetoric was parallel announcing the paradigm shift in Russian architecture.

## 5.4. Formal Impacts of the Palace of Soviets; Abstraction, Eclecticism, Rationalism, Monumentalizm

Thus, Palace of Soviets clearly exemplifies the shift in Russian politics. In that regard, the new politics of 1930s displayed two major characteristics; on the one hand, it showed clear similarities to the German politics of the time; on the other hand, it exhibited the signs of a tendency towards globalism. These characteristics were reflected in the eclecticism, monumental rationalism and abstractionism of the architectural language. Stalin's dictum "national in form socialist in content" lead to pseudo-nationalistic styles; taking inspiration and elements from ancient architectural forms of Russian Republics,  geometric features of Central Asian regions back to modern architecture [91]. Thus, eclecticism, which followed modernism, was appropriated as the accepted style in association with the new term 'socialist realism'. Accompanied by the desire to make every building "a monument of the epoch" [92], it inevitably turned, on the one hand, architecture into an exercise of volume and form, on the other hand, into an exercise of extreme engineering, which can be exemplified by the Moscow metro in the way that the heroic scale was quite oppressing rather than being humanist if not socialist. Similarity of this architectural approach to German architecture of the time is worth examining here.

Regarding to the link between Russian and German politics and architecture, Stalin's policies of 1933 that helped to deliver German working class to the hands of Nazis and brought the downfall of Communist International must be noted because similar policies paved the stones for the once-proclaimed as barbarous city of capitalism to become a socialist one, yet socialist Moscow to replace it. 1935 plan, as Berton [93] puts forward, was clearly another example of autocratic planning with its strategies of massive clearance, street widening and aligning the urban space with straight lines. Sokolina [94] suggests that socialist age brought together new models of living spaces which architects optimistically attempted to define as spaces of collective property, that is to say spaces understood as belonging to the Soviet people as a whole, yet also means, in practice, belonging to nobody where the authorities could control access and monitor behavior.

Following the invasion of Moscow by German army in 1941and the period of cold war after 1946 the winds of anti-west movement prevailed until 1960 (that is after Stalin's reign) which marked a return to western sources. Yet, with 1990s, Moscow witnessed a profound return of the western influence again. Thus, the recursive cycles of Western influence on Russian art and architecture reveals its fragility under capitalism. Initially however, unlike some of the capitalist cities whose sole purpose is to hypnotize, addict or enslave its citizens, local Soviets erected innovative structures that entertained educated and organized workers and their families in their neighborhoods at the beginning of the revolution. As mentioned above, the ideal communist city was not distanced from daily life and practices of everydayness [95] during this period. Planners' concern for the everyday was apparent, for instance in their preference on pedestrian or public transport. Although urban planners of socialist society were in better position in the use of public space in regard to constraints [96], socialist cities demonstrated a fair degree of segregation by occupation and ethnicity. Pickvance [97] suggests that the totalitarian image of the society controlled by party-state ignores the space 'between' and 'outside' the formal structures of socialism, in which illegal or officially disapproved activity is conditionally tolerated. Hence, the initial interest in the reality of daily life of people was gradually replaced by a loss of concern and a shift towards abstract ideas. Consequently, as Trotsky kept emphasizing, Russian art sought to escape into the abstract realm of doctrine from the backwardness and poverty of everyday life. Argenbright [98] by referring to Sack [99], rhythms and routines of everyday life help sustaining the rule-based landscapes. However, the state's demand was that people inhabit the territory of abstractions, rather than real places. This was an inevitable consequence of what Pickvance [100] calls 'deviation between the model and the reality'. Vyleta [101] summarizes this paradox of Stalinist era and its art, architecture and urbanism as 'totalitarianism actively produces the self which it demonizes whereas the liberal democracies celebrate its values of individualism and privacy'. Pickvance [102] referring to Reismann [103], raises the issue of the relation between industrialization and urbanization, and suggests that under-urbanization is what characterizes state socialist societies [104, 105] as opposed to 'over-urbanization' [106]. Moreover, the endless concrete jungles, as the symbols of modern legacy, were expanding due to insufficiency of housing and cheap construction methods of these machines for living. Yet according to Sokolina [107] they are spreading deep into city destroying historic centers. As Smith (1996) claims, supposedly 'socialist' city ended up with major inequalities and segregations [108] despite its egalitarian ideals. Gross [109] also suggests that Bolsheviks and founders of revolutionary socialism called for rational central planning and control of country's productive resources, yet they were preoccupied with power struggle than with what to do with the power.

Argenbright [110] suggests that democracy would not be possible without the institutions of civil society which requires public space. This demand was clear prior to the revolution. By the very same token, the public space reflected the characteristics of the post-revolutionary regime.  Berton [111] draws our attention to the miserable conditions of workers at the end of 19th century and the social hierarchy which laid the stones for a revolution. After a short period of dynamism, Stalin's policies brought darkness and secrecy back into Moscow through its monolithic architectural settings. Trotsky [112] wrote that 'if futurism attracted to the chaotic dynamics of revolution then neo-classicism expressed the need for peace and stable forms' long before Stalin established a fearful calm and monolithicism.

The public space also displayed the attitude of the regime towards western policies through its architecture. Recalling the aforementioned discussion about the globalization not being a phenomenon of 20th century only, the interest in the western world has started with orthodoxy and Byzantium culture in the 10th century. Much later, again, the construction of St. Petersburg by Peter the Great revived the tendency to design in accordance with prevailing European styles. Ignatieva [113] quoting Duquenne [114], suggests that current globalization in Russia, which is seen as Westernization and Americanization, not only touches all spheres of life, including ideology and culture [115] but also manifests itself in media, particularly TV, homogenized modernistic western architectural style, as well as architecture of skyscrapers posing significant identity problems. Similar to Brade & Rudolph [116], Argenbright [117] bases his argument on Moscow's becoming a main link with global economy on striking economic figures about foreign investment to the city. Bowring [118] concludes that Moscow may either become a restoration of Stalin's dreams or an apotheosis as a capital of new Eurasian antagonist for the west. Particularly recalling Schnapp's concern for threat of fascination with power and its aestheticisation and its divorce from the culture, Moscow represents a potential city to accommodate more global and monolithic architecture. Thus, as discussed above, the transformation in Russian architecture concluded with the rise of expressionism more than classicism towards the end of 1930s. Indeed, Logan [119] warns us about the subtle progress of authoritarian state politics as a danger to the integrity of democracy. As mentioned above, the distinction of enlightenment philosophy between reason and liberty resulted in the divorce between the coherent relation between art and power parallel with relation between socialist politics and urban planning.

Szelenyi [120] asks whether zonal sectoral model of spatial structure was associated with socialist city or they were universal urban forms. In fact the model might have been unique yet the forms through which it was intended to be implemented were universal. In regard to what difference socialism made in cities, Argenbright [121] draws attention changes in the signification of space in Moscow, and says, reminding Lefebvre's [122] arguments, "conflicts over monumental spaces marked the collapse of the Soviet Communism" including dramatic toppling of statues of Lenin and others [123]. Thus, the deviation from the Ideal Communist City's pedestrian touch and closeness to daily life of ordinary people turned into an architecture legitimizing political authority [124]. Argenbright [125] accentuates on the parallels between the transformations in daily life and everyday places with reference to Moscow. Massey [126] defines this process as 'the constant remaking of identity'. Along this process of the recreation of a new identity, elimination of innovation and internalization of new aesthetic by engineers of neo-capitalist Russia with the intention to repress memory of Bolshevik experiences was so clear that the vertical buildings of Stalinist era were treated better [127]. This clear transformation and change of direction was epitomized at different scales both in 1935 plan of Moscow as well as in the Palace of Soviets as its epitaph. These two urban-architectural products share the common formal characteristics of eclecticism, rationalism, abstractionism and monumentalizm as the manifestations of the political change [128].

## VI.  CONCLUDING REMARKS

Consequently, this paper looks into the urban patterns and architectural history of Russian architecture with specific reference to Moscow through 1935 plan of Moscow as well as in the Palace of Soviets in terms of their deviation from the socialist and humanist principles of the Ideal Communist City Plan and avant-garde approaches of Constructivist and Suprematist architecture of the 1917 revolution as the manifestations of the change in state politics. The paper argues that aestheticisation of Stalinist power is achieved through means of urban monumentalizm despite intentions of Bolshevik Movement to deploy architecture as an instrument of human liberation. The role played by the 1935 plan of Moscow as well as in the Palace of Soviets is discussed from the perspective of power-space relationships. Finally, it is concluded that politics of power are implemented through a series of spatial and formal strategies ranging from monumentalizm via use monumental size or a heroic scale to rigid geometry or to new constructions techniques regardless of the nature of the political regime. Moreover, it is proved here that any cultural-spatial program with best of the intentions is unfortunately bound to yield itself to the exercise of power as long as the formal attributes of planning are more emphasized than its human issues.

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