

Moscow Triumphal Arches: Bringing Perceptions of War and Peace Together

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1. The Nature of Triumphal Arches and Rituals

Humanity cannot live without rituals – they surround us everywhere, ensuring progress, communications and comfort. Rituals, “spiritual beliefs, and complex relationships with the supernatural realm play a decisive role”¹. They helped the first bands of our Cro-Magnon predecessors 2,000 generations ago to survive through the brutal conditions of the Ice Age. The Neanderthals did not seem to have such things and became extinct. Common rituals and ceremonies can influence people in many ways, although this fact also provides much potential for social and political manipulation.

Triumphal arches and the rituals surrounding them are associated with ancient Rome. And, indeed, these constructions, which lack any sort of practicality apart from the production and delivery of very clear urban messages of power, victory, and promised peace, first appeared in that city, a city which exercised control over its vast conquered territories. They look like entrances to some sacred places: holy temples, heavenly adobes of gods or their blessed representatives on Earth – emperors, tsars or glorious military men. But they were not such entrances. Shifted away from their natural positions and deprived of their roles of ensuring access to certain accommodations, or gated places, these arches took rituals, already formed around temples and palaces, away with them to their new locations of immense spaces; and they turned these rituals into exaggerated ceremonies affecting masses of people.

In the early days of the Roman Empire, palaces, where most of the ceremonies took place, were more democratic and accessible. Later in the course of history, authority was strengthened, and the protection of this authority restricted access to grandiose palaces. Ceremonies were then moved outdoors. Just as imposing temples, forums, and baths provided physical dominance over human beings, so too triumphal arches required a certain regimentation of large masses of people, including the clergy, the elites, soldiers, citizens, and slaves. “Here vast crowds came together to witness the passage of their military leaders in chariots, parading their trophies or their royal captives, bound to their chariot wheels, passing under triumphal arches”². Well-organized ceremonies of gigantic masses of people centered around arches contributed immensely to traditional Roman patriotic aspirations and to Stoic dreams.

¹ B. Fagan, *Cro-Magnon. How the Ice Age Gave Birth to the First Modern Humans*, New York, Bloomsbury Press, 2010, p. 3

² L. Mumford, *The City in History*, New York, Harcourt, 1989, p. 222.

Even in the first Mesopotamian cities the “kings were presented as cultural heroes, responsible for constructing and playing the role of a priest themselves”³.

Initially the personal power of the leader was blessed. Then, especially with advent of Christianity, the leader’s sacred character was extended to the authority as a whole, so that the administration would be blessed and supported by the church, regardless of the leader. Strong urban messages addressed to contemporary people were very much in demand in order to practice power as well as to ensure public-relations campaigns for future generations. Arches were more than able to fulfill all these functions; and, along with temples and palaces, they formed vital topoi in the architectural landscapes. More than once in the course of their lifetimes, triumphal arches became important pages of the mythological biographies created by monarchs, showing how those monarchs saw themselves (or wanted the public to perceive them) not only through the narratives of the décor but also through each event of the associated ceremonies.

No wonder that such a well-proven method of combining an architectural with a ceremonial impact on human minds found its way to many cities in Europe, Northern Africa, and Asia. Triumphal arches became especially popular in Europe during the presence of the classical styles: Classicism, Baroque and Empire. These styles conveyed the idea of strong power in a very complicated system of urban symbols through the celebration of victories and the promise of prosperity for everybody. The arches played the role of a gateway between battlefields and peaceful life, between real hardships and an illusive, utopian paradise. They were given embodiment by very talented architects and sculptors and were used in monumental propaganda by autocratic regimes. They were meant to justify warfare as a normal way of human development that was associated with economic prosperity. Closely connected with political and economic conditions, the three classical styles reappeared several times in the XVIII-XXth centuries, bringing to renewed life, in one way or another, the erection of triumphal arches.

2. Arches Appear in Moscow

Moscow has always been either the political or the spiritual capital of Russia, both under the tsarist regime and under communist power. Thus, it can be considered very representative of the trend, described above. The construction, demolition, and reconstruction of arches in Moscow give us another dimension in which to consider the dialogue between historical periods, the choices of historical inspiration, and the points of reference of our cultural reflections.

“Perspective” entrances to medieval Orthodox churches, as well as their very tall and lavishly decorated gates, remind us already of triumphal arches, especially of those arches built to celebrate accomplishments of a military, political and economic character. However, the first real, separately standing arches appeared in the late XVIIth century to commemorate the glorious entrances of the Russian emperors and empresses to Moscow.

³ L. Nikiforova, *Halls of Power. The Palace in the Space of Culture*, St. Petersburg, Art-St. Petersburg, 2011, p. 19. [Л.В. Никифорова, *Чертоги Власти. Дворец в пространстве культуры*, Санкт-Петербург, «Искусство – СПб», 2011].

There was also a tradition of treating the main Kremlin towers—Spassky or Christ the Savior (1491, Italian architect Pietro Antonio Solari) and Trinity (1499, architect Aloisio da Milano)—as holy entrances to the political and religious space protected by the Kremlin wall. Even Grand Princes of the Moscow Principality had to descend from horseback and ceremonially enter the Kremlin through the Spassky Gate, being blessed by the senior clergy and greeted by enthusiastic crowds as they did so. Those who came to visit Orthodox Metropolitans and later the Patriarch or the women of the tsar's family made their entrance through the established ritual associated with the Trinity Gate.

Initially churches and cathedrals were erected to commemorate victories in battles. Special indoor and outdoor rituals and ceremonies took place at the time of the inauguration of these buildings, and further celebrations of military successes turned the presence of rulers and their achievements into examples of God's providence and made war heroes secular heroes as well. For instance, in 1561 Ivan the Terrible built the Intercession or St. Basil's Cathedral (architects Postnik and Barma Yakovlev) on the Red or Market Square to commemorate the victory over Kazan and Astrakhan. Many popular Orthodox saints were former soldiers who had special mythologies and rituals surrounding them. Cathedrals, temples, monasteries, and remote reserves often gave blessings for the military activities, in this way combining peaceful mediation and the direct encouragement of warfare. Supporting autocratic power, the Russian Orthodox Church glorified princes, tsars, and emperors in an array of forms, including participation in complicated, extended processions. When the royal residence and political center were moved from Moscow to St. Petersburg in 1703, the Russian rulers still came to the sacred city for their coronations, weddings, and special religious events. These events were often connected with past wars and so played an active part in the militarization of mass consciousness. Arches as individually standing, attractive objects become active participants in every royal exercise, preserving their aura of information for centuries through their presence. Moscow's toponymy is saturated with names that show where triumphal arches used to stand – Triumphal Square, Red Gate Square, Red Gate Metro Station, and so on. In Russia, these objects were called both arches and gates, meaning basically the same thing.

Peter the Great laid the cornerstone of the European arch tradition and ceremony in Russia, contributing a great deal to the formation of new secular holidays and ceremonies that included the whole city and neighboring regions. He constructed his first independently standing temporary wooden arch in Moscow in 1696 to commemorate the capture of Azov in his Turkish campaign and the glorious return of the Russian troops to the capital. This conquest could be considered the first major victory of Peter's regular army and navy, which themselves grew out of his boyhood amusement regiments and fleets in the playgrounds of the Preobrazhenskoe estate near Moscow. Now an adult sharing the pride of the victory with his childhood friends, he organized what could be called the first secular celebration in Moscow – a solemn procession of victorious troops, entering the city from the south. The culmination of this event was the passage of the warriors through the triumphal arch.

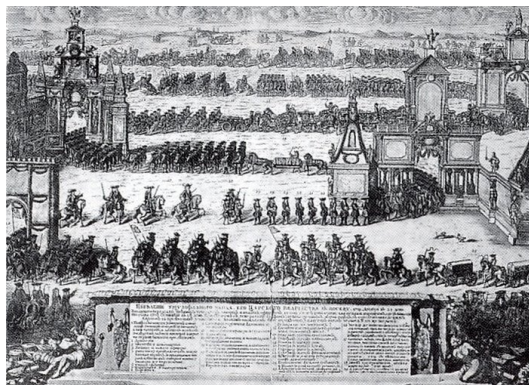
Actually, it was not an arch in its full meaning, it was only a theatrical setting made of fabric and attached to the double-tent passage gate of the Bridge of All Saints or the Big Stone Bridge of 1692 across the Moscow River. Although this arch was a secular

object, a great deal in it was taken from the religious cultural environment. For example, in Orthodox churches the door in the center of the iconostasis is called the tsar gate. The same name was often applied to triumphal arches, symbolically referring to the gates which admitted only the righteous souls. During the Azov cortege, they brought a certain traitor, Yakushka, and dragged him through the opening next to the triumphal arch or tsar gate.

A tireless warrior and sailor, constructor and carpenter, autocrat and master of ceremonies, Peter built three lavishly decorated arches in 1703 to commemorate his conquest of Ingria and his selection of the place for his new capital on the Neva River. It could be considered a historical irony that through these arches Moscow celebrated the transition of its power to the new capital-to-be. All three gates were concentrated on the main streets leading to Red Square and close to the Middle Town gates (Iliinskie, Miasnitskie, Nikolskie). They conveyed several urban messages—of the protection of the capital, the extension of the country borders through geopolitical expansion, and the return of healthy, well-fed, and brightly uniformed soldiers—as a convincing example to those who would serve in further military campaigns. The arch built in Nikolskaya street was always called the one “near the Zaikonospassky Monastery,” a leading theological and educational institution in Russia, thus emphasizing that the war had been blessed by the Orthodox church.

On the first day of Peter’s triumphal entry into his ancient capital he made a stop at each triumphal gate. Festivities began in the morning, went on through the daytime, and culminated in the night with illumination and fireworks. Following the church tradition, the procession stopped at each triumphal gate, where the dignitaries left their carriages, dismounted from their horses, and then took off their hats and reverently listened to welcoming speeches.

By the end of the 1700s, the route of festive processions had changed. It now originated from the Kremlin. When the capital was moved to St. Petersburg, the processions in Moscow usually started near Tverskaya Zastava on the highway to St Petersburg. All these processions continued to center on to move through Peter’s arches. Decorated with allegoric Greek or Roman statues and symbols, placed at important urban crossroads and topoi of the city, these arches laid the foundation, in Russia, of the new secular architecture and of the new urban planning principles, secular symbols, and coat of arms.



Panorama of Moscow. Fragment. Triumphal Entrance of Russian Troops into Moscow after the Battle of Poltava. Engraved by A.F. Zubov (1710)

In 1709 Moscow hosted Peter's celebration of the Poltava victory, when seven arches were erected, following the tradition of quickly building up wooden constructions with many messages in words and visual images of glory, prosperity, heroic deeds, and peaceful life. After that, Peter would mostly build his arches in his new capital of St. Petersburg, for example to commemorate the marine victories of 1714, when the celebrations grew larger and even boats participated in the parade. However, the peace treaty with Sweden was so important for Russia, weakened by many military activities, that in 1721 a new triumphal arch was erected in Moscow on the square that is still called Triumphalnaya (Triumphal), followed by lengthy ceremonies which depleted the treasury. Triumphalnaya Square is located on Tverskaya, the main street of Moscow and a part of the road to St. Petersburg, and it would see many arches in the course of the XVIIIth century. Peter's 1721 arch was a silent and impassive participant in the massive festivities of the clergy, the civilians, and a parade of troops. During these festivities, boats on sleighs also formed a huge fleet on snow which moved along the St. Petersburg road toward the center of Moscow. After the fire of 1724, this arch was replaced by the arch for the coronation of Catherine I, the wife of Peter the Great. This arch would also serve for the official entrances of young Peter II and Anna into Moscow. It was burned in the fire of 1737, rebuilt in 1742, and then destroyed again by the fire of 1757.

The same site witnessed the arch of 1762, designed for the coronation of Catherine the Great and burned in 1773. Another arch was built in 1775 for the official entrance of Field Marshal Peter Rumiantsev-Zadunaisky, the hero of the war with Turkey. A well-plotted theatrical production was performed which was recorded in the memoirs and memories of many people. The Field Marshal refused the honor of riding under the arch, transferring this privilege to Catherine the Great, who kindly agreed to go through it herself towards Khodinka Field for the victory celebrations. On the broad space of that field, Vasily Bazhenov, a leading Moscow architect, erected an ensemble of wooden follies and pavilions which told the success story of the war with Turkey, using Greek mythology allegorically. Throughout the XVIIIth and XIXth centuries, arches were decorated in the language of ancient mythology both Greek and Roman. Representations of symbols and gods were employed that were known and appreciated by many at that time – figures of the winged Victory, Apollo, Zeus, Mars, and Athena, and also Christian crosses, angels, and icons. The processions through and around the arches followed a distinct religious tradition in their pace, colors, glittering gold, relics, robes, and overall atmosphere. Both pagan and Christian symbols merged in the arches to deliver stronger messages than were provided by either tradition alone.

The last arch on the Triumphal Square was built in 1797 for the coronation ceremony of Paul I, the only son of Catherine the Great. It was demolished several years after the construction, barely surviving the ill-fated emperor. Further arches would later be erected in different places in Moscow.

The coronation arch for Paul I actually represented a reversion to a kind of symbolism associated with the earlier Russian tradition of the patrilineal descent of the crown. The three XVIIIth-century Russian Empresses, Anna, Elisabeth, and Catherine the Great, had not acquired their position in this way. In fact, all three came to the throne as a result of conspiracies and upheaval. They erected arches and conducted ceremonies to commemorate their ascent to power in part in order to make their

coronations unconditionally lawful. Both the arches and the ceremonies were very similar to the earlier military gates and rituals, and the leading Orthodox clergy participated in order to prove the sacred legitimacy of power.

3. Urban Messages of Construction, Destruction and Reconstruction of Arches

As we consider the sequence of arches just described and the later history of Moscow, a further theme emerges and plays a central part in the symbolism of this characteristic architectural feature of the city. Moscow public memory preserves a central image of the triumphal arch as an object associated with a mythological “red gate”, a striking symbol of victories, coronations, festive events, free food and drinks, and the certain entrance into a different world of peace and bounty. In the old Russian language, “red” also meant beautiful, and some arches were painted red with white décor. The Red Gate is thus a collective image of the past and beautiful Moscow, which disappeared under the Soviets.

One of the Red Gates managed to survive till 1927. One can still see it in numerous drawings and photos, and it has given its name to the metro station of the first underground transportation line opened in 1935, which is designated the “Red Line” on Metro maps. The first wooden red gate was erected in 1742 in connection with the coronation of Elizabeth, who was planning to visit her Lefortovo palace on her way from the Kremlin. A rather unusual concept was here involved, of building an arch to mark the departure of the Empress from the center to her suburban palace rather than her movement towards the point of power in the middle of the city. Elizabeth, a happy and pretty daughter of Peter the Great, was on the move most of her life, engaged in pilgrimages to sacred Moscow, its many churches and monasteries, as well as to other holy places, and always accompanied by long ceremonial trains on either wheels or sleighs. Although this wooden gate served its purposes well, it burned in 1748. But then Dmitry Ukhtomsky, a favorite architect of Elizabeth and the author of the first Moscow city plans, especially of the area around the Red Gate, rebuilt it in brick with red plastering, white sculptures, reliefs, and some golden décor. This typical baroque masterpiece carried more than fifty paintings, showing the glory of the Russian Empire, victories in battles, and the coats of arms of the Russian regions.

Later, Nicholas I, who planted symbols of his power everywhere and encouraged a Byzantine revival in architecture as the national style, replaced the portrait of Elizabeth in a shining nimbus in this arch with the double-headed eagle. The symbol of the double-headed eagle had been brought to Russia by Sophia Paleologue, a Byzantine princess and the wife-to-be of Ivan III. It expressed power over Europe and Asia and was very appealing to Nikolai I. Besides the imperial eagle, another important symbol associated with this arch is the golden angel blowing a trumpet. The angel, which originally stood on the top of the arch, has now descended to the Historical Museum where, in his unusual proximity to viewers, he surprises us with his intriguing look. This angel is a very complicated and ambiguous symbol: Old Testament angels are authorities of God and connote light, dignity, glory, and honor. Angels also are bearers of news, both joyful and not. Their trumpets are supposed to announce the Final Judgment, and they are meant to remind all believers of their sinful life. There are also fallen angels responsible for the darker side of human beings, and their presence can be considered as a certain symbolic justification of the

lawful character of warfare. Though the golden figure from Elizabeth's arch is meant to depict a spiritual and not a physical being, it is endowed with both masculine and feminine physical traits, probably emphasizing the presence of both male and female archetypes in each of us. Other survivors of this dramatic Red Gate arch include two curly headed putti, who are now sitting on the exhibition stands of the Moscow Museum of Architecture.



Angel from the Red Gate (1748) – architect Dmitry Ukhtomsky, Russian National Historical Museum, Red Square

The Red Gate was such a bright and strong reminder of the previous regime that the Bolsheviks pulled it and other monuments down, under the pretense that they interfered with the “heavy” traffic in Moscow at that time. Now a skyscraper, one of the seven towers of Stalinism built by Alexei Dushkin in 1951, is the guardian of this square. Its giant entrance marked by obelisks has become part of a silent ritual of letting specially blessed visitors into the secured halls of administrative power.



Red Gate (1748) – architect Dmitry Ukhtomsky, postcard (1911)

Besides the Red Gate, another Moscow triumphal arch should be mentioned here in connection with the city's later imperial monuments. This arch also was associated with many political events, involved a great deal of effort to construct, and resulted in a further piece of strong urban symbolism. It was first erected in wood on the road to St. Petersburg that was mentioned above. But it was set up on a new site different from that of its many predecessors. It was built in 1814 in the area near the contemporary building of the Belorussian Train Station and was meant to commemorate the return of the Russian troops from Paris after their victory over the French army during the reign of Alexander I, who had been a great admirer of Napoleon but then became his resolute enemy and destroyer. There was much historic irony in this construction, for it resembled the Arc de Triomphe, which Napoleon had set up in Paris to celebrate his victories. It was built in the glorious Empire style developed in Napoleonic France, a style which was very successfully used in Russia, and in Moscow in particular, to mark Napoleon's defeat.

After twelve years the original wooden monument deteriorated, and Osip Bovet, a leading architect and urban planner of the 1820-1830s, was brought in to build a

replacement in the new style of Nicholas I, who succeeded his brother Alexander I in 1825. Unfortunately Bovet died before the completion of the new arch, and his younger brother Mikhail supervised the last month of the construction. Lavishly decorated with the coats of arms from the 48 Russian provinces as well as with symbolic Roman sculptures and reliefs sculptured by Ivan Vitali and Ivan Timofeyev, this grand Triumphal Arch was completed in 1834. Its inauguration allowed Nicholas I to parade his reformed army through its portal, an army which had won him many victories over Persia and Turkey, suppressed the Polish rebellion for independence, and gained Russia the name of the “gendarme of Europe”.

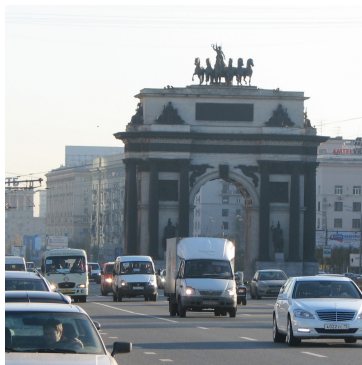


Figure of Fame and Her Six-Horse Chariot (1834, 1966) – Iv. Vitali, Iv. Timofeyev

No wonder that this symbol of the recently defeated regime looked so annoying to the fresh Soviet power, which had plans to build its own sacred capital of the new militaristic and industrial empire. In 1936 a special organization called “Mosrazborstroï”, which had been set up to dismantle everything which interfered with the new Stalinist plan of Moscow development, started to tear down the hundred-year-old construction. The sculptures from the arch were sent to the Museum of Architecture and to the Donsky Monastery, which had been turned into that museum’s annex. The destruction of this arch and of other symbols of the past served as a well-designed PR campaign, reflected by the media, that showed old Moscow, the old regime, and the old traditions disappearing and a new Moscow and new traditions emerging. The photos and documentaries presented crowds of happy people, equipped with shovels, attacking old Moscow monuments. Once again an arch, this time dying, brought crowds together as a consequence of a ruler’s caprice.



Triumphal Arch (1834) – Osip Bevet, Kutuzovsky Av., postcard



Triumphal Arch (1966) – Osip Bevet, Kutuzovsky Av. (new reconstruction)

In 1966, linking two events together – the twentieth anniversary of the Russian victory in World War II and the 150th anniversary of the battle of Borodino – the Moscow Soviet decided to rebuilt the Triumphal Arch on a new site. The place chosen lay on the road to Western Europe and the Borodino field, a location which had experienced many battles, including those between the Russian and French armies in the hot summer of 1812 and those between the Soviet and German troops in the cold December of 1941. It was a huge and costly undertaking conducted by the seventh workshop of Mosproject-3 and supervised by V. Libson, an experienced restorer. The project included a study of old drawings, photographs and documents, the design of the arch in accordance with the new landscape, and the production of all the separate parts and sculptures, as most of them had rusted or deteriorated in their outdoor storage. The new arch was included in a huge war memorial dedicated to a number of military events and victories. This memorial is situated on Poklonnaya Gora, a hill on Kutuzovsky Avenue with a view of the city. A vast landmark, it stands between heavy, five-lane traffic moving in both directions. It separates the 1812 Borodino Museum and other memorial constructions of the Napoleonic war (monuments to Mikhail Kutuzov and Pyotr Bagration), on the one side, from the 1941-1945 War Memorial with its museums, monuments, churches, historical artillery, Katyushas, tanks, submarines, and other military gear on the other side.

The new memorial is placed in a very complicated multi-cultural and multi-confessional landscape that contains several public war museums and monuments, as well as the Orthodox church of St. George the Warrior, a mosque, erected as a memorial to several Islamic schools, and a synagogue, commemorating Jewish soldiers who died in World War II. The complexity of the topos and its rituals include weddings and memorial services, parades and regular meetings of roller-bladers and war-veterans, the administration of oaths by different regiments, and visits by high-level delegations. The monument brings together everyday, peaceful activities of younger and older members of the Moscow urban community and links them to the efforts of governmental power to promote military ideas.

Traffic jams have turned the on-land transportation around the memorial into unexpectedly dilatory processions, and the arch can be seen from afar as well as from nearby, when drivers, sitting and waiting for some slight signs of movement, can absorb unconsciously the details of the sculptures from the windows of their cars. On top of the arch they may note six horses that pull the chariot of winged Fame leisurely and proudly. The victory has already come true and now she is here to crown the winners with her laurel wreath.

5. A Gateway to Utopia: the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition

Soviet “Moscow was the building site of the utopia”, and “members of the Soviet intelligentsia were swept up by this optimistic atmosphere that they closed their eyes to the horrors perpetrated by the Stalinist regime in the name of the progress”⁴. The best example of this utopia was the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition (VSKHV),

⁴ O. Figes, *The Whisperers. Private Life in Stalinist Russia*, London, Picador, 2007, p. 189.

opened in 1939 when the Soviet Union was struggling through the problems of collectivization and of shortages of basic food products. It was a fairy tale built on 140 hectares with pavilions looking like temples of regional prosperity, agriculture, and mechanization. The exhibition had model farms with lovely cottages, dairies, barns, veterinary services, offices, schools, stables, and sheep sheds surrounded by orchards, vineyards, and lakes brimming with fish. It was full of life, with farmers tending to cows, pigs, horses, and chickens, while teachers and midwives talked about their unique methods, applicable in rural areas. In the time of shortages, the restaurants and kiosks offered delicious food and refreshments. Flowers and fountains of fresh water made the short Russian summer look brighter and better.

The presence of these constructions in the contemporary city still has a strong cultural meaning. Esteemed scientists and political leaders gave their talks there, and collective farmers dressed in their national costumes paraded their well-washed and brushed cows and bulls around the demonstration ring. A huge media campaign showed constantly how the best and most dedicated visitors could enter this dream world through the central arch, a physical portal from the real world, full of hardships, into the Soviet paradise. Just as peaceful, everyday life was perceived as a battlefield and its achievements were regarded as victories, so too this arch was built as a typical triumphal monument incorporating many sophisticated Soviet allegories and symbols.

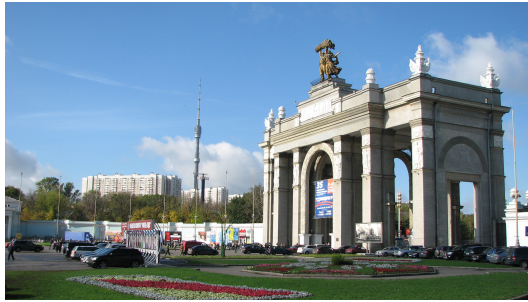
Now all white and with most of its glorious sculptures, reliefs, and gilding gone, the arch still looks elegant and slender, although squeezed between two newer constructions and besieged by exhibition trucks and vans. Leonid Polyakov, an outstanding Soviet architect, one of the creators of the Soviet art-deco, took Roman triumphal arches as the source of his inspiration. Gregory Motovilov, the author of many Moscow metro-station masterpieces, sculpted workers and kolkhoz women as well as rich wheat, pumpkins, sunflowers, cabbages, and beats. Photos and documentaries portray the happy faces of people coming through the gate, carrying flowers, banners, and posters displaying Stalin and Lenin. Several feature films showed processions of athletes and collective farmers with their animals.



*The Main Entrance to the All-Union Exhibition of Economic Achievements (1939)
– architect L. Polyakov*

The new arch served brilliantly for the promotion of Stalinist ideology and power. Competitions among collective farms and individual farmers were organized, and the winners received trips to VSKHV. Visitors from remote villages were totally surprised by what they saw as it was so different from their own lives. They returned back to their homes to advocate for the Communist future, convinced by their experiences as well as by rich gifts from the organizers. Novels, songs, and movies were produced about this miracle, portraying it as the place to make friends, present the results of hard labor, exchange experiences, and relax, all while eating the best ice-cream in the world. The most esteemed scholars offered success stories of national

agriculture at the same time as the villages were suffering from the results of collectivization and mismanagement.



The Main Entrance to the All-Union Exhibition of Economic Achievements (1954) – architect In. Melchakov

Following World War II, in 1954 the territory of the Exhibition was enlarged, and a new imposing gate was built, depicting the evolution of Stalinist ideology from the pre-war collectivization, industrialization, and militarization of the country to the post-war victory celebration. It was much bigger than the first gate and much more elaborately decorated. Apart from the traditional agricultural themes, it had many militaristic symbols of banners, trumpets and armaments. With its horns of plenty, huge fruits and vegetables, animals, and giant suppliers of food to Soviet cities, it also promoted the well-provided life.

The author of the new arch, Innokenty Melchakov, was born in Siberia, where he grew up surrounded by formidable nature and strong Siberian people. Later on, he went to Leningrad to study and admire its classical constructions with columns and large statues of the ancient gods. These two perceptions were reflected in the concept of his constructions, with their noticeable scale, strength, divinity, power, and absolute symmetry. The statue of the Tractor Driver and the Kolkhoz Woman sculptured by Sergey Orlov symbolized the values of the Soviet planned economy – the city provided the country with tractors, and the country provided the city with food.



Décor of the Main Entrance to the All-Union Exhibition of Economic Achievements (1954) – sculptors A. Andropov, S. Orlov, S. Rabinovich, S. Slonim, N. Shtamm, architect In. Melchakov

Happy people who had a chance to get in to the Exhibition were stunned by its new look, which reflected the new victorious taste through the buildings with towers, spires, cupolas, sculptures, and military symbols. Those who were not able to get inside had a chance to see the Soviet paradise in many newspapers, magazines, and the newly launched TV. Yet there was a hidden defect in this paradise, or in its architectural presentation. As one scholar notes, “the Stalinist neo-classical style

incorporates an internal contradiction – a factual requirement to idealize Soviet life and nevertheless to be realistic”.⁵



Happy procession, going to the Exhibition. Mural “People of the Russian Federal Soviet Socialist Republic are building socialism” – Bella Utits, Oxana Pavlenko (1954) – Main entrance. Pavilion “RSFSR”

The arch of 1954 has seen many political, economic and social changes, as well as different names of this venue, which is now called the Central Exhibition Center, but it still plays an important role in the urban environment. It is a historical monument, talking about the past and yet now able to witness opening ceremonies for contemporary exhibitions, promotional business activities of the new market economy, and many manifestations of consumerism, all very different from what existed at the time it was built. However, it still divides space into the life of working hours and concerns and the life of leisure and entertainment. In the business manner of nowadays, one can rent bicycles or roller-blades or get into a cute little train to cross this invisible line and plunge into the wonders of the promised bright future.

6. Moscow’s Arches, in Conclusion

In closing this discussion I would like to mention that all Moscow arches brought together cultural features of temples and palaces in spaces not limited by any walls or roofs. Though they were meant to be secular and surrounded by secular rituals, they had much in common with religious ceremonies.

They displayed the dominance of autocratic power, which was often connected with war – arches were built to commemorate peace and at the same time to justify military campaigns in contrast to peaceful diplomatic conflict resolution.

Their locations, sizes, and décor allowed the city’s rulers to devise strong urban topoi. Their exclusive position in urban space created enormous rituals around them, both temporary and permanent. The language of the rituals included different characters (political, religious, and people of note), references to historical individuals, a variety of symbols, banners and colors, a style of procession, and parades of troops or athletes. These features differed from one time period to another, but the overall meanings stayed the same.

Decorated with militaristic symbols, the Moscow arches speak to us of wars as lawful paths of historical development. The rituals around these arches have many meanings and purposes – on the one hand, people are united and made to feel proud of the

⁵ E. Gromov, *Stalin: Art and Power*, Moscow, Eksimo, 2003, p. 286

country that they live in; but, on the other hand, these rituals offer room for manipulation.

Even standing independently, these arches still mark entrances to certain worlds or spaces, although imaginary: from battlefields to peaceful life, from a transition period to the world of the lawful and well-established crown, from economic instability into the utopian city of total prosperity.

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