

VDNKH Exhibition: Stalinist main propaganda venue and its transformations of today

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The Moscow All-Union Exhibition of Agriculture (VSKHV) since 1939 or, as it has been known since 1959, the All-Union Exhibition of Economic Achievements, (VDNKH), has just reclaimed its second original name and is ready for another series of urban transformations. The current trend of the growing interest in Soviet cultural heritage, awareness among professionals and common people, together with the need to maintain and use the dilapidating propagandistic Stalinist “temples” and “palaces”, as well as its misused public space have convinced the City Administration to look for investors and balance between preservation and remodeling. This paper explores both professional and public attitudes toward this place, how bloggers and web-pages reflect on what is going on there, and asks whether the Exhibition is seen as a glorious history of the fallen regime or is it still a vision of a bright future, as once declared by the designers of the Exhibition.

Key words: Totalitarian architecture. Urban propaganda. Cultural heritage. Post-totalitarian cities. Public space. Culture 1. Culture 2.

Introduction

Architecture is dependent on politics and economy. At times, it becomes more democratic, serving the needs of businesses and even common people. We can also see that strong powers often use architecture for their own needs. Vladimir Paperny in his book “Culture 2” has shown two axes, horizontal (Culture 1) and vertical (Culture 2). Authoritarian and propagandistic structures of Stalinism (Culture 2) dismissed democratic experiments (Culture 1) after the Revolution of 1917. Political and economic changes are followed by the transformations of cultures 1 and 2. Most of the time you can see the presence of the elements of both cultures in different proportion. VDNKH is a very distinct example of these transformations with very specific communications. Now one can argue that both cultures are manifested.

Historical Background

In 1935, the Second All-Union Congress of Collective Farmers, prompted by the Government, endeavored to open the All-Union Exhibition of Agriculture (VSKHV) for 100 days to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Soviet power in 1917. In Culture 2 “the power takes an interest in architecture as the practical tool to bind the population and as a spatial expression of the new centralized system of values”.¹ VSKHV set out to prove the success of the collective-farm movement, by presenting the image of Soviet “abundance and well-being” on the gated area in the East of Moscow. “The agricultural paths of fertility and productivity looms large, when the real fertility and productivity of agriculture fade. This feature is realized in one of the greatest cultural structures 2 - the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition”,² where Stalin wanted to promote the benefits of the Soviet regime, rather than individual commodities or services.

1 PAPERNY, V. *Kultura Dva*. Moskva : Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2006, p. 20.

2 PAPERNY, V. *Kultura Dva...*, p. 162.

Viacheslav Oltarzhevsky, an experienced designer, who had spent more than 10 years in New York, was appointed the chief architect of the VSKHV. He designed its first Master plan of 1936. His job was to lay out a wonderland full of miracles. Oltarzhevsky composed a temporary entertainment ideological park with the pavilions constructed from wood. In May 1936, the Exhibition Committee finally approved Oltarzhevsky's Master Plan with the final layout of the pavilions and programs. "It included the following main sections:

1. Demonstration of the Soviet reorganization of agriculture and the victory of the collective farm system
2. Soviet agriculture in different republics, territories, regions
3. State farms
4. Mechanization and electrification of agriculture
5. Cereals and industrial crops
6. Soviet livestock
7. Demonstration of ethnic art and mass amateur talent groups".³

It was an outstanding and creative project, propagandistic, of course, ready for the first show season of July, 1937. Three weeks before the deadline, Stalin personally postponed the exhibition by one year, as the place looked too modest for the Red Tsar. It probably had too many features of culture 1, which lacked verticals and narrations of culture 2. In 1938, the State commission examined the structures and decided that it did not suit the ideological direction of the moment. Oltarzhevsky was arrested and spent several years in Siberian Vorkuta. Most of his pavilions and the entrance gate were torn down to be replaced with structures more appropriate for the tastes of the fastidious client.

"Sergei Chernishev, the next VSKHV chief architect received his education before the revolution of 1917 and had hands-on experience with the classical principles."⁴ He respected the work of his predecessor and followed his initial plan but made the place look more spectacular, using the trends of art-deco. The artistic image of the complex was conceptualized by a number of famous artists who kept being replaced as the result of many political re-shuffles: El Lisitsky, known through his projects for Russian and international trade shows was replaced by Victor Shestakov, famous as a theatrical designer. His talent proved to be quite appropriate for the melodramatic expression of Stalinist ideology and overall happiness as the state policy. "Culture 2 is full of healthy physiological joy and cheerfulness. In any case, it sees itself as such. Even the horrible famine, which had been hardly over in the 1930s, did not prevent the architects from creating joyful architecture"⁵ with sculptures, garlands, spires and pinnacles.

The park got its most memorable statue of the Worker and Kolkhoz Woman, featuring the gigantic figures of a man and woman holding together the famous hammer and sickle. The sculpture, which reached 25 meters towards the sky, was created by Vera Mukhina. Produced at the Aircraft Plant, it had been originally placed atop the 35-meter-tall Soviet pavilion (Boris Iofan) at the International Exposition in Paris in 1937. Then they brought it back to Moscow. The statue was also the logo of Russia's largest "Mosfilm" movie studio. It became rusted with time and was eventually sent for renovation. Only

3 *USSR Exhibition Ensembles of 1920 – 1930s. Materials and documents.* Moscow : Galart, 2006, p. 99.

4 ZINOVIEVA, Olga. *Back into the bright Future.* Moscow : Tonchu Publishing House, 2013, p. 38.

5 PAPERNY, V. *Kultura Dva...*, p. 165.

in 2009, after the restoration, was it mounted on the new giant foundation, a replica of the Soviet Pavilion in Paris of 1937.

The Main Gate, designed by Leonid Poliakov, was lavishly decorated with sculptures, which have been lost in the course of history. Altogether, 80 temple-like structures of different sizes represented the Soviet Republics, regions, and agricultural products such as grain, oil cultures, potatoes, fruits and other commodities. Art-deco style, which they called Stalinist or Soviet style in the Soviet Union, was very appropriate for the communist propaganda with its narrations, themes of labor, allusions to archaic Greece and ethnic borrowings.

The opening took place on August 1, 1939, the eve of World War II. The Fair set its eyes on the future and the world of tomorrow, modeling or foretelling an era of new machines and bountiful living standards. The exhibition also showed an idealized reality of superior products and services. Thanks to the legacy of the 1917 Revolution and of subsequent civil war and collectivization, the economy of the Soviet Union was in a state of near-collapse. The VSKHV was meant to promote Soviet policy and convince people of the temporary character of their hardships.

The media coverage could still deliver a brilliant model of the national propaganda campaign with endless stories of victories in agricultural fields, in barns and heroic deeds in tractor repair workshops on the front pages of all Soviet papers and magazines. Competitions among collective farms and individual farmers had been organized and the winners were rewarded with trips to the Exhibition.

The visitors from remote villages were stunned by their experiences, so different from their own lives. They returned to their homes to advocate for the Communist future, convinced by what they had seen, as well as by the 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, eating the best ice-cream in the world. The most esteemed scholars presented success stories of the national agriculture, while Soviet villages were suffering as the result of collectivization, Stalin's repressions, mismanagement and starvation.

The Exhibition operated during the summer of 1940 and was opened briefly in the summer of 1941 and closed when WWII reached the borders of the Soviet Union. After WWII, several attempts were made to reopen the Exhibition. The new wave of very expensive projects at the Exhibition grounds which reflected the glorious style of the post-war Soviet Union with its heroic statues, laurel garlands and palm tree leaves, delayed the opening. The grounds were considerably enlarged, and Innokenty Melchakov designed the new Main Entrance in the form of a true Roman triumphal arch, surmounted by the sculpture of a tractor driver and kolkhoz girl, raising high above themselves a wheat sheaf.

The idea to unite workers and peasants along with hammers and sickles was realized in the design of the exhibition. By following the fountain trimmed Main Alley, one could reach the Square of Agriculture and the Square of Mechanization (now Industrialization), where the statue of Josef Stalin (Sergey Merkurov, 1939) once stood.

The new Main Pavilion remained the focal point of the Soviet ideology. It presented the Soviet constitution, the victory of Socialism in WWII, as well as a successful march of collectivization and industrialization. The building changed its artistic image and symbolic configuration more than once, reflecting political fluctuations in the country. The first one, erected by Viacheslav Oltarzhevsky was demolished after his arrest for being too restrained about the "benefits" of Soviet power. Built again by Vladimir

Shuko and Vladimir Gelfreikh in monumentally austere forms of 1939, it was completely rebuilt with columns, brass banners, sculptures and a tall spire topped with the golden star, by Yury Shyko and Evgeny Stoliarov in 1954.

Some of the older pavilions in brick or wood, survived the hardships of war and were upgraded with victory symbols, new sculptures in reinforced cement, and finished with lustrous tiles. Others, lacking grandeur, were demolished and replaced by new brick palaces. The idea of presenting success stories of the 15 Soviet republics along with the livestock area with its temple-like stables surrounded by fields and orchards, remained from the Oltarzhevsky time. The new model villages looked different from their prototypes of 1939. They resembled the fabulous estates of the Russian nobility of the 18th century with their heavy columns, sophisticated décor and overall silhouettes and shapes. Ethnic motives were broadly used in model kolkhoz workshops, barns, canteens or post offices. With the country still in ruins, Stalin needed stronger communications through the use of imposing architectural forms and monumental art.

Three magnificent fountains and many smaller ones stimulated the imagination of people and burdened the budget. Konstantin Topuridze, along with a large group of sculptors designed them. The "Friendship" presented 16 twin girls of the Soviet republics dressed in ethnic costumes, dancing around the wheat sheaf entwined with garlands of sunflowers, hemp, castors, and other oilseed plants. It symbolized the endless Soviet dance around a bountiful food supply, which was never successfully achieved.⁶ "Stone Flower", full of plants and aquatic animals in brass and semi-precious stones, referred to a famous Russian fairy tale connected with the Ural Mountains and the overall idea of abundant natural resources. Both fountains are still functioning regardless of political and economic challenges, closed only briefly at times for renovations. "Golden Spike" was a real miracle of technology, artistic manifestation, size and location. Being in the middle of the Upper Pond, between the "Golden Spike", a grandiose restaurant and the "Mechanization" pavilion, it was 16 m high. The jets, reaching 25 meters, burst out from nozzles located in the golden grains of the spike and horns of plenty around it. With boats floating in the pond below the fountain, it was the most photographed place. Unfortunately, "Golden Spike" has not been working for dozens of years and needs a very sophisticated renovation.

The objective of the park was for the controlled entertainment, leisure, manipulation of mass consciousness, and the manifestation of power over natural resources and people. For Stalin, people were essentially "natural resources".

In the late 1950s, destalinization and Ottepel (Thawing), launched by Nikita Khrushchev, the involvement in international affairs and space exploration along with the global trends in post-war modernism had an immediate impact on the Exhibition. Some weakening of powers and easing tensions brought the features of culture 1 to life. Khrushchev, eager to show the achievements in Soviet science and technology, gave a new name to the place – the Exhibition of Economic Achievements, abbreviated as VDNKH in Russian. Republic pavilions were transformed into branch expositions and lost their pathetic décor. Thus, "Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic" became "Physics", Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic was listed as "Biology" etc. Agricultural pavilions also changed their profiles: "Mechanization" to "Space", "Cotton" to "Transport", "Sugar beets" to "Oil Industry" etc. Some of the pavilions lost their art-deco facades: they were either covered over with modernistic shields or completely rebuilt.

6 ZINOVIEVA, O. *Back into the bright Future...*, p. 126.

Pavilion "Povolzhie" (Volga Region) presented an amazing case of how architecture reflected the slightest changes in politics. It was built initially by architect Georgy Chaltykian in 1937, when Viacheslav Oltarzhevsky was still the chief architect. After his arrest in 1938, Alexander Boretskiy altered the project to meet Stalin's requirements of grandeur. In 1939 S. B. Znamensky and A. O. Kolesnichenko rebuilt it again with the tower crowned by a statue of Vasily Chapaev, the Red Army Commander, on horseback. In 1954 the pavilion was dismantled. I. M. Shoshensky and I. V. Yakovlev erected a new "Povolzhie" in the ornate post-war Stalin style with falling waters, imitating Volga hydraulic power stations in order to emphasize the success of industrialization but not the revolutionary hero. In 1959, while transforming it into "Radio Electronics", I. M. Shoshensky covered his own masterpiece of culture 2 with stamped aluminum panels in the best practice of the Potemkin villages. However, one should admit that it was a unique modernistic design, inspired by the space exploration of the times. The new façade looked similar to the exterior of a spaceship.

New modernistic pavilions appeared including "Gas Industry", "Shipbuilding Industry", as well as new showrooms for international fairs demonstrating features of culture 1 along with the presence of culture 2. The story of 1939 and 1954 repeated itself. – There were real events including lectures by outstanding scholars and engineers, but also propagandistic narrations and models of pilot-scale products which never materialized in any of the industries, leaving the country bereft of most consumer goods.

Perestroika and the new roles of the Exhibition

Perestroika of the late 1980s changed the profile of VDNKH and its name to the All-Russian Exhibition center (VVTS). There was no budget to maintain and run aging Stalinist pavilions embellished with stucco details and cement sculptures. In order to survive, the VVTS management had to market the space to retailers and to compete with other Moscow exhibitors.⁷ Many financial interests distributed power and gave space for the further development of culture 1 in its anarchic form.

One could see vendors of perfumes, underwear, vegetables, electronics or garden supplies both around the fountains as well as underneath the cupolas of palaces painted with Soviet banners and heroes. Yury Gagarin's portrait on the wall was modestly covered with a veil, preventing him from seeing the bazaar of flowers, seeds and plants in the former Space Pavilion which had lost all of its famous exhibits. Not entirely free, but better to say a wild market was booming at VVTS. There was basically no tax or sanitary control over what was going on. Inexpensive restaurants and barbeque places served food of unknown origins. However, VVTS helped many people to survive, who had either lost their jobs or were not earning enough to cope.

Finally, seventy years after the Revolution of 1917, people were allowed to travel across the borders. Many used this opportunity to earn money. Mostly women, but also some men traveled to China, Poland or Turkey and brought back inexpensive goods for sale in huge plastic bags with white and blues square-shaped patterns.

Those bags, seen all over the Exhibition became associated with the so called "shuttle" business. "It flourished thanks to the law, which allowed the importation of up

⁷ ZINOVIEVA, Olga. *The Soviet Propaganda Park: Myths and Reality of the All-Russian Exhibition Center (VVC)*. [online], 2009. [cit. 21. 10. 2016]. Available on the Internet: <<http://www.passportmagazine.ru/article/1674/>>

to 5,000 USD worth of goods without any custom tax by individuals.”⁸ On the one hand, the vendors sold inexpensive stuff, supporting their families and on the other hand, the customers could now afford food and clothes to meet the needs of their families. The main entertainment for young individuals or families was either shopping or eating. In actuality, people did not have much time and resources for other kinds of leisure.

The Russian construction boom is another Perestroika feature which had its impact on the VVTS. Several new pavilions, extensions to the old buildings and even a pretentious private house on the bank of the lake were erected without any consideration of the Russian Construction Code, places and designs having been chosen at the whim of clients.

The area around the first Main Gate (1939) presents a bright example of what was going on in terms of ill-managed development. In 1989, Igor Vinogradsky, an outstanding Soviet architect erected Pavilion № 69, called “Soviet consumer goods and services”. It was the last construction of the Soviet Union, when VDNKH was still a state-owned exhibition ground. It presented a very smart design: finished with white tuff and decorated with impressive arches, it was meant to harmonize with the white arch of the Main Entrance. However, in 2008, this unique idea in brick and stucco was disrupted by an enormous glass construction, which was squeezed between the historical arch of 1939 and the Soviet pavilion of 1989. It was Pavilion №75, called Multi-Profile Exhibition Complex, where most international exhibitions are conducted today. The drama was that one could not see the elegant silhouette of the first Entrance from the outside, neither was there adequate space to admire the design of the last Soviet pavilion.

With the advent of the Internet, numerous web-sites,⁹ web-pages and blogs appeared making people aware of what was taking place there: Things like trying to preserve history, national monuments, the environment, along with the ability to conduct tours, provide for professional and amateur architectural interests, nostalgic feelings and more.

Globally, Postmodernism could be characterized by the interest in historical and cultural heritage, restoration and reconstruction of historical buildings due to the development of the tourist and entertainment industry, national and international politics, as well as diverse forms of education, including self-education. The definition of cultural tourism may include “all movements of persons, because they satisfy the human need for diversity, tending to raise the cultural level of the individual and giving rise to new knowledge, experience and encounters”.¹⁰

The Stalinist park could serve as one of the best examples of the current trend. It has attracted the attention of historians, archeologists, biologists, NGOs, lovers and admirers of this place for very different reasons. The Fair turned into a battlefield for historical preservation. Finally, “in 1998, VVTS got two important statuses: of

8 YAKOVLEV, A. – GOLIKOVA, V. – KAPRALOVA, N. *Otkritie rink i „chelnochnaya“ trgovlia v rossiiskoi ekonomike: vchera, segognia, zavtra (po materialam empiricheskikh issledovany 2001-2005 gg.)* WP4/2006/05. Seria WP4. Sociologia rinka [online]. Moskva : GU BSH, 2006, p. 9. [cit. 21. 10. 2016]. Available on the Internet: <https://www.hse.ru/data/2010/05/05/1216427462/WP4_2006_05.pdf>

9 *Vsesoznaya Selskokhoziaistvennaya vistavka* [online]. [cit. 21. 10. 2016]. Available on the Internet: <<http://www.bcx1939.com>>

10 GÜNLÜ, Ebru – YAĞCI, Kamil – PİRİNAR, İge. *Preserving cultural heritage and possible impacts on regional development : Case of Izmir* [online], p. 3. [cit. 21. 10. 2016]. Available on the Internet: <<http://www.regionalstudies.org/uploads/networks/documents/tourism-regional-development-and-public-policy/gunlu.pdf>>

the historical ensemble and of the special protected natural territory".¹¹ At the same time, 47 VVTS objects were listed, which was only a partial success as more structures needed attention. However, during this time of shortages and lack of the most needed commodities, the VVTS administration had neither the resources nor the desire to practice control over the place. Several important structures were lost due to negligence and fires. In the best practices of the undisciplined economy, violating the laws and regulations, they managed to sell some of the land lots and pavilions which has led to numerous judicial problems today.

Once again, the Exhibition mimicked the political and economic situation in the country. This was the new time and new economic conditions of which Josef Stalin, the creator of this Soviet propaganda place, could hardly think of, let alone approve of or be happy with.

VVTS had a strong identity of Perestroika and liberalization of economy which brought the place into chaos and decay with uncontrolled stands and kiosks. But it was the taste of the free market economy, small private businesses, growing interest in the historical heritage along with the involvement of the population in individual activities which hampered the state's ability to manage the place properly.

Post-Perestroika: new is well forgotten old

From 2010, the new policy with an autocratic flavor, grand expensive and theatrical shows such as Olympic Games in Sochi on the one hand, and glorification of the past achievements to strengthen power in a shaky economy on the other, became obvious. The rate culture 2 started to grow again along with the presence of culture 1. In spring of 2014, the Moscow City Government launched a large-scale project of the VDNH's revival to commemorate its 75th Anniversary. The legacy of Perestroika is not easy: many buildings are in a state of decay, many renters have contracts for services in historical buildings, which complicates its restoration and proper use. Many smaller pavilions were either bought or privatized, illegally at times. It is very hard to control what is going on there. The gardens, neglected for many decades, are in need of extensive rehabilitation and landscaping.

An electronic vote by Muscovites and the decision by Moscow Mayor Sergey Sobyenin brought back the name of VDNKH, replacing the short-lived VVTs. The territory was enlarged again, reaching 520 hectares and the roadmap of the Fair was re-defined. Today VDNKh also encompasses the Botanic Gardens and Ostankino historic park.

VDNKH later restored its image as the primary exhibition center of the country with a program very similar to what was happening in 1939 and 1954. The idea was to promote the past and the present achievements of the country, while providing for quality leisure and entertainment. The state was ready to provide funding for this in exchange for a clear message that the government was doing great things for the people. In contrast to the 1939 and 1954 programs a lot of activities became commercial in combination with some free opportunities.

In order to transform to commercial, they needed to build new facilities in the historical venue. In April 14, 2015, the RF Ministry of Culture published the regulation, "which eliminated the status of VDNKH as "specially protected natural territory"

¹¹ DNKH – dostoprimechatelnaya i neokhranyaemaya territoria. May 13, 2015. [online]. [cit. 21. 10. 2016]. Available on the Internet: <<http://www.archnadzor.ru/2015/05/13/vdnh-dostoprimechatelnaya-i-neokhranyaemaya-territoriya/>>

which allowed capital construction there¹² and shocked the audiences involved. This regulation legalized already started projects and launched new ones.

"Moskvarium", now a huge aquatic show and aquarium, opened in August of 2015, is one of the most provocative projects on VDNKH. Not only it has replaced the historical "Shipbuilding" Pavilion and blocked the historical VDNKH skyline, but animal advocates constantly criticize the improper and inhuman treatment of wild animals in captivity. Initially, the organizers tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to deceive the public, giving a near academic title of "The center of oceanography and marine biology" to a purely commercial enterprise which uses animals from unknown origins. The sensational trial to let free two killer whales, who were kept in two improper tanks on VVTS, ended up in improving their conditions, as they luckily finished the Aquarium. The place is very popular among children and families, and our contemporary information world reflects its contradictory character through the official Media, Facebook pages and blogs.¹³

As in the past, the animals are still there but the concepts and goals of keeping them within the Exhibition venue are different. The Exhibitions of 1939 and 1945 showed the best breeds of livestock and poultry to demonstrate the advantages of the Soviet system and educate visiting farmers. Now the animals serve a commercial and entertainment purpose with a mere fraction of an educational component. There are different kinds of animal shows. Kids and their parents can spend time on a farm milking goats and working in kitchen gardens. The former "Fisheries" area is now an expensive restaurant, where the diner can catch and be served one's own fish.

It is a big issue for the restorers as to what time period to portray to the viewers out of the many cultural layers available. The choice of the current VDNKH ideology is to go back either to the originals of 1939 or 1954. Very realistic art-deco images of that time were able to deliver strong and clear messages of the leaders. They started renovation, taking off modernistic facades, when possible, sometimes destroying elegant designs of late 1950s – early 1960s. "Povolzhie",¹⁴ mentioned above. It became a sensational media event, when the Exhibition Press announced that they had discovered Stalinist sculptures behind the metal facade of 1959. Most historians and VDNKH fans had known that they were there. The VDNKH administration managed to capitalize on the occasion to draw attention to Fair's new policy of reconstruction and also the state's involvement. There is still no decision of what to do with the elegant metal façade of 1959.

Another major issue is restoration versus reconstruction policy. Restoration of several big pavilions has been launched. However, in many cases instead of the declared restoration the occupiers destroy old constructions and build fakes on their sites. The historical wooden camel stables of 1954 were in disrepair. Now there is a small restaurant in brick with new carved wood, imitating the construction of 1954. The famous outdoor Green Theater, built in 1954 and neglected during Perestroika, was reconstructed, changing its color from its original green to beige for reasons unknown. It is very active now and houses the best performing musicians from Russia and abroad.

12 VDNKH vishla iz sostava osobo okhrniaemoi prirodnoi territorii. In: Vedomosty Newspaper [online]. April 14, 2014. [cit. 21. 10. 2016]. Available on the Internet: <<http://www.vedomosti.ru/newspaper/articles/2015/05/06/vdnh-ne-osobo-ohrnyaetsya>>

13 Griaznaya voina protiv rossiiskogo dvizhenia za prava zhivotnikh. NGO Vita [online]. December 4, 2014. [cit. 21. 10. 2016]. Available on the Internet: <<http://www.vita.org.ru/new/2014/dec/05-2.htm>>

14 VDNKH: Chto spriatali za strogimi „fasadami-korobkami“. [online]. [cit. 21. 10. 2016]. Available on the Internet: <<http://engineer-history.ru/blog/2016/04/15/vdnh-chto-pryatali-za-strogimi-fasadami-korobkami/>>

Many museums have opened their branches there. Polytechnic Museum, closed for the renovation in downtown Moscow, opened several major exhibitions there, dedicated to the history of technology. It also runs a Science Festival there. A number of pavilions offer lecture programs, most of which are free. Some other museums, which are closed for renovation in the center of Moscow show their complete collections in historical buildings. It is followed by the inevitable transformations of the historical pavilions, their roles and communications. For example, the Museum of Cinema History,¹⁵ which has been homeless for several years is moving now to Pavilion №36 "Agriculture and food processing" ("Water Industry"), built in 1954 by P. P. Reviakin and Yu. N. Sheverdiaven on the bank of the lake in a rather romantic style. The pavilion will need a serious adjustment to house the Museum.

Expensive shows by famous choreographers dedicated to national holidays with noticeable promotion of a certain national idea can be made free to the public, as they are supported by the state. Thanks to mobile phones and applications, photos and video can be taken by millions of people and disseminated to another million with the press of a button.

Another big difference from 1939 and 1954 is that in today's world, there are many international participants. More than 100 international exhibitions and congresses, dozens of festivals and special events are held at VDNH yearly.

The summer program goes to great effort to attract people of different ages and backgrounds to VDNKH, listing fairs and markets, entertainment, cinema, concerts, activities for children and family, exhibitions, museums, lectures, tours, sports and leisure.

The Inspiration Art Festival was held at the VDNH in July, 2016, turning the venue into "The World of Wondering, telling the "Story about the Dream", based on the Russian fairy tale "A Little Humpbacked Horse". It was staged by Nikos Lagousakos, acclaimed choreographer, author of many famous operas and ballets, as well as Olympic games ceremonies. He is "known for his detail in movement quality no matter if it's a theatrical piece of one, or a mass choreography of hundreds".¹⁶ Needless to say it was among the most expensive chorographical productions in Russia. He also choreographed a massive dance flash mob.

The Exhibition "Unreal Heroes. The animator and characters of Souzmultfilm studio" tells a major story of the Soviet animation masterpieces, produced in the second half of the 20 century.

The Green Theatre shows productions of classical and modern ballet and gives gala concerts of opera stars. Children can have hands-on experiences at the City Farm. Outdoor events such as Das Fest, a festival of world stars, take place in the Industrial (Mechanization) Square where Stalin's giant statue used to be.

Every winter the biggest skating rink embracing Stalinist palaces and frozen fountains is opened to the public. The tickets are not cheap but there are free hours for special groups such as children, seniors and the disabled.

The overall look of the Exhibition is much better than several years ago. More and more young people spend time there, families find things to do, and older people can enjoy its parks and gardens. Now, when economy is under stress, VDNKH balances

15 *Musei kino perezhaet na territoriu VDNKH.* [online]. [cit. 21. 10. 2016]. Available on the Internet: <http://www.m24.ru/articles/125761?utm_source=CopyBuf>

16 Nikos Lagousakos profile: <<http://www.nikoslalousakos.com/profile/>>

between real events connected with arts and sciences and obvious promotion of the donor.

The new director, a young and creative woman, brings a lot of positive energy to the place. However, the Exhibition is still laden with totalitarian expression in brick and stucco. Proven technologies of mass manipulation are well documented symbolically in building and décor. Irina Prokhorova, a cultural historian and publisher said recently: "As we can see, fascination with power and totalitarian ideas wakes up again; the attempts to discredit democratic initiatives of the 1990s and plant nostalgia for the Soviet empire are retried."¹⁷

Conclusions

Today VDNKH presents a vast combination of venues, belonging to different time periods. The buildings reflect historical changes of the Soviet Union and Russia, serving both the needs of the state, businesses and common people. The Stalinist idea, expressed in 1939 and confirmed in 1954 to show the success of the Soviet policy and economy is still dominant, which presents culture 2 (as defined by Vladimir Paperny). Future transformations of the Exhibition due to weakening of the power during Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev brought some features of democratic activities, expressed by culture 1 (as also defined by Vladimir Paperny). Perestroika turned the landscape of the Exhibition, marked by the spires and domes of culture 2 into uncontrolled markets with some democratic features of culture 1.

It is still a unique art-deco ensemble with dozens of described monuments. It means a lot for the current state propaganda based on the past achievements, including the victory in WWII, art, architecture and space exploration. In other words, one can see both the presence of both culture 1 and culture 2. It is a memorial place for the nation and for the state; and it is used now to make the government look better. As in the past it remains an educational, entertaining and exhibition venue with a strong patriotic component. As regards to cultural heritage, it presents problems of restoration, maintenance, use and profitability, which puts at risk further life of many objects. More and more professionals and amateurs pay attention to different aspects, connected with VDNKH: architectural heritage, biodiversity, meanings of mass entertainments, manipulations, sociology and psychology of crowds, along with admiration of theatrical productions, classical concerts and interesting lectures. The media, documentary and fiction films keep portraying VDNKH festivals, shows, lectures and its overall image. But now, in contrast to the past when the media produced only positive remarks, much criticism is expressed regarding the preservation of the historical place, commercial character of events, obvious and hidden state propaganda and many other things. It is another case study of how the ruling elite tries to practice control over masses of people, based on a simple formula of "bread and circus", invented by the Ancient Romans. Or, perhaps even earlier than that.

¹⁷ <https://meduza.io/feature/2016/08/01/my-nikakie-ne-marginaly-my-avangard-obschestva?utm_source=safari_extension&utm_medium=small_list&utm_campaign=default>

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