

‘A Beautiful Dream, Facing Both the Future and the Past’: Destalinisation, Visual Culture and the Fortieth Anniversary of the October Revolution

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Between 5 November 1957 and 16 March 1958, the new Central Exhibition Hall in Moscow (Manezh) hosted the All-Union Exhibition dedicated to the Great October Socialist Revolution. Coming as it did just over a year after Nikita Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin, this hugely significant exhibition offers a unique lens through which to examine the dynamics of early Destalinisation and the artistic conceptualisation of the October Revolution in this new post-Stalinist landscape. This article demonstrates that while the general appeals for greater party spirit in art were highly influential in shaping how the Revolution and Civil War were presented thematically, the period was impervious to concurrent calls for artists to grapple with some of the more conflicted aspects of the human condition, leading to depictions of these events that were romantic and often sentimental in tone. This was in stark contrast to works displayed that dealt with the Great Patriotic War, which at last started to address the far more problematic and conflicting legacies of victory in 1945. Consequently, at the All-Union Exhibition, visitors were presented with two very different visions of the Soviet Union’s foundational experiences, and at the root of this was the instability unleashed by Destalinisation.

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‘A Beautiful Dream, Facing Both the Future and the Past’: Destalinisation, Visual Culture and the Fortieth Anniversary of the October Revolution

Between 5 November 1957 and 16 March 1958, the new Central Exhibition Hall in Moscow (Manezh) hosted one of the largest art exhibitions ever held in the Soviet Union.¹ Dedicated to the Great October Socialist Revolution, the All-Union Exhibition (AUE) that year displayed 5532 pieces by more than 2000 artists, bringing together the most recent works by contemporary painters, graphic artists, and sculptors.² Almost three times larger than the All-Union show of 1947,³ this exhibition was to be a focal point for the national celebration of all that had been achieved in the last forty years. Underlining its significance, the Soviet Art Fund had issued ten million rubles worth of new commissions to a thousand artists specifically to create work for the exhibition,⁴ and the Council of Ministers had announced the creation of ten gold and twenty silver medals to be awarded to the best pieces on display, as well as gifting the Ministry of Culture additional monies to buy the highest quality work for the nation’s galleries and museums.⁵

According to official reports, the exhibition was visited by more than a million people who, as one commented, ‘made a fascinating journey through Soviet life’ as they strolled the halls of the gallery, passing by works that took them from the historic struggles of the working class under the Russian Empire to the most recent achievements of the Soviet proletariat, made possible by the dual victories of both 1917 and 1945.⁶ It served as ‘an excellent school’, educating the visitor about the ‘life of the people, their deeds, and [Soviet] modernity’, with articles stressing the high demand for reproductions and catalogues, and photographs in the press capturing enthusiastic onlookers sketching on notepads or taking their own snapshot souvenirs.⁷ As would be expected, the revolutionary theme dominated many of the works on display, as artists attempted to express exactly what the establishment of Soviet power signified from this contemporary vantage point and how society had evolved over the intervening decades. Writing in a pamphlet about the exhibition published in 1958, Boris Ioganson – the newly appointed President of the USSR Academy of Arts – made it clear that the purpose of this particular exhibition was not just to showcase the latest work from across the union but was also to act as a barometer for how far Soviet art had come since 1917. For Ioganson these pieces collectively depicted the struggle against ‘formalism, aestheticism, eclecticism, [and] naturalism’ that had enabled contemporary art to present ‘a true reflection of socialist reality’.⁸

Typically, the fortieth anniversary of the Revolution has been overshadowed by interest in the upheaval of 1937 or the high-profile anniversary celebrations of 1967.⁹ However, the first decennial jubilee after Stalin offers historians a unique moment to consider the impact of Destalinisation on the

rhetoric and representation surrounding the event and its participants. By the time the next significant jubilee came around in 1962, conservative forces were once more in the ascendency and, although the fiftieth anniversary was celebrated with pomp and circumstance, the significance of the Revolution for contemporary society had begun to be eclipsed by the burgeoning cult of the Great Patriotic War.¹⁰ Still, while neglected by scholars, the fortieth jubilee was commemorated lavishly at the time, both within and beyond the borders of the Soviet Union.¹¹ It was simultaneously a moment of retrospection, a chance to reassess all that had been achieved, and a cause for positivity about the direction in which the country was now moving in light of the denunciation of Joseph Stalin's 'cult of the individual' little over a year earlier. The optimism of the Khrushchev era and the optimism of revolution were in synergy and this provided the backdrop for the 'revitalisation of the revolutionary myth' from the stinking corpse that some Soviet youth believed it had become.¹²

There was an outpouring of publications from a whole host of institutions proclaiming the beneficial impact of the Revolution on everything from education and health care to metallurgy and ophthalmology.¹³ National republics and Russian provinces published numerous collections of sources to elucidate the story of Bolshevik triumph, the subsequent struggle of the Civil War, and the great strides made since the consolidation of Soviet power in the specific regions of the union.¹⁴ Millions of celebratory posters and commemorative albums were published and numerous documentaries made, plays performed, and television shows broadcast. Shostakovich's new eleventh symphony dedicated to the 1905 Revolution enjoyed its world premiere,¹⁵ and 40th Anniversary of October Streets appeared in cities such as Kazan', Cheliabinsk, Sevastapol', and most pointedly in Sverdlovsk and Ul'ianovsk.¹⁶ On 7 November, Red Square hosted its familiar parade of military hardware and soldiers – debuting a new heavy tank and amphibious assault vehicle, which did not go unnoticed in the West¹⁷ – cheered on by enthusiastic flag-waving crowds and a host of Soviet and international dignitaries. Crowning all of these achievements was the successful launch of Sputnik, referred to by Nikita Khrushchev in his speech to the Supreme Soviet as a 'fine present for the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution' that like the most recent Soviet achievement had brought 'the most daring of human dreams to life'.¹⁸

Art was central to the celebration of the revolutionary jubilee. In the RSFSR alone, 66 exhibitions were held specifically on the theme of the anniversary of the Revolution, out of around 250 held across the republic in total over the course of the year,¹⁹ with similar jubilee exhibitions being held in other republics and discussed in the national press.²⁰ Many more across the Soviet Union focussed on aspects related to the revolutionary period, such as posters from the Civil War or artistic representations of Vladimir Lenin. Given that art was – and from the evidence of recent 2017 centenary, still is – a key way in which the achievements, legacy, and impact of the Revolution were

gauged and disseminated, it is surprising that there has not been more systematic attention paid to how art was used to articulate the meaning of the Revolution beyond its immediate context. The commemoration of the Revolution itself has been the subject of much scholarly analysis, with particular focus being paid to the very earliest celebrations, culminating in the decennial jubilee of 1927. Frederick Corney was one of the first historians to pay attention to the Revolution as what he termed a ‘memory project’, examining how the myth of October was ‘produced’ in the first decade of Bolshevik power.²¹ Like Corney, those who have turned their attention to the commemoration of the Revolution subsequently have often concentrated on the cultural aspects of this process and also tended to favour the earlier foundational period of the Soviet state: Malte Rolf’s work on mass festivals across the whole of the Soviet era provides great detail on the tenth anniversary but has little to say about later decennial jubilees and Susan Corbesero’s excellent exploration of the imagery of October in anniversary celebrations also ends in 1927.²² Art historians, most notably Susan Reid, who have written about the art world during the Khrushchev period have, of course, been sensitive to the frequent shifts in outlook, priorities, and policies that characterised the early years after Stalin, but even here the fortieth anniversary celebrations seem lost in a sea of extraordinary and significant developments.²³

This article aims to bridge the gap between considerations of how culture was used to give the Revolution meaning in the early Soviet period and the scholarship that has elucidated how the turbulent climate of the post-Stalin era shaped artistic production. Exactly what did the Revolution mean in 1957, an event now filtered through the experiences of the Civil War, the death of Lenin, the problematic legacies of Stalinism, the horror and victory of the Great Patriotic War, and renewed tensions with the capitalist West? More crucially in this context, how was the meaning of the Revolution conveyed visually and to what extent was the representation of the events of 1917 refracted through contemporary concerns? In order to explore these questions the discussion that follows will outline the public debates taking place regarding Socialist Realism and its shortcomings in the early months of Destalinisation before turning to how visual culture engaged with the history of the Revolution and Civil War in this new context, drawing primarily on materials circulated and reproduced in Soviet print culture. In doing so, this article seeks to uncover the ways in which the Revolution, Civil War and, to a lesser extent, the Great Patriotic War were presented artistically to the Soviet public in the first years following the death of Stalin, through high profile exhibitions, the production of materials for purchase, and the circulation of visual culture in the most popular magazines of the day.

The central case-study here is the 1957 AUE: this was an enormous exhibition and given both its scale and its timing, it could be used as a lens through which to explore a whole range of issues

related to early Thaw society—from gender to nationality, from everyday life to global geopolitics and countless things in between—as well as using it to trace the intricacies of professional debates surrounding the fine arts during this period. For our purposes though, the focus will be on how the changing landscape of early Destalinisation impacted upon the presentation of the revolutionary years, both thematically and aesthetically, in the works on display. As will be shown, the general appeals for greater *partiinosť* (party spirit) in art and the specific demand for the people to be placed front and centre of the revolutionary narrative were highly influential in shaping how the Revolution and Civil War were presented – a trend that is in line with post-Stalinist revisionism in other fields. Yet, the revolutionary period appears to have been impervious to concurrent calls for artists to grapple with some of the more conflicted aspects of the human condition, leading to depictions of these events that were incredibly romantic and often sentimental in tone, something that was in stark contrast to how the Great Patriotic War was being presented in contemporaneous works.

Ultimately what will be demonstrated is that in many ways the AUE of 1957 was the early Thaw in microcosm; a space where the tensions between the reformists and the traditionalists and between emerging talent and established doyens were laid bare, and where works that were attempting reassess and reconceptualise parts of the past in their post-Stalinist context hung alongside those that were broaching aspects of the Soviet experience that had to date gone unexplored. And at the very heart of all of this was October 1917.

The fault line of 1956

In the time between the initial plans for the jubilee AUE being published in May 1955 and the exhibition opening its doors in November 1957,²⁴ the whole of Soviet society had been rocked by the revelations made by Khrushchev during his so-called Secret Speech given at the Twentieth Party Congress in February 1956.²⁵ Master narratives, orthodox views, and official styles that had been formulated over the past three decades were called into question as a result of Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's actions and policies in the period between 1934 and his death, which were now seen to have been detrimentally affected by the all-pervading influence of what was referred to as the 'cult of the individual'. While the fundamental significance of the Revolution itself was assured, it was not exempt from this process of re-evaluation as how the history of period was written and represented, and the protagonists in the achievement of Bolshevik victory, were subjected to particular scrutiny.²⁶

The events of 1956 stimulated debate in every sector of Soviet intellectual society, and after the Secret Speech the art world grappled publically with how to address the problems highlighted by Khrushchev as well as some of the shortcomings in contemporary artistic production that had been

identified prior to the official onset of Destalinisation. Late in the year a conference was held by the Ministry of Culture, in association with the Moscow Artists' Union, the Academy of Arts, and the organising committee of the Soviet Artists' Union, to discuss the 'problems of development' when it came to the fine arts.²⁷ Reporting on the meeting, the Ministry of Culture newspaper *Sovetskaia kul'tura* wrote of the high levels of debate provoked by some of the 'basic creative and organisational' questions raised at the conference, that demonstrated 'the stir in the fine arts since the 20th Party Congress'.²⁸ This was followed just a few months later by the first ever All-Union Congress of Soviet Artists, held between 28 February and 7 March 1957.²⁹ While the idea of creating a Soviet artists' union was first mooted in 1932 with the disbandment of autonomous art organisations, it was not until after Stalin's death that the organisation came into being. Later in 1957, a new Russian Artists' Union was also created, designed to rectify the imbalance that existed in comparison to other national republics as a consequence of Bolshevik hostility to 'Great Russian Chauvinism', and with the intention of being a bulwark against the more reformist all-union body. These two parallel organisations offered two differing outlooks on the future of Socialist Realism: the all-union body echoed the calls coming from other quarters regarding internationalism, which in this context predominantly meant embracing the global heritage of the arts, including that which came from the West. The Russian union, on the other hand, broadly advocated maintaining the traditions of the nineteenth-century realist painters, the *Peredvizhniki*, returning Socialist Realism to its original aesthetic as conceived in the early 1930s.

Even before February 1956, the art world was in a state of internal turmoil between those who wished to see wide-reaching reform and those who had lived a comfortable life playing the Socialist Realist game of the Stalin era and were reluctant to have the source of their own wealth and status undermined.³⁰ The tension was not really about the need to reform, but about the nature of that reform: the excesses of Stalinist Socialist Realism clearly needed to be stripped away, but would fine art continue to draw on the Russian traditions mobilised to date, or would it embrace the wealth of the global artistic heritage? Prior to the death of Stalin art critics already had begun to lament the state of Soviet art arguing that it was dominated by a group of old elite artists, producing 'applause' paintings that presented a varnished image of Soviet life that was utterly devoid of conflict, with genre painting being especially denigrated. As Susan Reid summarised, 'Cliché and dogma had got in the way of any genuine, sincere artistic response to life... art was losing its audience; it no longer had the power to move, or even to matter'.³¹ Those advocating reform through openness to international influences believed that in order to reclaim its relevancy, Soviet art needed to change, to move away from its traditional Russian roots, and to recognise that the audience it served – the

people – had also been transformed due to the immense benefits of almost forty years of Soviet socialisation.³²

In the immediate aftermath of the Secret Speech, these conflicts between the old and the new, the traditionalists and the innovators, the internationalist and the autarkic were particularly acute, as the discussions at the 1956 conference testify. Ioganson, the renowned art historian Mikhail Alpatov, and the sculptor Evgenii Vuchetich, among others, demanded reform of the Academy of Arts and made impassioned pleas for artists to take greater account of historic works and techniques beyond those of the *Peredvizhniki* as a means of reviving Soviet art from its Stalinist stultification: as Ioganson argued ‘To make Soviet art, the art of socialist realism, the art we all want it to be, to make it show its full richness and brilliance, we must thoroughly study the best of the heritage bequeathed to us by past’.³³ In contrast, some delegates expressed doubts about the introduction of ‘alien aesthetics’ to Soviet art and spoke of their concerns about turning away from the heritage of Russian realism. Others wondered whether the current climate of criticism was an attempt to reduce Party influence in cultural production, something that needed to be avoided as ‘every attempt to weaken the link between art and the policy of our state and Party is ultimately directed toward undermining the force and influence of Soviet art’. Walking a middle line between these two factions some, such as Fedor Reshetnikov, recognised the need for reform but voiced caution about getting so wrapped up in criticism that the achievements of the past were diminished or undermined.³⁴

Paralleling the waves of freeze and thaw that have now been shown to characterise the Khrushchev era, the conservative and innovative parties within the art world would at various times have the ears of those in the highest echelons of power, with the conservative high watermark coming in 1962 with the infamous closing of the Thirty Years of the Moscow Artists’ Union Exhibition, which was also held at the Manezh.³⁵ However, it was the innovators that had the ascendancy when the First All-Union Artists’ Congress convened at the end of February 1957, and their concerns were echoed in the statement released on 1 March by the Central Committee, which extended its greetings to all delegates before going on to outline the tasks facing Soviet artists as the revolutionary jubilee neared:

There are serious shortcomings in the development of Soviet fine arts. There are few works as yet which depict with great artistic force the life, work and culture of the Soviet people, their struggle to build a communist society... Works of art still contain much that is grey, dull and inexpressive... Soviet artists, witnesses and participants in the creation of a new world, are called upon, on the basis of creative assimilation of all the finest achievements of *Russian and world culture* and deep penetration into the

life of the masses, to produce works which will remain throughout the ages as artistic memorials of our heroic epoch.³⁶

The ongoing debates regarding the future direction and development of Socialist Realism were as prominent at the congress as they had been in the Ministry of Culture conference held just a few months earlier, but proceedings were also overtly shaped by the impending anniversary, which prompted many to highlight what had been achieved in the intervening four decades as well as continuing to discuss what still needed to be done in order to ensure Soviet art lived up to its lofty ideals.³⁷ How to represent the revolutionary era in a post-Stalinist context was a particular concern, with Ioganson enumerating the many failings of past works in his report:

As time went by, both the public and the artists themselves became more and more impatient with intolerably hackneyed decorative compositions and statues. Very few of them stood the test of time. Most of them did not express the genuine truth of life, evidenced no attempt to embrace profound, vital problems, but merely presented a showy, artificially embellished facade of life... The cult of the individual had an unfavourable influence on the historical-revolutionary and portrait genres in painting. The historical-revolutionary theme was sometimes understood in narrow terms, and the role of the people, who created the revolution and bore the weight of the Civil War on their shoulders, did not receive the attention it deserved. Such canvases represented the people as a background, a passive mass.³⁸

Even the most cursory glance at revolutionary-themed work from the Stalin era supports Ioganson's allegations. For example, in the last few years of the Stalin regime, both Vladimir Serov and the brigade headed by Dmitrii Nalbandian produced paintings centred on the declaration of Soviet power that were typical of how the revolutionary theme was handled prior to 1953, complete with the reduction of the participants in the Revolution to an undifferentiated mass, the depiction of Lenin as elevated above the people, and of course the obligatory inclusion of Stalin in the revolutionary narrative.³⁹ Some artists, like Viktor Oreshnikov, focussed on the behind the scenes machinations, which in this particular work saw Stalin taking a more active role, with Lenin playing the part of the elder statesman ensconced behind his desk,⁴⁰ while others focussed on the more intimate relationship between the two leaders, but again portrayed a dynamic of either total equality or of Stalin being the more energised revolutionary leader, as seen in the drawing by P. K. Vasil'ev, *Lenin and Stalin in October (Lenin i Stalin v dni Oktiabria, 1949?)*.⁴¹ When we look at print culture from around the

thirty-fifth anniversary in 1952 it is possible to gain a real sense of how the various strands of the revolutionary narrative were presented visually in the final significant anniversary before Stalin's death. The jubilee edition of *Ogonek* that year began with a reproduction of Serov's scene of revolutionary victory—one of only a handful of paintings to be used as a front cover of the magazine in this period—followed on the inside front cover by a fragment from Pavel Sokolov-Skalia's iconic *The Storming of the Winter Palace (Shturm zimnego)* from 1927 and V. Klimashin's *On Red Square (Na Krasnoi ploshchadi, 1952?)*, which showed a crowd standing outside the Lenin Mausoleum watching celebratory fireworks. The next two pages were full-size individual portraits of Lenin and then Stalin, followed by N. P. Khristoliubov's, *The Leaders of October (Vozhdi Oktiabria, 1952?)*, which depicted the two men planning together, meaning the reader was seven pages into the magazine before they encountered the first article and by this point the idea that the October Revolution had been the joint venture of Lenin and Stalin already had been firmly established. In contrast, the people as agents of revolution had only appeared in one piece—a piece that had been created some twenty-five years earlier.

A further two collections of images were included in this particular issue: the next started with P. V. Vasil'ev's *Lenin and Stalin in Discussion (V. I. Lenin i I. V. Stalin za besedoi, 1951)*, which was the final image of a living Lenin, with Stalin going on to appear in reproductions of several of the most iconic paintings of recent years—a double-paged copy of Fedor Shurpin's *Morning of Our Motherland (Utro nashei rodiny, 1950)*, V. G. Puzyr'kov's *Stalin on the Cruiser 'Molotov' (I. Stalin na Kreisere 'Molotov', 1949)* and Vasilii Efanov's *An Unforgettable Meeting (Nezabyvaemaia vstrecha, 1936)*. The final image including the leaders was very pointedly an applause painting entitled *In the Name of Peace (Vo imia mira, 1950)*,⁴² which depicted Stalin and Mao signing the pact of friendship and mutual assistance between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, watched over by an enormous marble statue of Lenin, as Stalin's status as leader of a new socialist world was unequivocally assured. Thus, in this one magazine we can see a distillation of the traits that would form the basis of criticism levied at treatment of the revolutionary-historical genre in Stalinist Socialist Realism by Ioganson and his contemporaries: it was a vision of the Revolution that was entirely top-down, in which Lenin and Stalin had played an equal role in ensuring its success, and in which the significance of the people in the Bolshevik victory had been almost entirely expunged from the narrative being told visually. It was also a vision of an anniversary where more weight was placed on the current leader than the former, and where it was clear that Stalin had surpassed his mentor in terms of his achievements and his contribution to the Soviet Union's ongoing revolutionary development—development that was the result of Stalin's genius as opposed to a partnership between Party and people. The burning questions on the eve of

the jubilee five years later was how the negative impact of Stalinism on revolutionary-themed art was to be overcome and how artists could depict this epoch in a manner that truly encapsulated its perceived heroic and, crucially, popular nature.

Visual culture and the Fortieth Jubilee

The First All-Union Artists' Congress might have been one of the most public forums where debates over the achievements and future of Soviet art were held, with proceedings being published in lengthy articles in both *Izvestiia* and *Pravda*, but the contemplative mood engendered by the revolutionary anniversary influenced much of what was published in art journals such as *Iskusstvo* during the course of 1957 and into 1958. These publications were filled with differing views regarding the accomplishments of Soviet artists to date, the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary works, and how art could continue to contribute to the Soviet project. What was central to all of these pieces though was a clear and undisputed acceptance that the Revolution had fundamentally and irrevocably changed the arts, influencing everything from form to content, and of course the production, consumption, and purpose of visual culture. As the Secretary of the Party Central Committee Dmitrii Shepilov had proclaimed in his speech to the Congress, a 'beneficent October wind' had blown through the former Russian Empire in 1917, dissipating all that was corrupt and decadent about art, and bringing in its wake a new form that was realistic, produced by the people for the people.⁴³

Given that the link between October and art was so inextricable, it is not surprising that the anniversary was the theme of so many exhibitions held across the union in 1957; but visual culture played a central role in the celebration of the fortieth jubilee in a manner that went far beyond what was hung on the walls of venues such as the Manezh or discussed on the pages of art journals. In March 1957 the Central Committee laid out a comprehensive ten-point plan for how the Revolution was to be commemorated across various sectors of society. This included launching a nationwide programme of socialist competition; setting up local committees across factories, farms, and education institutions that would organise the celebrations in those locales; issuing recommendations that Komsomol cells, trade unions, and other such bodies extend invitations to participants in the Revolution and Civil War to join in their 'festive meetings'; and instructing the Academy of Science and other leading scientific organisations to hold seminars dedicated to the anniversary of the Revolution. The Council of Ministers' Central Statistical Administration was asked to publish a piece entitled *Statistics on the Achievements of 40 Years of Soviet Rule*,⁴⁴ while publishing houses were to ensure that the best works of literature and poetry concerning the Revolution, Civil War, Great Patriotic War, and the peoples' struggle for the achievement of communism were made

available. The Propaganda and Agitation Department was instructed to issue the thesis *On the 40th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution*,⁴⁵ and editors of newspapers and socio-political magazines were requested to ‘publish theoretical and propaganda articles on the 40th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, as well as reminiscences of participants in the October uprising and historical sketches and stories’.⁴⁶

Receiving the most detailed brief, the Ministry of Culture was asked to prepare and release films on revolutionary subjects, create documentaries on the progress of socialism, to hold an all-union festival of drama and musical theatre, and to organise regular radio and television broadcasts related to the fortieth anniversary of the Great October Revolution. In terms of the visual arts, the Ministry was to issue mass editions of posters, albums, and reproductions of the best paintings depicting Lenin, the Communist Party and the building of socialism,⁴⁷ highlighting the importance still placed on visual culture as a socialisation tool despite the growing prominence of more modern media such as television. Adhering to the Party’s request, the Ministry issued three sets of postcards, thirty portraits and thirty-six albums of images exclusively dedicated to the anniversary of the Revolution.⁴⁸ Many of these albums focussed on the Revolution in specific locales—such as the Donbass, Karelia and Russian cities such as Sverdlovsk and Kuibyshev--and were produced in relatively small numbers and comprised primarily of photographs.⁴⁹ Others were compilations of Soviet art spanning the forty years, while a significant number focussed solely on Lenin, bringing together photographs and artwork that illustrated his life and achievements. Print runs for these more nationally-orientated publications varied considerably, as did the price, but some of the Lenin-centric albums in particular were produced in the tens of thousands. For example, one ‘coffee-table’ edition based on an exhibition held at the Lenin Museum had a print run of 50,000 and was available for 50 rubles,⁵⁰ while a collection of 10 portraits had a print run of 100,000 across two editions, one selling for 11 rubles, and the other smaller copy for half that amount.⁵¹ In addition to these commemorative albums, around 140 individual posters specifically on the theme of the anniversary were printed during the second half of 1957, which across all republics totalled just shy of an astonishing 8 million copies; many had print runs that exceeded 300,000, and the vast majority were available to purchase for just 1 ruble.⁵² In short, every taste and every budget was catered for, meaning that, should they wish, any Soviet household could buy a visual memento to display in order to commemorate this great event, and the great man who orchestrated it.

The most widely circulated of the jubilee posters—with 350,000 copies printed—was Vera Livanova’s *Glory to the Great October Revolution 1917-1957 (Slava velikomu Oktiabriu 1917-1957)*, a busy panoramic poster, filled with banners, marching workers, revolutionary soldiers, ears of corn and branches of oak, all foregrounded by the dates in huge gold lettering.⁵³ This was

followed by Mikhail Gordon's *Lenin is Alive Forever* (*Lenin – Vechno zhivoi*), a simple monochromatic image of Lenin standing in front of the Kremlin walls, which had a print run of 325,000 copies, and Stanislav Zabaluev and I. A. Kominarets' *The People and the Party Are One!* (*Narod i Partiia – ediny!*)--which also featured Lenin, this time alongside soldiers and workers from 1917 and 1957--that racked up 350,000 copies across the two versions available.⁵⁴ In the three most widely-circulated posters of the day we can see the summation of those themes that had dominated artistic and historical discussions related to the celebration of October 1917--it was about the people, the Party, and the eternal legacy of Lenin--and the poster, as the most straightforward and unambiguous visual format, was the ideal medium for expressing this fundamental and incontestable view of the Revolution.

The All-Union Exhibition: Continuity and change

The production and circulation of posters might have been the most commonplace and most accessible means of visually articulating both the historic and contemporary significance of the Revolution, but the All-Union Exhibition of 1957 was by far the most high profile. As can be deduced from the debates at the various congresses and conferences held in the period between the Secret Speech and the launch of the anniversary celebrations, what was deemed to be an appropriate way of representing such momentous events was far from set in stone. While the reformists had had the ascendancy when the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Artists met in early March, with the defeat of the 'anti-Party group' in the summer of 1957, the brakes were put on reform in the months leading up to the anniversary, which in the cultural sphere culminated with the publication of Khrushchev's *For a Close Tie Between Literature and Art with the Life of the People* in August that year. In this statement Khrushchev criticised those who derided the leading role of the Party in the arts, making it abundantly clear that the campaign against the cult of personality did not mean that the guidance of the state was somehow diminished.⁵⁵ The Russian Artists' Union, created to provide a counterweight to the reformist outlook of its all-union equivalent, was a product of this period; a development that was not only confined to art, as attempts were made across various cultural sectors to rein in liberal metropolitan institutions by increasing the power of the more conservative provinces.⁵⁶ Still, care needs to be taken not to draw too sharp a line between the 'reformist' and 'conservative' camps at this time as the situation was so fluid, there was so much uncertainty about the state's own position, and exactly what 'reform' meant was by no means fixed. Those who would think of themselves as reformers if this meant undoing the worst excesses of Stalinism to return to the purity of Socialist Realism as it was conceived in the early 1930s found themselves labelled as

conservatives by those who advocated a renewed commitment to the revolutionary pluralism of the 1920s.⁵⁷

It should not be surprising then that when the Manezh finally opened its doors on 5 November, these tensions between the old and the new, between reformists and conservatives, between the Stalinist doyens and the young artists of Destalinisation were writ large. Everything from the venue to the artists and the type of works featured in the show spoke to the flux of the period.⁵⁸ The fact that AUE was being held in the new Central Exhibition Hall, rather than in the traditional venue of the Tretyakov Gallery, hinted at the earlier power of those who advocated breaking away from the nineteenth-century legacies of the *Peredvizhniki*. Yet within this bold new venue the artist with the most individual works on display was Nalbandian, a stalwart of Stalinist ‘parade’ paintings full of the pomp and circumstance and lack of artistic flair that had been so derided in the first half of the 1950s.⁵⁹ Epitomising the interplay between continuity and change, the exhibition was the last gasp of genre painting—those works focussed on the trivialities of the everyday that had dominated the late Stalinist era—and the first breath of a new psychologism and a concern with the interior dimensions of the Soviet person, which became a vehicle for the long-overdue exploration of emotional complexity. It was a place where visitors could view the familiar photorealism of Aleksandr Laktionov or the textured canvas of Latvian artist Edgar Iltner,⁶⁰ where one could seek out the old favourites of Arkadii Plastov, Reshetnikov and Sergei Gerasimov—all of whom, along with Laktionov, had multiple pieces on display—or engage with the artists of the new generation, such as Geli Korzhev, Pavel Nikonov and Dmitrii Zhilinskii.⁶¹

It was also an arena that featured artists from the national republics on probably the largest scale to date, symptomatic of the desire to show how Socialist Realism was now more open to non-Russian influences and of the practical changes in how works were selected, which the Soviet Union of Artists had devolved to the representative union of each republic.⁶² This development also aptly demonstrated the desire to emphasise the global significance of the Revolution, as both its great scope and at times specific contextual impact were exemplified by the paintings and sculptures of unveiling women from Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan, which featured alongside the more generic scenes of hydroelectric dam construction and the mechanisation of agriculture.⁶³ It also showed how, after the Russocentrism of the recent past, the maxim of ‘socialist in form and national in content’ was being reinvigorated in its new post-Stalinist context as artists such as the Georgians Aleksandr Bazhbeuk-Melikov and Vladimir Gudiashvili and the Armenian painter Martiros Sar’ian, all of whom had been repressed under the previous regime, had works displayed. The value of the national contribution did not go unnoticed, with *Iskusstvo* dedicating an unprecedented number of articles to the submissions by non-Russian artists to the exhibition.⁶⁴ Indeed, as Anatolii Kantor highlighted in

his review of the exhibition for the journal *Tvorchestvo*, the organ of the Soviet Union of Artists, that the national republics could be so well-represented and with work of such high quality was inconceivable a decade earlier, and it was without doubt one of the defining characteristics of the 1957 show.⁶⁵

However, it was one thing for these nuanced developments to be analysed on the pages of trade journals and visible to the supposed million people that managed to visit the Manezh while the exhibition was running, which, even if true, was still less than 1% of the Soviet population. It was another thing entirely to bring this evolving vision of both the past and the Soviet present to a mass audience.⁶⁶ In this respect, the popular press provided an essential conduit for the circulation of what was on display at the AUE to the Soviet public. With annual print runs in the tens of millions, magazines such as *Ogonek* had always been an important vehicle for the dissemination of visual culture, but the period from the late-1950s to the mid-1960s was when fine art reproduction in particular reached its apotheosis; this was a time when art was receiving a particularly significant degree of attention and it was also the point before photography dominated the visual aspect of such publications, as it would from the early Brezhnev era onwards. Still, even within this context, nothing could compare to the coverage that the 1957 AUE received. Although its written reportage on the exhibition was still fairly modest,⁶⁷ *Ogonek* alone published more than 100 reproductions of works on display as well as several photographs showing visitors contemplating the works *in situ* in the months between the show opening in November 1957 and the end of July 1958, a full four months after the Manezh had closed its doors. Many of these reproductions featured in full-page colour spreads, where images were often grouped together according to theme or the nationality of the artists. As with the exhibition itself, the works featured did not all exclusively deal with the revolutionary era, but reflected the whole range of what was on display, from landscapes, portraits, genre paintings, scenes of industrial construction, and workers on the Virgin Lands, to pieces that dealt with aspects of the Russian and Soviet past, most notably the Great Patriotic War and other significant revolutionary moments, such as the failed Decembrist uprising of 1825 and the massacre at Lena in 1912.⁶⁸ This said, the works that centred on October and the Civil War did dominate, as artists such as Vladimir Serov, Evsei Moiseenko, Lev Kotliarov, Semen Guetskii and Viktor Shatlin --all of whom are discussed below--had their paintings featured in the popular press at this time, in some cases more than once.⁶⁹ Therefore, when thinking about the scale and the impact of the 1957 AUE, it is crucial to go beyond what was on display and (likely inflated) visitor numbers, to really consider the exposure that the Soviet population would have had to these works. In this art-literate society many readers must have noticed that what was presented here portrayed a very different

vision of the Soviet Union's foundational period from those that had been produced just a few years earlier.

The romance of revolution and the horror of war

Beyond the important aesthetic and national dynamics discussed above, the AUE of 1957 represented a thematic shift, as for the first time since the mid-1940s scenes from the Great Patriotic War were outnumbered by those concerned with the revolutionary era. The established interrelationship between the Revolution and the War had been shaken by the denunciation of Stalin and the reassessment of the war years as a consequence of the accusations levelled against him. Yet, while the return to 'Leninist values' was a fundamental aspect of Destalinisation this did not mean that the Revolution was restored to a position of primacy over the more recent conflict. Indeed in his anniversary report to the Supreme Soviet, Khrushchev interwove these two experiences so that the triumph of 1917 and the destruction of the 'Hitlerite war machine' were presented as equally significant pillars on which the Soviet Union would continue to build communism. Likewise, those who had died in the course of the Civil and Great Patriotic Wars were combined to create one unified heroic group who had 'given their lives for the cause of revolution and the defence of its achievements'.⁷⁰ But the certainty that Khrushchev espoused in terms of the significance of both these events was not reflected in their respective artistic treatment. As such, while prioritisation of the revolutionary theme is hardly unexpected given the timing of the exhibition, if we scratch the surface of what appears to be a self-explanatory shift in focus, what becomes evident are signs of a far more complex and diverging conceptualisation of these two foundational periods. While artists, and broader society, grappled with what the War 'meant' in this new post-Stalin context, those that turned their attention to the revolutionary period could do so with the assurance that its world-historical significance was unquestioned and unwavering. The result of this was a body of works that celebrated the unequivocal accomplishments of the Revolution on one hand and articulated for the very first time the far more problematic and conflicting legacies of victory in 1945 on the other.

As has already been shown, the *meaning* of the Revolution was not altered by the processes of Destalinisation; one only needs to consider the vitriol aimed at Boris Pasternak for his questioning of the orthodox revolutionary narrative in *Doctor Zhivago* to see how untouchable this origin myth was.⁷¹ But there were demands for the official history to be revised and the popular legitimacy of the regime to be reinforced by returning the people and their relationship with the Party to the centre, and in doing relegating those who had been lauded unjustly to the side-lines.⁷² This dictum proved to be highly influential in shaping how artists approached the subject of the revolutionary period, with the vast majority of works on display in 1957 exploring this great historical event from the

perspective of the anonymous proletarian participant, the resurrection of a key trope from the early 1920s. Emblematic of this foregrounding of the ordinary person was the series of quite unremarkable but popular works produced by Vladimir Serov, *Waiting for the Signal*, *At Smolny*, *The Decree on Peace*, and *The Decree on Land* (*Zhdut signala*, *V Smol'nom*, *Dekret o mire*, *Dekret o zemle*), all of which focussed on seminal moments in the history of the Revolution--the firing of the volley from the Aurora, discussion between Lenin and the revolutionary soldiers, and the first two decrees of Bolshevik power--but did so entirely from the position of those on the ground; a radical departure from Serov's painting produced for the decennial anniversary in 1947, *V. I. Lenin Proclaims Soviet Power*, discussed earlier.⁷³ [Insert Fig. 1 – or at the start of this paragraph]

Figure 1 Vladimir Serov, *Decree on Peace* (1957)

From the anxious anticipation of the crowd by the canals of Petrograd waiting to advance to the soldier joyfully waving the Decree on Peace to his despondent comrades in the trench (with the exception of *At Smolny*) the revolutionary leaders were entirely absent in Serov's 1957 works, but in every one the bond between Party and people was integral to the stories being told.⁷⁴ This transformation in Serov's approach to the Revolution was noted even before the AUE opened: in a short piece in *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, the lack of individualism and character in Serov's earlier representations of the people was contrasted with the focus on the internal state, thoughts and experiences of his protagonists in the work he was preparing for the forthcoming exhibition.⁷⁵ Indeed, Serov later reworked his 1947 canvas, removing Stalin, along with Dzerzhinskii and Sverdlov, from the dais behind Lenin, and depicting workers and soldiers in their stead, and also giving those in the crowd more personality and more complex emotional responses to the scene they were witnessing.⁷⁶

[Insert Fig. 2]

Figure 2 Pavel Nikonov, *October* (1956)

The move away from the 'heroes and the crowd' compositions that had dominated in the 1930s and 1940s, was often combined with demands coming from within the art world for greater attention to be paid to the interior dimensions of the Soviet person. Numerous paintings at the exhibition portrayed quieter moments of contemplation and reflection amidst the tumult of revolution and war, but Nikonov's *October* was deemed to be the most successful of such works. Nikonov's work was actually completed in 1956 and had been first displayed at the Fifth All-Union Exhibition of Diploma Works in November that year upon his graduation from the Surikov Institute.⁷⁷ Giving

some indication to how warmly it had been received, the young artist's work was reproduced in colour on the cover of *Iskusstvo* in its very first edition of 1957, and just a few months later *October* was the first piece mentioned in Oleg Soptsinskii's review of the Moscow Youth Exhibition, even though it was not a part of this show, demonstrating that this painting had already become the barometer by which the quality of this new generation of artists was being judged.⁷⁸ In contrast to earlier works, such as Sokolov-Skalia's *The Storming of the Winter Palace*,⁷⁹ Nikonov's representation of October was not a scene of action but one of anticipation; a scene not of revolution itself but of the innate revolutionary spirit of the proletariat. Huddled around a fire, with the Petrograd skyline behind them, these workers, soldiers, and peasants gather to hear the message being read aloud by one of the group. In the pre-dawn light, the cold makes one of the group bury his head further into his coat, while another reaches out to warm his hands by the flames. It is a scene that encapsulated the grimness of a late October morning in the midst of war, that is devoid of excessive lyricism and yet is undeniably heroic. What will spur these men into action are the contents of the message being read--guidance from the Bolshevik Military Revolutionary Committee. As Reid so astutely highlighted in her assessment of Nikonov's work, while the revolutionary potential lay in the proletariat, it was only through the words of the Party that this power could be unleashed.⁸⁰ In his review for *Tvorchestvo*, Kantor referred to Nikonov's work as 'a beautiful dream, facing both the future and the past', a scene that managed to capture the spirit of the Revolution without being engulfed by a 'haze of romantic fantasy'.⁸¹ It was the ideal combination of emphasising the bonds between people and Party in terms of its theme and demonstrating psychological complexity and unvarnished reality in the manner of its execution.

Although Nikonov successfully sidestepped overt romanticisation in his work, it was undeniably one of the key features of many of the new works that took the years of revolution as their subject and was particularly pronounced in paintings that dealt with the Civil War. Previously, paintings had focussed on events at the various fronts and had been dominated by Mitrofan Grekov, the renowned military artist, whose work had defined the representation of the Civil War from the early 1920s until his death in 1934, and beyond; in fact, Grekov's paintings were the only Civil War themed works used to commemorate the foundation of the Red Army in both the thirtieth and thirty-fifth anniversary editions of *Ogonek*, with the exception of M. I. Avilov's scene of the First Cavalry greeting Stalin (1932), which was reproduced in 1948.⁸² As skilled as Grekov was as a painter, these were scenes of the carnage of battle, replete with heroic advances, the contorted bodies of fallen horses (rather than men usually), and the eventual surrender of Denikin, Kornilov, and their ilk. In contrast, images that were produced around 1957 focussed far more on the individual than the grand narrative of the War itself and were indicative of trends found in other Thaw-era culture that

reoriented the events of the revolutionary period away from the ‘fathers’ of the Stalin years and back to the enthusiasm of youth.⁸³

[Insert Fig. 3]

Figure 3 Lev Kotliarov, *To the Front* (1957)

Typical works include Lev Kotliarov’s *To the Front* (*Na front*), which depicted a steam train ploughing through the Russian countryside at sundown with a young recruit playing his guitar, another with his face illuminated by his lit cigarette, while others listen and watch as the scenery rolls by. A similar piece by Marc Kliionskii showing members of the Komsomol heading to the front was also displayed, offering a rare glimpse of female participants in the War that was described as capturing the ‘subtle stirrings [*dvizheniiam*] of the soul’.⁸⁴ Viktor Shatlin’s well-received *Across the Valleys and Hills* (*Po dolinam i po vzgor’iam*), portrayed a group of Red Army cavalry singing as they cross the steppe at twilight, while Evsei Moiseenko’s *The First Cavalry Army* (*Pervaia konnaia armia*), showed dozens of mounted soldiers falling into formation, ready to charge, and being spurred on by the bugle player in the image’s foreground. These works, along with those of Iaroslav Nikolaev, Livi Shchipachev, Indulis Zarin and Genrikh Klebakh’s joint piece, and Kievan sculptor Vasiliï Borodai, were all mentioned in passing by Kantor in his assessment of the exhibition as demonstrative of the ‘intimization’ (*intimizatsiia*) of how these great historical episodes were now being handled, as scenes of family farewells and the thoughts of those on their way to the front became as central to how the Civil War was portrayed as were the scenes of daring cavalry charges – a mode of representation that took the viewer beyond the physical and provided them with an insight into the spiritual world of those depicted.⁸⁵

In many respects this increased psychologism in the representation of the revolutionary era is very much in line with broader developments in the art world during the early post-Stalin period, especially when it came to calls for the varnishing lacquer of Socialist Realism to be stripped away to reveal a more complex human experience and for artists to grapple with the interior dimension of the New Soviet Person. This reclamation of individual experience was also a key trope in Thaw-era culture more generally, albeit manifesting in different ways and often at different times across the various genres; for example, as Oksana Bulgakowa has highlighted in her work on cinema, filmmakers were also deeply concerned with the “‘subjectivization” and “‘intimization” of historical experience’ but these trends are most evident in films produced in the early 1960s, rather than being a trend directly associated with early Destalinisation as was the case in art.⁸⁶ Yet, while images of people taking a break from labour or pausing momentarily to contemplate the life around them were relatively commonplace after 1956,⁸⁷ the application of this psychological complexity to the war

genre changed how artists approached both the events of the Civil War and the Great Patriotic War in a manner that was arguably more radical than its use in these quotidian settings, as the previous focus on the great battles or grand heroic moments of the past gave way to a more individualised and consequently more emotionally-engaged portrayal of conflict.

In his lengthy assessment of war-themed works at the exhibition published in January 1958, the critic E. Polishchuk outlined how the approach to painting wartime scenes had changed since the early 1950s as artists had started to move away from the rigid categories of the past of either battle scenes or sketches taken from military life and were now being compelled to represent ‘the heroism in the simple, the small, and the everyday’. This was not about outward display, but painting with a psychological depth, in which the artist was concerned with ‘thoughts, feelings, doubts and hopes’. In short, Polishchuk was demanding that the same emotional complexity be consistently brought to the war genre as it was to in works dealing with any other aspect of Soviet life.⁸⁸ Yet, while praising the development of this more psychological approach to historical painting, and being especially fulsome in his appreciation of Nikonov and Moiseenko, in his review of the same works, Kantor was quick to point out that, although the characterisation may have been more complex and the spotlight had rightly been turned back on the actions of the everyman, these paintings were a ‘genre of romantic memoirs, of things artists have not seen or at least cannot remember’,⁸⁹ underlining both the fact that these works were often coming from artists still relatively early on in their careers and that the difficulties of the period were barely acknowledged.⁹⁰ Thus, while some artists were successful in applying these general principles of complexity and interiority to works dealing with the Civil War, the results were overwhelmingly romantic, producing images of war that had all the hard edges removed: the Red Army man may now have had an interior dimension, but that did not mean he was grappling with existential concerns or trying to come to terms with the horrors of fratricidal warfare.

In contrast to the romanticisation of the struggle of revolution and civil war, it was around 1957 that painful and emotionally honest representations of the Great Patriotic War began to appear, marking a new trend in how these events were being depicted. These representations contrasted with the explicitly triumphalist tone of images produced in the immediate post-war era and the good natured depictions of wartime camaraderie that dominated by the early 1950s. Some of the earliest works of this more complex and nuanced view were there for all to see in the All-Union show. The disjuncture that was evident across how the two foundational events for the Soviet Union were treated artistically did not go unnoticed by contemporary audiences. As Kantor wrote, ‘The most dramatic and profound works are devoted to the Great Patriotic War... how clearly resounds the cutting pain of those who have left us, but who are forever alive in our memories... Everything here

comes from the heart, from the deeply experienced'.⁹¹ For this critic, the distinction was clear: while the visions presented of the Revolution and Civil War were based on imagination, of things not seen or not remembered, those of the last war were absolutely rooted in reality, the consequences of which were still a tangible and visible presence in contemporary society.

[Insert Fig. 4]

Figure 4 Boris Nemenskii, *Scorched Earth* (1957)

Nowhere is this profundity and emotional depth more evident than in Boris Nemenskii's *Scorched Earth* (*Zemlia opalennaia*), which depicted three men taking refuge in an abandoned trench amidst a desolate landscape of barbed wire and churned earth. Through his three protagonists, Nemenskii presented three differing reactions to battle: the relief of the soldier propped against the trench wall, the almost-sexual satisfaction of the man lying on the ground, nonchalantly smoking a cigarette, and the look of utter horror and heartbreak that is etched upon the face of his central figure. The protagonist of the piece is a farmer who holds in his hand a few grains he has found from spikelets still growing amidst the carnage, and as he does so he grieves for the ruined harvest back home and for his native land, which is now 'blood-soaked, scorched... naked [and] tortured'.⁹² Nemenskii's work was not just popular with the critics, it also drew considerable attention from the public according to an overview of visitor comments published in *Iskusstvo* in May 1958, where it was celebrated for encapsulating the Soviet people's love of peace, hatred of war, and nobility of character: 'you believe no one will ever break or conquer these people' wrote one observer.⁹³

While Nemenskii's work may have been the most stirring, it did not stand alone in its grittier, more brutal portrayal of the War. The brothers Aleksei and Sergei Tkachev produced the first of their many war-themed images, *In Difficult Years* (*V trudnye gody*), during this time; a dark canvas, with thick paint application, the scene showed the tender moment between a soldier and a kitten, described by the brothers as a 'piece of peaceful life that warms the heart of the soldier', providing a brief reprieve from the horrors of war.⁹⁴ Mark Maliutin and Evgenii Gribov portrayed the early stages of the defence of the Brest Fortress, showing soldiers and unevacuated women and children seeking refuge in the cellars below, in a painting that was later called 'not only a requiem for the dead but also an alarm call for contemporaries and future generations'.⁹⁵ Likewise, Vladimir Gavrilov's *The Forty-First Year* (*Sorok pervyi god*) and Aleksandr Romanychev's *The Grain Farmers* (*Khleboroby*) were each discussed in terms that spoke of both the particular horrors of the first year of the War and a concern with preventing such events from ever happening again.⁹⁶ Understandably, with all these works, the Cold War's threat to the hard-won peace weighed

considerably on how people, both in the official critiques and the exhibition comment books, related to what was presented.

There is an important comparison to be made, then, between the works depicting the revolutionary years and those situated within the context of the Great Patriotic War. While the latter was not without its romanticisation, especially when it came to the depiction of the camaraderie between soldiers or the relationship between the Soviet military man and the motherland,⁹⁷ paintings that tackled aspects of the war experience were amongst some of the emotionally honest on display and certainly this exhibition marked a defining moment in how the War was presented in visual culture.⁹⁸ What works across both these events have in common is a new, and often successful, focus on the interior dimensions of the Soviet person, and a recognition that with warfare came not only heroism and profound camaraderie, but moments of introspection and a need for respite. Where the differences manifest is when it came to representing the consequences of conflict on that same interior self, and despite there being calls for artists working on the historical-revolutionary genre to depict struggle very little of it is evident in the works created around the time of the anniversary, whether this is the case of literal struggle against enemy forces or the far more controversial acknowledgement of the emotional or bodily cost of war. Although this disparity could be explained away by the celebratory mood of 1957, the youth of the artists, or even the inherent romance of revolution, the most compelling explanation is the change wrought by Destalinisation. By stepping out from under the shadow that Stalin had cast across both events, artists could at last restore agency to the anonymous proletariat hero, allowing them to be portrayed in a manner that depicted them as an engaged and conscious participant in the revolutionary process, not as an undifferentiated mass or worse still some mindless follower of Bolshevik instruction. In contrast, with this new focus on the interiority of the Soviet citizen, Destalinisation had allowed artists to begin to broach the aspects of the War experience that had been subsumed by the rhetoric of normalisation and the glory of victory, which given the recentness of these events was likely to be articulated in a manner that was far more raw and emotionally honest than comparative treatments of the Civil War. The end result may have been different but the root of both these developments lay in March 1953.

Lenin in 1957: ‘The most humane person’

In February 1958, *Ogonek* published a photo essay that depicted visitors to the AUE and captioned these images with what was imagined to be the thoughts of the audience. Most of the page was given over to a photograph of a grandfather and his grandson standing in front of a bronze bust of Lenin and in their invented conversation, the man turns to the young boy and says ‘For you my friend, this man will be forever alive and indispensable [*neobkhodimym*]’.⁹⁹ It is impossible to talk about the

representation of the Revolution without giving some consideration to the figure who appeared most frequently in the visual culture of the day--Vladimir Lenin. As has been seen, Lenin was a dominant presence in the posters and commemorative albums produced for the celebration of the anniversary, and he was equally dominant in the works on display in the Manezh in 1957. There were at least ten portraits and nine sculptures of the man individually,¹⁰⁰ and many more works that included the leader interacting with others—from his parents when he was a youth, to the soldiers in Smolny in 1917, to workers and young children after the Revolution—as well as various pieces of decorative and material culture, such as carpets, that were also on display bearing his likeness. A recipient of a Stalin prize in 1950 for his work on the brigade painting, *Lenin's Address to the Third Congress of the Komsomol*,¹⁰¹ Boris Ioganson paid particular attention to the pieces representing Lenin in his retrospective pamphlet on the exhibition, something that was mirrored by the fact that the pamphlet also contained more images of Lenin than any other subject. Indeed, many of the qualities found in Ioganson's brigade work came to define how Lenin was portrayed during the Khrushchev era. He became vital and warm, willing and eager to engage with the people from whom he derived his power, and to show affection, particularly towards the Soviet child. As such, while we cannot associate this more humane representation of Lenin directly to the processes of Destalinisation, the introduction of this more accessible version of the leader to a revolutionary context was most definitely a development that occurred after the death of Stalin, a shift that took place alongside the reclamation of Lenin's status as the sole mastermind of Bolshevik success.

The cult of personality surrounding Lenin became especially prominent following his death in 1924 and was consciously cultivated as a key legitimising tool for securing Stalin's own position of power as the undisputed heir to the Leninist legacy. This legitimisation took several forms but, as has already been demonstrated, Lenin's image was most frequently used to elevate Stalin in the story of revolutionary triumph, and to reinforce the fact that Stalin was equal—if not superior—to Lenin intellectually as someone who Lenin had often turned to for guidance. As the 1930s progressed so did the mode of representation, as outside of the revolutionary context, Lenin became a spectre at the feast—the bust on the desk, the marble statue in the hall, the dictum on the banner. He stopped being a man of flesh and blood and instead became a presence, cold and removed, and deliberately contrasting to the warm corporeality of Stalin, whose interactions with the Soviet people often constituted the foreground of such works. When we think of the great portraits of Lenin—perhaps most notably Isaak Brodskii's *Lenin in Smolny* (*Lenin v Smol'nom*, 1930) and Aleksandr Gerasimov's *Lenin at the Tribune* (*Lenin na tribune*, 1929)—the vision that we have of him is one of a tireless revolutionary, one who dedicated his life to the cause, a great orator and a great intellectual, a leader of the people but not necessarily a man of the people.¹⁰² These images of the severe and

godlike leader began to decline in the early 1950s, as Ioganson *et al*'s brigade work testifies, a trend that was cemented by the move in 1955 from marking Lenin's death to celebrating his birth, which revitalised the cult giving it a more vigorous and energetic quality. One of the genres where this was most apparent was in the renewed emphasis on Lenin's relationship with the Soviet child. The idea that the Soviet child enjoyed the deep paternal care of Lenin was not a new one, but it was not until the 1950s that this relationship took on a more emotional, intimate, and relatable quality, as evidenced by the dozens of pictures and sketches of Lenin and the Soviet child that were reproduced in the nation's magazines across the period, demonstrating a warmth and accessibility that was almost entirely absent from his representation under Stalin. It is within this context that these images of the revolutionary Lenin appeared in 1957.

[Insert Fig. 5]

Figure 5 Semen Guetskii, *Smolyni, 1917* (1957)

What came across clearly in the range of works on display at the AUE was that Lenin was a man who had spent his life dedicated to the cause; while 1917 was the focus for the majority of artists, a few, such as Reshetnikov and Ia. Sokolov, chose to focus on Lenin's revolutionary activities prior to the Revolution—such as his denunciation of the *narodnik* Vasilii Voronotsov and his work with the underground paper *Iskra*—while Viktor Ivanov portrayed a resolute Vladimir Ulyanov in the aftermath of his brother's execution.¹⁰³ Several more based their representation of Lenin on later periods of his life such as his work during the Civil War or his plans for the electrification of Russia, in works that subtly reoriented the origins of recent Soviet achievements in science and technology away from the industrialisation drives of the 1930s.¹⁰⁴ The numerous remaining images were defined by their focus on Lenin's interactions with the people, both during the Revolution and beyond. In terms of the portrayal of Lenin during the Revolution, the one that garnered the most attention was Ukrainian artist Semen Guetskii's *Smolny, 1917 (Smol'nyi, 1917 god)*, which showed Lenin watching over a couple of sleeping soldiers in the hours following the Revolution with what was described as 'immense human warmth, paternal tenderness [and] love'.¹⁰⁵ At *Smolny*, from Serov's series of revolutionary-era works, showed Lenin engaged in an informal but vigorous conversation with peasants, workers, soldiers and sailors, crucially not pronouncing directives from a rostrum but in dialogue with the people. Latvian Oto Skulme painted Lenin surrounded by the riflemen of his home republic and in a manner similar to the works of Kotliarov, Korzhev and the Tkachevs evoked the romance of the revolutionary era through the use of music; in this case Lenin listens on while the cultured soldiers of the Revolution play their instruments to entertain the assembled crowd.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, Mikhail Deviatov's *The Wind of October (Oktiabr'skii veter)*, with its sullen grey tones and its depiction of Lenin walking through the streets of Petrograd alone, was unusual in both its subdued

and contemplative narrative and its portrayal of a solitary Lenin; it is a piece that is more reminiscent of Brodskii's earlier portrait than many of the other works on show at the AUE,¹⁰⁷ but it proved popular and was one of only two fine art reproductions of Lenin that were included in the anniversary edition of *Ogonek* in November 1957, the other being Guetskii's work. Tellingly, the other reproductions in this issue focussed on the actions of the people during those eventful days.¹⁰⁸

[Insert Fig. 6]

Figure 6 Isaak Tartakovskii, *In an Hour of Rest* (1957)

The final subset of images were those that had no specific grounding in time or place but depicted imagined scenes of interaction between Lenin and the people. In such paintings, Lenin is shown dining with a typical family in their modest home;¹⁰⁹ relaxing on a sofa in a softly lit living room listening to a violinist and pianist play in Isaak Tartakovskii's intimate *In an Hour of Rest* (*Vchas otdykha*); and perhaps most extraordinarily of all, in Vasilii Khitrikov's *A Conversation with Il'ich* (*Beseda s Il'ichem*), being confronted by an irate worker, who looms menacingly over a physically-diminished but composed Lenin in what Matthew Cullerne Bown described as a display of 'lèse majesté that would have been impossible even a year earlier'.¹¹⁰ In comparison, the canvases on display by the old guard of Ioganson, Nalbandian and Dmitrii Shmarinov, all of whom also drew inspiration from the relationship between Lenin and the people, seem out-dated and somewhat staid in their portrayal of the leader, focussing as they did on parades and speeches.¹¹¹ Such works that honed in on Lenin acting in his official capacity were out of step with the prevailing trend, which was to try and encapsulate what were deemed to be Lenin's greatest attributes—a revolutionary genius, yes, but also a simple man (*prostoi chelovek*) and a true friend of all working people.¹¹² While the more 'truthful' representations of Lenin were welcomed by many of those who commented on the exhibition, Nalbandian was criticised for his lack of thought and Ioganson's work was lambasted for both its incompleteness and for failing to capture the same connection between the leader and the people he had managed in the earlier *Lenin's Address*.¹¹³ In order to avoid these problems going forward, one group of 'old Bolsheviks' recommended to the organisers of future exhibitions that artists should consult with those who knew Lenin personally and that pre-show reviews should be held with the 'compulsory participation of Il'ich's former co-workers'; a comment that may draw a wry smile but one that underlines the fact that there seemed to be a broad understanding that art should now be concerned with portraying the man and not the myth.¹¹⁴

Through many of these representations of Lenin, especially those produced by younger artists who seemed to be more willing to dismantle his deific aura, it is possible to see the convergence of

several of the key issues that had concerned the creative unions in recent years. The revitalisation of Lenin, while hardly surprising given the context, was also the genre where Destalinisation was most obvious, as Stalin was quite literally removed from the narrative of the Revolution that was being presented in 1957, but this was about more than recalibrating the events of 1917 for a Thaw-era climate by reinstating one personality for another. Whether it was about showing the guiding hand of the Party, now synonymous with Lenin, or the link between the Party and the people during the Revolution and in the years that followed, the vast majority, if not all, of these works aligned with the official desire to see a greater emphasis on *partiinost* and the role of the masses in the creation of the Soviet state. The significance of showing Lenin amongst the people was also symptomatic of the calls for a return to 'Leninist values', in which the primary relationship between the Party and the people would once again be based on the fraternal bonds and genuine discussion of ideas perceived to have existed in the revolutionary period, rather than organised according to the strict paternal hierarchies established in the 1930s. So while it might seem contradictory that the image of Lenin proliferated almost immediately after the denunciation of the cult of personality, at least in theory this was not about replacing one with another but the restoration of what was perceived to be a truly revolutionary way of structuring and governing society that was based on popular will. Finally, in works such as those of Guetskii, Deviatov, and Tartakovskii we can also see evidence of the demands for greater psychological complexity being applied to the character of Lenin, as he was shown to be someone who was concerned for the people, who required private moments of contemplation, and who was even known to listen to music with friends on an evening, all of which only served to underscore his humanity. Fundamentally, the art of the period around 1957 reclaimed Lenin the man, transforming him back from the cold marble statues and bronze busts of the Stalin era to a real and dynamic presence in contemporary society, forever alive and indispensable.¹¹⁵

Conclusion

The consensus from the critics and the public alike was that the All-Union Exhibition commemorating the Great October Revolution was a resounding success. The combination of the diversity of images, the spectrum of experiences, and the talent that was on show from all parts of the USSR was seen as being a body blow to those in the West that claimed that the Soviet Union was uncultured and produced only propaganda with no artistic value.¹¹⁶ 'Humanity', 'truth', and 'optimism' were the watchwords of the day and on the whole the exhibition was, in the words of one visitor, seen as representative of 'the obvious desire of Soviet artists, following the decisions of the Twentieth Party Congress, to more closely and more fully reflect the lives of the Soviet people, their achievements, and the history of their struggle'.¹¹⁷ The youth of many contributors was also

applauded, with one research scientist echoing the opinions of many others when he observed that ‘the work of the young artists... often exceeded the quality of the works by big-named artists’.¹¹⁸

As was to be expected, the subjects of the Revolution and Civil War dominated the show, as artists attempted to convey the historical significance of this period whilst also taking into account the new directives that were coming from above about ensuring that party spirit and the people were at the heart of how these years were portrayed. At the same time, this focus on the power of the proletariat and the move to present the events of the Revolution through their eyes provided artists with the ideal vehicle for exploring one of the other essential requirements of post-Stalinist cultural production – psychological depth. The best works from this period, then, demonstrated a more nuanced examination of the revolutionary experience, one that was not simply about heroic cavalry charges and boisterous military camaraderie, but also depicted scenes of farewells or of quiet reflection, of anticipation and not just action. But what was often absent from these pieces is evidence of the reality of revolution or war; there is no death, only minor injuries, and certainly no examination of the mental pressures of combat, despite the new focus on emotional complexity and conflict. Accordingly, even with persistent calls for artists to show the struggle of the people, there was little of it evident in those works that focussed on the revolutionary era, either in terms of the literal battle against enemies or in terms of its physical and psychological consequences. In this respect the portrayal of this era offered a very different vision of conflict than contemporaneous representations of the Great Patriotic War, as the 1957 exhibition marked a watershed in how these years and their impact were depicted, with artists at last acknowledging some of the costs incurred in securing victory.

The disjuncture between how the revolutionary period and the Great Patriotic War were handled artistically was explained at the time as being the result of a combination of the youth of many artists and the still fresh memories of the 1940s, but with the benefit of hindsight we can see that the differing approaches to these two foundational periods in Soviet history were profoundly shaped by the mutability of early Destalinisation. Everything from the location of the 1957 AUE, to the artists who displayed works, to the aesthetics, tone, content and reception of those pieces were influenced in some way by the ongoing efforts to undo the impact of the cult of personality. As one of the genres that was believed to have suffered the most, in historical-revolutionary paintings from this period it is possible to see Destalinisation in its most blatant form, as Stalin was literally removed from the narrative presented, Lenin was reinstated as the chief architect of Bolshevik victory, and the people re-established as the protagonists of both the events of 1917 and the subsequent Civil War.

In other ways though, the impact of Destalinisation was far more subtle in terms of shaping how the revolutionary period was handled artistically. While the denunciation had destabilised many of the accepted narratives and understandings of the recent past, most crucially in terms of the Great Patriotic War, the fact that Khrushchev's condemnation had focussed on events since 1934 had allowed the revolutionary years to retain a sense of integrity and certainty in the revised master narrative of the state. Stalin's highly exaggerated influence needed to be removed, but what the Revolution meant, its impact, and its ongoing significance in global social development were unquestioned. Amidst all of the upheaval of the mid-1950s, and prior to the cementation of the Great Patriotic War as a legitimising myth in its own right, the Revolution had to be the unshakeable bedrock of the whole Soviet project, the unmoving North Star in the Soviet worldview. It was this unequivocality that allowed artists to explore these years from an idealised perspective, overlooking the hardships associated with such struggle, and instead focus on the achievements of that generation in setting the Soviet people on the path to communism; a dream born in 1917 that was now believed to be within reach.

The author would like to acknowledge the incredibly helpful and constructive feedback given by the anonymous reviewers, and the guidance and support offered by the journal editors throughout the whole process of producing this piece.

¹ Although the Manezh was the largest venue, given the scale of the exhibition displays were also hosted by a number of other institutions to include the exhibition hall of the Union of Artists, the Central House of Artists, the Palace of Sports in the Central Lenin Stadium and the Krasnaia Roza factory.

² As can be deduced from these statistics, many artists had more than one piece exhibited in this show. For a full breakdown of what was displayed see *Vsesoiuznaia khudozhestvennaia vystavka: zhivopis', skul'ptura, grafika raboty khudozhnikov teatra i kino: katalog* (Moscow, 1957).

³ Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting*, 308.

⁴ 'On Changes in the Statutes of the USSR Art Fund—Report by Comrade A. P. Kibalnikov', *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 8 March 1957, trans. *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, IX No. 11 (1957), 22.

⁵ 'O meropriiatiakh, sviazannykh s 200-letnim iubileem Akademii khudozhestv SSSR i provedniem v g. Moskve Vsesoiuznoi khudozhestvennoi vystavki', *Pravda* 27 December 1957, 1.

⁶ Ts. Golodnyi, 'Vsesoiuznaia khudozhestvennaia vystavka', *Sovetskaia zhenshchina* 2 (1958), 20. It has not been possible to get a comprehensive sense of the actual layout of the exhibition halls. Coverage of the exhibition in the media and specialist journals spoke in terms of themes rather than specific halls and no layout was included in the exhibition catalogue. Photographs offer some clues as to the organisation of some of the rooms, showing a mix between paintings, sculptures, and material culture from across the country within the same space, suggesting that organisation was not based on genre or on national republics. For example, the photograph included in Golodnyi's article shows M. F. Baburin's sculpture *Song*, a massive carpet featuring Lenin from Azerbaijan, Semen Guetskii's *Smolny, 1917* and L. A. Shmat'ko scene of Lenin presenting his plans for the electrification of the RSFSR, amongst other canvases and busts that are not identifiable. A similar

photograph in *Ogonek* shows A. M. Lopukhov's *Arrest of the Provisional Government* in the same space as Viktor Shatlin's *Across the Valleys and Hills* and Isaak Tartakovskii's *In an Hour of Rest*; F. Bogorodskii, 'Prazdnik sovetskoe kul'tury', *Ogonek* 47 (1957), 3.

⁷ *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 19 November 1957, 4; 'Zriteli o iubileinoi khudozhestvennoi vystavke', *Iskusstvo* 5 (1958), 30

⁸ Ioganson, *Vsesoiuznaia Iubileinaia khudozhestvennaia vystavka*, 3.

⁹ The 1937 anniversary has been the subject of particular scrutiny. See for example Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades*, 148-74 and Schlögel, *Moscow, 1937*, 344-54. See also Bordiugov, ed., *Revolutsiia – 100*. Even this recent account of anniversary celebrations since 1917 only dedicates one and a half pages to 1957 in an entire chapter on the memory of the Revolution; Bordiugov, 'Rossiiskaia revoliutsiia v stoletnem prostranstve pamiati', 51-94.

¹⁰ For more on the fiftieth anniversary see Gajos 'Fading Red October', 107-12. Every effort was made to locate the exhibition catalogue from the 1967 show to enable a comparison across the intervening decade but it proved impossible to find. What is more, as the number of reproductions of art decreased dramatically though the Brezhnev era as photography became increasingly dominant, magazines and other print media cannot be used to chart artistic trends by the late 1960s in the same way as they can for the Khrushchev period. As such, it is incredibly difficult to say comprehensively how motifs, styles, and topics prevalent in 1957 may correlate to depictions of the revolutionary era in 1967; wherever such a comparison has proved possible, this has been noted.

¹¹ For details on how the Revolution was to be commemorated through cultural activities and publications outside of the Soviet Union see Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii (RGANI) f. 5, op. 30, d. 239, ll. 112-14.

¹² Torbakov, 'Celebrating Red October', 15-16. The idea of the stinking corpse is from Evtushenko, *A Precocious Autobiography*, 92.

¹³ For example I. P. Bardin, *40 let chernoi metallurgii SSSR* (Moscow, 1957); M. M. Deineko, *Sorok let narodnogo obrazovaniia v SSSR* (Moscow, 1957); O. Ioffe, ed., *Sorok let sovetskogo prava, 1917-1957* (2 vols., Leningrad, 1957); E. B. Rabkin 'Vsesoiuznoe nauchnoe oftalmologicheskoe obshchestvo; k 40-letiliu Velikogo Oktiabria', *Vestnik oftalmologii* 70:5 (1957), 9-16.

¹⁴ For collections from the republics see, for example, Partiiia tarikhi institute, *Oktiabr'skaia sotsialisticheskaia revoliutsiia i grazhdanskaia voina v Turkestane* (Tashkent, 1957); A.N. Mnatsakaniana et al., *Velikaia Oktiabr'skaia sotsialisticheskaia revoliutsiia i pobeda sovetskoi vlasti v Armenii; sbornik dokumentov* (Erevan, 1957); Collections on the Revolution in the Russian provinces include *1917 god v Saratovskoi gubernii: Sbornik dokumentov (fevral' 1917–dekabr' 1918 gg.)* (Saratov, 1957) and *Podgotovka i pobeda oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii v Moskve* (Moscow, 1957).

¹⁵ Shostakovich went on to win a Lenin Prize in 1958 for this work, a commendation that marked his official rehabilitation after falling foul of Andrei Zhdanov's cultural policies of the late 1940s. For more on Shostakovich's personal relationship to the Revolution see Kelly, 'Protest and Discipline', 1132–55.

¹⁶ See inside front cover of *Ogonek* 44 (1957).

¹⁷ 'Soviet Show of Force: Missiles Taken off Secret List', *The Manchester Guardian* November 8 1957, 1.

¹⁸ 'Sorok let Velikoy Oktiabr'skoy Sotsialisticheskoy Revoliutsii Doklad tovarishcha N. S. Khrushcheva na iubileynoy sessii Verkhovnoiui Soveta SSSR 6 noiabria 1957 goda', *Pravda* 7 November 1957, 2.

¹⁹ Statistics collated from *Vystavki sovetskogo izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva: Spravochnik* Tom 5.

- ²⁰ See, for example, ‘Kogda zhizn’ vdokhnovliaet...’, *Sovetskaia kul’tura* 28 May 1957 (Belarus), 2; ‘Ukrainskaia iubilenaia khudozhestvennaia vystavka’, *Sovetskaia kul’tura* 22 October 1957, 1; ‘Iubileinaia vystavka’, *Sovetskaia kul’tura* 22 October 1957, 4 (Turkmenistan).
- ²¹ Corney, *Telling October*.
- ²² Rolf, *Soviet Mass Festivals 1917-1991*; Corbesero, ‘The Anniversaries of the October Revolution’.
- ²³ For a comprehensive understanding of the incredible complexity of the period Susan Reid’s PhD is still unsurpassed; Reid, ‘De-Stalinization and the Remodernization of Soviet Art’.
- ²⁴ Details of the early plans can be found in ‘Podgotovka k Vsesoiuznoi khudozhestvennoi vystavke – vazhneishaia zadacha tvorcheskiki soiuzov’, *Iskusstvo* 5 (1955), 3-4.
- ²⁵ For more on the impact of the Secret Speech see the contributions of Miriam Dobson, Polly Jones and Susanne Schattenberg in Jones, ed., *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization*.
- ²⁶ For coverage of how the history of the Revolution was challenged by Destalinisation see the translator’s introduction to Burdzhhalov, *Russia’s Second Revolution* and Zelnik, *Perils of Pankratova*. See also Markwick, ‘Thaws and Freezes in Soviet Historiography’, 173-92.
- ²⁷ ‘Develop and Enrich Soviet Fine Arts: Molotov and Mikhailov at Soviet Artists’ Conference’, *Sovetskaia kul’tura*, 20 Nov. 1957, trans. *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, VIII No. 48 (1957), 10.
- ²⁸ ‘Develop and Enrich Soviet Fine Arts’, 11.
- ²⁹ Full proceedings can be found in *Materialy pervogo Vsesoiuznogo s’ezda sovetskikh khudozhnikov: 28 febralia-7 marta 1957* (Moscow, 1957). See also the lengthy report on the congress published in *Iskusstvo*, ‘Pervyi vsesoiuznyi s’ezd sovetskikh khudozhnikov’, 3 (1957), 3-36.
- ³⁰ Reid, ‘The Soviet Art World in the Early Thaw’, 163.
- ³¹ Reid, ‘Modernizing Socialist Realism in the Khrushchev Thaw’, 210.
- ³² Aleksandr Kamenskii cited in Reid ‘Modernizing Socialist Realism in the Khrushchev Thaw’, 214; fn 25.
- ³³ ‘Develop and Enrich Soviet Fine Arts’, 11.
- ³⁴ ‘Develop and Enrich Soviet Fine Arts’, 12.
- ³⁵ For a dissenting voice regarding the positive impact of world culture on Soviet artistic development, see the criticism of a youth exhibition held in May 1957 that blamed the poor quality of work on the ‘recent increase in bourgeois influences’ in Soviet art: ‘Zapiska otdelia nauki, shkol i kul’tury TsK KPSS po RSFSR o Tret’ei vystavke rabot molodykh khudzhnikov Moskvy i Moskovskoi oblasti. 22 Maia 1957 g.’ reproduced in Afranas’eva et al., *Apparat Tsk KPSS i kul’tura 1953-1957*, 665-67. For more on Manezh see ‘Khrushchev on Modern Art’, *Encounter* April 1963 reproduced in Johnson, ed., *Khrushchev and the Arts*, 102-3 and Reid, ‘In the Name of the People’, 673-716.
- ³⁶ ‘Priveststvie TsK KPSS Vsesoiuznomu s’ezdu sovetskikh khudozhnikov’, *Pravda* 1 March 1957, 1. Emphasis my own.
- ³⁷ See for example Z. Azgur, ‘Za bogatstvo soderzhaniia i formy!’ *Ogonek* 10 (1957), 2.
- ³⁸ ‘Sostoianie i zadachi sovetskogo izobrazitel’nogo iskusska: doklad B. V. Ioganson’, *Pravda* 1 March 1957, 3; translation taken from ‘All-Union Congress of Soviet Artists: State and Tasks of Soviet Art - Report by B. V. Ioganson’, *Pravda*, 1 March 1957, trans. *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, IX No. 10 (1957), 22. For full proceedings of the conference see *Materialy pervogo Vsesoiuznogo s’ezda sovetskikh khudozhnikov: 28 febralia-7 marta 1957* (Moscow, 1957).
- ³⁹ V. Serov, *V. I. Lenin provozglashaet sovetskuiu vlast’* (1947); D.A. Nalbandyan, V. Basov, V.A. Pribylovskii & M.A. Suzdaltsev, *Vlast’ soveta – Mir narodam* (1950).

- ⁴⁰ V. Oreshnikov, *V. I. Lenin i I. V. Stalin v shtabe oborony Petrograda (1917 god)* (1949).
- ⁴¹ See also P. V. Vasil'ev, *V. I. Lenin i I. V. Stalin za besedoi* (1951); N. P. Khristoliubov, *Vozhdi Oktiabria* (1952?); and E. Kibrik, 'Est' takaia partiia!' (1947).
- ⁴² This was a brigade work completed by V. Vikhtinskii, B. Zhukov, E. Levin, L. Chernov and L. Shmat'ko.
- ⁴³ 'Za dal'neishii rastet sovetskogo khudozhestnogo tvorchestva: Rech' Sekretaria Tsenrtal'nogo Komiteta KPSS tov. D. T. Shepilova', *Pravda* 3 March 1957, 3.
- ⁴⁴ Published as *Dostizheniia Sovetskoi vlasti za sorok let v tsifrakh* (Moscow, 1957).
- ⁴⁵ Published as *K sorokaletiiu Velikoi Oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii, 1917-1957* (Moscow, 1957).
- ⁴⁶ 'Postanovlenie TsK KPSS O poiutovke k prazbovaniui 40-i iubovshchiny Velikoi Oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii', *Pravda* 17 March 1957, 1.
- ⁴⁷ 'Postanovlenie TsK KPSS O poiutovke k prazbovaniui 40-i iubovshchiny Velikoi Oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii', 1.
- ⁴⁸ RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 239, l. 105.
- ⁴⁹ Based on information collated in *Letopis izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva*, Tom 4, 1957, 150-52 and *Letopis izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva*, Tom 1, 1958, 153-56.
- ⁵⁰ More details on the planning of these publications to accompany the exhibition can be found in RGANI, f. 5, op. 33, d.12, l. 66.
- ⁵¹ *Letopis izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva*, Tom 4, 1957, entries 14038 and 14040; *Letopis izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva*, Tom 1, 1958, entry 3366.
- ⁵² Based on information collated in *Letopis izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva*, Tom 4, 1957, 3-5, and *Letopis izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva*, Tom 1, 1958, 3-9.
- ⁵³ *Letopis izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva*, Tom. 4, 1957, entry 10451. Livanova also had her poster *Mir! Druzha!* displayed at the 1957 AUE; *Vsesoiuznaia khudozhestvennaia vystavka: katalog*, 218.
- ⁵⁴ *Letopis izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva*, Tom 1, 1958, entries 52 and 48.
- ⁵⁵ Nikita Khrushchev, 'Za technuiu sviaz' literatury i iskusstva s zhizn'iu naroda', *Pravda* 28 August 1957, 3-4.
- ⁵⁶ For a detailed account of the interplay between conservative and reformist forces in 1957 see Reid, 'De-Stalinization and the Remodernization of Soviet Art', esp. 301-32.
- ⁵⁷ Reid, 'De-Stalinization and the Remodernization of Soviet Art', 306.
- ⁵⁸ Unless otherwise indicated, all the works discussed here were produced in 1957.
- ⁵⁹ Based on a survey of the exhibition catalogue: *Vsesoiuznaia khudozhestvennaia vystavka: katalog* (Moscow, 1957). It should be noted, though, that this is artists with individual works on display; some artists who presented series had more.
- ⁶⁰ Iltner's *The Husbands Return* (*Muzh'ia vozvrashchaiutsia*) encapsulated many of the qualities that are seen to define the 'severe style', which is usually dated to emerging around 1957. It was an aesthetic interpretation of Socialist Realism that would become increasingly influential as the decade progressed, leading to some works that are rightly viewed as masterpieces, even though they were derided in the conservative climate of the early 1960s; the darling of 1957, Pavel Nikonov, was famously publicly condemned by Khrushchev for his *Geologists* at the Thirty Years of the Moscow Artists' Union Exhibition as representing 'one jackass riding on another'. For further discussion of Iltner's work see Reid, 'Masters of the Earth', 289-90. See also Bertelé, 'Soviet "Severe Romanticism" at the 1962 Venice Biennale', 158-72.

⁶¹ It is interesting to note that for all the young talent on display was generally applauded by visitors to the exhibition, according to an official report, the artist whose work was most frequently praised in the comment books was Laktionov; Johnson, 'Aleksandr Laktionov: A Soviet Artist', 138 fn. 4.

⁶² B. Ioganson 'Khudozhniki – K 40-letiiu Velikogo Oktiabria', *Sovetskaia kul'tura* 20 August 1957, 1

⁶³ For example, F. Abdrakhmonov, *Osvobozhenie* and V. Zhmakin, *Zhenshchina bez parandzhi*.

⁶⁴ Reviews of the Ukrainian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian Republics were published in *Iskusstvo* 1 (1958); Moldova and Belarus were covered in *Iskusstvo* 2 (1958); the Transcaucasian republics and Central Asia and Kazakhstan in *Iskusstvo* 3 (1958).

⁶⁵ A. Kantor, 'Cherty novogo' *Tvorchestvo* 2 (1958), 5. To give one example: according to Kantor, the Uzbek republic showed 11 paintings in 1947, it showed 64 paintings in 1957 from 30 different artists; *Vsesoiuznaia khudozhestvennaia vystavka: katalog*, 331-36

⁶⁶ While, naturally, not every visitor was from the Soviet Union, reports of the exhibition actually stressed the number of foreign visitors especially from the Soviet Bloc and from Vietnam who came to share in the celebrations in Moscow.

⁶⁷ See for example 'V masterskikh khudozhnikov', *Ogonek* 43 (1957), 30-1; F. Bogorodskii, 'Prazdnik sovetskoe kul'tury', *Ogonek* 47 (1957), 3-4 'Na khudozhestvennoi vystavke', *Ogonek* 6 (1958), 36. See also Ts. Golodnyi, 'Vsesoiuznaia khudozhestvennaia vystavka' *Sovetskaia zhenshchina* 2 (1958), 20-9.

⁶⁸ Iurii Tulin's *Lena, 1912 (Lena, 1912 god.)*, proved to be one of the most popular pieces in the whole exhibition, being repeatedly singled out for praise by both critics and the public. While still on display, it was selected to represent the Soviet Union at the World Exposition in Brussels the following year, where it was shown alongside such classics as Isaak Brodskii's *Lenin at Smolny* (1930), Aleksandr Denieka's *Defence of Petrograd* (1928) and Laktionov's *Letter from the Front* (1947); 'Iskusstvo na mezhdunarodnoi vystavke 1958 goda v Briussele' *Tvorchestvo* 2 (1958), 1.

⁶⁹ See for example, *Ogonek* 45, 46, & 50 (1957) and *Ogonek* 2, 6, 7, 15 & 17 (1958).

⁷⁰ 'Sorok let Velikoy Oktiabr'skoy Sotsialisticheskoy Revoliutsii Doklad tovarishcha N. S. Khrushcheva na iubileynoy sessii Verkhovnoi Soveta SSSR 6 noiabria 1957 goda', *Pravda* 7 November 1957, 2.

⁷¹ For a detailed discussion of the Pasternak affair see Kozlov, *The Readers of Novyi Mir*, 110-33.

⁷² See for example 'Za tvorcheskoe izuchenie istorii Velikoi Oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii', *Voprosy istorii* No. 7 (1957), 2-15.

⁷³ Serov's work was used in 1952 on the front cover of *Ogonek* to commemorate the Revolution that year, making it one of a handful of paintings that was deemed worthy to use in this manner; *Ogonek* 46 (1952).

⁷⁴ The capture of the Winter Palace had been the subject of a piece by Serov in 1954 (*Zimnii vziat*) and struck a very similar tone to the works in this series, showing two soldiers in the aftermath of the Revolution smoking cigarettes by the Jordan staircase. As mentioned above Serov was one of only a few artists that had his work used as front covers for *Ogonek* during this time; he would have this honour again just a few years later with this work; *Ogonek* 3 (1955).

⁷⁵ 'V masterskoi khudozhnika V. Serova', *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 16 July 1957, 4.

⁷⁶ A copy of this reworked painting was used in the anniversary edition of *Ogonek* 45 (1962).

⁷⁷ Reid, 'De-Stalinization and the Remodernization of Soviet Art', 291.

⁷⁸ O. Soptinskii, 'Puti tvorchestva: Zametki o vystavke proizvedenii molodykh khudozhnikov Moskvu', *Iskusstvo* 5 (1957), 34.

⁷⁹ To say it was thirty years old, Sokolov-Skalia's work featured quite prominently in the popular press over the course of 1957, providing the frontispiece of *Sovetskaia zhenshchina*'s anniversary edition in November 1957. Presumably it was painting's focus on the people that made it suitable for a Thaw-era context, despite falling short of the now desired standards of characterisation and internal complexity.

⁸⁰ Reid, 'De-Stalinization and the Remodernization of Soviet Art', 292-3.

⁸¹ Kantor, 'Cherty novogo', 8.

⁸² *Ogonek* 8 (1948); *Ogonek* 8 (1953). Avilov's painting had also been used ten years earlier as the image on a commemorative eighty kopek stamp celebrating twenty years since the creation of the Red Army.

⁸³ Monastireva-Ansdell, 'Redressing the Commissar', esp. 233.

⁸⁴ M. Klionskii, *Puti-dorogi*; Ioganson, *Vsesoiuznaia Iubileinaia khudozhestvennaia vystavka 1957 goda*, 8.

⁸⁵ Kantor, 'Cherty novogo', 7-8.

⁸⁶ Bulgakova 'Cine-Weathers', 455

⁸⁷ Just a few of the examples on display in 1957 include A. Levitin, *Teplyi den*, D. Zhilinskii, *V metro*, and M. Trufanov, *Domenshchiki*.

⁸⁸ Polishchuk, 'Sovetskaia armia v proizvedeniiakh zhivopisi', 43.

⁸⁹ Kantor, 'Cherty novogo', 8

⁹⁰ In contrast to these works by young artists, Sergei Gerasimov's (born 1885) *For Soviet Power (Za vlast' Sovetov)* was derided by critics and visitors for its lack of dynamism and its rendering of the relationship between the people depicted. See Ioganson, *Vsesoiuznaia Iubileinaia khudozhestvennaia vystavka 1957 goda*, 18-19; 'Zriteli o iubileinoi khudozhestvennoi vystavke', 29.

⁹¹ Kantor, 'Cherty novogo', 8.

⁹² Polishchuk, 'Sovetskaia armia v proizvedeniiakh zhivopisi', 46-7.

⁹³ 'Zriteli o iubileinoi khudozhestvennoi vystavke', 28-9.

⁹⁴ Tkachev, *Brat'ia Tkachevy*, 118. This work was one of only two wartime images included in the retrospective pamphlet written by Ioganson the other being Mikhail Samsonov's *Perekhod cherez Sivash*.

⁹⁵ *Tysiacha deviat'sot sorok pervyi god (Brestskaia krepost')*; Zaitsev, *Khudozhestvennaia letopis' Velikoi Otechestvennoi*, 249.

⁹⁶ Kantor, 'Cherty novogo', 8; Polishchuk, 'Sovetskaia armia v proizvedeniiakh zhivopisi', 47. For a discussion of how the traumas of the first year of the War were broached in Soviet literature of the period see Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma*, 173-211.

⁹⁷ See especially Dmitrii Oboznenko, *Solov'inaia noch'* and Boris Nemenskii's earlier *Dykhaniie vesny* (1955).

⁹⁸ The Khrushchev era was characterised by a widespread cultural reassessment of the War and its impact; however visual culture followed a different path to that laid out in film and literature. For a detailed discussion of the representation of the war years during the Thaw see McCallum, *The Fate of the New Man*.

⁹⁹ 'Na khudozhestvennoi vystavke', *Ogonek* 6 (1958), 36

¹⁰⁰ For discussion of the representation of Lenin in sculpture in the run-up to the exhibition see Natal'ia Sokolova, 'Monument V. I. Leninu' *Iskusstvo* 7 (1957), 12-18. A review of the sculptures of Lenin at the exhibition can be found in I. Svetlov, 'Obraz vozhdia' *Tvorchestvo* 2 (1958), 3-4. See

also V. Zimenko, 'Obraz velikoi vdokhnovliaiushchei sily' *Iskusstvo* 4 (1960), 10-18 for a broader overview of representations of Lenin.

¹⁰¹ B. Ioganson, V. Sokolov, D. Tegin and N. Faidysh-Krandievskaiia, *Vystuplenie V. I. Lenina na III s'ezde komsomola* (1950).

¹⁰² The personality cult of Lenin has generated a substantial amount of literature. For more see Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives!*; Kelly, 'Riding the Magic Carpet', 199-224; Kelly, 'Grandpa Lenin and Uncle Stalin', 102-22; Bonnell, *Iconography of Power*.

¹⁰³ F. P. Reshetnikov, *Za Leninskuiu Iskru*; Ia. M. Sokolov, *Vystuplenie V. I. Lenina protiv narodnika V. V. Vorontsova na nelegal'noi vecherinke v Moskve 9 (21) ianvaria 1894 goda*; V. I. Ivanov, *Posle kazni Aleksandra Ul'ianova*.

¹⁰⁴ See for example L. A. Shmat'ko, *Vystuplenie V. I. Lenina o plane GOELRO*.

¹⁰⁵ Ioganson, *Vsesoiuznaia Iubileinaia khudozhestvennaia vystavka 1957 goda*, 7; see also 'Dostoino voploshchat' obraz sovetskogo naroda' *Iskusstvo* 6 (1957), 7.

¹⁰⁶ O. E. Skulme, *V. I. Lenin s latyshskimi strelkami v Kremle, 1 Maia 1918 goda*. Contrast this to his 1952 piece, *V. I. Lenin na IV-m s'ezde sotsial-demokratii Latyshskogo kraia v 1914 g.* See also Kotliarov's work discussed above, A. & S. Tkachev, *Mezhdu boiami* (1957-60), and Geli Korzhev, *Internatsional* (1957-8), which would eventually form part of his *Communists* triptych.

¹⁰⁷ An interesting counterpoint to Brodskii's famous portrait is Adam Kostiuhenko's diploma work on display in 1957, *V. I. Lenin at Gorki* (*V. I. Lenin v Gorkakh*), a scene that shows Lenin reading in the more cosy environs of his estate, with what could almost be described as a smile on his face.

¹⁰⁸ These paintings were G. Savinov, *Pered shturmom*; L. Tkachenko, *God. 1917*; V. Kuznetsov, *Shtab Oktiabria*; A. M. Lopukhov, *Arest Vremennogo Pravitel'stva* and A. Deineka, *Oborona Petrograda* (1928).

¹⁰⁹ M. I. Krivenko, *V. I. Lenin v sem'e rabocheho*.

¹¹⁰ Bown, *Socialist Realist Paintings*, 319.

¹¹¹ B. Ioganson, *Sotsialisticheskaia revoliutsiia sovershilas'*; D. Nalbandian, *Lenin v 1919 godu* (also known as *Lenin na Krasnoi polshchadi*); D. Shmarinov, *Lenin na parade Vseobucha*.

¹¹² 'Dostoino voploshchat' obraz sovetskogo naroda', 7.

¹¹³ 'Zriteli o iubileinoi khudozhestvennoi vystavke', 28. Criticism of Ioganson's work was also published in a series of vignettes of opinions from the exhibition entitled 'Pros and Cons in Art' in the English-language magazine *Soviet Union* no. 97 (1958), unpagged.

¹¹⁴ 'Zriteli o iubileinoi khudozhestvennoi vystavke', 28.

¹¹⁵ For a discussion of how the image of Lenin changed following the end of the Khrushchev era, see Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting*, 416-17. A more general discussion of the manifestations of the Lenin cult in this period can be found in Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives!* 255-65. Interestingly, both authors highlight the continuation of Lenin's humane representation into the 1960s and 1970s, although from what evidence has been found it seems that this was not the case when it came to his representation in a revolutionary context. See for example, G. Mosin & M. Brusikovskii, *Tysiacha deviat'sot vosemnadtsatyi* (1963-5), V. Pravdin, '...Ia syn trudovogo naroda' (1965?) and L. Krivitskii, *Predsedatel' Sovnarkoma V. I. Ul'ianov (Lenin)* (1969).

¹¹⁶ For a typical Western view of Soviet culture during this period see Parry, 'Are They Kul'turny?'

¹¹⁷ 'Zriteli o iubileinoi khudozhestvennoi vystavke', 27.

¹¹⁸ 'Zriteli o iubileinoi khudozhestvennoi vystavke', 27.

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