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From Ideals to Ideology— Two Contrasting Views of Architectural Discourse at the 1937 Paris Exposition

Abstract

If language is a word that describes a toolkit of communication, then architecture and associated design may be considered their own languages, which communicate the purposes, permissions, and boundaries of the socio-political contexts from which they arose. Such languages of architecture and design will have their own "grammatical" tools and discourse styles, with consequent differences of meaning between them. This paper considers the differences in architectural and design discourse styles expressed by two totalitarian states at the 1937 Paris International Exposition. Such expositions were traditionally places where liberal democratic ideals of free trade and discourse were extolled. The Soviet Union and Nazi Germany confronted such ideals through ideology in that forum. However, while each of them communicated a totalitarian language of purposes, permissions, and boundaries, there were essential differences in the styles of discourse represented by the architecture and design of their respective pavilions. Indeed, they were polar opposites of each other and the liberal ideals they contested.

Keywords

Paris Exposition 1937, Nazi Architecture, Soviet Architecture, Styles of Discourse, Realism

Introduction

That architecture and design have functional narrative is self-evident—even follies have their purpose. It is less evident that they may also have a metanarrative that transcends basic physical functionality. The metanarrative offers consideration of factors of greater import than the physical utility. These

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include ambience and aesthetics, but at a deeper level, they may be aspirational, promoting an idealisation of where society could be. Alain de Botton (2008, 137, 140) cites Friedrich Schiller as suggesting that art is "an absolute manifestation of potential' and that it is 'an escort descended from the world of the ideal"; from which he develops the concept of "idealised architecture" and the "project of idealisation"; the concept of the project being a style of discourse for achieving a goal. This paper proposes that international expositions, through their architecture and design, created a genre of discourse style which aspires to such idealisation.

Notwithstanding the diverse interpretations resulting from multinational participation in such events, broadly speaking, liberal democratic ideals of free trade and endeavour in a spirit of plurality have constituted the *telos* of the project of idealisation of international expositions. However, in the interwar period, two -isms—the Communism of Josef Stalin and the national socialism of Adolf Hitler, confronted that liberal idealisation with alternative metanarratives. This paper explores those alternative propositions and their contrasting characters.

International Expositions 1851–1937

International Expositions were not only a product of the Industrial Revolution with its need for the opening of world trade but also statements of projects of idealisation. *Hunt's Handbook to the Official Catalogues* of the first such exposition, the *Great Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations* held in the purpose-built Crystal Palace in London in 1851, described the purpose of that inaugural event thus:

> The Great Exhibition is […] a great exemplification of the present state of human industry and the efforts of the mind. We perceive in it the complete illustration of the application of science to all the purposes of use and ornament; we discover how far man has advanced in his knowledge of the physical agencies […] (Hunt 1851, vi).

In the following three-quarters of a century, many more expositions were convened, leading to a desire for a formal definition of purpose. Consequently, the Paris Convention of 1928 defined a fundamental purpose for such expositions as being "the education of the public: it may exhibit the means at man's [sic] disposal for meeting the needs of civilisation, or demonstrate the progress achieved in one or more branches of human endeavour or show prospects for the future" (Protocol to Amend the Conven-

tion Signed at Paris on the 22nd of November 1928 Relating to International Exhibitions; www.bie-paris.org/site/images/stories/files/BIE_Convention_eng.pdf). It was in this context, which was also in the wake of World War I and the Great Depression, that the 1937 Paris exposition was convened.

Paris 1937—Ideological Rivals Face Off Through Structure and Design

The plan for an *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne*, approved in 1929 by the French parliament, was proposed to be a conceptual successor to the seminal 1925 *Exposition des Arts Décoratifs Modernes*. That exposition gave rise to the Art Deco movement, which defined much of the international architectural discourse of the following decades.

The exposition ran from May to November 1937 with a visual centrepiece of the Eiffel Tower, the 1889 exposition's relic. It had been intended for replacement by a much larger (700 m) and more modern structure, the *Phare du Monde* (Lighthouse of the World), but this never eventuated due to budget constraints. The exhibition site was bounded by the Trocadéro at one end and the École Militaire at the other with the unintentionally ironic *Avenue de Paix*, connecting them through the footprint of the Eiffel Tower. In the *esprit du temps* of the 1930s, planners had intentionality as to the central juxtaposed location of two key pavilions—those of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Though elected a year earlier on an anti-fascist platform, Leon Blum's Popular Front government felt an urgent need to appease a resurgent Germany hoping to discourage it from hostile behaviour towards France by diverting its energies eastward against the Soviets.

Arthur Chandler wrote that the 1937 *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne* "faced some of the most important dualisms that divided humanity against itself: the split between Paris and the provinces, between France and her colonies, between art and science, between socialism and capitalism, between fascism and democracy" (Chandler 1988, 9). Yet, the most visible dualism at that exposition was between Communism and national socialism.

The Bystander of the 7th of July 1937 (Fig. 1) described these two pavilions and their juxtaposition: "They are a fine pair […] each pavilion as it faces its rival, towers ambitiously into the Paris sky. The Reich eagle, ineffably contemptuous, perches on its swastika above the austere square-columned German tower, which looks at once permanent, arrogant, and sober. Over the way the Russian [sic] façade, faintly reminiscent of a cathedral, carries its

stupendous burden of sculpture, the young Soviet workers bear the hammer and sickle forward with an extraordinary intensity of challenge and triumph. It is, in fact, a queer drama of politics and architecture."

The 1937 Paris Exposition was an extraordinary showcase of national achievement and aspiration given the febrile socio-politico context which had arisen from the devastation of the "war to end all wars" and the Great Depression a decade later—all of which had been accompanied by the birth of quintessentially "modern" -isms in the form of Communism and national socialism/fascism. This study deals solely with the Soviet and German pavilions at that exposition. However, other pavilions also echoed similar themes such as the Spanish (with its display of Picasso's *Guernica* amid that country's raging civil war) and the Italian (with its assertion of Italian fascism under the leadership of Mussolini in the wake of Filippo Marinetti's 1920 *Manifesto de Futurismo*).

Fig. 1

The Bystander, July 7, 1937—17

Ideological Rivals

The Russian and German Pavilions in the Paris Exhibition of 1937

Carrying the Hammer and Sickle into the Future

The Proud Contemptuous Eagle of the Reich

They are a fine pair, these two Pavilions that stand on either side of the wide roadway to the Pont d'Iéna. Each Pavilion as it faces its rival towers ambitiously into the Paris sky. The Reich eagle, ineffably contemptuous, perches on its swastika above the austere square-columned German tower which looks at once permanent, arrogant and sober. Over the way the Russian façade, faintly reminiscent of a cathedral, carries its stupendous burden of sculpture; the young Soviet workers bear the hammer and sickle forward with an extraordinary intensity of challenge and triumph. It is in fact a queer drama of politics and architecture, into which the partisans of either protagonist can read what they will of symbolic significance

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The Soviet Pavilion

In their 1935 brief for the pavilion, Soviet officials wrote: "The USSR pavilion must in itself be an exhibition object, expressing the expansion of socialist culture, art (and) technology" (Kangaslahti 2011, 193).

Designed by Boris Iofan, the Soviet pavilion in Paris was a product of an "ecumenical" phase of Soviet architecture reflecting Stalin's internationalist agenda "to consolidate (the Soviet Union's) position on the international scene and simultaneously legitimise its image with […] leftist movements" (Udovički-Selb 2015, 42). This phase was during the Third International (or Comintern) era, whose seventh world congress in 1935 had advocated popular front tactics in a global contest against fascism and, therefore, downplayed class warfare, adopting a *realpolitik* of collaboration even with capitalist states.

It was beyond coincidence then that, notwithstanding the massive Mukhina statue atop the pavilion, its design echoed the Rockefeller Centre, whose first buildings had been completed in New York only four years earlier and which had been "widely publicised in the Soviet architectural press" (Udovički-Selb 2012, 39).

The German Pavilion

Like the Soviet pavilion, the German one was an expression of its authoring ideology. In the pavilion guidebook, Wilhelm Lotz wrote: "[the] building is a powerful display of the forces of a nation and the expression therein of its vital energy" (Kangaslahti 2011, 197).

Albert Speer, its designer, was delighted to be involved in the "construction of a new monument of the national socialist disposition realised after the will of the Führer" (cited in Fickers 2008, 294). At the same time, Gastón Gordillo quoted Speer as admitting that Nazi monumentality was a "nouveau riche architecture of prestige" with an "urge to demonstrate one's strength" (Gordillo, 2015, 61). It was undoubtedly self-consciously resistant to any Art Deco influence.

Though not as tall as the German, the Soviet pavilion was called a *небоскрёб* (*Neboskryob*—literally, a cloud scraper), whereas Speer's *Deutsches Haus* was referred to as a *Hochhaus* (a tall house or building), not a *Wolkenkratzer* (German for skyscraper) standing solid and stolid in the ground rather than reaching for the sky.[1]

Contemporary observers saw the two pavilions as combatants confronting each other (Fig. 2). However, the original French intention for their placement close to each other had been as engines of a C20 dialectic astride

[1] This is not an idle point, in 1937 Fritz Höger, who had hoped to be named *Reich Staatsarchiteken*, designed a 250 m skyscraper to be built in Hamburg and which was to be named *Gauhochhaus* (Regional High House).

the Avenue of Peace visually separated by the Eiffel Tower, an icon of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, which had been erected according to its architect Gustav Eiffel "as an expression of gratitude to the Revolution of 1789" [Laws, in Art and Political Crises: The 1937 Paris International Exposition (https://culturedarm.com/1937-paris-international-exposition/)].

Fig. 2

Source: Alamy Photos

Elements of Discourse

This study contends that there were essential differences in the styles of discourse evinced by both the Soviet and German pavilions. Danilo Udovički-Selb has argued that "though both of the Paris pavilions were composed of a pedestal and a statue, each belonged to disparate architectural territories" (Udovički-Selb 2015, 32). In order to consider those disparate architectural territories, it needs to be understood that different styles of discourse were involved and that they each embodied distinct interpretations of a complex of sub-components. In considering the styles of the discourse of the Soviet and German pavilions, it is therefore essential to examine the "lexicon" of sub-components constituting the language of architecture and design discourse. An examination of the discourse sub-components of Shape, Vector, Colour, Art, Technology, the Anthropic, and the Image of Leader follows. There will then be a consideration of how these discourse sub-components were woven together to create "languages" of architecture and design com-

municating the idealised visions of the Soviet and German ideologies, which contrasted with each other and the liberal democratic aspirations of such expositions.

The Discourse of Shape

To initial observation, the Soviet and German pavilions represented similar shapes that mirror-imaged each other across the Avenue de Paix. Each had a tall entry structure complemented by a horizontal body containing an exhibition space with an inner sanctum at the rear.

The German entry structure was the tallest pavilion building at the exposition. Speer asserted[2] a reactive element to his design since he claimed to have seen plans for the Soviet pavilion before its construction, which impacted his ideas. He had determined to make the German pavilion taller but, more significantly, he intended it as a bulwark, writing that he "designed a cubic mass [...] which seemed to be checking this onslaught (of the Soviet statue), while from the corner of my tower an eagle with the swastika in its claws looked down on the Russian sculptures" (Speer 130 cited in Kangaslahti, 2011, 196-197).

A common feature of the two, however, was that each was a "sampler" of grander projects envisaged by their architects, which were themselves displayed by maquettes inside each pavilion—namely, Iofan's Palace of the Soviets and Speer's Deutsche Haus, a much larger building proposed for the Nuremberg complex started in 1934. Indeed, Speer had indicated his pavilion was a "guide(s) for future construction in Germany" (cited in Fiss 2002, 321).

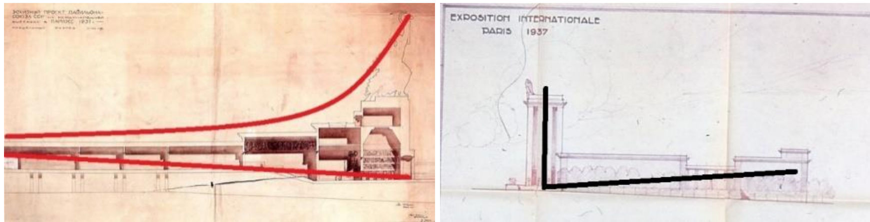
The Soviet tower, embodying as it did Art Deco design principles first popularised at the 1925 Paris exposition, was as "active" as the German was "reactive." The tower of the Soviet pavilion invoked the imagery of a ship's prow sailing forth, while the side elevation of the whole was suggestive of a locomotive pulling carriages. The German pavilion contained no such symbolism of movement; instead, it "stood as a motionless stud" (Udovički-Selb 2015, 32).

[2] It should be noted that Karen Fiss has demonstrated the improbability of Speer's claim (Fiss 2002, 60).

The Discourse of Vector

There was a significant contrast between the two structures. A consideration of implied motion or stasis in the two pavilions is suggestive of symbolic directional vectors in the design of both buildings. Fig. 3 superimposes my suggestion of the intent of the respective architects for those vectors on the cross-section design of each pavilion.

Fig. 3



Source: https://culturedarm.com/1937-paris-international-exposition/

There were two implicit vectors in the German pavilion—the downward, foundational gravitas of the entry tower from which a vertical aspiration might arise and the slightly inclining horizontal trajectory through the length of the exhibition space towards the inner sanctum at the rear. Udovički-Selb has written about the tower as a "deeply rooted, solitary pillar" (Udovički-Selb 2015, 32). There was a sense that the tower's solidity was anchored in a mythical past, the Wagnerian myth. Udovički-Selb has noted that the crystalline appearance of the tower evoked "the crystal architecture found in German medieval mythology" (op. cit., 34). The downward vector, rooting Germany in its past, enabled a corresponding upward vector that suggested a phoenix rising from the ashes of the First World War and the 1920s, a phoenix in the form of an eagle holding a swastika.

The two directions of the vertical vector, arising from meta-cultural origins and twentieth-century *Zeitgeist*, joined an inclining horizontal vector through the body of the pavilion. The guidebook to the German pavilion spoke of a "fundamental harmony" in the building as a whole and hence a unity between these two vectors. From this harmony, "a powerful display of the forces of a nation and the expression therein of its vital energy" was generated (cited in Kangaslahti 2011, 197). The exhibition spaces through which visitors progressed led to a quasi-altar in an inner sanctum at the pavilion's rear. There the German eagle with a swastika emblazoned on

a back-lit lead-light window loomed over four braziers standing altar-like before it. The message was clear, visitors entering through a portal redolent of a newly revitalised Germany built upon a historical myth would traverse through the displays of German accomplishment and then onto an altar to German millennialism—the idealisation of the so-called thousand-year Reich.

By contrast, the Soviet pavilion contained two different vectors. Firstly, an inclining vector led through the entry portal up a staircase to the exhibition space and then onto the inner sanctum at the rear. The grand staircase leading to the exhibition space seemed to evoke a glorious reversal of the staircase chaos depicted in the iconic 1925 film *Battleship Potemkin*; thanks to Soviet policy, the staircase seemed to say, people could now ascend to a brighter future rather than live terrified under Tsarist oppression. After arriving at the inner sanctum, the now "liberated" populace would recognise the need for leadership and encounter Stalin ready to lead them forth.

From this encounter, a second vector then arose, one of a surging upswing. The physical end of the pavilion represented the start of an aspirational journey, from the statue of the "beloved" leader Stalin in an upward sweep back through the exhibition space up the entry tower to the statue atop of the outstretched arms of the male factory worker and female collective farm worker—the idealisation of the ultimate global victory of the proletariat.

The Discourse of Colour

Externally, both pavilions were steel structures faced with pink granite and interstitial mosaics in the German pavilion, and Samarkand marble and Black Sea porphyry in the Soviet. However, internally the use of colour was different. The colour contrast of the interior of the two pavilions was more marked than the exterior. Fig. 4 contains a photo from each interior—on the left the Soviet, on the right the German.

The Soviet pavilion was strongly influenced by Art Deco's metaphysical adherence to white, a theme not followed in the German pavilion. The 1925 Paris Art Deco Exposition had idealised the status of white as a colour, imbuing it with significance beyond being either the aggregation of all colours or an emblem of purity. Le Corbusier, for example, extolled whitewashing over the coloured past, proclaiming it as his *Loi Ripolin* (Ripolin Law, after a famous brand of white paint of the time). He wrote about the virtue of a compulsory whiteness which would bring an "inner cleanness [...] (a) refusal to

allow anything at all which is not correct, authorised, intended, desired, thought-out: no action before thought" (le Corbusier 1987, 188). Here white was neither the spectral containment of all colours nor an emblem of purity. It had become the antithesis of all colours and thus became a Year Zero in a culture abandoning polychrome ideological ambiguity for monochrome unity of purpose. White backdrops, therefore, predominated in the interior of the Soviet pavilion.

On the other hand, in the central exhibition hall, the German pavilion used deeply coloured, decorative wallpaper, which, combined with chandeliers, created a C19 opulence amidst which the products and achievements of the Third Reich were rather awkwardly displayed. Kangaslahti likened the effect to *Kunstkammern* (art galleries) of the late C19 (*ibidem*, 198). Karen A. Fiss has described the intentionality of such nostalgic design, "a reactionary turn back to nineteenth-century aesthetic codes," as being an effort "to mask the contradictions between Nazi *Völkisch* rhetoric and political-economic reality" by citing the German philosopher Ernst Bloch, who wrote of the "aesthetic of the *gute Stube* or parlour" in his study of fascism, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (Heritage of our Times) (Fiss 2002, 326). A modernist element strangely complemented the nostalgic colouring of the walls: red flooring, made from the German-invented synthetic rubber, evocative of the predominant colour on the Nazi flag and which "went unnoticed" as the public consumed the pavilion's peace rhetoric which concealed "the rumbling of Germany's new war industry" (Udovički-Selb 2015, 37).

Fig 4

Left photo: Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library
Right photo: Alamy Photos

The Discourse of Art

Reference will be made shortly (in The Discourse of the Anthropic) to the statuary on display in both pavilions. However, paintings were also used extensively within each pavilion.

Both pavilions eschewed the widespread use of photographic images, preferring to use paintings as mural backdrops instead. There was some irony in this, given that both Soviet and Nazi German propaganda in the early 1930s had seen effective use of photographic images and montages to create an intensely modern sense of ideological achievement. However, by 1937 there were different agendas in play for both countries. In the case of the German pavilion, Gisèle Freund noted that “it is a myth which prevails upon man”, which left no room for “photographic realism” (Kangaslahti, 2011, 198). Romy Golan has written, “the staging of the cultic effect […] was so successful that photographs seemed to have all but disappeared” (Golan 2018, 139-140).

In the case of the Soviets, previous advocates of the realism of the photographic image such as Gustav Klutsis had, by 1937, been humiliated into backing down, stating that “the assertions […] that the photo and photomontage have as their goal to squeeze out and replace painting and drawing are completely ridiculous and inaccurate” (ibidem, 137).

Thus by 1937, the artistic mythic suggestion had replaced photographic verisimilitude with painted image replacing the photographic ideology had replaced reality. However, the genres used in each case were different—Socialist Realism in the Soviet pavilion and Romantic Realism in the German one.

Socialist Realism, an art form designed to reflect and promote the ideals of a socialist society, had become “the official style of Soviet culture” in 1934 (first espoused at the First Congress of Soviet Writers). In the Soviet pavilion, a classic example was a large wrap-around mural in the inner sanctum of the Soviet pavilion which had been painted by Aleksandr Dejneka, portraying an idealisation of racial and cultural harmony in the Soviet Union showing “an airy, almost floating group of people dressed in white […] smiling as they advanced behind their leader” (Udovički-Selb 2012, 44).

In the case of Nazi Germany, T. W. Adorno wrote that Joseph Goebbels had spoken of Romantic Realism, a classically derived artform, as the new official doctrine for Nazi art (cited in Dahlhaus 1985, 58). Thus, artwork in the German pavilion, rooted in romantic imagery, consisted of “oil paintings of picturesque German landscapes and allegorical compositions” (Fiss, 328).

Perhaps by coincidence, the display in the German pavilion in Paris simultaneously took place with the antithetical *Entarte Kunst* (Degenerate Art) exhibition on display in Munich, displaying "denigrated artworks considered to be the products of decadent, Judeo-Bolshevist modernism" (ibidem).

The Discourse of Technology

Both Soviet and German pavilions sought to show the application of technology as part of their ideological narrative. Two areas of technology, however, highlighted their very different approaches.

The first difference is in automotive technology. Returning to Fig. 4, a streamlined prototype Mercedes racing car could be seen in the German pavilion; while in the Soviet, there was a mass-produced sedan (GAZ M-1) manufactured under the Ford Motor company's license. One is an example of innovative technology, the other derivative.

In the second, technologies of the moving image, the Soviet pavilion was content to show celluloid films to visitors. In contrast, the German pavilion had a theatrette where up to 200 people at a time watched its new television technology with programs which "were shown at intervals of 30 minutes, combining the play-back of films with live transmissions" (Fickers 2008, 301). The use by the Soviets of propaganda films was not exceptional (there was an entire French pavilion devoted to the cinema); television, on the other hand, was cutting-edge technology and was intended for more than mere entertainment. Andreas Fickers has posited that the viewing approach used in the German pavilion was in support of "National Socialist propaganda theory" since "the group reception of television in television halls ensured a consistent interpretation and minimised aberrant negotiations of meanings" (ibidem, 298).

In general, the Soviet Union was prepared to follow a derivative approach to technology, using innovations developed elsewhere, reflecting "the Soviet eagerness to catch up with America's technology" (Udovički-Selb 2012, 41). The German approach showcased a resurgent Germany promoting self-reliance through autochthonous technology. The futurist car and moving image technologies were just two examples of advanced German technology; Udovički-Selb noted that its pavilion housed several television circuits displays, including a video-telephone […] cutting-edge phenomena—Germany's visible "will to modernity" (Udovički-Selb 2012, 24).

The discourse of the Anthropic

In addition to painting, the human form was also represented in sculpture in both pavilions. Each had external statuary portraying its respective idealisation of the relationship of humanity and the state. Richard Overy has commented that “nothing quite encapsulates the contrasting image of the new humanity in the two dictatorships more completely” than the statuary outside these two pavilions (Overy 2004, 320).

Two statues at the entrance flanked the German pavilion. The one on the right consisted of three figures, two males in front with a raised female suggesting a guiding spirit. Sculpted by Josef Thorak, the statue was entitled *Kameradschaft* (Comradeship); Overy described the nude male figures as “models of so-called ‘Aryan’ man with bulging muscles and chiselled faces, standing defiantly side-by-side, one clasping the hand of the other in the expression of a unique comradely bond between race brothers and soldier-companions” (ibidem, 320). On the left of the pavilion was Thorak’s statue, entitled *Deutsche Mann und Deutsche Frau* (German Man and German Woman). This work also had three figures and idealised the male and female nude figures in the fore with a female spirit behind them.

The Soviet pavilion’s external statuary was of an order of magnitude many times larger than Thorak’s 5 m tall statues. Vera J. Mukhina sculpted a six-story high, forty-eight-ton stainless steel behemoth depicting two figures entitled *Rabochiy I Kolkhoznitsa* (male factory worker and female collective farm worker) jointly holding a hammer and sickle aloft. The statue promoted a “vision of a mythical working-class vanguard” (Udovički-Selb 2012, 27). Its figures were clothed in ideologically appropriate proletarian garb.

The siting of the statuary in each pavilion was also an ideological statement about their respective idealised stereotypes of humanity. In the Soviet, the work was placed atop the entire structure, with the tower becoming a mere pedestal to working-class heroes, symbols of Communism’s goal of a “dictatorship of the proletariat,” the *telos* of the communist project after the withering away of the state. On the other hand, the German pavilion placed idealised humanity at the foot of its pedestal, adorned by a symbol of an overarching, protective statehood: the eagle with a swastika.

The Discourse of Images of the Leader

The competing New Orders on display in the two pavilions paid different obeisance in their architecture and design to their leaders. In the Soviet pavilion, a statue of a seated Lenin was placed deep in the exhibition space, but it was the upright statue of Stalin in the inner sanctum which was key to the overall discourse of the structure. That statue was the linchpin between the two vectors, the enabler of the populace seeking direction to lead to a new future. In 1937, the cult of Stalin was still being established in the populace, though it had already permeated all tiers of the body politic. A local party report advised that "there must be more popularisation of the *vozhdy* (leaders) and love for them must be fostered and inculcated in the masses, and unlimited loyalty, especially by cultivating the utmost love for comrade Stalin" (cited in Davies 1997, 150).

Udovički-Selb has noted that "in sharp contrast with the Soviet's ubiquitous images of Stalin, virtually no portrait of Hitler was found in the German pavilion, a shrewd propaganda move by omission" (Udovički-Selb 2012, 24). The German pavilion was surprisingly understated regarding the leader of the Third Reich. The absence of his portraiture, however, was not as self-effacing as it might at first have seemed; for, unlike Stalin, Hitler was the embodiment of Nazi ideology as both its founding voice, the author of *Mein Kampf*, and its unchallenged contemporary leader, *führer*; thus, Hitler was present even in his absence. On the other hand, Stalin was neither the founder of Communism nor its Soviet expression; he was only an inheritor of the mantle who, in 1937, still felt the need to stamp his authority brutally upon that inheritance.

The Language of the Pavilions

Both the Soviet and Nazi regimes strove for the mastery of communication as elements of control rather than information. Hitler had understood the power of the slogan, having written that propaganda "must be confined to a few bare essentials and those must be expressed […] in stereotyped formulas. These slogans should be persistently repeated until the very last individual has come to grasp the idea that has been put forward […] The leading slogan must […] be illustrated in many ways and from several angles" (from *Mein Kampf*, cited in Project Gutenberg). For his part, Stalin understood the social engineering power of words, having told the First Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers in 1934 that "the production of souls is more im-

portant than the production of tanks […] and therefore I raise my glass to you, writers, the engineers of the human soul" (Wikipedia, *Engineers of the Human Soul*).

Very frequently, the enduring power of such propaganda had been through slogans. For the Nazis the overarching slogan summing up their propagandistic enterprise was *Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer* (One People, One State, One Leader). Even though there were many slogans used by the Soviets in the wake of the Revolution, in the context of the 1930s, perhaps Gustav Klucis' 1931 poster slogan "USSR—shock brigade of the world proletariat" best summed up the endeavour of Soviet propaganda in that decade.

However, the Soviet and German pavilions of 1937 were not intended for their domestic audiences, and they were addressing an international one, most immediately those attending the Paris Exposition and the broader world that was watching from afar. For Hitler, that meant nuancing the increasing brutalism of his domestic message, making it palatable through such means as the 1936 Berlin Olympics. A similar need to turn a blind eye to domestic repression led the Soviets to extol internationalism through peace. While both pavilions were remarkably bereft of obvious sloganeering, there was one emblazoned in a key position in the interior of the Soviet pavilion, which in part read: "We are determined to pursue the politics of peace with all our force and by every means" (English translation of the original, which was in French) (cited in Kangaslahti, 2011, 196).

Udovički-Selb has summed up the duplicity of both pavilions thus: "The German pavilion *concealed* reality behind a classical façade; the Soviet pavilion *substituted* reality with fiction" (Udovički-Selb 2012, 45–46). How did the various sub-components of discourse style contribute to this concealment and substitution? Both required media massaging; in the case of Soviet substitution, a visitor to the pavilion noted that "Russian authorities seized the opportunity to show all that had been done […] they supplied guides and lecturers, and you came away feeling that you knew something of the aspirations of industrial Russia" (Gloucester Journal 28/08/37, 11). While German concealment was achieved by obliterating any mass mobilisation imagery, à la the Nuremberg rallies from its pavilion.

Gastón Gordillo has written that "despite their ideological differences […] these different monuments were designed as affective weapons intended to create a bodily state of respect" (Funambulist website). While there was a relative absence of propaganda through text, both pavilions, through their architecture and design, created ideological "hieroglyphs" of structure, design, and art to communicate their distinctly different totalitarian visions of

an idealised future. Udovički-Selb has proffered the idea that the "most essential underlying difference between the German and the Soviet pavilions was the incarnation of two singularly different historical conditions: Epimetheus versus Prometheus" (Udovički-Selb 2012, 44). Epimetheus, the Titan representing Afterthought with his brother Prometheus, Forethought, have been described by Karl Kerenyi as "representatives of mankind" (Kerenyi 1951, 207); in Udovički-Selb's proposition, Nazi Germany looked backwards to a mythic Epimethean past for hope and inspiration, while the Soviet Union looked to a utopian Promethean future.

German Discourse of Architecture and Design

William J Dodd has described the "discourse practices of National Socialism […] (as being) an amalgam of historical discourses which had gained currency in the long C19 […] and (which) were intensified after the defeat of 1918" (Dodd 2018, 13). Each of the elements of architecture and design of the German pavilion spoke to this, with classical structure and reactionary vectors and rich colours in defiance of modernist simplicity all against a backdrop of pre-C20 style painting. However, this reactionary and nostalgic perspective chose to speak of a promised land to which Nazi ideology would lead the Volk. In 1933 they coined the word *Gleichschaltung*. The etymology of the word comes from *Gleich* (equally) and *Schalten* (to govern), with the latter having an even earlier Old Norse origin from *skalda* (ferryboat) (Merriam online dictionary). The pavilion intended to show a promised land, rich in history but evoking new technology from a rich and distinctly German heritage. Nevertheless, the journey to the promised land, the idealised future, would need a national socialist boat steered by the Führer as a helmsman.

This presentation all came together in a project that Karen Fiss notes intended that "journalists were expected to describe the German pavilion as the embodiment of the Third Reich's dignity, restraint, and quiet pride […]" (Fiss 2009, 55).

The Soviet Discourse of Architecture and Design

Until 1944, *The Internationale* was the "national" anthem of the Soviet Union, the chorus of which went: "Then, comrades, come rally! / And the last fight let us face. / The Internationale / unites the human race." Internationalism was a message which resonated with many in the 1930s and thus was the

spirit the Soviet pavilion addressed. Frank Lloyd Wright, who visited the pavilion, later addressed the First USSR Congress of Architects, held in Moscow in June 1937. In his closing address, he touched upon the Soviet architecture and design discourse, noting that “this tremendous social construction (the Soviet project) […] is calling upon Architecture for help and direction” (Laws, (https://culturedarm.com/1937-paris-international-exposition/)).

There was unintended irony in Wright’s reference to “this tremendous social construction,” for his words were spoken during considerable turmoil within Soviet architecture, which itself had been echoing the purges happening elsewhere in the country. Indeed, two different versions of Wright’s speech were published in Russian—one appearing in *Pravda,* the other printed in the journal *Arkhitektura SSR* each serving a distinct purpose in the task of engineering souls (Johnson 1990, 219).

There is no Russian word for *Gleichschaltung;* indeed, the concept had no resonance in the Soviet Union, which was premised on the idealised notion of the people and their hierarchy of *soviets* (councils). The spirit of the word “soviet” includes advice, harmony, concord, but in the 1930s, such “harmony” needed strong leadership. While the German discourse on architecture and design might have been settled while the Nazis were in power, there was, in 1937, no such finality to the debate regarding the Soviet discourse which Stalin was still in the stage of brutally shaping. His pavilion in Paris had echoed an internationalist spirit, but it would soon be replaced in the Soviet Union itself with Socialist Classicism which would predominate for the remainder of Stalin’s rule.

Fig. 5

Source: Alamy Photos

Conclusion

Fig. 5 shows the final salon, or inner sanctum, of each pavilion. These spaces summarised the discourse styles of the regimes as manifested at the 1937 Paris International Exposition.

The language of a system communicates the purposes, permissions, and boundaries of socio-political context. So, the inner sanctum of these pavilions potently spoke to those tasks in different ways in their separate answering of the three objectives of international expositions laid out by the 1928 Paris Convention.

The first objective of the Paris Convention was "exhibiting the means for meeting the needs of civilisation." To circumscribe a civilisation is to set boundaries. Those boundaries were distinctively different in the two pavilions. Murals portrayed the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet inner sanctum and the giant statue atop the building. On the other hand, a unified state of one people, the *Reich*, symbolised the swastika in an altar-like position in the German one.

The means of any system is by creating permissions to define the "who" permitted to flourish within its space; this relates to the second objective of the Paris Convention, "demonstrating the progress achieved in human endeavour." The murals of the Soviet inner sanctum showed a plural understanding of humanity, reflecting the multi-ethnic mix of the USSR and its internationalist viewpoint. This contrasted with the *ein Volk* homogeneity conveyed in the murals in the German pavilion. Thus, these two approaches posited a competition between internationalism and nationalist self-reliance to achieve human progress.

A system has an implied purpose by any logical analysis, a *raison d'être.* In a similar vein, the final objective of the Paris Convention called for "showing prospects for the future." The Soviet pavilion opted for a utopian future to be arrived at by "benign" leadership, with an optimistic spirit conveyed by the murals with the father of the journey, Stalin, as a centrepiece. However, the German pavilion anchored itself in the myth of Teutonic history, alluded to by the murals, with this nostalgic pride protected by the swastika-bearing eagle.

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