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postmasters 459 w 19 street nyc 10011 212 727 3323

fax 212 229 2829

postmasters@thing.net

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ENGINEERS OF THE SOUL Инженеры человеческих душ 人类灵魂的工程师

Photographs by Yuri Shalamoff



Panorama. A long wait to see the founding father of the USSR, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, lying in state in the mausoleum in the Red Square. Moscow, 1969

Having largely abandoned religion after the revolution in 1917, Soviet rulers remarkably kept some Russian Orthodox traditions, or rather adopted them to their own purposes. The Communist party became the new religion; its doctrine – the new bible. Icons were replaced by ever-present portraits of the Soviet leaders that were prominently displayed throughout the country. Deceased leaders acquired a status near sainthood. And the biggest symbol of the revolution – V.I. Lenin, who became a god-like figure behind the iron curtain, was embalmed and laid to rest in the Red Square to be viewed and revered by generations to come. It became a must on a visit to Moscow to spend up to a whole day queuing for a glimpse of the deceased leader's eerily yellowish body. The long lines to the mausoleum were a daily occurrence in the Red Square, irrespective of the weather.

Following the demise of the Soviet Union in the 1990's there were numerous calls for Lenin's body to be removed from the Red Square and properly buried. However, despite dismantling of many monuments, including that of Lenin, and other artifacts celebrating the revolution, Lenin's body remains in its place in Red Square to this day. Only the long lines of people are gone.



The opening ceremony of the Mamayev Kurgan World War II memorial. Volgograd (formerly Stalingrad), 1967

World War II and the horrific sacrifices of the nation, with over 20 million dead, have been kept fresh in the memory of the Soviet people. The Mamayev Kurgan memorial was created in honor of the Battle of Stalingrad – the bloodiest battle in the history of mankind. The battle was a decisive victory for the Red Army and turned the tide of the whole war.

At the time of its installation in 1967 the statue entitled "The Motherland Calls!" was the largest free-standing sculpture in the world. The ceremony held on the occasion of its erection was attended by all the top leaders and senior military brass. Its author and chief sculptor, Yevgeny Vuchetich, is seen presenting it to the Soviet leader at the time, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Leonid Brezhnev.



Nikita Khrushchev and Fidel Castro. Luzhniki stadium, Moscow. 1963

The year after the October missile crisis, Khrushchev decided to reaffirm his close friendship with Castro by organizing a huge gathering in Moscow's largest stadium, named after V.I. Lenin in Luzhniki. Whether jokingly or accidentally, Castro appears to be sticking his tongue out to Khrushchev in this shot.



Nikolai Bulganin, Prime Minister of the USSR. Leningrad, 1955

After Stalin's death in 1953 Bulganin moved into the first rank of the Soviet leadership, as he was appointed to the key post of Defense Minister. He was an ally of Nikita Khrushchev during his power struggle with Georgy Malenkov, and in February 1955 he succeeded Malenkov as Premier of the Soviet Union.

Here he is seen arriving for a historic meeting with Josip Broz Tito, President of Yugoslavia who was visiting Russia for the first time in seven years.



Ballistic missile in the Red Square. Moscow, 1971

In those not-too-distant times military parades in the Red Square were semi-annual events, meant to remind the world of the Soviet military might. A huge ballistic missile is rolling through the Red Square for the first time.



Cosmonaut Vladimir Komarov's funeral. Red Square, Moscow Mourning a friend. Cosmonauts Gagarin and Leonov (crying) in the Red Square, 1967 The Last Goodbye, Komarov's wife, 1967

Cosmonauts were granted a true hero status in the USSR and were awarded the Hero of the Soviet Union medal - the highest military award of the land. Throughout the entire history of the Soviet Union only a select few were buried in the Kremlin wall, e.g. Stalin. Komarov was the first publicly acknowledged casualty of the Soviet space program and as such was accorded the great honor of a place in the Kremlin wall.



Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin's funeral. Gagarin's widow and Alexei Leonov ,Red Square, Moscow. 1968

Yuri Gagarin was the hero of what is arguably the USSR's greatest achievement during peace time – being the first country to send a man into space – thus beating the US in the space race at the time. Gagarin's face became synonymous with the image of Russia that the Party leadership wanted to project throughout the world. Gagarin died during a training flight of a military plane MiG-15, which crashed near Moscow. Like Komarov's before him Gagarin's body was buried in the Kremlin wall in the Red Square.



Nikita Khrushchev and the Soviet winter Olympics team at a Kremlin reception. Moscow, 1964

Sport was always seen as a major propaganda tool by the Communist party. Victory in international competitions symbolized the superiority of the socialist state and its way of life – both to those in the West and the people at home. Almost unlimited funds were made available to create the Soviet "sports machine," and the results usually followed. Particular emphasis was given to the Olympic Games. Here Khrushchev – just six months before removal from office – appears to be truly enjoying the "fruits of his labor".



Flowers for the leaders - L. Brezhnev, N. Podgorny, A. Kosygin. Leningrad, 1967

In the days when the First Ladies of the USSR were non-existing entities (not until the time of Mikhail Gorbachev in the mid 1980's were Russian people introduced to the concept of a First Lady) and were almost never seen in public, the top leaders, nonetheless, were supposed to show their human side by displaying great affection for children. It was not uncommon for them to be met on their travels throughout the country by children with flowers. Here Leonid Brezhnev (Gen. Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, the actual leader of the country), Nikolai Podgorny (Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, a nominal President of the country) and Alexei Kosygin (Chairman of the Council of Ministers, an equivalent of a Prime Minister) are seen arriving in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), Russia's second city.



"Beauty and the Beast". Minister of Culture of the USSR Ekaterina Furtseva and Sofia Loren. Moscow, 1965

Furtseva was the first of only two women to ever be admitted into the ruling Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. During her time as the Minister of Culture she exerted immense influence on all aspects of Soviet culture – mostly repressive – showing particular interest in manipulating theater and cinema. But perhaps what made her particularly (in)famous was her response to one rather provocative question from a foreign journalist. When asked to comment on apparent presence of members of the world's oldest profession in a Moscow hotel frequented by foreigners, she angrily responded: "... in the Soviet Union there is no sex!"

In 1974, having been implicated in illegal commercial dealings, Furtseva committed suicide.

Here she is seen meeting Sofia Loren in her prime and visibly shaken by her beauty and glamour.



Yves Montand and Simone Signoret in the Red Square. Moscow, 1956

Yves Montand was a prominent member of the French Communist Party in the fifties. As such, he was a very welcome visitor to the Soviet Union. He later became disillusioned with the party and publically dumped his Communist party membership card in the center of Paris.