

By: Anne Odum and Wendy Salmond
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Introduction

From Preservation to the Export of Russia's Cultural Patrimony

ANNE ODOM *and* WENDY R. SALMOND

THE EXPORT OF Russia's cultural patrimony in the first two decades of Soviet rule required the development of a complex bureaucracy able to adapt to the changing political and economic imperatives of the young Soviet state as it struggled for survival. From 1918 to 1938, this bureaucracy oversaw a vast network of organizations (with constantly changing names) and individuals charged with marketing abroad the Russian art, antiques, books, and material culture confiscated from imperial palaces, churches, gentry estates, and bourgeois mansions.

In the immediate post-revolutionary years, these sales were a means of siphoning off the unwanted debris of imperial Russia to finance the cultural and ideological goals of the new regime. During the First Five-Year Plan (1928–1932), the scale of art exports threatened the integrity of Russia's most important cultural institutions and simultaneously flooded the international art market at the height of the Great Depression. Before the Soviet policy of art sales came to a halt on the eve of World War II, it had left an indelible mark on the cultural landscape of Russia and the course of art collecting in the twentieth century.

The 1917 Revolutions and Civil War, 1917–1921

In February 1917, bread riots and extensive revolutionary activities in Petrograd, as St. Petersburg was renamed in 1915, led to the abdication of Nicholas II on March 2 (OS).¹ The Provisional Government, under the leadership of the Constitutional Democrats, seized power in the vacuum, confining Nicholas and his family to the Alexander Palace and confiscating all imperial property.² Nonetheless, unrest prevailed throughout the country as dissatisfaction with Russia's devastating war losses and economic privation mounted. Hooligans and revolutionaries roamed the streets, looting the properties of the nobility

Imperial Tsarevich Easter Egg, 1912, firm of Fabergé, St. Petersburg. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond. Bequest of Lillian Thomas Pratt. Armand Hammer exhibited this egg at Lord & Taylor in 1933. Lillian Pratt purchased it that year.

and bourgeoisie, many of whom had fled. Numerous memoirs confirm the chaotic situation in the cities and countryside from February 1917 until well into 1918. Thievery was largely random and unorganized, with perpetrators ranging from soldiers and peasants to Bolshevik Party officials and anarchists. Their motives, in the words of Richard Stites, consisted of "a varying combination of envy, hatred, self-interest, and symbolism."³ The selling of personal possessions began immediately after the February revolution, particularly in urban areas, where people struggled to buy food or prepared to flee the country. As Baron Nikolai Vrangeli bitterly remembered, "Everything was for sale and everybody became a seller. Buyers were not lacking either. Members of the proletariat, red soldiers, commissaries, sailors—'The flower of the Revolution'—all had to set themselves up completely and to do so on a decent footing suitable to their new station. After all[,] people do not overthrow a throne in order to go on living as pariahs, and the women, and especially the sailors, were fond of jewels."⁴

By fall 1917, as the sense of panic increased, so did the selling. In June 1917 the newspaper *Novoe vremia* (New time) had printed an advertisement claiming that a U.S. corporation was ready to designate \$20 million for the purchase of Russian antiquities and paintings.⁵ Robert C. Williams details how in September William Boyce Thompson, head of the Red Cross in Petrograd, bought objects at auction and privately from individuals.⁶

Many Russians managed to escape the country with valuables in hand. Most common were jewels concealed in clothing, but Prince Feliks Iusupov left the Crimea not only with family jewels, gold boxes, and miniatures, but also with two rolled canvases by Rembrandt, all of which he eventually sold in the West.⁷ Many others who escaped with the dowager empress Maria Fedorovna from the Crimea in 1919 carried silverware, works by Fabergé—Maria Fedorovna fled with one of the Easter eggs given to her by her son, Nicholas II—and other treasures.

In Moscow and Petrograd, organized attacks against monuments and palaces did not begin until the Bolsheviks swept to power in October 1917. On the night of October 25–26 (OS), they stormed the Winter Palace, where the Provisional Government had established its headquarters; the next day, the government surrendered. Considerable looting and damage occurred during the storming, particularly in the private apartments of the imperial family, now under arrest in Tobolsk. Moisei Lazerson, president of the Admiralty Duma, entered the Winter Palace five days later and described the scene in his memoir.⁸ Upholstery on the chairs had been slashed, the eyes in portraits of imperial family members poked out, china crushed under foot, and countless items stolen. Even so, Lazerson concluded, "With the exception of a few articles, really valuable art-treasures had not been destroyed. A few costly objects had, of course, been either demolished or stolen, but they had

nothing whatever to do with art. On this occasion we convinced ourselves that the last Tsar and Tsaritsa possessed not the slightest artistic taste, and that in their private apartments they had surrounded themselves with objects the tastelessness and banality of which could hardly be excelled.”⁹

Within several days of the storming of the Winter Palace, Bolsheviks under orders from Petrograd bombarded the Kremlin, where *junkers* (cadets) were holed up. A number of Kremlin churches were damaged, and the sacristy of the patriarch’s church was looted.¹⁰ The attack outraged the intellectual community, particularly art historians and museum officials, many of whom supported the revolution. The Kremlin and the Winter Palace were quickly closed and placed under guard.

Some of the worst destruction took place in the countryside, beginning in February 1917 and continuing throughout the civil war, from 1918 to 1921. More than 10,000 estates had been left without owners, and many abandoned estate houses were looted and burned by radical peasants or townspeople intent upon revenge or simply taking advantage of departed landowners. The preservation of the buildings and the artifacts in them largely depended on the loyalty and political leanings of family retainers who had been left in charge, the local revolutionary authorities’ commitment to preservation, and the speed with which representatives from museum committees in the capitals could reach the provinces. The fate of these estates is the focus of Priscilla Roosevelt in chapter 1.

In July 1917, the Provisional Government established a series of commissions for inventorying the moveable property of the Petrograd palaces. These were essentially extensions of the Gor’kii Commission, a watchdog group of influential artists and critics founded informally that March at the suggestion of the writer Maksim Gor’kii (the pseudonym of Aleksei M. Peshkov) to ensure the protection of the capital’s cultural heritage.¹¹ One of their major accomplishments was cataloguing the contents of each of the summer palaces in the environs of Petrograd and providing a detailed description of their location in the hope that “the décor would never perish, or could at least be reconstituted if it did get dispersed.”¹² Aleksandr Polovtsov’s commission fought valiantly to save Pavlovsk in summer 1917,¹³ as Georgii Lukomskii’s did similarly at Tsarskoe Selo.¹⁴ Count Valentin Zubov, founder of the Institute of Art History, was less successful at Gatchina, despite the government’s order to preserve the palace. Upon the fall of the Provisional Government in October, revolutionary Red guards looted the palace after Aleksandr Kerenskii, the deposed leader, sought refuge there during his escape.¹⁵

When the Bolsheviks seized power in October, they immediately created Narkompros, the People’s Commissariat of Enlightenment, a new cultural administrative structure under the direction of Anatolii Lunacharskii. In

Petrograd and Moscow, they established *Komissii po Okhrane Pamiatnikov Iskusstva i Starina*, Commissions for the Preservation of Art and Antiquities, within Narkompros to protect important monuments and private collections from theft and damage; the commissions were composed mostly of the same people active since the summer. Emergency measures to counter revolutionary excesses included *okhrannye gramoty*, a system of certificates of protection that promised immunity from requisition and confiscation of properties and their contents. The precariousness of these measures is illustrated by the case of Princess Olga Palei, morganatic wife of Grand Duke Paul, whose palace at Tsarskoe Selo was considered a jewel of French eighteenth-century culture.¹⁶ Despite having a certificate of protection, she had to resort to paying off the local official with wine, and later money, to keep the palace intact in the early months of 1918.¹⁷ In almost all such cases—and there were many throughout the country—the local revolutionaries and soviets argued that the possessions of the ousted elite now belonged to the people, who should be allowed to use palace or manor house porcelain in their kitchens, while the furniture could serve the needs of local officials.

Many of the leading lights of pre-revolutionary antiquarian and artistic life, among them Alexandre Benois, Mstislav Dobuzhinskii, Igor' Grabar', Pavel Muratov, Lukomskii, and Count Zubov, continued to work with the Bolshevik government throughout the ensuing civil war to save museums, palaces, churches, and their contents. They cooperated fully with Lunacharskii and relied on his support in their preservation efforts. He was practically the only person in the leadership sympathetic to these "preservers of old junk," as the poet Vladimir Maiakovskii called them.¹⁸ Narkompros and its various subsections became the operational nexus not only for the avant-garde groups in the visual arts section, but also for those working for the Committee on Museum Affairs and the Protection of Works of Art, Antiquities, Folk Life, and Nature, *Glavmuzei* (1918–1922), and its successor, the museum section of *Glavnauka* (1922–1930).

One of the most successful preservation activities of the immediate post-revolutionary era was the work of the Commission for the Preservation and Restoration of Works of Early Russian Painting, headed by Grabar' and Aleksandr Anisimov and staffed by the most gifted icon restorers of the era. In a series of expeditions undertaken throughout Russia during 1918–1919, the commission obtained access to some of the most sacred icons in the country's monasteries and churches, thanks in large part to Patriarch Tikhon's blessing of their work, as Irina Kyzlasova discusses in chapter 2. Bringing important, often miracle-working, icons back to Moscow for examination and conservation, Grabar' and Anisimov laid the foundations for a distinctively Soviet school of icon restoration, and paradoxically, for the creation of an international market for icons as works of art.

The legal justification for this vast reorganization of the nation's cultural

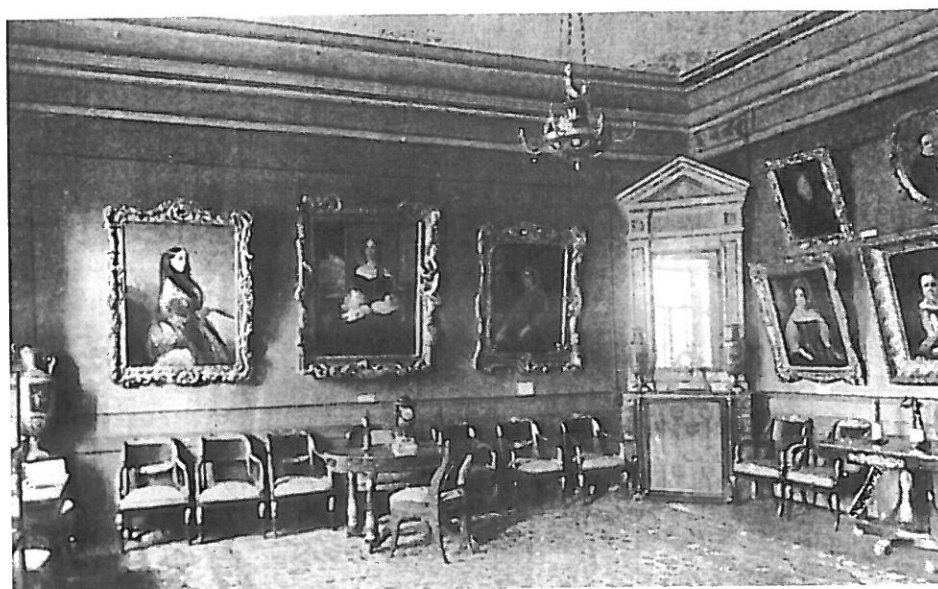
patrimony and property began with two decrees: On Land, issued in October 1917 to nationalize property and abolish its private ownership, and On Freedom of Conscience, Church and Religious Societies, published on January 23, 1918, to proclaim the separation of church and state and nationalize all church property. Throughout 1918, the Sovnarkom, Council of People's Commissars, issued additional decrees that systematically dismantled the entire structure of property ownership by the church, the imperial family, institutions, and private individuals. The right of inheritance was abolished and tight control placed on the right of émigrés to take works of art with them into exile. Soon, all works of artistic and historical importance had to be registered, and in fall 1918 the registration and nationalization of art works was extended to private holdings. These included the world-famous collections of Ivan Morozov, Il'ia Ostroukhov, and Sergei Shchukin along with the Bakhrushin Museum and the Treťiakov Gallery.

For the members of the old intelligentsia who staffed Glavmuzei, this was a longed-for opportunity to rationalize the nation's cultural patrimony and treat it professionally, in line with contemporary museum practice in Western Europe.¹⁹ They seized the chance to organize in public institutions the vast quantities of art and antiques that nationalization had made available, and in the process, create a coherent, comprehensive history of Russian art and culture. The next few years were a period of extraordinary experimentation in museum theory and practice. Glavmuzei created dozens of new public museums to house the material culture of the Old Regime that could have no place in the new state except in the context of public cultural institutions. The result was a process of *muzeifikatsiia*, "museification," on an unprecedented and accelerated scale.²⁰

By summer 1918, Peterhof, Pavlovsk, Gatchina, and the Catherine and Alexander Palaces at Detskoe Selo (as Tsarskoe Selo was renamed) had been opened as public museums. Visitors thronged to see the imperial residences, fascinated by a world hitherto unknown to them. In Moscow, as Natalia Semenova relates in chapter 3, eight "proletarian museums" were created in the former homes of the bourgeoisie where their furnishings and collections were put on display (Fig. 1).²¹ Museums devoted to furniture, porcelain, toys, the 1840s, and Old Moscow also appeared. The former owners sometimes remained as caretakers and guides in their "house museums": Aleksei Bakhrushin continued to oversee his collection of theatrical arts in Moscow, and Il'ia Ostroukhov maintained nominal stewardship over his magnificent icon collection. Ivan Shchukin's daughter Ekaterina led visitors around her father's famous collection of French impressionist paintings.²²

One of the most innovative of the new museum types was the *istoriko-bytovoi muzei*, museum of history and daily life—that is, palaces, estates, churches, and monasteries opened to the public that tried to preserve the

Fig. 1 Room of the 1840s in the First Proletarian Museum, Moscow. From *Sredi kollektsionerov* 4 (1922).



complete fabric and context of the pre-revolutionary past. In Petrograd, the Sheremet'ev Palace became a museum depicting the life of the nobility. Maria Fedorovna's residence, the Anichkov Palace, was incorporated with the Museum of Old Petersburg to become the Muzei Goroda, or City Museum.²² In 1920 Narkompros's Commission for Receiving Church Property, created in 1918 to register confiscated church property, began organizing museums in former monasteries, including at Boldino, Novyi Ierusalim, Optina Pustynia, Savvino-Storozhevskii, Tikhvin, and Troitse-Sergieva Lavra.²³ The value and boldness of these measures are particularly clear when it is recalled that between 1917 and 1920, the state liquidated 673 monasteries. Those who spearheaded these efforts, many with close ties to the Russian Orthodox Church, were thus able to preserve the material culture of the Church intact until well into the 1920s.

The Gosmuzeifond, the State Museum Reserve, became central to this grandiose project for preserving the legacy of the past. This vast reserve—on which all the country's museums could draw and of which their own collections were an integral part—allowed the free transfer of works of art among the country's institutions. In Petrograd, important private collections were transferred to the Hermitage, the Russian Museum, and the Shtiglits Museum. The Winter Palace was used initially as the collection point for confiscated goods, but by 1919 problems with security had led the authorities to designate the Novomikhailovskii Palace, the former residence of historian and collector Grand Duke Nikolai Mikhailovich, as the primary Petrograd depository of the Gosmuzeifond. There were also collection points at all the summer residences. Moscow had seven storage facilities.²⁴ In 1923 alone, officials added some 200,000 items to the Gosmuzeifond for distribution to the museum network.²⁵ As museum directors and curators opened their

institutions to the public, and emissaries and expeditions brought works of historic and artistic importance to the capitals, the inner circle of the Bolshevik Party began discussions on selling off the art accumulated.

When the Bolsheviks assumed power in 1917, they needed to rebuild the country's ravaged infrastructure. Convinced that revolutionary elements in Europe and the United States would soon follow their lead, they were also intent from the start on supporting international communist movements.²⁶ The Komintern, Communist International, was formed in spring 1919 and generated an inexhaustible demand for funds to be sent abroad.²⁷

As Elena Osokina explains in chapter 4, funding World War I had sorely depleted the Russian government's gold reserves. The Bolsheviks found it financially and ideologically essential to nationalize the banks in order to seize money and jewels belonging to the wealthy. This policy, implemented in January 1918, provided the Soviets with access to gemstones, which they smuggled to the West by various means, including diplomatic pouch.²⁸ The government financed the Martens Bureau for Soviet-American Trade in New York City in this way.²⁹ By some estimates, the Soviets sold \$300 million to \$400 million worth of jewels abroad, thereby throwing the European jewel market into crisis in the early 1920s.³⁰ That émigrés were also trying to sell their jewels abroad exacerbated the situation and further deflated the market.

In February 1919, less than two years after the creation of the Commission for the Preservation of Art and Antiquities, the Gor'kii Commission, authorities placed Maksim Gor'kii in charge of a very different body, the Petrograd Antiquarian Evaluation Commission, and charged it with evaluating and selecting objects to sell abroad through the Antikvarnyi Eksportnyi Fond, the Antiques Export Fund.³¹ The commission was also responsible for locating partners and syndicates through which to sell the art collected. Objects came initially from antique shops, pawn shops, and abandoned residences, but in 1919 authorities issued decrees to confiscate and seize property, particularly precious metals, precious and semi-precious stones, and pearls.³² In February 1920, the National Museum Fund of Narkompros, Gosmuzeifond's precursor, created Gokhran, the State Depository of Valuables, with a network of storage facilities in Moscow and Petrograd for the stockpiling of confiscated precious metals and gemstones.

The desperate straits in which the cash-strapped Bolshevik Party found itself by the end of 1919 can be seen in the feverish pace of decrees and instructions for collecting art and antiques for export, the creation of storage facilities, and the commissions created and charged with selecting items for melting down or for sale abroad. On October 26, 1920, the Sovnarkom instructed Narkomvneshtorg, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Trade, to offer a prize for the fastest and most profitable sales of antiques abroad.³³

The New Economic Policy, 1921–1928

By 1921 Russia had endured seven years of war, revolution, and civil war. The economy had collapsed, and famine gripped the southern and central agricultural regions. In the face of this crisis, in March 1921 Bolshevik Party leader Vladimir Lenin made the decision to revert from the economic policies of War Communism, with its nationalization of property and manufacturing along with requisitions and rationing, to one of small-scale capitalism that he called the New Economic Policy (NEP). A degree of normalcy returned to the small-business world. Food, clothes, and antiques reappeared in shops and open markets. The pages of *Sredi kollektionerov* (Among collectors), a Petrograd journal published from 1921 to 1924, are filled with reports of domestic and foreign art auctions and reveal the existence of a thriving community of collectors.³⁴ Articles describe the collecting of porcelain, books, and even bookplates, passions that seem far removed from the tragedies and privations of those years.

At the same time, famine in the Volga region had reached catastrophic proportions, affecting more than 20 million people. Patriarch Tikhon (opposite page 57) sent an early call to believers to contribute to the cause of alleviating hunger. On August 5, 1921, it was estimated that 10 million rubles had been collected from believers at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow.³⁵ In February 1922, the patriarch also recommended to Pomgol, the Committee to Aid the Starving, that unconsecrated church valuables might be melted down to buy grain.³⁶ Lenin, however, had no intention of letting the Church lead in this cause; on the contrary, he saw the famine as a pretext to destroy the power of the Orthodox Church by seizing control of its valuable moveable property—the jeweled icon covers, pearl-encrusted miters, gold and silver vessels, censers, candlesticks, and gold brocade vestments integral to the Orthodox rite.³⁷ On February 23, 1922, the government issued *On the Confiscation of Property without Museum Significance Located in Churches and Monasteries*, a decree ostensibly intended to aid the Volga famine victims. Lenin used a battle between believers and soldiers trying to collect valuables in the textile town of Shuia, northeast of Moscow, to justify a full-scale attack on the Church, which he laid out in a chilling top-secret letter to Viacheslav Molotov, a secretary of the Central Committee:

It is precisely now and only now, when in the starving regions people are eating human flesh and hundreds if not thousands of corpses are littering the roads, that we can (and therefore must) carry out the confiscation of the church valuables with the most savage and merciless energy, not stopping [short of] crushing any resistance. . . . We must . . . carry out the confiscation of church valuables in the most decisive and rapid manner, so as to secure for ourselves a fund of several hundred million gold rubles. . . . Without this fund, no government work, no economic construction in particular . . . is conceivable.³⁸



Fig. 2 The Classification Committee of Gokhran. Moscow, circa 1921. Moisei Lazerson, chair of the committee, is seated in the center. Professor Sergei Troinitskii, director of the Hermitage, is seated third from the left. From the Max Lazerson Collection, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University.

At the end of 1921, Lev Trotskii, the head of the Red Army that carried out the confiscations, was also appointed the Bolshevik Party's special plenipotentiary in charge of accumulating valuables. With his sights set firmly on world revolution, he was anxious to sell off the results of the confiscations as soon as possible, before the next proletarian revolution glutted the international art market and brought it to a standstill. Desperate to increase its holdings of exportable precious metals, the Sovnarkom created a special commission to expedite the process. Meanwhile, the American Relief Administration (ARA), headed by Herbert Hoover, was feeding 25 million people in the Volga region as funds from the liquidation of church valuables supposedly destined for famine relief were in fact being used for covert communist movements abroad.³⁹

In spring 1922, confiscations of church valuables proceeded relentlessly; they would continue for the next eighteen months. The raids on churches were methodical and far reaching. In Moscow, for example, authorities created hand-drawn maps, dated April 4, 5, and 6, 1922, to target all the churches in the prosperous Zamoskvorech'e region.⁴⁰ In Petrograd, the Kazan' Cathedral and the St. Aleksandr Nevskii Lavra, two of the city's richest churches, experienced official confiscations in the late spring. The cathedral's iconostasis, made of trophy silver that the Cossack general Matvei Platov had captured from the retreating French army in 1812, went into the melting pot.⁴¹ The silver sarcophagus over the tomb of St. Aleksandr Nevskii barely escaped the same fate.

Experts from Glavmuzei oversaw operations and ensured that works of historical and artistic value were spared (Fig. 2). According to instructions

issued by Nataliia Trotskaia, head of Glavmuzei, designated experts of Narkompros were to sort the confiscated goods into three categories: anything made before 1725 should be considered of museum or historical importance and set aside for Narkompros to handle; everything made after 1835 should go to Gokhran for melting; examples of Orthodox liturgical art from the period 1725 to 1835, "reflecting Louis XV, XVI and Empire styles," were considered likely to suit the taste of potential European buyers and so were designated items of export quality.

Vessels used for liturgical purposes were supposed to be exempt from seizure, but this rule was often neglected in the heat of the confiscations. The extremely high number of objects destroyed or damaged as a result of careless handling during the collection process reflected the confiscations' broader purpose of bringing the Orthodox Church to its knees. Glavmuzei's experts struggled to counter the professional revolutionaries' desire to put everything in the pot as scrap for melting into raw materials. In one four-month period, they managed to save 14,000 objects out of 24,000.⁴² They sent approximately 3,000 museum-quality pieces to the Hermitage, where these objects were exhibited in 1923.⁴³ The vast majority of items confiscated in the course of 1922–1923 were sent to various collection points, the largest being Gokhran's storehouse in central Moscow. By July 1923, more than 20,000 parcels of precious metals, including a half million kilos of silver, had been assembled.

The government's massive economic needs made it inevitable that its attention would next turn to museum collections as a source of hard currency. The first concerted assault took place in June 1922, when the Sovnarkom decreed the confiscation of "items of high material value [gold and silver] from museums."⁴⁴ Yet another special commission was appointed to select goods for export, with Grabar' and Sergei Troinitskii representing the interests of Glavmuzei. After first collecting valuables from the historic Troitse-Sergieva Lavra that had been removed to the Kremlin Armory, the commission moved on to the storerooms of the Hermitage, the Russian Museum, and the Shtiglits Museum in Petrograd.

As income from these sources fell far short of expectations, officials considered more controversial sources of revenue. In 1921 the regime had begun to inventory the crown jewels, which had been removed to Moscow for safekeeping in 1914 at the beginning of World War I (Fig. 3). Valuables, including Fabergé Easter eggs from the Alexander Palace (the principle residence of Alexandra Fedorovna) and the Anichkov and Gatchina Palaces (the residences of Maria Fedorovna), as well as paintings and other works of art from the State Hermitage—had been moved to Moscow in late 1917 to protect them against a possible German advance on Petrograd. The eggs and crown jewels then languished in crates in the Kremlin Armory until their discovery in January 1922.



Fig. 3 The Committee for Appraisal of State Treasures, Moscow, circa 1922. Courtesy Sotheby's London.

Carl Fabergé's son Agathon, who had once been responsible for the care of the crown jewels, was released from prison to assist with their appraisal and inventory, supervised by the well-known gemologist Aleksandr Fersman.⁴⁵ On December 18, 1925, the jewels went on display in the Colonnade Hall of the House of Trade Unions, the former Noblemen's Assembly (Fig. 4). According to the catalogue of the most important treasures, published in English by Narkomfin, the People's Commissariat for Finance, the exhibition was clearly intended to defuse rumors that the Bolsheviks had sold the jewels.⁴⁶ Sir Martin Conway, a British member of Parliament, was shown the jewels and other treasures on a visit to Moscow, and like many other foreign observers, reported favorably on the Soviet regime's care of its cultural heritage.⁴⁷ In fact, the Bolshevik leadership was seriously considering selling the jewels, but their sale "constantly met with insurmountable obstacles, owing to the fact that there were no buyers for the jewels, while the diamonds would have realized, in the event of a sale, only a trivial part of their real value."⁴⁸



Fig. 4 State treasures in 1923 photo. From *Russia's Treasure of Diamonds and Precious Stones* (Moscow: Narkomfin, 1925), in the collection of the Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens Art Library.

The more radical supporters of the new regime believed the jewels should be sold because they represented "the foulest type of bourgeois luxury," while others agreed with one curator of the jewels who thought they should turn "diamonds into tractors." Still others resisted, arguing that the jewels were part of the nation's heritage and should not be alienated. Eventually, in March 1927, the Soviet government sold a selection of the crown jewels at Christie's in London through a consortium of French and British dealers. (See Anne Odom's discussion of the sale of the nuptial crown in chapter II.) It remains unclear why the jewels were sold at this time or how they were selected; this effort may have been an attempt to test the jewel market. According to contemporary reports, more of them were not sold because no one was willing to pay the right price.⁴⁹

On April 19, 1923, the Sovnarkom passed On Special Funds for Securing the State Protection of Cultural Valuables, a decree to allow the nation's network of museums to charge admission, rent out their premises, and sell off surplus property to help ease the burden on the state treasury of maintaining these institutions. At the same time, in an effort to stimulate the domestic antiques market, the government released onto the open market 23,000 works from nationalized private collections in the Gosmuzeifond.⁵⁰ The state frequently held local sales and auctions to manage this mass of objects and paintings and to provide Glavmuzei with an operating budget. The items included museum pieces described as "duplicates . . . not directly linked to the activity of the museum in question and not being essential for other museums of the RSFSR."⁵¹

As the economic situation deteriorated under the NEP, the museums proceeded to lay off large numbers of staff; many had barely enough money to guard their collections. By 1923 all eight proletarian museums in Moscow had closed. Some of their exhibits were moved to the Porcelain Museum and the Museum of Furniture, while paintings were transferred to the Tre'tiakov Gallery, but many more works of art were deposited in the Gosmuzeifond to be considered for acquisition by other museums or for sale. The same story unfolded in Leningrad (formerly Petrograd), although the palace museums lasted somewhat longer. The Iusupov and Shuvalov Palace Museums closed in 1925, the historic rooms in the Anichkov Palace in January 1928, and the Sheremet'ev Palace in 1932. Their contents went directly onto the export market.

The NEP proved to be a grim period for Soviet museums because of the government's increasing willingness to cull from museum collections and its insistence that museums become more economically self-sufficient. In January 1926, the museums received instructions to sell "unneeded and damaged property and gosfonds without museum significance"; the government promised them 60 percent of the proceeds to supplement their diminishing budgets.⁵² Palace museums received some of the revenue from the sale of clothes,

draperies, table linens, porcelain, and silver from palace wardrobes and pantries. In the monastery museums, vestments were among the first things to go, often sold to dealers who melted them down for their gold and silver content. By 1927 so much was being sold on the domestic market that prices fell dramatically.⁵³ Mikhail Zoshchenko's satirical short story *The Tsar's Boots* (1927) captures the mood of this extraordinary time, when the personal effects of the imperial family could be had for a song.

Meanwhile, the foreign market for Russian antiquities began to grow, especially in Berlin, where the Soviet trade mission became the center of operations for promoting art commerce with other European centers, particularly Paris and Vienna. The promulgation of the Rapallo Treaty with Germany in spring 1922 had reestablished diplomatic relations between the two countries and removed barriers to the sale of Russian antiquities in that country. In 1923 Gostorg, the State Import-Export Trading Office, reached an agreement with the Berlin auction house of Rudolph Lepke, which pledged to pay in advance for antiques. Lepke's experts obtained access to the Gosmuzeifond storerooms, establishing a trend allowing dealers and syndicates to take their pick of the stockpiled items. The government established the Knizhnii Fond, the Book Reserve, as Gosmuzeifond's equivalent in the arena of antiquarian books and in 1923 created Mezhhniga, shorthand for Mezhdunarodnaia Kniga, or International Books, to dispose of books abroad.

In the months leading up to the demise of the NEP and the introduction of the First Five-Year Plan, government officials continued to investigate new avenues for turning art into foreign currency. In October 1927, Narkomtorg, the People's Commissariat for Trade, set its first export targets for antiques (half a million rubles for the last quarter of the year). As Waltraud Bayer recounts in chapter 8, trade officials vigorously courted auction houses in Berlin, Paris, and Vienna, as well as established dealers, among them Germain Seligman. In fall 1927, Commissar of Trade Anastas Mikoian offered Seligman an opportunity to sell in Paris the mountains of antiques and furnishings stockpiling in Moscow. Seligman described one hall in the storerooms: "[It] gave the impression of being a great cave of ormolu and gilt bronze, with stalactites and stalagmites of gold and crystal. Hanging from the ceiling, standing on the floor or on tables, was an incredible array of chandeliers and candelabra. . . . Nor were the tables they stand on any less resplendent, with ormolu ornaments, and tops of marble, onyx, agate, or that vivid green malachite of which the Russians are so fond."⁵⁴ With his sights set on acquiring Watteaus and Matisse from former private collections, Seligman became annoyed with his tour and finally convinced the Soviets that he did not deal in ordinary *objets*. Later, when Old Master paintings came up for sale, he regretted not having been more patient.

First Five-Year Plan and Cultural Revolution, 1928–1932

Unsystematic and uncoordinated, the sales that occurred before 1928 caused little serious damage to Russia's major art holdings, but the sheer scale of the material culture lost and the eradication of provenance that resulted from the creation of the Gosmuzeifond resulted in serious long-term repercussions. More than one observer has noted that the motivations driving the sales during the NEP were as much to obliterate the memory of the past as to profit from it because the income generated must have been modest relative to the party's needs. By comparison, the sales that took place from 1928 to 1932 left a scar on every museum that stands to this day. In the immediate post-revolutionary period, the museums stood as the apparent beneficiaries of the Old Regime's destruction, but they soon became victims, with irreplaceable national treasures being lost, primarily at the hands of Antikvariat, which was responsible for trade in art and antiques.

As Joseph Stalin consolidated his power in the wake of Lenin's death in 1924, many of those who had initially staffed the cultural institutions of Narkompros emigrated, lost their jobs, or suffered arrest; museums and small businesses were forced to close. A full-scale cultural revolution ensued that destroyed individuals and alienated world-class works of art. In December 1927, the Fifteenth Party Congress launched the First Five-Year Plan for the accelerated build-up of heavy industry. The achievement of this goal required a major infusion of hard currency to build new factories and purchase machinery, including the tractors that symbolized the mechanization of agriculture and the collectivization of the countryside.

Since 1924 the Soviet Union had suffered a negative trade balance for all but one year and by the end of 1927 faced a catastrophic budget deficit.⁵⁵ To fund the First Five-Year Plan, Stalin and his lieutenants sought to earn 30 million rubles from the sale of art.⁵⁶ On January 23, 1928, the government issued the decree On Measures to Intensify the Export and Realization of Antiques and Works of Art. Four days later, as Rifat Gafifullin describes in chapter 6, authorities summoned the directors of the Leningrad museums to discuss the selection of valuables from their collections for export. Commission shops and auction houses were forbidden to sell items that could be sold abroad for foreign currency. It was also recognized that "the entire Gosmuzeifond can be transferred to the export fund." In Leningrad the local museum fund was ordered to pick out, in just one month, 3 million rubles worth of objects for sale. Extra workers had to be hired to type up the lists of requisitions from the museums.⁵⁷ In keeping with the spirit of the times, special "shock brigades" were sent to museums, palaces, and libraries, as well as to the former Gosmuzeifond facilities, to ensure that quotas were met.

At the beginning of 1925, in an attempt to gain a complete monopoly over what was still a disorganized and decentralized market, Narkomtorg had

established Antikvariat as the central authority for “realizing valuables without museum significance.” (Antikvariat operated under Gostorg.) By 1927 the regime had eliminated organizations that might interfere with Antikvariat’s monopoly on exporting art, antiques, and books.⁵⁸ Providing an ideological rationale for the sales, Glavpolitprosvet, the party’s direct representative in Narkompros, wielded increasing power, and the demand grew for Soviet museums to function as the “beachhead for organizing the thinking of the masses”—that is, to make the teaching of dialectical materialism and class struggle their primary task.⁵⁹ Intolerance grew of anything that smacked of sympathy for the Old Regime. The rhetoric of unmasking class enemies and “storming the heavens”—attacking religion—intensified.

Antikvariat’s leadership, with few restrictions on its authority, embarked on an ambitious marketing campaign. In quick succession, it liquidated the Anichkov, Elagin, and Stroganov Palace Museums and prepared their contents for sale. A series of three export exhibitions were held in the Gatchina, Novomikhailovskii, and Pavlovsk Palaces, settings intended to lend the individual objects confiscated from the imperial palace museums a special cachet and to tempt foreign dealers, like the president of the Lepke auction house in Berlin. Sergei Troinitskii, director of the Hermitage, was dispatched to London and Paris to organize similar auctions there. Keenly aware of the potential value that an aristocratic or imperial provenance could lend, Antikvariat hoped to sell the contents of the Stroganov and Pavlovsk Palaces *in toto*, reasoning that items of lesser intrinsic importance would sell more easily purely because of their pedigree.

Glavnauka’s production plan for 1929–1930 clearly delineated the new priorities. The previous year, its budget had been drastically cut, from 5,704,173 to 470,200 rubles. Its new goals included the following:

Carrying out its annual share of the task of “Catching up with and outstripping the capitalist countries of America and Europe in the tempo of developing socialist economy.” . . . 5) Involving the institutions of Glavnauka in solving the problems of export and import . . . 7) Intensifying the struggle on the ideological front for a Marxist and materialist worldview, with maximum penetration of Marxist principles into the work of scientific and museum institutions.⁶⁰

The tasks of Glavnauka’s museum section included “realizing gosfonds without museum value, realizing metals (bells, canons, etc.) to meet the needs of industry, selecting from gosfonds objects of export value and transferring such objects to Gostorg’s Antikvariat for realization on the foreign market.”⁶¹

A landmark event in the escalation of Antikvariat’s operations was the famous Lepke auction of November 6–7, 1928, in which the Soviets offered for sale unique works of European painting, furniture, and decorative arts from

the Winter, Anichkov, and Gatchina Palaces. (See chapter 9 for Wolfram Koeppe's discussion of the fate of Roentgen furniture sold at this time.) Lepke held a second sale in early June 1929, just months before the stock market crash; and in July the entire contents of the Palei Palace were auctioned in London. What fundamentally distinguished the sales of this period from what had gone before was the fateful and unprecedented decision to tap the most important of the country's museum and palace collections. Although the major museums and summer palaces remained open as popular tourist attractions, between 1928 and 1933 their collections suffered irreparable losses. The damage inflicted on the State Hermitage and Pavlovsk are meticulously detailed in chapters 5 and 6 by Elena Solomakha and Rifat Gafullin, respectively.

The attitude of the international community toward these events was revealed in November 1928, when more than sixty émigrés claimed ownership of works offered at the Lepke auctions in Berlin, but lost their lawsuit on the grounds that the nationalization of property in 1917 had been a legal act by a government that Germany had recognized. In 1929 Princess Palei unsuccessfully brought suit against the dealer Norman Weisz in an effort to prevent the sale of her collection at auction in London.⁶² In 1931 the Wallace H. Day Galleries, at 16 E. 60th Street in New York, held an exhibition of decorative arts formerly belonging to the imperial family that it intended to auction off on January 29. A suit brought by Grand Duchesses Ksenia and Olga halted the sale only temporarily. The press reported protests at the opening of a major Soviet loan exhibition of icons at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in late 1931, but these aroused no more than a passing interest. (Wendy Salmond discusses this loan exhibition in chapter 10.) Nevertheless, the threat of lawsuits and their attendant embarrassment made Soviet trade officials more cautious than they previously had been about what they publicly offered for sale abroad.

The most notorious dealings during this period were the covert sales of Old Master paintings from the Hermitage to Calouste Gulbenkian and Andrew Mellon, in part through the mediation of the Matthiesen Gallery and Knoedler & Co. Elena Osokina, in chapter 4, vividly describes the intrigues and double-dealing within Antikvariat as its leadership connived, ultimately unsuccessfully, to manipulate dealers and collectors. Robert C. Williams was the first to point out the irony of how Mellon, who as secretary of the Treasury was supposed to be preventing the dumping of matches, lumber, and asbestos on the U.S. market, was at the same time facilitating the dumping of "oils" into his private collection.⁶³ Similar motivations made it possible for Gulbenkian, an oil tycoon, to submit his own wish list of Hermitage paintings, manuscripts, and decorative arts, now in his personal museum in Lisbon. Elena Solomakha and Elena Osokina shed new light on the difficult negotiations between the State Hermitage and representatives for Mellon and the art dealer Joseph Duveen.

The losses sustained by public and imperial libraries were also significant, although as Patricia Kennedy Grimsted points out in chapter 13, their precise extent is only now being documented. On a par with the loss of paintings from the Hermitage was the sale of the Codex Sinaiticus Petropolitanus to the British Library and the removal from the Russian National Library (formerly the Imperial Public Library) in Leningrad of the only Gutenberg Bible in the country. Many manuscripts and incunabula also landed on the international market.

Attempts to protect museum collections almost always proved to be fruitless.⁶⁴ Anatolii Lunacharskii categorically protested the first proposal to draw on museum collections, for which he was formally censured by the party; in 1929 he resigned as head of Narkompros. The government demoted or removed from their posts a number of museum directors who resisted plans to gut collections, including Sergei Troinitskii of the Hermitage and Sergei Troinovskii of the Kremlin Armory, as well as curators, among them Aleksandr Anisimov, head of the Department of Religious Life at the Moscow Historical Museum. Entire organizations, such as the State Central Restoration Workshops in Moscow, were purged and their staff arrested. Museum professionals in the provinces and in Ukraine met with similar punishment. Thus, the insatiable quest for hard currency decisively won out over preservation efforts.

In 1934 Tat'iana Chernavina, who began her museum career organizing the archives at Pavlovsk, wrote the sad conclusion to this period: "Sometimes we actually fancied that the State would be grateful to us some day. Alas! The three of us who did most for Pavlovsk have all been imprisoned since. It was the same elsewhere; museum workers ended in prison or exile, and the art treasures they preserved so carefully during the awful years of famine have been sold to foreign countries."⁶⁵

As Konstantin Akinsha and Adam Jolles point out in chapter 7, the radical shift in Soviet museum culture in this period facilitated the sales drive, as museum educators turned away from the previous focus on preserving elite culture and used their collections to illustrate the politics of class struggle. This new ideological emphasis is reflected in comments made by travelers, such as Louis Fischer, an American journalist who visited the Soviet Union in the early 1930s. Fischer noted that "the homes of the czars are utilized as object lessons in anti-monarchist propaganda."⁶⁶ Anne O'Hare McCormick, a correspondent for the *New York Times* who visited the Soviet Union in 1929, gives a more specific example. At Tsarskoe Selo, her guide, who thought the rooms of Nicholas II "hideous," said, "You see the kind of thing they admired? You observe that the Tsaritsa was mad and that the Tsar was nothing?"⁶⁷ This message differed significantly from the one delivered in the early 1920s, when visitors and guides marveled at the great achievements of Russian architects and artists (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5 The original caption for this photograph reads, "Artisans ruthlessly obliterating names from age-old works of art. For *Romanoff*, they substitute *New Moscow Hotel*, and tourists who steal spoons are just as happy." From James E. Abbe, *I Photographed Russia* (New York: National Travel Club, 1934).



In this climate of so-called vulgar sociologizing, Marxist theories of museum display helped to validate Antikvariat's raids on the country's major museum collections. In a backlash against the perceived "museum fetishism" of the old intelligentsia who had established the structure of Soviet museums, a new cadre of Marxist curators and educators argued against the need for pairs or sets of objects where one would suffice. It was even suggested that museums need not show original works at all.⁶⁸ Similar tactics prevailed in the museums of atheism that sprang up as a result of the war on religion, which like the collectivization of the countryside, was an integral part of the First Five-Year Plan. In Moscow alone, the authorities razed fifty religious buildings, among them the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, the Chudov monastery in the Kremlin, the Simonov monastery, and the Church of the Kazan' Mother of God, and the Chapel of the Iberian Mother of God, both located at the entrance to Red Square. This new wave of church closures, together with the dissolution of church and monastery museums, brought many more liturgical objects and textiles onto the market.

Soviet authorities insisted that the sales did not "mean that the country's paintings, jewels, and other works of art are being sold merely to replenish the dwindling funds in the State coffers, but that museums are overfilled and most of the pieces offered for sale represent duplicates."⁶⁹ To some degree this was true, but as is now known, unique works of art were also being sold for foreign currency. Archival documents reveal that the sales of valuables in 1927 were four times as great as in 1921. From fall 1927 through 1928, sales grew tenfold, eventually peaking in 1930. After 1932 they declined to their 1927 level, and by 1940 they had virtually ceased.⁷⁰ The decline in sales reflected the low prices being paid for art and antiques on the Western market and the glut that Soviet dumping had created.

The Soviet tourist industry that emerged during the First Five-Year Plan became an integral part of the evolving sales mechanism. Authorities built shopping into the tourist system as yet another way to extract foreign currency from the visitors who came in the thousands after the establishment of the Intourist agency in 1929. In 1931 the government created the system of Torgsin, Trade with Foreigners, retail stores designed to entice foreign currency from tourists and foreign specialists in search of scarce foodstuffs and antiques, but also “to attract to the national exchequer any foreign currency, gold, silver, jewelry and religious ornaments which had been hoarded, since the revolution, by former well-to-do Russians” (Fig. 6).⁷¹ Travelers’ reports confirm the virtual impossibility of getting a bargain in the Torgsin stores, so thoroughly was everything for sale vetted. Forbidden to take rubles out of the country, tourists got rid of them in the state-run commission shops or unloaded leftover currency in the Torgsin stores, buying the porcelain, silver, paintings, and icons deemed unsuitable for export.⁷² As one émigré newspaper reported in 1931,

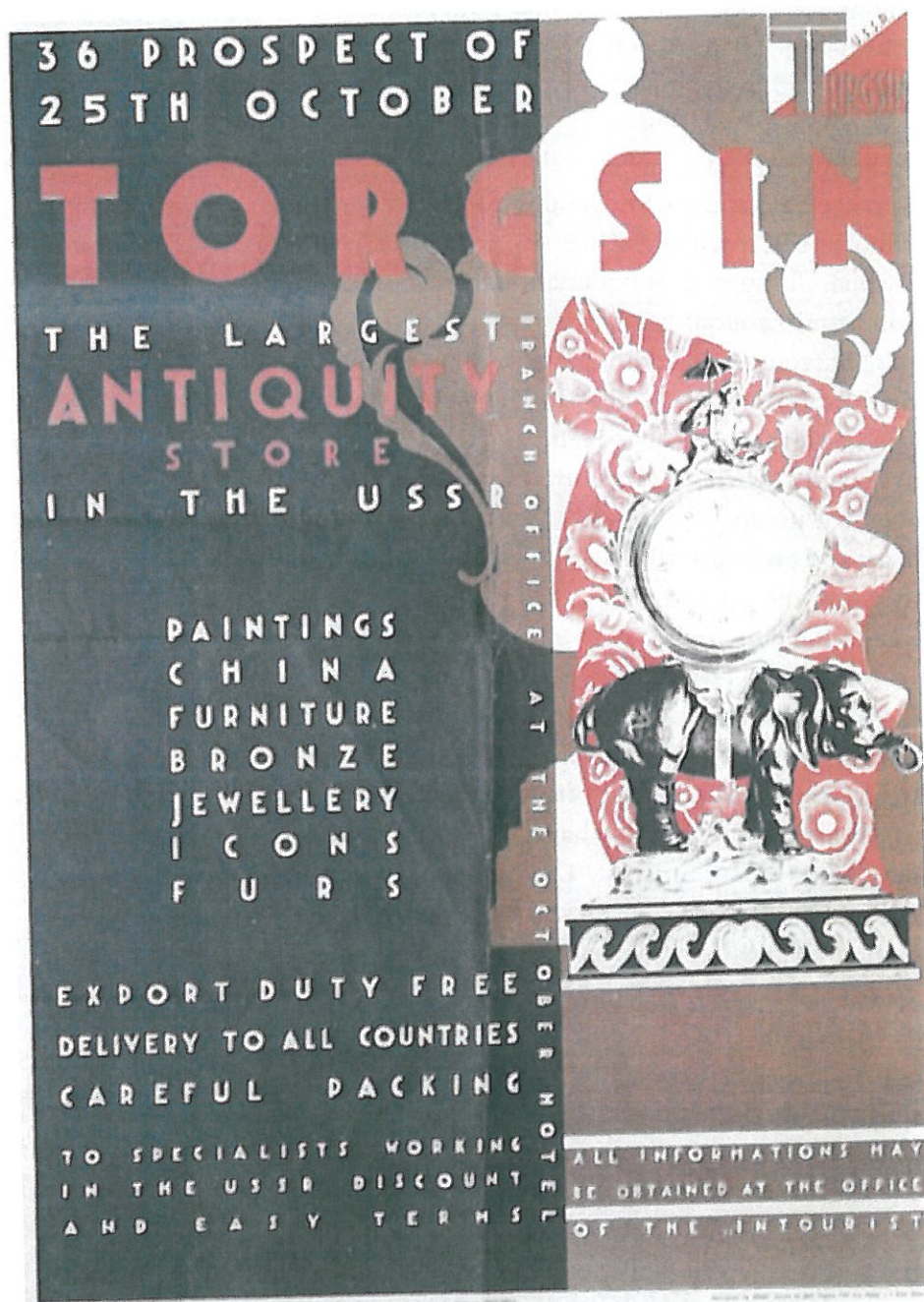
You won’t find first-class works of art here. . . . The state sells those in auctions abroad. You can buy icons of average quality, furniture, silverware (with the initials and often the coats-of-arms of their former owners), cigarette cases, miniatures, parts of Sèvres dinner sets, crystal, lots of Russian porcelain and glass, and a lot of kустar wares. For the casual shopper there’s enough interesting stuff for presents, but the real connoisseur will rarely happen on anything worthwhile. The prices aren’t any lower than in any shop in Europe, and the only ones likely to be tempted to buy are those obliged to spend their rubles or leftover foreign currency.⁷³

Documents recently published on items deaccessioned from Ukrainian museums confirm the modest quality of the items set aside for domestic tourist consumption: a jade letter opener, a silver breast badge, two silver gilt crosses, a gold pendant with enamel and pearls removed from the Shevchenko All-Ukrainian Historical Museum.⁷⁴ Items of more considerable value—for example, *kovshi*, goblets, Augsburg enamel bowls—were requisitioned by Antikvariat’s Expert Valuation Commission and transferred to Leningrad to be put on the export market.

Creating Markets

In organizing its export strategies, Antikvariat gave considerable thought to the requirements and market potential of each nation. After an initial sorting of its enormous stocks—one portion destined for Western Europe, the other for the United States—Antikvariat’s staff worked with its agents abroad, generally the staff of the Soviet trade missions, to identify potential customers and middlemen.

Fig. 6 Torgsin poster, circa 1931–36.
Courtesy Larry Zeman and Howard
Garfinkel, Productive Arts, Brooklyn
Heights, Ohio.



Western Europe

Berlin emerged as the most active and cooperative European center for these activities thanks to Germany's early recognition of Soviet Russia and to the presence at the Soviet trade mission of Mariia Andreeva, Gor'kii's common-law wife and an enthusiastic proponent of art exports. By contrast, the Soviet trade representatives in Paris and London "openly refused" to participate in activities that brought little credit to the Soviet Union's reputation abroad.⁷⁵

By 1930 local and émigré newspapers in Berlin, London, Paris, and

Prague brimmed with reports on Soviet art sales.⁷⁶ Europe's leading auction houses—the state-owned Dorotheum in Vienna and Rudolph Lepke's in Berlin—and well-known antique stores—such as Wartski in London and A La Vieille Russie and Popoff in Paris—were dealing in high-quality treasures from imperial and noble collections. Fine volumes from the libraries at Tsarskoe Selo and the Stroganov Palace found their way into the inventories of Gilhofer & Ranschberg (Lucerne), S. A. Georg Librairies (Paris), Joseph Baer Buchhandlung und Antiquariat (Frankfurt), Maggs Brothers, and William H. Robinson (London).

There were in addition a number of dealers, agents, and intermediaries about whom far less is known. The names of Norman Weisz in London and Michel Norman, Jacques Helft, and a certain De Haan in Paris all appear in newspaper articles and archival documents. These individuals seem to have operated independently and as members of consortia to facilitate the export of art and antiques from the Soviet Union. As a consortium, they could afford to buy whole collections, as was the case with the Palei collection and a selection of the crown jewels.

In 1928 a collective of prominent émigré dealers and collectors mounted the first exhibition of Russian art in Brussels. Perhaps launched in part as a gesture of opposition to the Soviet regime and its heavy-handed tactics to sell “their” patrimony, their efforts to promote the romance and elegance of lost imperial culture must also have played a part in fueling a market demand for the objects they cherished. The Brussels organizers were inspired by Sergei Diaghilev's landmark exhibition of Russian art at the 1906 Paris Salon d'Automne exhibition, which epitomized the cosmopolitan aesthetic of the World of Art group.⁷⁷ The following year, an exhibition of Russian porcelain was held at Sèvres.⁷⁸

The largest of these European émigré exhibitions took place in 1935 in Belgrave Square, London.⁷⁹ It included icons, paintings, sculpture, and decorative art loaned by émigrés as well as British subjects who had acquired Russian works of art years before the revolution as part of the normal business of diplomatic relations, trade, personal friendships, and royal connections. (Even Queen Mary was an enthusiastic collector of Fabergé.) One of the largest lenders to this show was Wartski, the London antique firm owned by Emmanuel Snowman. The extraordinary upsurge in the reputation of the Fabergé workshops in Europe can be dated to this period of émigré promotional exhibitions. Henry Bainbridge, manager of Fabergé's London shop before the revolution, fanned the store's reputation still further when he published his first articles on the workshops in 1933.

The United States

Robert C. Williams was the first to explore the dimensions of the U.S. mar-

ket for Russian art, for which, as is now known, the Soviets had special plans. Not only were American buyers believed to have bottomless pockets, but during 1928–1932, the boom years of the state-run art sales, the U.S. government had not yet officially recognized the Soviet Union. The Bolsheviks viewed cultural diplomacy as a path toward recognition. Amtorg, the Soviet trading organization in New York, was Antikvariat's contact in the United States and advised that in addition to their interest in cheaper, *kustar*, or peasant crafts, Americans were interested in buying antiques, icons, and paintings.

As Anne Odom relates in chapter 11, Americans had little knowledge of or exposure to Russian art before the twentieth century, and only after the 1917 revolution did interest in Russian art build in the United States. Soviet marketing initiatives focused on two cultural commodities: the arts of the Orthodox Church—that is, icons and liturgical vestments, and the personal effects of the imperial family. In 1929 in a report on the liquidation of the Alexander Palace, Tat'iana L. Liloia of Antikvariat's Valuation Commission specifically emphasized the need to feed the “pathological interest” and the “specific form of vanity” of American buyers anxious to imitate the great financier-collectors of the prewar period, but lacking their discriminating taste.⁸⁰

Armand Hammer did more to further the Russian antique market in the United States than any other individual, fostering in the process a specifically American genre of collecting. Hammer was the son of Julius Hammer, a founding member of the American Communist Party. Through his father's connections, he went to Russia in 1921, at the start of the NEP. He established several business concessions with the government involving asbestos and later a pencil factory. By 1928 the implementation of the First Five-Year Plan had forced Western entrepreneurs out of the country as anti-foreign sentiment grew.

Hammer later claimed that he too had to leave the Soviet Union, but that he was allowed to take his personal collection of art out of the country in exchange for ownership of the pencil factory that he had built there.⁸¹ In reality, Anastas Mikoian, the commissar of trade, had approached Hammer in 1928 to act as a middleman selling Russian art abroad. Hammer was the ideal conduit through which to siphon art out of the country. Because of his long tenure in the Soviet Union, he could reasonably claim to have amassed a large art collection while there, whereas the “imperial treasures” he sold were actually on consignment from the Soviets.⁸² To disguise the funds returning to Moscow, Hammer set up a business buying beer barrel staves through Amtorg. Hammer's *Quest of the Romanoff Treasure* (1932) provides a colorful cover story for his activities, which amounted to exporting the piles of Russian artifacts and imperial effects and memorabilia filling the former Gosmuzeifond storage facilities and the private apartments of the imperial family. Further, Hammer's brother Viktor, who ran the Hammer Galleries in

New York, revealed in the 1990s that the Soviet authorities also supplied them with Fabergé punches, which were used to stamp Fabergé hallmarks and other silver marks on unmarked period silver and gold and even on objects newly made in Paris.⁸³

Armand Hammer's first antique venture was with his brother Harry, who in 1928 set up shop to sell art in New York as part of a business deal with another importer, Emery Sakho. The operation was located in an office at 3 E. 52nd Street in Manhattan, with the names of other Hammer-family concerns listed on the door, among them L'Ermitage Galleries, Wallace H. Day Gallery, and A. Hammer Co.⁸⁴ The brothers scored their first real success selling Russian art when Armand, who had returned to the United States in 1930, conceived the brilliant idea of selling his wares in the department stores of the Midwest, beginning with Scruggs-Vanderoort-Barney in St. Louis in early 1932.⁸⁵ From there he went on to sell at Marshall Field in Chicago, eventually exhibiting in twenty-three stores over the next two years. Hammer devised this plan at a time when department store owners were looking for new ways to entice wealthy women with leisure time to spend it in their stores. They installed cafés and lounges, where such women could meet their friends, enjoy live music, lectures, and art exhibitions.⁸⁶ In 1933 Hammer signed a three-year contract with Lord & Taylor, where Dorothy Shaver, the first woman to head a major department store, had organized an exhibition of French modernist decorative art in 1928.⁸⁷ Hammer's traveling *Imperial Collection of Russian Art* exposed women in the prosperous industrial cities of the Midwest to Russian icons, paintings, and decorative art, much of it with an imperial provenance. Hammer exhibited once again at Marshall Field in 1933 at the time of the *Century of Progress* exhibition in Chicago.

Hammer's most famous Russian acquisitions were the Fabergé Easter eggs. When in 1931 Antikvariat removed eleven eggs from the Kremlin Armory to sell, Hammer was among the dealers who purchased them. The story of the assassinated imperial family added an aura of tragedy to these eggs as well as their other belongings.⁸⁸ The astronomical rise in the status and market value of Fabergé in the United States can be pinpointed to Hammer's determined marketing campaign.

Around 1923 professional soccer player Alexander Schaffer had left Hungary for Paris, where he became a buyer for Jacques Zolotnitsky, who ran the antique shop A La Vieille Russie with his nephew Léon Grinberg. In 1932 Schaffer went to New York to work for the Hammers. Two years later, he and his wife, Ray, opened the Schaffer Collection of Russian Imperial Treasures in Rockefeller Center. They renamed their shop A La Vieille Russie in 1941, when Schaffer sponsored Zolotnitsky and Grinberg as immigrants to the United States.⁸⁹ The Hammer and Schaffer families would be fundamental to the formation of many American collections of Russian art long after World War II.

The extraordinary influx of books of imperial provenance into U.S. libraries stands as a category of its own, thanks in large part to the efforts of the dealer Israel Perlstein. The Library of Congress, the Harvard libraries, and the New York Public Library owe their holdings in this area to Perlstein and the perspicacity of library staff. Titles from the libraries of thirty different Romanov family members and nine imperial and grand ducal palaces are represented in the holdings of the New York Public Library, which has championed the many sumptuous plate books from imperial libraries in its collections, emphasizing their aesthetic as well as their bibliographic value.

Denouement

In June 1933, a member of Antikvariat's staff reported to Narkomtorg that profits had reached a five-year low and concluded that "profits from Antikvariat's wares can no longer be realized on the foreign market."⁹⁰ The final blow was the National Socialists' decision to close the Soviet trade mission in Berlin in July 1933, depriving the government of its European headquarters for sales activities. The "bacchanalia" of selling had truly begun to ebb by early 1936, when the Soviets liquidated the Torgsin shops as part of a revaluation of the ruble. Export figures capture the precipitous slide in profits. In 1934 the Soviets exported thirty-eight tons of art and antiques valued at 487,000 rubles, but in 1935 forty-five tons valued at 380,000 rubles. At the same time, the Soviet regime's sense of economic urgency had also begun to recede. By 1935 its credit was sufficiently established abroad that banks in several countries were willing to discount bills or acceptances backed by the guarantee of a foreign government at favorable rates.

By January 1937, when U.S. ambassador Joseph E. Davies and his wife, Marjorie Merriweather Post, arrived in Moscow, the sales operations had entered their final phase. In April 1938, the government reinstated the ban on the export of art and antiquities, while members of the diplomatic community lost the privilege of openly removing art from the country duty free, with the exception of diplomats at the rank of ambassador. The Davies were among the last to take Russian art out of the country under such terms.⁹¹ Thus the most extravagant art and antiques market in recent times came to a close. ●

- 1 The Bolsheviks adopted the Gregorian calendar on February 14, 1918, which in the twentieth century was thirteen days ahead of the Julian calendar used by the Russians until that time. For events before January 1918, the Russian dates (Old Style, or OS) are used.
- 2 For an extensive timeline of events from 1917 to 1938, see Nikolas Il'in and Nataliia Semenova, *Prodannye sokrovishcha Rossii: Istoriia rasprodazhi natsional'nykh khudozhestvennykh, konfiskovannykh u tsarskoi familii* (Moscow: Trilistnik, 2001), 236–45. For a chronological narrative listing the decrees passed relating to the confiscation and sale of property, see Waltraud Bayer, "Revolutionäre Beute: Von der Enteignung zum Verkauf," in *Verkaufte Kultur: Die sowjetischen Kunst- und Antiquitätenexporte, 1919–1938*, ed. Waltraud Bayer (Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 2001), 19–40.
- 3 Richard Stites, "Iconoclastic Currents in the Russian Revolution: Destroying and Preserving the Past," in *Bolshevik Culture: Experiment and Order in the Russian Revolution*, ed. Abbott Gleason, Peter Kenez, and Richard Stites (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 4.
- 4 *From Serfdom to Bolshevism: The Memoirs of Baron N. Wrangel, 1847–1920* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1927), 300. Alan Wood, *The Fall of the Romanoffs*, rev. ed. (1992; Cambridge: Ian Faulkner Publishing, 1918), 195, also describes a hectic selling pace by the wealthy to avoid loss through theft or destruction.
- 5 *Novoe vremia*, June 7, 1917, and *New York Times*, June 23, 1917, 8.
- 6 Robert C. Williams, *Russian Art and American Money, 1900–1940* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 19–20.
- 7 Prince Felix Yousouppoff, *Lost Splendour* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952), 256, and Hans Nadelhoffer, *Cartier: Jewelers Extraordinary* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1984), 131–33.
- 8 Under the pseudonym M. J. Larsons, Moisei Iakovelevich Lazerson published *An Expert in the Service of the Soviet*, trans. Angelo S. Rappoport (London: Ernest Benn, 1929), one of the most important memoirs of this period. Lazerson is known in the West under other pseudonyms as well. See Robert H. Davis Jr. and Edward Kasinec, "Witness to the Crime," *Journal of the History of Collections* 3, no. 1 (1991), 53–59 for more on Lazerson.
- 9 Larsons, *Expert in the Service of the Soviet*, 8–9.
- 10 The damage to the Kremlin churches is graphically illustrated in Thomas Whittemore, "The Rebirth of Religion in Russia: The Church Reorganized While Bolshevik Cannon Spread Destruction in the Nation's Holy of Holies," *National Geographic Magazine*, November 1918, 379–401.
- 11 Emily D. Johnson, *How St. Petersburg Learned to Study Itself: The Russian Idea of Kraevedenie* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 73–82, discusses how the Gor'kii Commission came about and evolved.
- 12 Alexandre Polovtsoff, *Les Trésors d'art en Russie sous le régime bolcheviste* (Paris: J. Pavlovsky, 1919), 174.
- 13 See Polovtsoff, *Trésors d'art en Russie*, and Suzanne Massie, *Pavlovsk* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990), chaps. 8 and 9.
- 14 When Lukomskii began inventorying objects at the Alexander Palace after the arrest of the imperial family, he was rebuffed by Count Pavel Benkendorf, who believed he was going to remove everything belonging to the family. Benkendorf later credited Lukomskii with saving the palace. See *Last Days at Tsarskoe Selo, Being the Personal Notes and Memoirs of Count Paul Benkendorff, Telling the Last Sojourn of the Emperor and Empress of Russia at Tsarskoe Selo* (London: William Heinemann, 1927; repr. Pavlovsk Press, n.d.), 118–19.
- 15 For Zubov's account of Kerenskii's stay at Gatchina and raids on the palace, see V. P. Zubov, *Stradnye gody Rossii* (Moscow: Indrik, 2004), 48–60. For another account of the situation at the summer residences, see Christopher Morgan and Irina Orlova, *Saving the Tsar's Palaces* (Leominster, Hertfordshire: Orphans Press, 2005).
- 16 Rifat Gafitullin, "Kunst und Antiquitäten aus der Leningrader Schlossmuseen, 1926–1934," in Bayer, *Verkaufte Kultur*, 69.
- 17 Princess Paley, *Memoirs of Russia, 1916–1919* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1924), 197.
- 18 Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and the Arts under Lunacharsky, October 1917–1928* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 128.

- 19 Glavmuzei was headed by Nataliia Trotskaia (née Sedova), second wife of Lev Trotskii, head of the Red Army responsible for executing confiscations. Narkompros was one of the few government sectors where the wives of high officials in the Bolshevik Party were entrusted with leadership positions. See Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1993), 285, and Fitzpatrick, *Commissariat of Enlightenment*, 19.
- 20 According to Stites, "Iconoclastic Currents," 17, eighty-seven museums were operating at the end of 1918. G. A. Kuzina gives a figure of 244 new museums created between 1917 and 1923 in the provinces alone. See G. A. Kuzina, "Gosudarstvennaia politika v oblasti muzeinogo dela v 1917-1941 gg.," in *Muzei i vlast': Gosudarstvennaia politika v oblasti muzeinogo dela, XVIII-XX vv.*, ed. S. A. Kasaprinskaia, part 1 (Moscow: Nauchno-issledovatel'nyi Institut Kul'tury, 1992), 188. Il'in and Semenova cite additional figures with other dates: 220 museums under Glavnauka in January 1923 (down from a high of 396). Of these, 49 were in Moscow, 23 in Petrograd, and 148 in the provinces. See *Prodannye sokrovishcha Rossii*, 240.
- 21 Floran Geitts, "Proletarskie muzei v Moskve," *Sredi kollektsionerov* 2 (1922): 23-32, and *Sredi kollektsionerov* 4 (1922): 27-30.
- 22 For more on the Anichkov Palace as the City Museum, see G. A. Popova, *Muzei Goroda v Anichkovom dvortse: Sobytiia, sud'by, kollektsii* (St. Petersburg: Almaz, 1998), and G. A. Popova, "Podlezhat likvidatsii v dvukhnedel'nyi srok . . .": Ob istoricheskikh komnatakh dvortsa," in *Sud'by muzeinykh kollektsii: Materialy VI Tsarskosel'skoi nauchnoi konferentsii* (St. Petersburg: Tsarskoe Selo, 2000), 327-34.
- 23 M. E. Kaulen, *Muzei-khramy i muzei-monastyri v pervoe desiatiletie sovetskoi vlasti* (Moscow: Luch, 2001).
- 24 No. 1 was in the former Zubalov mansion (1920), No. 2 in the former English Club (from 1918), No. 3 in the former Morozov mansion (porcelain reserve, from 1920), No. 4 in the former Stroganov School (from 1919 to 1925), No. 5 in the depository of the museum section of Narkompros, No. 6 in the former Mamonov dacha on Vorob'evskoe Shosse, and No. 7 in the A. M. Katkov house on Nikitskii Boulevard.
- 25 Kuzina, "Gosudarstvennaia politika v oblasti muzeinogo dela v 1917-1941 gg.," 188. In 1925 the Moscow and Leningrad depositories merged and in 1927 were closed.
- 26 On the Soviet government's financial support of the U.S. Communist Party, see Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Kyrill M. Anderson, *The Soviet World of American Communism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998), chap. 2, and pp. 133-34, for the Hammers' activities in money laundering for this purpose. See also Dmitri Volkogonov, *Lenin: A New Biography* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 375, for agents sent not only to Europe, but to China, India, and Persia as well.
- 27 Vasil'eva and Knyzhevskii, *Krasnye konkistadory*, 145, estimate that "by the end of 1921/beginning of 1922 812,232,600 rubles in gold had been thrown at the needs of the revolution," including "twenty million for Party work in Latvia and twenty five million in Finland." Further examples of Komintern spending are provided on pages 145-53.
- 28 Volkogonov, *Lenin*, 69.
- 29 Williams, *Russian Art and American Money*, 212.
- 30 Nadelhoffer, *Cartier*, 124.
- 31 For more on this commission and its successors, see R. R. Gafillullin, "Leningradskii Gosudarstvennyi muzeinyi fond, 1917-1929 gody," in *Sud'by muzeinykh kollektsii: Materialy VI Tsarskosel'skoi nauchnoi konferentsii*, 314-26. The irony of Gor'kii's initial leadership of two organizations so diametrically opposed in purpose deserves much closer investigation.
- 32 Il'in and Semenova, *Prodannye sokrovishcha Rossi*, 238.
- 33 Ibid., 237-38.
- 34 See *Zhurnal "Sredi kollektsionerov" (1921-1924): Ukazatel' soderzhaniia* (Leningrad: DOK RSFSR, 1986) for a complete index of the journal's contents. Since an independent auction market would have endangered state control over cultural valuables, by a decree of March 8, 1923, the domestic antiques market was placed under the control of the museum section of Glavnauka. Kuzina, "Gosudarstvennaia politika v oblasti muzeinogo dela v 1917-1941 gg.," 128.

- 35 *Iz"iatie tserkovnykh tsennostei v Moskve v 1922 gody: Sbornik dokumentov iz fondov Revvoensoveta Respubliki* (Moscow: Pravoslavnyi Sviato-Tikhonovskii Gumanitarnyi Universitet, 2006), 3–4.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 148, doc. 15.
- 37 All faiths were equally affected by the confiscations, but the Orthodox Church has received the lion's share of attention.
- 38 This document can be found translated in full in Richard Pipes, ed., *The Unknown Lenin* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996), 152–53. Also see Vasil'eva and Knyshevskii, *Krasnye konkistadory*, 160.
- 39 Volkogonov, *Lenin*, 345. When ARA relief ended in the summer of 1923, more than \$65 million worth of food supplies had been sent to Soviet Russia. See Norman E. Saul, *Friends or Foes? The United States and Soviet Russia, 1921–1941* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 71.
- 40 *Iz"iatie tserkovnykh tsennosti v Moskve v 1922 gody*, illustrated pp. 5–7 after p. 128 in text.
- 41 Geraldine Norman, *The Hermitage: The Biography of a Great Museum* (London: Jonathon Cape, 1997), 184–85.
- 42 N. Zhukov, *Operatsiia Ermitazha* (Moscow: Moskvitianin, 1993), 17.
- 43 Kaulen, *Muzei-khramy i muzei-monastyri v pervoe desiatiletie sovetsskoi vlasti*, 58.
- 44 Elena Solomakhina notes that at this time 82 gold and 342 silver pieces, mostly from the Chamberlain's stores (*Gofmarshal'skaia chast'*) were sent to Gokhran. See her "Verkäufe aus der Eremitage, 1926–1933," in Bayer, *Verkaufte Kultur*, 42.
- 45 Agathon Fabergé told his story to the former head of the London branch of the firm. See Henry Charles Bainbridge, *Peter Carl Fabergé* (London: Spring Books, 1966), 61–62.
- 46 *Russia's Treasure of Diamonds and Precious Stones* (Moscow: Narkomfin, 1925), pt. 1, p. 9.
- 47 Sir Martin Conway, *Art Treasures in Soviet Russia* (London: E. Arnold & Co., 1925) 69.
- 48 Larsons, *Expert in the Service of the Soviet*, 64. For examples of the Gokhran evaluations and the prices paid for gems on the world market, see Il'in and Semenova, *Prodannye sokrovishcha Rossi*, 240. The latter also reproduces the Narkomfin illustrated catalogue.
- 49 "The Russians Are Divided on Sale of Art Works," *New York Times*, May 20, 1931, 13.
- 50 See Kuzina, "Gosudarstvennaia politika v oblasti muzeinogo dela v 1917–1941 gg.," 129.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 128.
- 52 *Ibid.*, 152.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 153.
- 54 Germain Seligman, *Merchants of Art, 1880–1960: Eighty Years of Professional Collecting* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1961), 172.
- 55 Zhukov, *Operatsiia Ermitazha*, 52.
- 56 *Ibid.*
- 57 Popova, *Muzei Goroda*, 105.
- 58 By the end of 1927, the former Gosmuzeifond's storage facilities in Moscow and Leningrad were closed and their contents dispersed among museums or sent to Antikvariat (for export) and Gosfond (for disposal). Kuzina, "Gosudarstvennaia politika v oblasti muzeinogo dela v 1917–1941 gg.," 324.
- 59 *Ibid.*
- 60 State Archive of the Russian Federation, f. 2307, op. 14, d. 14.
- 61 *Ibid.*
- 62 *Princess Paley Olga v. Weisz* (1929), 1 K.B., 718, has been frequently cited in legal arguments regarding the right of private individuals to reclaim property confiscated by the state.
- 63 Williams, *Russian Art and American Money*, 168 and chap. 5.
- 64 An exception was I. A. Orbeli's successful plea to Stalin in December 1932 to spare the Eastern collections of the Hermitage.
- 65 Tatiana Tchernavin, *Escape from the Soviets*, trans. N. Alexander (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1934), 23.
- 66 Louis Fischer, *Soviet Journey* (New York: Harrison Smith and Robert Haas, 1935), 46.
- 67 Anne O'Hare McCormick, *Russia: The Hammer and the Scythe* (London: Williams and Northgate, 1929), 50–51.
- 68 Kuzina, "Gosudarstvennaia politika v oblasti muzeinogo dela v 1917–1941 gg.," 142.
- 69 "Royal Russian Art for Sale in Berlin," *New York Times*, October 1, 1928, 10.

- 70 Zhukov, *Operatsiia Ermitazha*, 5. See also recent archival documents on the Hermitage sales in E. Iu. Solomakha, comp., *Gosudarstvennyi Ermitazh: Muzeinye rasprodazhi, 1928–1929 godov. Arkhivnye dokumenty* (St. Petersburg: Izd. Gos. Ermitazha, 2006).
- 71 W. P. Coates and Zelda K. Coates, *Scenes from Soviet Life* (New York: International Publishers, 1937).
- 72 In 1930 the Sovnarkom decreed, "Antiques, paintings and other masterpieces of art purchased in state and co-operative stores may be taken out of Russia without any special permit or license. . . . Custom duty will in future be included in the price of the article and collected by the store selling the article. Antiquities and works of art purchased from private individuals and shops may be taken out of the country only upon obtaining special permission from the Commissariat of Education. In such cases export duty is charged either at the border or may be paid in any branch of the State Bank." *Art News*, February 20, 1930, 21.
- 73 "Lavki 'drevnostei' i 'redkosti' v Moskve," *Novoe russkoe slovo*, May 9, 1931.
- 74 Sergii Bilokin, Mikola Mozdir, and Oleg Sidor, *Ukrainian Sculpture and Icons: A History of Their Rescue* (Kyiv: Rodovid Press, 2006), 33, 34.
- 75 Zhukov, *Operatsiia Ermitazha*, 94. Great Britain, after concluding a trade agreement in 1921 and establishing diplomatic relations in 1924, annulled the former and severed the latter after the Arcos raid in 1927. Despite formal diplomatic relations, France remained cool.
- 76 For year-by-year press clippings of émigré and local coverage between 1917 and 1940, see the Vladimir Teteriatnikov papers, New York Public Library, Slavic and Baltic division.
- 77 Organizers included Alexandre Benois, Jacques Zolotnitsky, the owner of A La Vieille Russie in Paris, and his nephew Léon Grinberg, and Alexander Polovtsoff. Among the lenders were Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna, Prince Feliks Iusupov, Fedor Chaliapin, and porcelain collectors Alexandre Rozembergh and Alexandre Popoff. *Exposition d'art russe ancien et moderne, organisée par le Palais des Beaux Arts de Bruxelles*, 1928 (Brussels: E. Vain Buggenhoudt, 1928).
- 78 This was a large show, with 658 entries of porcelain from the Imperial Porcelain Factory and from private factories as well. Denis Roche, *Catalogue de l'exposition de céramiques russes anciennes* (Paris: Lapina et Fils, 1929).
- 79 See *Catalogue of the Exhibition of Russian Art: 1 Belgrave Square* (London: Oliver Burridge, 1935). Also A. Polovtsoff, "The Exhibition of Russian Art," *Burlington Magazine*, June 1935, 297–98.
- 80 Gafullin, "Kunst und Antiquitäten," 80. The document is reproduced in Il'in and Semenova, *Prodannye sokrovishcha Rossi*, 292–94.
- 81 Any personal art collection Hammer may have had was probably not large. A Hammer biographer argues that in 1930 he was virtually broke. See Edward Jay Epstein, *Dossier: The Secret History of Armand Hammer* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1999), 124–25.
- 82 *Ibid.*, 127.
- 83 Carl Blumay and Henry Edwards, *The Dark Side of Power: The Real Armand Hammer* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 106.
- 84 Epstein, *Dossier*, 131.
- 85 *Ibid.*, 137. Marshall Field is often listed as the first store he approached, but Epstein has found evidence of an earlier show in St. Louis.
- 86 Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, Customers in American Department Stores, 1890–1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 85, and William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 313–14, for a design exhibition at Macy's in 1927.
- 87 Leach, *Land of Desire*, 315.
- 88 In 1935 Hammer opened Hammer Galleries at 682 Fifth Avenue. After 1934 he also had a store in Palm Beach in the winter. In 1937 he held his first exhibition of Russian art, and in 1943 he raised money for the Russian War Relief Fund with a show held at the Jay Gould Mansion on Fifth Avenue entitled *Five Centuries of Russian Art*. Former U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union Joseph E. Davies and his wife, Marjorie Merriweather Post, loaned icons and chalices to this exhibition.

- 89 Laura Cerwinske and Anthony Jackson, foreword to *Russian Imperial Style* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1990). The store still exists at 781 Fifth Avenue, run by Alexander's sons, Paul and Peter, and grandson Mark.
- 90 Memo from Prusakov to Rabinovich, Leningrad, June 8, 1933, RGAE, f. 413, op. 13, no. 661, l. 19.
- 91 Ilin and Semenova, *Prodannye sokrovishcha Rossi*, 231–32.