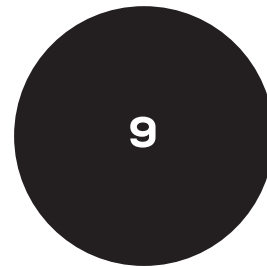




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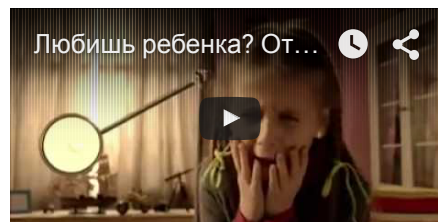
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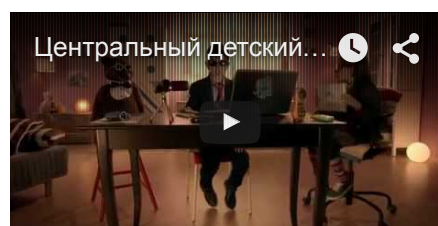
Lubyanka Square – Monument of an Unresolved Conflict

At the end of March 2015, after a long period of renovation, the biggest Russian toy store known as “Children’s World” was re-opened on Lubyanka Square in Moscow. In support of the children store’s reopening, three commercials were published. In the plots of these videos, two kids interrogate their parents like investigators, the video ending with the phrase: “If you love your child, bring him to Lubyanka”.¹ This slogan provoked a barrage of criticism which forced the administration to remove these commercial from TV. According to the video producers and the administration of the shop, they intended to encourage parents to spend more time with their kids, while the toponym Lubyanka was used to help customers define the location of the toyshop and to make finding it easier.² Despite this explanation, the commercial slogan initiated a huge debate in the Russian press and other media – news instantly spread via social networks and many news websites provoked lively discussion in the public sphere. The cause of such enormous interest in this advertising campaign was the carefree treatment of the shop’s specific location and of the established image of Lubyanka Square in the public memory.

Because of the close proximity of the KGB ex-headquarters, Lubyanka Square (or just Lubyanka) became one of the most notorious symbols of the Soviet system of repressions. Today the square synonymous with the Soviet security agency and its victims in the Russian public sphere and the popular memory, meanwhile the security agency (known as *the KGB*) received the unofficial name *Lubyanka*. In the light of these associations, the slogan “bring your kids to Lubyanka” meant “put your kids into KGB hands.” The leading criticism was a rebuke to the authors of the commercial who appeared oblivious of recent history taking a frivolous approach to it. The Russian poet Lev Rubinstein,



“If you love your child, bring him to Lubyanka!”



“If you love your child, bring him to Lubyanka!”

who had been a dissident in the Soviet times and now is an active participant of the movement for political changes in Russia, perceived this slogan as a consequence of the politics of historical unconsciousness which is imposed on society and directed by the authorities.³

The Square of Conflict

This case, which might appear to be a merely amusing incident, describes the current climate around Lubyanka square and its image in public memory well. Every activity and reaction to this incident clearly outlines the specifics of this space in public discourse: the shop's managers used Lubyanka's image to provoke public interest and the press turned the event into one of the most important news items; oppositionists and ex-dissidents had seen it as a trend to restore the ideology of the totalitarian state and erase the memory of the victims of state terror, the public vividly discussed it and shared it on social networks and news sites.

A more serious conflict around Lubyanka happened a few months after the Children's World opening. The Russian communists proposed a Moscow referendum *about* the return of the monument of Felix Dzerzhinsky (also known as "Iron Felix") to Lubyanka Square.⁴ During



Lubyanka Square today (source)

the summer months the probable return of "Iron Felix" to the square became one of the main topics of public discussion on TV and internet. Russian democrats and intellectuals were so shocked by the news that they started to force the idea to erect the hated monument of Saint Vladimir (the Baptist of Russ) to the square: to occupy it so as not to let Felix come back.⁵ In the end the communists could not collect the necessary amount of signatures and the referendum did not take place. In the meantime, smaller protests, such as the protest against the imprisonment of Nadezhda Savchenko⁶ and the symbolic burning of Dzerzhinsky's image, happened on the square. The last and maybe the most radical incident happened on November 9. A Russian artist Pavel Pavlensky burnt the main door of the Lubyansky façade accusing the secret service of becoming terrorists themselves.⁷

All these conflicts and the reactions to them tell us about the immense significance of Lubyanka Square in the politics and the public sphere of contemporary Russia. At *the same time*, Lubyanka became more than just a place of political struggle: it became a crack in Russian society. On the one side of this crack is the memory for

the victims of state terror and a belief in democratic values, and on the other side is the glorification of Soviet history and clinging to a conservative ideology. In one part of the square there is a monument to the victims of purges, in the other there are souvenirs with the symbols of the KGB and portraits of Dzerzhinsky.

As in other post-socialist countries, the difficult Soviet heritage provokes clashes in the public sphere. In the situation of political transition, conflicts concerning sites of historical significance demonstrate the ambiguous character of this history: on the one hand it is already the past; on the other some of its parts are still alive. In the case of Lubyanka Square, the office of the security service on the square constantly revives the connection of this agency with the KGB and also with the authorities of contemporary Russia.

Among the great number of contradictory Soviet heritage sites in Moscow, only Lubyanka Square provokes so much conflict and is able to elicit such different contradictions from Russian society. This characteristic of the square forces me to explore the question: What makes it a space of permanent public conflicts and what supports such its role today?

In answering this question, I will stress the established evidence of the connection of Lubyanka Square with state terror and the KGB. I will explore the roots of this evidence with an analysis of Lubyanka's image and its dissemination. In short, I argue in this essay that it was exactly the Image of the square that made Lubyanka a place of permanent political conflict and tension in the public sphere of post-Soviet Russia. In the article I will consider the genesis and reinforcement of Lubyanka's image along the process of the radical transformation of the Moscow cityscape in the Soviet time. First of all, I will demonstrate how the changing material shape of the square led to the appearance of Lubyanka's powerful (iconic) image today and secondly, how the political transition of the USSR brought changes to the perception of this image. In the conclusion I will go back to the situation in present-day Russia and emphasize the influence of the square on political life, the public discourse and memory in contemporary Russia.

The (Non-)Obviousness of Lubyanka

To enforce my argument about the significance of the visual image of Lubyanka, I will start from a consideration of the established obviousness of the

understanding of Lubyanka as a place of traumatic memory.

Today, Lubyanka Square is so firmly intertwined with the public memory about the repressive state that the name of the square has become a synonym of the KGB and its previous incarnations, while the view of the former head-quarters of KGB has become the main view of the square. (By reason of the double meaning of the name Lubyanka (as the square and as an epitome of KGB), later I will use *italic type* referring to the KGB image of Lubyanka). It seems everything that happens around the present Lubyanka Square connects with the memory of the KGB and the repressions.

However, this image of Lubyanka Square in the public discourse seems puzzling in light of the real topography of the Bolshevik terror. While the square monopolized memory of purges, the established opinion that the house on Lubyanka Square was a place where the Cheka⁸ and its successors killed the enemies of the Bolsheviks⁹ still had not been proved. According to the latest research,¹⁰ Lubyanka has never been the location of an execution. It was rather the central administration of the Soviet security agency and their investigation office with its inner prison.

At the same time, the real sites of the Bolshevik terror (places of executions and burial places in Moscow and its suburbia¹¹) are de facto excluded from the public discourse and public memory. Only rarely do they appear in public discussions, mass media or commemoration events although some of them are situated very close to Lubyanka square. Take, for example, 11 Varsonofievsky pereulok, a house situated 300 meters from Lubyanka square where some thousand people were killed during the Great Purge in 1937-1938. The only commemorative plaque on this house states that Felix Dzerzhinsky worked here in 1918-1920. The other real and almost nameless place of terror in Moscow is Yauza Hospital No 23 where during the years 1921-1926 the VChK (the ancestor of the KGB) killed and buried hundreds of people. In the late 1990s a commemorative stone was placed on the site, but until now the place has not received the status of a commemorative site. Similarly, the house on 23 Nikolskaya St., where the extreme extrajudicial commissions (*troikas*) sentenced about 30000 “public enemies” to death, has not become a symbol of the repressions.

Besides this shift in the placing of the memorial sites of the state terror there is one more shift – the shift in the location of the KGB building. Despite the established

opinion, the ex-headquarters of KGB is not a building on Lubyanka square¹² it is a complex of diverse buildings and looks like an irregular square occupying the large area between streets Bolshaya Lubyanka, Myasnitskaya, Furkasovsky pereulok and Lubyanka square. The yellow façade, today wholly representing Lubyanka, is, in point of fact, the back side of the building and it appeared in its present form only in 1983. The function of the yellow façade is mostly decorative; it does not serve as an entrance (although it does have doors). The central entrance since 1934 is at the reverse side in Furkasovsky pereulok where the main building of the KGB ex-headquarters is located. The largest part of the Lubyanka building is located along Bolshaya Lubyanka and Myasnitskaya streets.

The *weakest* connection between the square and the KGB until the present time, the present-day view of *Lubyanka's* yellow façade, has become the main image (representation) of the Soviet and Russian security service. If one looks at present-day representations of the square in the public discourse and media, you discover a striking unity among Lubyanka's images. The typical image of the square depicts the yellow façade of the former KGB headquarters as the main object on the square (pic. 1). Nowadays this image has been propagated by the media in thousands of copies: from covers of books and Wikipedia to souvenir shops and internet folklore. A Google image search for "Lubyanka" shows mostly pictures with the view of the KGB-building façade (24 out of the first 26 images).¹³



Map of Lubyanka Square

Moreover, the view has been the object for several artistic interpretations of contemporary Russian history and politics.¹⁴ For example, the artist Dmitry Kavarga proposed to put an abstract figure on the square as a monument of the first Russian president Boris Yeltsin and his contradictory reforms. This kind of image of the square is also supported by several commercial enterprises: it is worth mentioning that one of the cafes on the square has the name "Dissident" and it proposes "a spectacular view of the KGB building"¹⁵ to its customers. Meanwhile, numerous stalls rich with souvenirs containing *Lubyanka's* images have been opened in the underground passage under the square. So, as we can see, the established view of the square with the yellow façade transmits to this space the connection with security offices and their history by means of a variety of media.

We will look further at the history of Lubyanka to understand how the square has transformed and how during this transformation the square acquired its present-day image and significance.

Forming Lubyanka's Image

The history of the connections between Lubyanka and the VChK begins in 1918 when this organization was moved from Petrograd in Moscow and placed in numerous houses along Bolshaya Lubyanka Street. The number of buildings which were occupied by VChK on Bolshaya Lubyanka and nearby streets grew rapidly. After some time, the authorities organized a special "Lubyansky section" here, directed by Soviet security agency.¹⁶ From this time onward the whole square around Bolshaya Lubyanka Street began to be connected with the Soviet secret police, at varying times known as the VChK, OGPU, HKVD, MGB and KGB.¹⁷ In the meantime, the VChK, due its new location acquired the unofficial name *Lubyanka* which, as we can see, was not connected with Lubyanka Square originally.

In the early years, the visual image of *Lubyanka* did not have a clear representation but, being connected with Bolshaya Lubyanka Street, this image had a horizontal structure as if the image of the VChK was spreading along streets and houses occupied by the secret police. An image of *Lubyanka* of this kind was described in the memoirs of the Soviet dissident Lev Rasgon: "This agency expanded and struck its metastasis along the next streets and alleys. It occupied all Bolshaya Lubyanka from the square until Sretinskie Vorota and Malaya Lubyanka, it swallowed a high-rise general stores and a nine-storey living house; gradually all windows of this district were drawn by the same silk curtains and long in the evenings these windows were lighting with a cosy hellish light."¹⁸ Vasily Grossman, speaking about the atmosphere in Moscow in 1937 described the horizontal image of *Lubyanka* in the same way: "It had been especially terrible to walk down Komsomolskiy Alley and Lubyanka Street during the summer nights of 1937... The dark, stifling streets were deserted. For all the thousands of people inside, the buildings seemed quite dead; they were dark and the windows were wide open. The silence was anything but peaceful. A few windows were lit up; you could glimpse faint shadows through the white curtains."¹⁹

This dispersed image had been firmly established by the early 1920s when VChK did not possess a big administrative building which could admit all services and

represent the institution as whole. But after some years *Lubyanka* got a much more marked image. In 1920 the central administration of VChK moved in the ex-rented apartment house of the insurance company "Russia". The new building was located at the start of Bolshaya Lubyanka Street (building 2) and faced Lubyanka Square with its main façade. It was a large, neo-baroque house with well-decorated façade, built in 1898. More importantly, the house had an effective location in front of Lubyanka Square which made it prominent among other houses in this area and turned it into an architectural landmark of the square. When the secret police occupied the building and established a small inner prison nearby the view of the neo-baroque house became an image of the VChK. At the same time, the house and the surrounding area acquired a sinister reputation. Already in the late August 1924, Lubov Derental, who was the wife of the famous Russian revolutionary Boris Savinkov and kept a dairy in that time where she provides a highly laconic description of the house: "This is famous *Lubyanka* [...] *Lubyanka*. Nobody leaves this prison."²⁰ So, as we can see, by the middle 1920s the image of *Lubyanka* had become strongly associated with the building 2 on Bolshaya Lubyanka Street.

In spite of the fact that the Soviet security forces occupied many houses in Moscow, the rapid expansion of its functions and the growth of the staff led to the decision of extending the office area of *Lubyanka*. For this purpose, in the late 1920s the government announced a competition for the design of a new office block for the OGPU. The new building was to adjoin the old one from the side of Furkasovsky Pereulok Street (see pic. 2). Several outstanding Soviet architects took part in the competition as the new building was to become an architectural landmark for the whole district. Finally, the design of the famous constructivist architect Arcady Langman won the competition. In 1933, a huge E-shaped constructivist building appeared in Furkasovsky Pereulok. In accordance with the plan of the government and the architects, the new building took up its central location place at the intersection of two big streets which shaped the overall image and underlined the ideological importance of security forces in the Soviet state.²¹

The appearance of the huge new headquarters with its impressive façade changed the visual image of *Lubyanka* in 1930-1940s. We meet this new image in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's novel *In the First Circle*: "he looked up at the new building of the Greater Lubyanka and shivered. It held a new meaning for him. Its nine-storey grey-black hull was a battleship and the eighteen pilasters on its starboard side were

eighteen gun turrets.”²² We encounter a similar description of the building in the aforementioned novel of Vasily Grossman: “She was still a long way away when she recognized the towering granite wall of the Lubyanka. ‘Hello, Kolya,’ she thought [...] There seemed to be no connection between this ordinary waiting-room and the vast, many-storeyed stone building that looked out over Lubyanka Square, Stretenka, Furkasovsky Lane and Malaya Lubyanka Street.”²³

Together with the new façade, the reconstruction of the OGPU headquarters brought other significant changes – the new building received an inner yard with a rebuilt and repurposed special prison. The prison was hidden behind the main building and did not have its own visual image but at the same time, with the aid of the prisoners’ tales and city legends, the prison gained notoriety as one of the most terrifying prisons of the secret police.²⁴ The view of *Lubyanka’s* headquarters merged straight away with the image of the prison. As a result, after the Great Purge of 1937-1938, the NKVD headquarters became a symbol of the Soviet terror machine. Although after Stalin’s death the prison population thinned out, up until Perestroika the legends about *Lubyanka’s* prison remained alive. This image of *Lubyanka* was graphically described in the novels of Vasily Grossman, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Varlam Shalamov and memoirs of contemporaries. Eyewitnesses described its structure, the daily regimen, the rules of conduct and so on. In these accounts *Lubyanka* is represented by house No 2 on Bolshaya Lubyanka Street but its image differs from its present-day image. In these accounts in the forefront we see elements such as gates where trucks carried prisoners, the chimney of the heating system, the walking yard, corridors: “We used to walk in the shadow of that chimney, our exercise yard a boxlike concrete enclosure on the roof of the Big Lubyanka, six floors up. The walls rose around us to approximately three times a man’s height,”²⁵ “In just a moment they would turn on the Lubyanka and enter the black maw of the gates,”²⁶ “Hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of prisoners disappeared into the Inner Prisons, behind the doors of the *Lubyanka*,”²⁷ “I was happy when the terrible gates closed up behind me. Although *Lubyanka’s* gates could be called ‘the gate’ (of Hell – M.A.).”²⁸ This inside view of *Lubyanka* appeared from accounts of prisoners and quickly became popular. As a consequence, the inside view of the prison came to define the whole image of *Lubyanka* to a considerable extent.

So by the early 1950s the image of *Lubyanka* was strongly associated with building

2 on Bolshaya Lubyanka Street (at that time *Dzerzhinsky Street*). It should be pointed out that in the considered accounts the NKVD headquarters was located on Bolshaya Lubyanka Street rather than on Lubyanka Square. At the same time the visual image of *Lubyanka* was not the monolithic it has become today. The authors cited at least three images of Lubyanka which existed in parallel to each other: the first is the old façade facing Lubyanka Square, the second is the façade in Furkasovsky Pereulok Street and the third is the inside view of Lubyanka prison.

A New Image of Lubyanka Square

The subsequent transformation of *Lubyanka's* image was connected with the large-scale reconstruction of Moscow undertaken by the communist government in the mid-1930s. The 1935 General Plan for the reconstruction of Moscow was supposed to construct several new arterial roads through Moscow, the main one (called in the General Plan *the Central Avenue*) was to lead through Lubyanka Square (at that time *Dzerzhinsky Square*) to the later aborted Palace of Soviets.²⁹ The realization of the General Plan dramatically changed Lubyanka Square: many old houses were destroyed for the purpose of widening the square. In the meantime some neighbouring streets were widened which helped the square turn into a huge transport bottleneck connecting eight streets.³⁰

According to the General Plan, arterial roads were a pivotal part of the future socialistic capital³¹ – buildings along these streets were considered a continuation of roads because the government planned to create whole new architectural ensembles along the main streets. The new buildings were expected to have a style and a scale appropriate for the main arterial roads of the socialist capital. So the relations between roads and buildings were not purely functional but had a strong ideological element³² – so the authorities located the Palace of Soviets, the Narkomtiazhprom building, Stalin's skyscrapers and so on as central points on these axes.

The same architectural conception underlay the reconstruction of Lubyanka square during 1930-1950s. Since the square was to become part of the Central Avenue, the government planned to build a complex of large, new administrative and public buildings in the place of the existing buildings³³. The former house of the insurance company "Russia" was inconsistent with the future look of Lubyanka Square and ideological message. Its new image demanded a more massive building, suitable

for the world capital of socialism rather than an old-fashioned neo-baroque mansion. At the end of 1930s, the government made the decision to rebuild the old house on Bolshaya Lubyanka Street in a new neoclassic form (the favourite style of Soviet authorities).

One of the main Soviet architects, Alexey Shchusev (the author of Lenin's mausoleum), was commissioned to design a new image for the square and a new kind of an administrative building.³⁴ By 1940 Shchusev had prepared his project for the new building, according to which a huge neoclassic office block was to appear along Myasnitskaya Street, adjoining the constructivist building on Furkasovsky Pereulok Street and the old baroque house on Bolshaya Lubyanka Street. The façade of the old baroque house had to be radically rebuilt in accordance with the style of the new building – unified, they were to form an immense, monolithic façade dominating the entire square. However, because of the entrance of the USSR into the Second World War, the plan for the reconstruction of Lubyanka Square was set aside for some years. In 1948 the work on the new building was finished but the original project was not realized – lacking resources, it was decided not to rebuild the old baroque house façade of the KGB building and so the building ended up with a bipartite façade.³⁵ After the transformation, the headquarters of the KGB occupied a big square between four streets and swallowed up a piece of Malaya Lubyanka Street lying between the new and old houses.

The new façade and the changes to the structure of the square – which I will address below – significantly changed the physical structure and appearance of Lubyanka. However, in spite of the bright look, the new façade did not significantly alter the public image of the square in the period 1950–1970. In contrast to the present-day public image of the square, in 1950s the yellow façade did not have the same importance: it was only one part of the new architectural ensemble of the square, together with the shop Children's World and the entrance pavilion of Lubyanka metro station.

Interestingly, the "Children's World" (on the right side of pic. 3), which appeared in 1957, became an important part of the new image of the square and, according to people's recollections as expressed on the internet,³⁶ was



The classical view of Lubyanka Square and Theater Proezd Street in 1960–1970s; according the General Plan it was to be the central arterial road, after 1961 renamed "Marx Avenue". (source) The photo is from a guide to Moscow, see: *Moscow. Guide*, 6th ed. (Moscow: Moscovsky Rabochy, 1973).

the main landmark of the square in the Brezhnev era. It was a surprising juxtaposition: a paradise for children existing in the same place as the symbol of repression, standing as it were peacefully side-by-side, both signifying the Square. Which brings us back to the present situation when, after the return of the shop to the square in 2015, it provokes outrage and protest. Today, we see the toy shop through *Lubyanka* and so this connection, and the double-meaning of the Square, is no longer possible.

However, neither the KGB headquarters, nor "Children's world" were the main part of Lubyanka's image. Since the time of the General Plan, the focus of Lubyanka's images was the central arterial road and its flow of traffic intersecting the square. One can see this from old Moscow photographs, postcards and guides.³⁷ Usually, our gaze at the square on these pictures is directed from above downwards at the road and it then goes along the street towards the far perspective of Theater Proezd Street (pic. 3).

The Monument on the Square

Almost at the same time as Children's World, the monument of Dzerzhinsky appeared on the square. At the end of December 1958, the monument of Felix Dzerzhinsky was presented to the Moscow public with a formal ceremony. On the occasion of the monument's presentation the Moscow authorities organized a meeting on Lubyanka Square, attended by five thousand people. The Soviet leaders, including the head of the USSR Nikita Khrushchev and Dzerzhinsky's family attended that event.³⁸ A twelve-metre high bronze statue of Dzerzhinsky on a pedestal was erected in the centre of Lubyanka Square and became its architectural and ideological pivot for 33 years.

The Soviet authorities had decided to erect a monument to "the devout knight of the revolution" straight after his death in 1926 - but the idea was not realized. The next attempt was undertaken in 1940 when the authorities announced a competition for the monument on Dzerzhinsky Square (Lubyanka). Such prominent Soviet sculptors as Vera Mukhina and Sarra Lebedeva took part in the competition.³⁹ But the project was laid aside for lack of resources after the entrance of USSR into the Second World War. After the denunciation of the Stalin cult, the Soviet authorities came back to the idea of Dzerzhinsky's monument with a view to separating the Communist party of the USSR and the revolutionary's

image from Stalin's crimes. So Dzerzhinsky as an ethical ideal and an exemplary official was promoted by Soviet propaganda and by Khrushchev personally.⁴⁰ Work on the monument was offered to the main Soviet sculptor of monuments Yevgeny Vuchetich while the location of the statue was set as the centre of Lubyanka Square along the axis of Theater Proezd Street (*Marx Avenue* since 1961). The shape, the size and location of the monument were attentively designed with the view to creating a vertical pivot (a kind of a column) on the square around which the space of the square would be organised.⁴¹ The monument received the advantageous location and so created a powerful visual representation: architects and urban planners noted that the monument held the composition of the square together perfectly.⁴² So in consequence it gained a great ideological significance: the square with the monument in view became the main image of Lubyanka; it appeared in many photos, postcards and guides to Moscow.

So according to the plan of the government, the Dzerzhinsky statue was supposed to strengthen Lubyanka's ideological component – to "connect the square with the name of 'Iron Felix' more closely,"⁴³ as the newspaper Pravda expressed it. However, what is noteworthy in this 'branding', in the beginning nobody paid particular attention to the combination of the yellow façade and Dzerzhinsky's monument on the square.⁴⁴ The main Soviet newspaper Pravda even failed to note the neighbourhood of the KGB headquarters in the reportage of the monument's opening – although it did write about the reinforced connection between the square and Dzerzhinsky after the erection of the monument. Meanwhile, on the photo in the newspaper the façade and the statue are visually separated (the monument stands not in front of *Lubyanka* building as on the latest wide-spread pictures of the square, but on the right of the building).⁴⁵

One more important detail: today it seems evident that initially the monument stood in front of the Lubyansky façade, but on older photos one can see clearly that the monument stands semi-sideway by the yellow façade and faces Theater Proezd Street (see pic. 3). The monument was not moved; a shift took place in our perception of Lubyanka's image – before the demolishing of "Iron Felix" there was a different emphasis, a different main perspective on the square (the perspective along the street instead of the present-day, frontal one). I will now follow specifically this shift and its consequences for the next transformation of the square.

The Final Transformations: Lubyanka Goes Icon

A crucial role in establishing the present-day image of Lubyanka was played by the new expansion of the office space of the KGB. For this purpose, in the early 1980s the government built two new huge buildings for KGB, nearby the old headquarters. At the same time they decided to rebuild the old house on Bolshaya Lubyanka Street and unify the Lubyansky façade following to Shchusev's design of 1940. As a result, forty years after Shchusev's reconstruction, Lubyanka gained its well-known neoclassic monolithic façade. Features of the renovated façade such as its size, colour, and shape perfectly fitted its location which, thanks to previous transformations, gave the Lubyanka building an improved look.

These transformations of the façade had an important aftermath because they created an attractive image helping the façade to gain visual domination over the space and creating a powerful view of Lubyanka Square. Ironically, together with the appearance Lubyanka's new image, the functions and status of the KGB headquarters were passed to the new building on the other side of the street. But this shift changed nothing. The new façade gained popularity with time and became a landmark of the square, an iconic image of the secret service.

However, in the beginning, the emergence of the new appearance of the *Lubyanka* building did not lead directly to establishing the present-day iconic image of the square. Moreover, during a stay of "Iron Felix" at the square, the Lubyansky façade did not have the primary importance. The decisive step towards achieving the iconic image of Lubyanka was taken on August 22, 1991. During the huge democratic meeting against the *coup d'état* attempt by conservative communists, Dzerzhinsky's statue on the Lubyanka square was toppled. This action, today symbolizing the end of the USSR and the victory of democratic forces, gave the square new symbolic and political significance.

Right after the demolition of the monument, the façade attracted a lot of public attention because it had come to represent a crucial event of contemporary Russian history which took place on the square. The view of the pedestal without the statue in front of the triumphant façade of the KGB building quickly became an iconic image of Lubyanka Square and a symbol of the recent changes.

It was a paradox, but exactly at the moment when the monument was toppled, it

became an inseparable part of the Lubyanka's image. Today the shadow of Dzerzhinsky always hangs over the square as if the monument had merged with the yellow façade. It seems that when the monument was taken out from the square, the yellow façade on the one hand became the main landmark of the square; on the other hand, the façade incorporated within itself the image of the overthrown monument (for this reason Dzerzhinsky is still present there). Finally, the toppling of the statue was also the birth of the powerful iconic image of Lubyanka. The façade became a representation of *Lubyanka's* glory and its downfall gave the square a huge potential to provoke tension and conflict in the society.



Toppling of the monument of Dzerzhinsky on August 22, 1991.
(source)

Let us take a look at some influences of the new image of Lubyanka on the public role of the square today. The first significant change was the transformation of Lubyanka square into an official monument to the victims of state terror. At the end of 1990, the monument known as the Solovetsky Stone was placed on the square. The Stone was to honour the memory of KGB victims against the heroic narrative of the KGB. The idea of this monument was proposed and promoted by the Association "Memorial," and very soon the Stone turned into the main memorial for KGB victims. Every year on the Day of Political Prisoners, the "Memorial" organizes commemorative events near the Solovetsky stone, including the main one: "Return of the names." The image of Lubyanka transformed the public memory: today the square became the main memorial to the victims of state terror.

The second consequence was the idea of erecting a new monument on the square and the related public discussion about historical leaders of Russia. The empty space in front of the yellow façade of Lubyanka provoked numerous vivid discussions about which leader's monument could take that place on the square. This monument would be able to fill in the gap in historical consciousness which had opened up after the denunciation of the Soviet leaders.

The final consequence of establishing of Lubyanka's iconic image was the transformation of the square into the perceived heart of the political system of Russia.⁴⁶ It is this image that Pavel Pavlensky was, in fact, attacking and which

continues to exert its influence in the public space, enabling and amplifying political gestures and making visible the tensions present in contemporary Russian society.

Footnotes

- 1 The original slogan went: "Lubish rebenka? Otvedi na Lubyanku!"
- 2 "Lubish rebenka? Otvedi na Lubyanku!" *BBC Russian*, April 2015, accessed April 25, 2015, http://www.bbc.com/russian/society/2015/03/150325_tr_detskiy_mir_ads
- 3 Lew Rubinstein, "Rebenka na Lubyanku," *Echo Moskvy*, March 2015, accessed March 30, 2015, <http://www.echo.msk.ru/blog/rubinshteyn/1518102-echo>
- 4 "V Moskve razreshili referendum o vosstanovlenii pamjatnika Dzerzhinskomu," RIA Novosti, June 11, 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://ria.ru/moscow/20150611/1069488179.html>
- 5 "Vladimira na Lubyanku," *Yabloko*, August 18, 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://volgograd.yabloko.ru/news/index.phtml?id=4442>. Urban activists proposed to return the historical fountain which had been removed from the square by communists in 1934.
- 6 Filipp Kireev, "Aktsiya v chest dnya rozhdeniya Savchenko," *Echo Moskvy*, May 11, 2015, accessed May 12, 2015, <http://echo.msk.ru/blog/mynameisphilipp/1546752-echo>
- 7 "Hudozhnik Pavlenskij zaderzhan za popytku podzhech vhod v zdanie FSB na Lubjanke," *Echo Moskvy*, November 11, 2015, accessed November 9, 2015, http://echo.msk.ru/blog/daily_digest/1654986-echo
- 8 From now on I shall use the more official acronym *VChK*.
- 9 Stéphane Courtois et al., *Chernaya kniga kommunizma* (Moskva: Tri veka istorii, 2001), 265.
- 10 Vasily Khristoforov et. al., eds., *Lubyanka 2. Iz istorii otechestvennoy kontrrazvedki*, 3rd ed. (Moskva: Izd-vo Glavarhiva Moskvy, 2007), 64–66. See also:

Nikita Petrov, "Formirovanie kvartala gosorganov na Lubyanke," *Uroki istorii*, accessed June 12, 2015, <http://urokiistorii.ru/history/soc/52115>

11 These places are well-known, see: "Mesta massovyh zahoroneni y pamyatniki zhertvam politicheskikh repressiy," *Memorial*, accessed April 13, 2015, <http://www.memo.ru/memory/martirol/index.htm>

12 One can meet this opinion for example on Wikipedia: "Lubyanka Building," *Wikipedia*, accessed July 12, 2015, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lubyanka_Building

13 Search made on April 3, 2015.

14 An incomplete list of suggestions for the new monument on the square look at: "Lubyanka i pustota," *Gazeta.ru*, May 10, 2010. Accessed July 16, 2015, http://www.gazeta.ru/comments/2011/05/10_e_3611393.shtml

15 "Vinoteka Dissident," *Afisha*, accessed June 12, 2015, <http://www.afisha.ru/msk/restaurant/21576/>.

16 *Lubyanka 2*, 60–61. For a description of the structure of the VChK buildings see: Petrov, "Formirovanie kvartala gosorganov na Lubyanke," accessed November 11, 2015, <http://urokiistorii.ru/history/soc/52115>

17 Over time, these agencies changed their functions and specific characteristics but in the article we will consider them together.

18 Lev Razgon, *Nepridumannoe* (Moskva, 2010), 51.

19 Vasily Grossman, *Life and Fate*, trans. Robert Chandler (New York: Random House, 2011), 611.

20 "Dnevnik L.E. Dikgof-Derental," in *Boris Savinkov na Lubyanke. Dokumenty* (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 2001), 203–204.

21 *Lubyanka 2*, 61, 63.

22 Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The First Circle*, trans. Michael Guybon (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968), 11.

23 Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 665.

- 24 *Lubyanka 2*, 64-66.
- 25 Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*, trans. Thomas P. Whitney (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 137.
- 26 Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*, 10.
- 27 Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 612.
- 28 "Beseda s Irinoy Yemelyanovoy," *Polit.ru*, June 23, 2010. Accessed July 15, 2015, <http://polit.ru/article/2010/06/23/emeljanova/>
- 29 *Generalnyy plan rekonstruktsii Moskvy 1935 goda*, (Moskva: Izdatelstvo 2ya kartograficheskaya fabrika VKT GUGSK NKVD SSSR, 1936), 72.
- 30 Iosif Semenowicz Romanovskiy *Novaya Moskva. Ploshchadi i magistrali* (Moskva: Moskovskiy rabochiy, 1938), 55-56.
- 31 It is interesting to note that a book officially presenting the achievements of the Soviet urban planning had the title *New Moscow. Squares and Arterial Roads* (Moskva: Moskovskiy rabochiy, 1938).
- 32 *Lubyanka, 2*, 61, 69, 70.
- 33 Romanovskiy *Novaya Moskva*, 55-56; Kirill N. Afanasev, *A.V. Shchusev* (Moskva: Stroyizdat, 1978), 191.
- 34 *Lubyanka, 2*, 69.
- 35 *Lubyanka, 2*, 74.
- 36 See internet discussions: "Tsentralny Detskiy Mir," *Savok.name*, June 27, 2008. Accessed May 06, 2015 <http://savok.name/158-dm.html>
- 37 See old pictures of Lubyanka Square on: <http://www.pastvu.com>. Accessed August 30, 2015.
- 38 "Torzhestvennoe otkrytie v Moskve pamyatnika F.E. Dzerzhinskomu," *Pravda*, December 21, 1958, 2.
- 39 It is interesting to note that Mukhina and Lebedeva's projects supposed to locate the monument not in the centre of the square but nearby the entrance

pavilion of metro, see: Alexander Dobrovolsky, "Neizvestnye fakty o pamyatnike Dzerzhinskomu," *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, June 24, 2015. Accessed July 25, 2015, <http://www.mk.ru/moscow/2015/06/24/neizvestnye-fakty-o-pamyatnike-dzerzhinskomu.html>; see also Nikita Voronov, "Pamyatnik na Izhi," *Kultura*, July 17, 2000. Accessed July 25, 2015, <http://www.km.ru/glavnoe/2000/07/17/iskusstvo/pamyatnik-na-lzhi>

40 Fedor Djuli, *Tradicii chekistov ot Lenina do Putina. Kult gosudarstvennoj bezopasnosti* (Petersburg: Piter, 2012), 48-50.

41 Dobrovolsky, "Neizvestnye fakty o pamyatnike Dzerzhinskomu".

42 *Lubyanka*, 2, 75.

43 *Pravda*, Ibid., 2.

44 There are photos with such composition but mainly they are amateur photos which did not represent the square in the public discourse, see Lubyanka Square on <https://pastvu.com/>

45 *Pravda*, Ibid., 2.

46 Babchencko A. "Pavlenskij zazhjog", *Echo Moskv*y, 09.11.2015. Accessed October 9, 2015, <http://echo.msk.ru/blog/ababchenko/1655184-echo>