

УДК 94 (47+57)"1953/1959"

doi 10.17072/2219-3111-2023-4-61-73

Ссылка для цитирования: *Golovlev A. I. Culture and State: Creation of Ministries of Culture in the USSR and France from a Comparative Perspective, 1953–1959 // Вестник Пермского университета. История. 2023. № 4(63). С. 61–73.*

CULTURE AND THE STATE: CREATION OF MINISTRIES OF CULTURE IN THE USSR AND FRANCE FROM A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE, 1953–1959

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In this essay, the creation and organisational frameworks of the ministries of culture in the USSR and France are compared. Established in the 1950s, they represent an important departure from most then-contemporary European practices, on the one hand reflecting the acceptance of a particular role of the state in cultural governance, yet on the other lacking a clearly defined area of competence, policy strategy, and power resources. In France, the creation of a separate ministry of culture resulted in no small part from a desire to give a ministerial rank to Andre Malraux and make a reverence to French culture as part of national identity. Conversely, the Soviet regime sought to assert culture’s symbolic independence from propaganda, while equally upgrading the status of culture within the state apparatus. In both cases, the ministry of culture was politically weak, and in the Soviet Union an appointment to a minister of culture was akin to a demotion compared to top party positions. Malraux found himself without a detailed plan and significant economic and personnel resources, just as the Soviet ministry was relatively underfunded and subordinated to the CPSU Central Committee’s cultural department. While the Soviet and French decisions to raise cultural management to a ministerial level occurred independently from each other, they reveal deep-seated parallels in the respective societies’ perceptions of culture, governance, and the value of cultural goods and habitus that prevailed over a clearly defined policy of cultural management.

Key words: cultural governance, cultural management, cultural history, Soviet thaw, Gaullism, Ministry of Culture.

“The Soviet Union, within the remit of culture, has one clear priority: the invention of state cultural policy” [*Khestanov*, 2013, p. 35]. Indeed, the USSR can claim precedence in consistently pursuing such a policy via the *Committee on Arts Affairs (Komitet po delam iskusstv)* between 1936 and 1953 and a *Ministry of Culture* afterwards. This institution was among the first cohort of ministries established during the 1953 reform that abolished people’s commissariats in the wake of Stalin’s death. In 1959, only six years later, General Charles de Gaulle, President of the newly established Fifth Republic, suggested setting up a Ministry of Culture in France, pioneering the idea of cultural governance on the ministerial level amongst capitalist western democracies.

Inventing these two ministries was, naturally, not equal to a complete invention of cultural policies as such, and needs to be placed more precisely within the cultural history, and the history of cultural governance, of France, Russia/Soviet Union, as well as within a broader context. From Ancient Egypt and Assyria to New Deal America, arts and culture have played a crucial role within state-defined *politics*, even though a specific cultural *policy* may have been secondary to political or religious goals. It is the *coherence* in state-defined cultural policy [*Urfalino*, 1996, p. 360] that was novel in the 20th century, and a departure from “iskusstva” and *Beaux-Arts* (“Fine Arts”), two narrower concepts.

One might reasonably ask, however, whether there is analytical value in comparing those two acts of ministerial creation, beyond a chronological coincidence. In fact, this question is a historiographical lacuna. Much of the existing literature that will be explored in this essay is concerned with

single national cases – notably Rouslan Khestanov, Nataliia Beloshapka, Mikhail Gershzon for the USSR; Pascal Ory, Jean-Michel Dijan, Philippe Poirrier, Philippe Urfalino, among others, for France, where a vivid public debate has existed since the publication of Marc Fumaroli's *Etat culturel: une religion moderne* in 1991. A more organizationally centred history (Geneviève Poujol, Michel Dardy), harking back to the incentives of Jeanne Laurent and André Malraux, has been concentrated on the Committee on History of the French Cultural Ministry, which, naturally, has been less sceptical of the institution, yet in its methods comes closer to Russian historians such as Gershzon, who painstakingly worked through the vast archival heritage of the Soviet Ministry of Culture. While cultural governance has been typically studied either between totalitarian regimes¹, or within a “European” (more or less, EU/EEC) framework [Sassatelli, 2007, among others], I will suggest a different perspective. Borrowing Jeremy Ahearne's (and, indirectly, Philippe Urfalino's) term, I see the late 1950s as an interesting point of convergence on ‘explicit’ cultural policies [Ahearne, 2009, p. 141, 143], when the Soviet Union and France became the forerunners of such a ministerial policy.

In addressing this issue, I will attempt to answer several questions. Why did a major Communist and a major Western European power move to create a cultural ministry in the first place? How were they structured and financed? What was their relative power position? What can these reforms reveal about Soviet and French understandings of culture, as well as of “the” state's relation to, and governance/management of, culture? Can a greater continental European convergence – or still a prevalence of East-West divergence – be suggested?

A proviso is needed here: did they *know* of each other? A Soviet official once suggested that the French had studied the Soviet mode while devising “their” ministry [Gershzon, 2010, p. 274], which I could not – at least yet – corroborate with French sources. The Soviets *did* look into the organigramme of the French Ministry of Culture – but only in 1990 [Struktura..., 1990] when a full-scale reform at home was being discussed. Hence, I will not (yet) posit the existence of any explicitly *transnational* history. Future research, however, may disprove this study's purely comparative, and (almost) not transnational, focus.

Kultura/Culture and Cultural Governance: A Juxtaposition

Raymond Williams's famous, and often-cited, characterization of culture as “one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language” fits both the Russian (“*Kultura*”) and the French (*culture* and *civilisation*) usages. Williams specifically mentions *Ministries of Culture* in distinguishing three meanings of this word:

“(i) the independent and abstract noun which describes a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development, from C18; (ii) the independent noun, whether used generally or specifically, which indicates a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general, from Herder and Klemm. But we have also to recognize (iii) the independent and abstract noun which describes the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity. This seems often now the most widespread use: culture is music, literature, painting and sculpture, theatre and film. A Ministry of Culture refers to these specific activities, sometimes with the addition of philosophy, scholarship, history” [Williams, 1976, p. 26–27].

Bolshevik leaders, including Lenin himself, ascribed a variety of meanings to the word “culture”, which mostly referred to a “cultured” way of life (and work) which the Soviet state was expected to foster [Khestanov, 2014]. “Culture” gained currency in the NEP period, as the party – and the state – committed to raising the “cultural level” within Soviet society [Kurennoi, 2013, p. 21–22]. Stalinist subjugation of culture to the party-state power, however, was less of a principal departure from the essentially Leninist concept of party supremacy than a practical realisation of a totalitarian mode of cultural governance, and the creation of an imperial Soviet cultural identity [Artizov, 1999; Dobrenko, 2007; Dobrenko, 2020]. Ultimately, *culture* united both ambition and down-to-earth considerations and was used in ways to stress the Bolshevik claim to power and symbolic domination.

What, then, of managing culture? Archival evidence does not suggest that plans for setting up a *cultural* ministry existed before 1953 [Gershzon, 2021, p. 98], even if Anatoly Lunacharsky had not concealed his ambitions to personally direct culture in the 1920s [cf. Fitzpatrick, 2002]. The Commit-

tee on Arts Affairs, called into being in 1936, functioned as an instrument of instilling Socialist Realist obedience rather than a political actor of its own [Golovkina, 2008], and culture was not fully concentrated under its command (VOKS, for example, being nominally independent). As Mikhail Gershzon noted, ‘managing cultural processes was dispersed among various party-state organs’ [Gershzon, 2010, p. 274]. While the party was to *direct* culture, existing state organs would actually *govern* it [Khestanov, 2013, p. 44].

Did that change in 1953? Khrushchev claimed that culture was opposed to propaganda: “[t]he establishment of the Ministry of Culture ... was the act of culture’s emancipation from ideology” [Khestanov, 2013, p. 49; Khestanov, 2014, p. 137]. If we accept Khrushchev’s rhetoric of separating *culture* from *politics*, then the Soviet Ministry of Culture was an ideational opposite of the Stalinist model. However, the maintenance of party control leads us to think that Khrushchev was somewhat disingenuous in his distinction between culture and politics, and we will return to this while discussing the Cultural Ministry’s hierarchical position.

Was Soviet thinking *totalitarian*? This is an inherently typological, and transnational, question that must bring up two other ideal-types of totalitarian regimes: Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The Italian *Ministero della Cultura Popolare* existing in 1937–1944 appears to be, on the surface, closer to the Soviet model. Its origins lay in the press and propaganda services that were morphed into a broader concept of ‘popular culture’ aiming to bring the ‘fascist revolution’ to the masses. Historians have tended to be dismissive of culture’s autonomy, political and administrative, within this “popular” field: *Minculpop* has been mostly viewed as an Italian pendant to the German Imperial Propaganda Ministry – *Reichsministerium für Propaganda und Volksaufklärung/RMVP* [Cannistraro, 1970; Cannistraro, 1975; Novellino, 2016]. While comparing Soviet, Nazi, and Fascist cultural governance in the 1930s is a valid project, I would contend that the post-war Cultural Ministry of the USSR was different from the Italian and German models. Neither the Minculpop, nor the RMVP were dedicated *exclusively* to culture as understood by the Soviets in the 1950s (it was but one of their competences), and thus cannot be equated with the Soviet *Minkul’t* which wasn’t a commanding height in the propaganda industry.

What would, conversely, French officials understand under the word *culture*? Broadly, the third meaning within Williams’ definition would apply. Cultural governance by the state had started with royal patronage in the 16th and 17th centuries, via Napoleon III’s “etatisation” of cultural oversight via the *Maison de l’Empereur*, to the experiences of the Third Republic, including a short-lived Ministry of the Arts in 1881, and, particularly, the Front Populaire which brought forward the idea of a ‘democratisation’ of culture, expressed notably by Jean Zay [Ory, 1994; Poirrier, 2000]. Yet the relationship between state and culture was not clearly defined, and the state’s stewardship of *beaux-arts*, for which a directory existed in the education ministry, was often perceived as unacceptable [Dubois, 1999, p. 30–151]. Democratic and monarchical principles coexisted in ideas of state’s and society’s interactions with – and benevolent guidance of – culture (Ory, 1989; Ory, 2004). In a rather contradictory way, both Vichy and the Fourth Republic contributed to a further legitimation of the idea of state intervention in culture [Poirrier, 2000, p. 48–49]. However, French cultural policies before 1945 did not constitute a linear path to creating a *ministry* – which has been seen as a product of a particular political contingency in 1958–1959 [Négrier, 2017, p. 4–5].

Thus, both the French and the Soviet state brought considerable institutional, and ideational, luggage when the creation of ministries for culture was being decided upon. Firstly – the French more explicitly than the Soviets – they referred to “culture” as essentially high culture, and a high culture-oriented habitus, which had to be instilled among the general population. Culture became in both cases a politically charged word. Unlike the English-speaking countries (and Germany), the central state’s preeminence in directing culture was not a foreign idea to Soviet and French contemporaries, resulting from a long prehistory of state involvement with culture in France, and an active role in preserving and shaping culture claimed by the Bolshevik party and the Soviet state.

Organisational Setup: Ministries in the Making

The *Ministry of Culture of the USSR* officially came into being on 15 March 1953. Its activities were regulated by the Law on Reconstitution of Ministries in the USSR (15 March 1953), Council

of Ministers Decree No 33 “On the Structure and Personnel of the Central Apparatus of the Ministry of Culture” passed on 28 March 1953, and a Regulation of the Ministry of Culture adopted on 20 June 1953 [Zakon o preobrazovanii 15.03.1953, Postanovlenie o strukture 28.03.1953, Postanovlenie ob utverzhenii 20.06.1953, *Gershzon*, 2016]. Finally, in the 1977 Soviet Constitution, the Ministry of Culture was assigned the task of directing “cultural construction” (development) via union republic ministries or all-union cultural institutions [*Beloshapka*, 2012, p. 40].

When the ministries’ bill was introduced in March 1953, Georgy Malenkov stated that the law would help reduce the bureaucratization of state organs and operationalise the decision-making process [*Gershzon*, 2010, p. 275]. The actual structure of the ministry spoke a different language. It contained: 10 general directories (Arts, Radio Information, Radio Broadcasting, Vocational Education, General Directory of Publishing Houses, Printing and Book Sales, *Sovinformburo*, General Directory of Cinema Development and Leasing, Construction Works, Productive Facilities, Sales (*sbyta*)); 7 directories (Directory for Cultural-Enlightenment Institutions, for Vocational Training Institutes, Leading Cadres, External Relations, Planning and Economy, Finances, Construction Works (*kapital’nogo stroitel’sstva*)); a Central Accounting Office; 6 departments (First, Military Register, Expertise of Projects and Cost Estimates for Construction, Legal, Militarized Protection and Fire Brigade Units, Transport); and a separate Minister’s apparatus (Inspectorate, Secretariat, Chancellery; Arbitrage; and Janitors). In addition, a PhD Examination Commission (*Vysshaia attestatsionnaia komissia*) and a State Inspection for Protection of Cultural and Historical Heritage were attached to the Ministry, and the All-Union Directory for Circus (*Sovgostsirk*) was subordinate to it (*Gershzon*, 2010, p. 279). The Ministry was governed by a College (*Kollegiia*) which assisted the minister and embodied the idea of collective decision-making [*Gershzon*, 2010, p. 283–284; *Gershzon*, 2018, p. 379–391; *Gershzon*, 2022]. Vice ministers soon took over much of the actual work. Locally, the Cultural Ministry oversaw, firstly, republican cultural ministries, and then cultural departments within regional, city, or local (*raion*) councils, down to a constantly expanding network of “houses of culture” (*doma kul’tury*) and clubs on the ground.

This plethora of subdivisions reflects the composite, all-in-one character of the new, hastily set up “super-ministry” that later underwent a series of readjustments as a number of departments were detached from it during the 1950–1960s [*Khestanov*, 2013, p. 50; *Gershzon*, 2010; *Gershzon*, 2022, p. 20]. That happened, however, not according to a strategically designed plan, but rather as a reaction to the overburdening of the state bureaucracy with endless problems of minutely supervising culture, cultural institutions, and artists, with their varying interests and incessant lobbying. In cinema, ideological shifts (de-Stalinization) and the *malokartin’e* (modest rates of production) served as a ground to attack the ministry’s stewardship of cinema and the latter’s detachment in 1963 into a State Committee under the Council of Ministers [*Gershzon*, 2010, p. 307–325; *Gershzon*, 2016; *Gershzon*, 2021, p. 100]². The printing industry and book circulation soon followed suit. Separations continued, as internal and international tourism and foreign relations (where the Central Committee and the KGB rebuked the Ministry for wanting to concentrate control over cultural exchange in its hands [*Gershzon*, 2010, p. 381]) were definitively excluded from the Ministry’s purview.

The Ministry of Culture did not rank highly in the party-state hierarchy. The first minister, Panteleimon K. Ponomarenko (a former First Secretary of Belarusian Communists, and the commander of Soviet partisans), was essentially demoted to this post by Khrushchev, whose relationship with Ponomarenko was notoriously bad. In 1954, Ponomarenko was appointed first secretary in Kazakhstan and replaced by Grigory F. Alexandrov, who started a de-Stalinization of cultural governance practices and replaced several senior officials [*Gershzon*, 2022, p. 20], but soon lost his position after a sex scandal [*Ogryzko*, 2019, p. 55–130]. The last “pre-Furtseva” minister, Nikolai A. Mikhailov, had more experience in cultural management and was expected to systematise the ministry’s work [*Gershzon*, 2021, p. 99]. However, he could behave rudely towards artists, and was not generally respected [*Gershzon*, 2010, p. 290, 293; *Ogryzko*, 2019, p. 158–167]. An ambitious apparatchik would seek a better position than leading the Cultural Ministry.

What, then, of party control? The “state” Ministry of Culture was thought of, and promoted, as separate from the CPSU apparatus and thus “a-political” – fitting into Khrushchev’s discourse³. In addi-

tion, its creation fell into the period of “first thaw” when cultural regulation was not clearly defined and rather fluid [Gershzon, 2022; Gershzon, 2018, p. 45–50, 172–173]. Liberalism would be in the air.

Yet this supposed liberalism was largely nominal. Historians are fairly unanimous in assigning the dominant role to the Cultural Department of the Communist Party’s Central Committee [see *Beloshapka*, 2009; *Beloshapka*, 2012; *Gershzon*, 2010; *Gershzon*, 2018; *Gershzon*, 2022]. The ministry essentially carried out orders from the Central Committee [Gershzon, 2021, p. 100]: the CPSU cultural department⁴ presided over the Ministry of Culture. Gershzon notes that only those initiatives of the Ministry of Culture that had been previously expressed, or in some way endorsed, by senior party leadership eventually went ahead [Gershzon, 2010, p. 386]. However, the union – and, concomitantly, the union republics – ministries overtook the technical work of cultural governance that was delegated to them by the party.

The **French Ministry of Culture** was set up in 1959 by the decree on 3 February 1959 establishing its creation, a decree appointing André Malraux adopted on 22 July 1959, and a decree regulating the structure of the Ministry, 24 July 1959 [Décret No. 59-212 03.02.1959, Décret 22.07.1959, Décret No. 59-889 24.07.1959; *Poujol*, 1991, p. 251–253]. Its broad objectives were stated as disseminating “the capital works of art” in France and abroad, while also contributing to the accessibility of culture to French citizens and the *rayonnement* of France – and the *Francophonie* – in the world [*Beaulieu/Dardy*, 2002, p. 22–23]. Here, Philippe Poirrier sees a break with the narrower *Beaux-Arts* tradition [Poirrier, 2000, p. 73–74]. The 1959 organisation scheme of the ministry foresaw a Secretariat General, a General Directory of Arts and Letters, Directories for Archives and Architecture, a Directory of Sports, and a National Centre of Cinema [*Beaulieu/Dardy*, 2002, p. 28]. While the Soviets heaped up various subdivisions, France’s Ministry of Culture started with almost no internal structural design at all. Its “function” and its administrative structure were to be created along the way, as even the most important general directories were slowly taking shape through 1960–1961 [Poirrier, 2000, p. 76, 81–82; *Dubois*, 1999, p. 226–234; *Dubois*, 2016, p. 84–85].

André Malraux, the charismatic new minister, wanted “to do for culture what Jules Ferry [had done] for education” [*Cabanne*, 1981, p. 50, 51]. His appointment to “a ministry for a man” [Poujol, 1991, p. 251] is usually attributed to de Gaulle [*Dijan*, 1996, p. 69–70; *Poirrier*, 2000, p. 70–71; *Kosenko*, 2008, p. 24] who wanted to keep Malraux in the cabinet, yet the President was less clear on what Malraux could (and should) be able to do. This has been seen as the main explanation why the new ministry came into being without any thought-through administrative structure [Poirrier, 2000, p. 89], and even motivated administrators met with conservative resistance from Education [Poujol, 1991]. Malraux was a contested figure⁵, and little did he attempt to assuage the spirits when, for example, he condemned the revolting students in 1968 or expected other central or local authorities or artists not to differ from his viewpoint *too much* [*Rigaud*, 1996, p. 271; *Kosenko*, 2008, p. 32–33]. Following Jean-Michel Dijan, Philippe Urfalino [Urfalino, 1997] saw Malraux’s personal policies as an expression of the indissolubility of state and modernisation.

The democratisation pathos espoused by Malraux fitted into the Front Populaire tradition and the critique of the ‘elitist’ *beaux-arts* [Poirrier, 2013, p. 26; *Urfalino*, 1996, p. 359; *Urfalino*, 1997, p. 43, 46; *Kosenko*, 2008, p. 31]. Furthermore, the Ministry sought to modernise French culture (and French society), following the Gaullist ideas of the IV Plan [Poirrier, 2000, p. 78; *Urfalino*, 1997, p. 47] and a paternalist conception of state [Kosenko, 2008, p. 58, 86]. Another important aspect was decentralisation. Malraux saw *Maisons de la Culture* as a key project that would eventually put his *action* on the same foot as Jules Ferry’s (opponents were more or less convinced) [Mossuz, 1970, p. 169–171; *Wachtel*, 1987, p. 13–14]. Yet decentralisation’s successes in the first years of the new ministry were rather modest [Mozhaeva, 2011, p. 308; *Kosenko*, 2008, p. 27–28], and it was in the 1960–1970s that more stable form of cultural presence on the ground, Directions régionales des affaires culturelles (DRAC), took ground.

Another, potentially controversial, axis was the initial intersection of France’s cultural and colonial politics (after all, Malraux traveled widely across the *oultre-mer*), which, as Marie-Ange Rauch argued, was essential for *rayonnement* luggage and the personnel policies within the Cultural Ministry, which eagerly recruited *fonctionnaires* of the crumbling imperial administration [Rauch, 1998,

p. 51–53, 133–137]. As the Soviet Union did not have a formal colonial empire, it cannot be directly compared to France in this respect, while, understandably, a strongly centralised cultural policy would rather quickly border on cultural colonialism in a multiethnic Soviet state. Last but not least, in foreign cultural affairs, like in the USSR, the Foreign Ministry has been keen to keep the Ministry of Culture at a distance from the actual decision-making [Poirrier, 2000, p. 88].

While the French cultural ministry displayed more internal political autonomy compared to its Soviet counterpart, it was hardly one of the more powerful departments in the French government. They both looked back at a history of state involvement with culture. In the short term, the Soviet and French ministries were brought into existence with fairly lapidary decrees without much previous planning, yet the political conjuncture in Moscow and Paris was different. The party-state sought to reform and optimise its control over Soviet culture; de Gaulle wanted to create a suitable position for Malraux, from which a new ministry began to grow.

Art for Art vs. Money for Art: On the Tightness of State Purses

When Ministries of Culture were being designed, both Soviet and French authorities had rather vague ideas about their budgetary requirements. It must be said beforehand that estimating the exact value of a subvention meets with important methodological difficulties (in the planned economy, access to goods was not regulated by money alone, and prices were fixed). In addition, Soviet budgets did not feature a clearly defined “culture” category that could be assigned to the Cultural Ministry alone (republican ministries, such as that of the RSFSR, were supported, correspondingly, by republican budgets, where similar problems persist). While just over a quarter (28–29 %) of Soviet expenditure was dedicated to “cultural issues”, these included education (*prosveshchenie*), sports, leisure, and, finally, “social and cultural activities” (which were not necessarily covered by the Ministry). Only subventions to the most important theatres and musical institutions were singled out [Bakanov, 2021, p. 313–314, *Otchiot ob ispolnenii 1953, Gosudarstvennyi biudzheth SSSR 1946–1950, 1951–1955; O gosudarstvennom biudzhete SSSR na 1956 g.*]. Valentina Muzychuk calculated that culture was continuously allotted roughly one percent of the Soviet budget [Muzychuk, 2007, p. 248] – being financed “on a residual basis” (*po ostatochnomu printsipu*). The Cultural Ministry wasn’t a wealthy and powerful office of state.

In France, likewise, the government was from the start not generous with the new ministry [Rioux, 1990, p. 115; Kosenko, 2008, p. 28]. Back in 1954, the *Beaux-Arts* section of the education ministry had obtained just 0.10 % of the national budget [Poirrier, 2000, p. 56]. The Ministry of Culture had a correspondingly larger, yet decisively modest share in the national budget. It was calculated at 0.38 % in 1960, and then slowly rose to, but only twice reached, the 1 % benchmark – notably with a doubling in the early 1980s under Jack Lang [Budget de l’Etat, 2013, p. 392–396; Dijan, 1996, p. 106; Poirrier, 2000, p. 161; Poirrier, 2013, p. 26]. Before Jack Lang, Malraux, with his political leverage, appears to have been the most successful minister in raising budgets with the national government [Négrier, 2017, p. 8–9; Foulon, 2019].

Neither the Soviet, nor the French ministry had a complete monopoly on managing finances dedicated to culture; in the French case, for instance, never a majority of government subventions related to the arts. Like their Soviet colleagues, cultural *fonctionnaires* found themselves in a ministry that was (correctly) perceived as significantly underfunded (Kotlikova, 2017, p. 47). If the decision to set up a separate ministry of culture was a one-way road (with a short secretariat general diversion later in France), extracting large sums from the state has been an arduous task ever since the 1950s⁶. And this points to another structural weakness of both the Soviet and French ministry within their political systems.

Internally, expenditure was set to grow. Both Ministries of Culture have been overseeing “public goods” and a number of institutions whose income has been diminishing. From the start, the Ministry of Culture in France dedicated more than a third of its budget to the ‘big’ Parisian institutions, such as the opera and museums [Kosenko, 2008, p. 156]. Opera (and drama) theatres, subject to the Baumol law, are an exemplar of this tendency: if in the 19th century opera was a commercial business, the second half of the 20th century sees both a decrease in contemporary opera production (paired with a diminished relevance of opera for cultural production, its elitisation and museification), and an increase

in financial subsidies. Simultaneously, cultural lobbyists, artists, and societies at large expected the level of state support to increase. Cultural ministers in both countries were not seldom forced to transmit the state's austerity policy down to artists: a pattern that has been reproduced in other countries where such ministries have been established.

Conclusion: “Cultural State” or “Residual Basis”?

Cultural ministers, and their ministries, were not among the first cohorts of political elites in either country, nor did they have much say in broader political issues. A position in the Ministry of Culture would hardly be a first choice for a purely careerist *fonctionnaire* or *apparatchik*. For artists, however, the ministries became important interlocutors, commanding financial and capital means that were distributed among institutions and individual “cultural workers”. After all, both the USSR and France used culture in their prestige offensives at home and, particularly, abroad, and ‘culture’ had too much of a positive tinge in Russo- and Francophone *political cultures* to be discarded once a top-level government division had already been created.

I therefore see the creating of Cultural Ministries as a representative milestone within the intellectual history of cultural governance in the USSR and France. Cultural prestige has tended to hold sway over educated circles in both countries – both among officials and, I would argue, historians. As Sergei Kosenko wrote, “if in the power of its nuclear arsenal France lags behind Russia ... in cultural and spiritual influence in Europe and the world, France is nonetheless far superior to Russia” [*Kosenko*, 2007, p. 87]. Culture has been a desirable and prestigious good, and the cultural industry has had to be protected from commercial “vandalism”. “Communism” versus “gaullism” (or, arguably, “democracy”) would itself hold less explanatory power than these broad convergences that are better explained by Pierre Bourdieu than Karl Marx (or Karl Popper). This notional convergence can be singled out as the most important common trait in these two cases⁷.

While both cultural ministries were relatively poor, and commanded little independent leverage in attracting resources, they could benefit from the perceived need to accumulate prestige capital both domestically and abroad, which could help raise funds – specifically when higher-ranking authorities felt they could themselves benefit from a “cultural offensive”. Far from being loci of power, cultural ministries remained objects, rather than subjects, of state policies and have tended to act within the narrowly circumscribed limits of their nominally assigned competences that have never covered the entirety of cultural creation, dissemination, and consumption. This weakness was congenital, and to overcome it would require another transformation, its scope equal to those of 1953 and 1959.

Notes

¹ A workshop dedicated to the cultural history of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy was organized by Humboldt University in 2019, shortly before the pandemic. See: https://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/fmi/bereiche/ab_janz/Termine/Workshop-programme_Comparing-the-cultural-history-of-Fascist-Italy-and-Nazi-Germany.pdf.

² State Committees were another fashion in Soviet governance under Khrushchev.

³ Interestingly, the “depoliticization” *Zeitgeist* did not immediately register with all “cultural workers”. In early 1953, Alexander Fadeev petitioned the Central Committee to retain full party control, instead of creating a state institution, over Soviet culture (Letter to Malenkov and Khrushchev on 14 September 1953, *Apparat TsK KPSS i kul'tura 1953–1957*, 153–156). He was subsequently rebuked by party officials (M.D. Iakovlev / Culture and Science Department of the Central Committee to Khrushchev, 28 September 1953, *Apparat TsK KPSS i kul'tura 1953–1957*, 187–188).

⁴ Between 1953–1955: science and culture, since 1955 – separate culture department, 1956–1965 divided by union republics, since 1965 – a unified culture department (see: *Kiselev et al.* 2004, 7).

⁵ Malraux's personality that dominated the Cultural Ministry's first decade stands in a stark contrast with the – almost visibly unhappy – Soviet apparatchiks sent to Mincult, who, before Ekaterina Furtseva (and with a possible exception of Grigory Alexandrov) displayed little individual profile in their job (and her successor, Piotr Demichev, was commonly described as a phony careerist, see *Shilov*, 2021).

⁶ The history of the Russian SFSR's *All-Russian Society for Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments (VOPIK)* is a notorious, and instructive, example of how initiatives from below that did not promise easy political capital, unlike a Bolshoi tour abroad, met with very lukewarm support from party-state apparatchiks.

⁷ Conversely, though, the Russian and French historiographies of cultural ministries' history have developed along rather different lines of inquiry: institutional history (Gershzon, Beloshapka), political history (Khestanov,

Kurennoi, partly Beloshapka), history of discourse (Khestanov) versus the French penchant towards intellectual and political history (notably Ory, Poirrier) next to economic and organizational aspects (e.g. Négrier, Poirrier among others); the Cultural Ministry itself produces accounts that are closer to the “Russian” tradition (e.g. Pouljol). Of note is recent Russian research on French cultural policies (Kosenko).

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Дата поступления рукописи в редакцию 12.03.2023

КУЛЬТУРА И ГОСУДАРСТВО: СОЗДАНИЕ МИНИСТЕРСТВ КУЛЬТУРЫ В СССР И ФРАНЦИИ В СРАВНИТЕЛЬНОЙ ПЕРСПЕКТИВЕ, 1953–1959 ГОДЫ

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Сравниваются создание и организационные основы министерств культуры в СССР и Франции. Основанные в 1950-х гг., министерства существенным образом отличаются от большинства тогдашних европейских практик. С одной стороны, этим признавалась особая роль государства в управлении культурой, с другой – министерства не имели четко определенной сферы компетенций, стратегической политики и властных ресурсов. Во Франции создание отдельного министерства культуры в немалой степени было вызвано желанием присвоить Андре Мальро министерский ранг и отдать должное культуре как части национальной идентичности. И наоборот, советский режим стремился утвердить символическую независимость культуры от пропаганды, одновременно повышая статус культуры в государственном аппарате. В обоих случаях министерство культуры было политически слабым, и в Советском Союзе назначение на пост министра культуры было сродни понижению по сравнению с высокими партийными постами. Мальро оказался оставленным без детального плана и значительных экономических и кадровых ресурсов, а советское министерство было сравнительно недофинансируемым и находилось в подчиненном положении по отношению к отделу культуры ЦК КПСС. Хотя советские и французские решения о повышении управления культурой до министерского уровня принимались независимо друг от друга, они обнаруживают глубокие параллели в существующих в советском и французском обществе представлениях о культуре, управлении и ценности культурных благ и габитуса, которые были важнее, чем конкретная политика управления культурой.

Ключевые слова: управление культурой, культурный менеджмент, история культуры, советская оттепель, голлизм, министерство культуры.

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