

THE MOSCOW METRO – PALACES FOR THE PEOPLE

by *Mona Jayos*

Not many of the world's underground railways can claim to be tourist attractions and artistic monuments in their own right. The Moscow metro is an exception. Its station platforms and concourses resemble miniature palaces with chandeliers, sculptures and lavish mosaics.

Built under the command of Stalin, the iron-fisted leader ordered the metro's artists and architects to design structures which would encourage citizens to look up, appreciate the station's art as if they were looking up to admire the sun. With their reflective marble walls, high ceilings and grandiose chandeliers, many Moscow Metro stations have been likened to an "artificial underground sun".

Russia's glorious architectural movement came to an end in 1955 after the Communist Party issued a decree eliminating "extravagance in design and construction". New stations that were built during this time were devoid of any stucco work, mosaics, original columns or other "unjustified" elements. The party had a new theme - "Kilometers at the expense of architecture."

Fortunately, the original architecture of the early stations was left intact, which, after all these years still look amazing. Here are some examples:

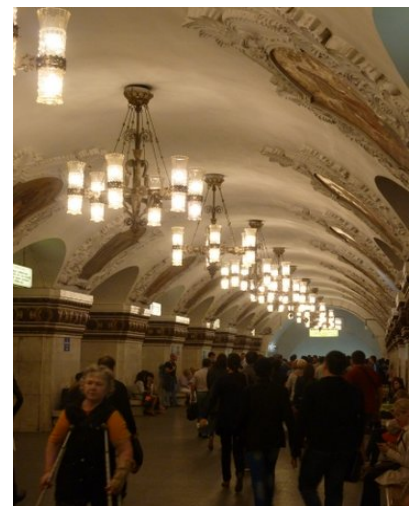
Mayakovskaya

Built in 1938, it was named after a famous Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky. Recesses in the ceiling contain a series of mosaics depicting planes and sporting scenes.



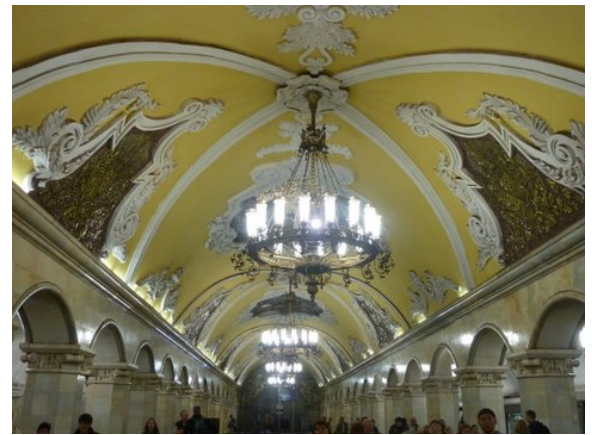
Kievskaya

Large, ostentatious mosaics decorate the walls of this station. They include idealized scenes representing Russia's friendship with the Ukraine and picture of Russia agriculture.



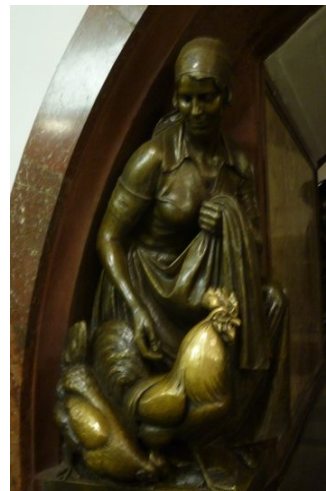
Komsomolskaya

This station is named in honor of the Communist Youth League (Komsomol) which helped to construct the metro.



Ploshchad Revolyutsii

The main hall of this station contains life-size bronze statues of ordinary citizens such as a farmer, who helped to build the Soviet Union.



Note : All photos in this document are the author's except for Mayakovskaya, which is from <http://www.moscow-russia-insiders-guide.com/mayakovskaya-moscow-metro-station.html>