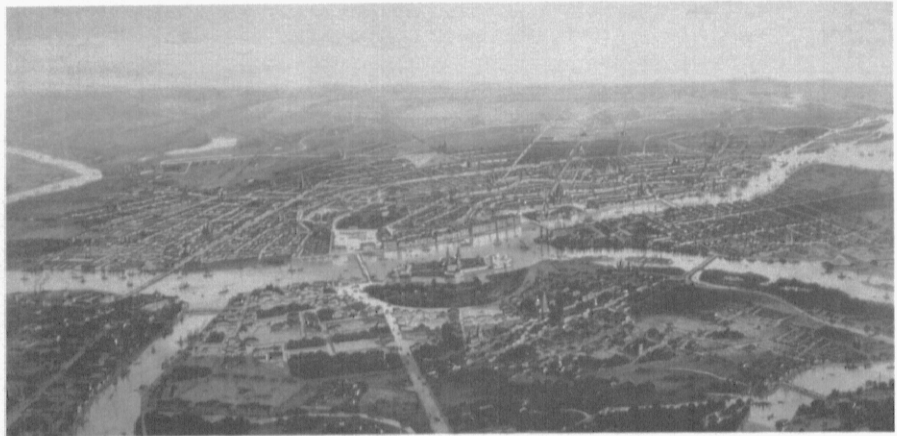


# St. Petersburg, Russia:

## Designing A Monumental Urban Stage Set For Imperial State Craft

Anatole Senkevitch, Jr.

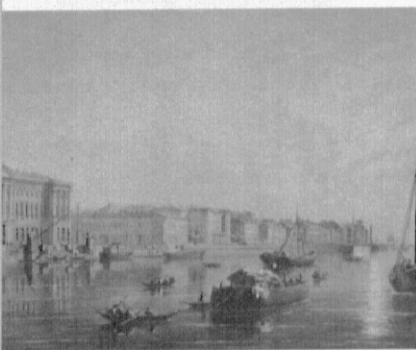
Bird's eye panorama of St. Petersburg in the mid-19th century. From an engraving by L.I. Charlemagne. (Saint Péterbourg: Ville et granit de gloire et de malheur, p. 53)



St. Petersburg, which Peter the Great founded in 1703 on the marshy banks of the Gulf of Finland as his "window to the West," was the principal focus for the political, cultural and artistic reforms undertaken by Peter and his successors. Peter's decision to open Russia to Western influence marked a decisive break with Moscow and the country's conservative and traditional past. As a result of these reforms, Russia moved from a parochial, quasi-medieval civilization into the "Age of Reason." St. Petersburg emerged as the seat of the new Russian imperial government proclaimed by Peter the Great and a practical and symbolic vehicle for its development.

The city's imposing physical and spatial setting, encompassing a seamless network of built forms, squares and waterways, represents an unparalleled achievement of urban design. That achievement was fostered by the keen interest and enlightened participation of key sovereigns – from Peter the Great to Catherine II and particularly Alexander I – in the embellishment of their new capital as the preeminent embodiment of imperial Russian culture. That the venture proved a success was also due in no small measure to the high caliber of the architects recruited for the task. Involving individuals from Western Europe and Russians trained abroad, chiefly in France, these architects demonstrated a singular capacity to create magnificent urban ensembles and a genius for integrating them into the overall physical and spatial fabric of the city.

View of the University Embankment, 1850s. From a lithograph by J.J. Charlemagne. (Saint Péterbourg: Ville et granit de gloire et de malheur, fig. 142)



Because of the importance that Peter and his successors attached to the establishment of St. Petersburg as a world capital of unparalleled splendor, architecture and urban design assumed preeminence among the emerging imperial Russian fine and visual arts, determining the very style of the age. They were not employed simply to embellish the stage on which the acts of imperial reform were to be played out. Rather, they were deployed as both



Figure 1 – Plan of the territory of which St. Petersburg was founded in 1703, showing the Neva River delta and the conditions of the site before its occupation by Peter I. (Egorov, *Ansambl' v gradostroitel'stve SSSR*, p. 34)

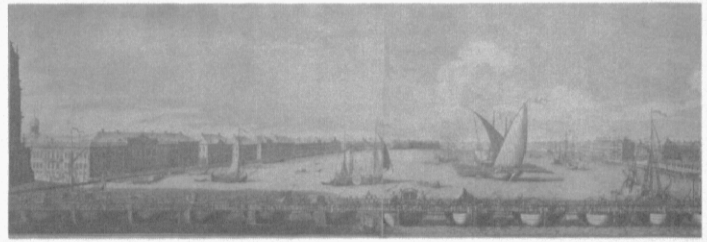


Figure 2 – Panorama of the Neva River, 1753. From an engraving by M.I. Makhaev. (*Saint Péterbourg: Ville et granit de gloire et de malheur*, fig. 15)

instruments and symbols of reform. In this sense, architecture and urban design proved the most imperial of the Russian arts, supplying vivid means for reforming, interpreting and re-possessing the Russian townscape.

### Early Planning

Although St. Petersburg was founded as a port of entry to the sea, its character was defined less by its proximity to the Gulf of Finland than by its situation in the delta of the Neva River, encompassing several of its branches and canals (fig. 1). Peter's admiration of Amsterdam, which he had visited in 1697, inspired visions of incorporating the Neva and its branches into the fabric of his city. The Neva River plays a vital role in the layout of the city, effectively constituting its main "thoroughfare." As much a ceremonial route as a waterway, the Neva's stunning breadth creates a unique expanse of space that breaches the horizon to encompass the spatial impression of the whole (fig. 2). The palaces and public buildings that line both sides of the Neva act, in Kaganov's words, to turn formless emptiness into formed space at an unprecedented urban scale.<sup>1</sup> The branches and canals, less colossal in scale, constitute dynamic, seamless channels of formed space (fig. 3). St. Petersburg's unique character thus derives in great measure from the degree to which its scintillating waterways both inform and energize the city's "tout ensemble," endowing it with a unique spatial and experiential character (fig. 4).

The first years of St. Petersburg's existence saw an amazing transition from a swampy, scarcely populated military outpost to a fledgling town that was destined to become a leading European capital. The first installations to be erected in 1703 were the Peter and Paul Fortress on Hare's Island and the Admiralty on the opposite, or mainland side of the river. At first, construction of these and other structures was dictated by a strategic desire to keep the enemy at bay. However, Russia's victory at Poltava in 1709 enabled Peter to focus on St. Petersburg in order both to consolidate Russia's strategic position in the region and to capitalize on Russia's rise as an emerging European power. In 1712 Peter the Great proclaimed St. Petersburg the new capital of Russia. From that moment, haphazard building activity gave way to concerted planning aimed at facilitating the swift construction of the city. Peter's vision of his new capital called for replacing the irregular medieval layout characteristic of most Russian towns, including Moscow, with a regular network of streets, waterways and squares lined with continuous rows of building.



Figure 3 – View along the Fontanka



Figure 4 – Winter Canal (*S-Peterburg/St. Peterbourg*, p. 10)



Figure 5 – Fortress and Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul (*S-Peterburg/St. Peterbourg*, p. 11)



Figure 6 – Plan of St. Petersburg, 1720, showing Trezzini's plan for Vasily Island. Published by I.G. Homann (Gli Architetti italiani a San Pietroburgo, fig. 8)



Figure 7 – The Building of the Twelve Collegia and the old Gostinyi Dvor Shopping Arcade, encompassing the initial public nucleus of the city (engraving from a drawing by L.I. Charlemagne. (Saint Péterbourg: Ville et granit de gloire et de malheur, fig. 17)

The Swiss-Italian architect, Domenico Trezzini, who had been recruited in 1703 to become the first chief architect of the capital, had put his stamp on Peter's fledgling town through his design of the later masonry Fortress and Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul (fig. 5), as well designs for a series of utilitarian and imposing structures alike. Concerned that the town was growing without a plan, Peter commissioned Trezzini in 1715 to prepare a plan for Vasily Island, which Peter had initially projected as its center.

Although Trezzini aimed to satisfy Peter's desire to emulate the great European maritime cities, especially Amsterdam, his plan for Vasily Island was preoccupied with practical concerns (fig. 6). The territory, fortified by a continuous bastioned wall and thus reflecting lingering concerns for military security, was laid out in a straightforward grid of streets and intersecting canals to drain the marsh, using a common Dutch practice for reclaiming areas of low-lying land from a sea, lake or river.<sup>2</sup> Although the intermittent placement of parks and squares offered some relief, Trezzini's layout lacked any architectural center or focus. He set aside a large public square near the cape of the Island as the administrative and commercial center of the city. In 1722 Trezzini erected two buildings to frame the square (fig. 7): the Twelve Colleges Building (now St. Petersburg University), conceived by Peter the Great to house the twelve ministries comprising Russia's new imperial form of government, and the Gostinyi Dvor, a storehouse for imported and exported goods.

In concentrating exclusively on Vasily Island, Trezzini's plan did not take due account of the surrounding landscape or accommodate the structure of the growing town beyond the Island, including the Peter and Paul Fortress and the Admiralty, which had already become the city's symbolic and practical focal points. Having initially approved it, Peter grew disenchanted with Trezzini's scheme. In 1717 he commissioned a grander plan from the Parisian architect, Jean-Baptiste-Alexandre LeBlond, a pupil of André Le Nôtre who had edited works on architecture and formal gardens and who had been recruited the year before to come to Russia for five years as superintendent of all architectural work.<sup>3</sup>

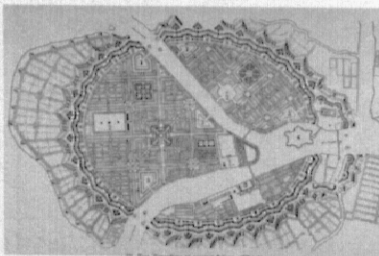


Figure 8 – Jean Baptiste Alexandre Le Blond. Plan for St. Petersburg, 1717. (Bunin, *Istoriia gradostroitel'nogo iskusstva*, p. 351)

Le Blond's monumental plan was the most elaborate and fanciful of the planning schemes produced for the Russian capital (fig. 8). Inspired by Renaissance plans for an ideal city, by the new plan of 1690 for Copenhagen, and by Vauban's 17th-century improvements to the French system of bastioned fortifications, Le Blond created a fortified city of canals that commanded the central part of the Neva delta. Unlike





Figure 9 – Plan of St. Petersburg, 1738, showing Eropkin's scheme. (Egorov, *The Architectural Planning of St. Petersburg*, p. 32)



Figure 10 – Plan of St. Petersburg showing the planning project of 1762. (Gli Architetti italiani a San Pietroburgo, fig. 4)

Trezzini's scheme, Le Blond's plan included the Peter and Paul Fortress and the Admiralty, together with portions of the adjoining islands and the south bank of the Neva. The town was enclosed by an oval ring of fortifications with angular bastions.

Le Blond treated the eastern half of Vasily Island as the center of the city, laying it out as an intricate rectangular grid of parallel streets, squares and intersecting canals cut through the low-lying marshland. Two main canals ran the length of the island, with twelve smaller canals intersecting it. A new imperial palace with an extensive formal garden stood at the center of this monumental grid composition; the diagonal avenues radiating from the palace terminated in four squares with cathedrals. Adjacent to the central square, Le Blond proposed a park and large square in the manner of a Place d'Armes.

Despite the fact that it would have inhibited growth on the mainland south of the Neva, Peter approved Le Blond's plan.<sup>4</sup> However, Le Blond had failed to comprehend the ambition of Alexander Menshikov, the governor general of the city, who did not wish to have his valuable properties on Vasily Island compromised by Le Blond's scheme. While Peter was abroad in 1717 Menshikov successfully undermined the initial work on the canals, causing the project to be abandoned.

After Peter the Great's death in 1725, the enterprise of building the capital threatened to collapse. When Peter II moved to Moscow in 1728 St. Petersburg effectively ceased to be the capital. The population began to abandon the city, construction came to a halt, the factories closed and industry and trade were deprived of state support. With the return of Empress Anna Ivanovna and the imperial court to St. Petersburg in 1732, however, the population began to grow and construction resumed. The Commission for the Construction of St. Petersburg, headed by the architect Peter Eropkin, was established in 1737 to regulate building activity in the city and finally resolve the problem of planning its center. The plan prepared by Eropkin offered interesting new options for the city's further development.

Eropkin's scheme reflected his belief that the south bank of the Neva was more suitable for development than the north because it allowed for unlimited expansion. In addition as part of the mainland, it would always remain in communication with the rest of the country, while the opposite shore might at times be cut off by floods.<sup>5</sup>





Figure 11 – View of the Moika Canal, 1830s. From a lithograph by K.P. Beggrov. (Gordin, Pushkinskii Peterburg, fig. 161)

Eliminating the confining fortifications that Trezzini and LeBlond had featured in their proposals, Eropkin's scheme provided a more sensible framework for incorporating existing building and advanced a more dynamic approach for managing the city's southward expansion (fig. 9).<sup>6</sup> It projected the Admiralty as the plan's focal point and applied the *patte d'oie* or "goose-foot" motif to create a symmetrical convergence of three primary radial thoroughfares at the Admiralty tower. The road from the east, incorporating an existing regional route, became the great Nevsky Prospect, the main street in the city, extending some two and a half miles from the Admiralty to the Moscow Railway Station and then to the Alexander Nevsky Monastery. The two other thoroughfares – Voznesensky Prospect, adapting the road westward to Novgorod, and Gorokhov Street, the central avenue – were realigned to complete the pronged layout. This dynamic device, whose implementation in Eropkin's plan Edmund Bacon termed "one of the wonders of urban design,"<sup>7</sup> proved an effective vehicle for coalescing the city's ensuing architectural and urban development. Eropkin's proposal was effectively incorporated in the 1762 Plan of St. Petersburg (fig. 10) issued by the Commission for the Building of St. Petersburg and Moscow, established earlier that year by Catherine the Great.<sup>8</sup>

### Developments Under Elizabeth and Catherine II

If Peter the Great's era was one in which St. Petersburg was still in process of becoming, that of his daughter, the Empress Elizabeth, marked the point at which St. Petersburg began to acquire more compelling trappings of an imperial setting. Her architect, Count Bartolomeo Rastrelli, built several outstanding late Baroque and Rococo urban complexes in St. Petersburg,<sup>9</sup> ranging from the diminutive Stroganov Palace on Nevsky Prospect (1750-4) to the vast Winter Palace (1754-62), firmly integrated into the core of the emerging capital; and the Smolny Convent (1748-57), a magnificent quadrangle of convent buildings. Rastrelli's projects pointed the way to the ensuing creation of integral urban ensembles in St. Petersburg.

During Catherine's reign, the art of architecture and town planning lost the last vestiges of provincialism and became full-fledged contributions to the legacy of European architecture.<sup>10</sup> Embracing the Neoclassicism of the French Enlightenment, Catherine evinced a passion for architecture that found expression in her personal involvement in the building enterprise. Leading palaces and public buildings erected during her reign followed Rastrelli's example in setting a more urban and urbane tone for urban design, albeit with a decidedly Neoclassical bent. Vallin de la Mothe's

expansive Academy of Fine Arts Building (1765-72) and Gostinyi Dvor (1761-82), a Retail Arcade covering an entire block fronting on Nevsky Prospect, are symptomatic of this new tendency, as are the Italian Giacomo Quarenghi's Hermitage Theater (1783-7), State Bank (1783-90), and Academy of Sciences complex (1783-9), together with Ivan Starov's Tauride vast Palace (1783-9).

Catherine's growing concern for town planning prompted her to establish the Commission on the Building of St. Petersburg and Moscow in 1762.<sup>11</sup> The commission devoted considerable attention to controlling growth and building through a strict regulation of lot and building lines. Its proposal to establish a system of regular lot and building lines was incorporated in the official plan for St. Petersburg adopted later that year.<sup>12</sup>

At Catherine's urging, the commission embarked upon a mammoth project to face the city's embankments with granite. Bold, severe and superbly adapted to the curving entrances of the canals, these granite embankments, designed by Yuri Velten, supplied a magnificent base for the rows of public and private buildings lining the city's waterways (fig. 11). The addition of overlook platforms, flights of steps and ramps descending to the landing docks and water-gates turned the city's waterways into veritable urban ensembles, the most grandiose and coherent of any European city at the time.

Although no major urban ensembles per se were erected during Catherine's reign, her own efforts and those of her commission were important contributions to the development of St. Petersburg as an imperial capital. They proved instrumental in setting the stage for the dramatic strides made during the first part of the 19th century under her successor Alexander I.

### The Alexandrian Empire Style

It was in the reign of Alexander I (1801-25), to whom the French architect Claude-Nicolas Ledoux had dedicated his 1804 treatise, *L'Architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art, des mœurs et de la législation* (1804),<sup>13</sup> that St. Petersburg achieved its final dynamic physical and spatial definition as a consummate imperial capital through the masterful conception and execution of a network of central squares encompassing the core of St. Petersburg.

Alexandrian classicism, which has come to be known as the Alexandrian Empire style, was a Russian version of the Empire style conceived in France. When Napoleon, posing as the champion of the ideas of the French Revolution, rose to power in Europe, the Neoclassical

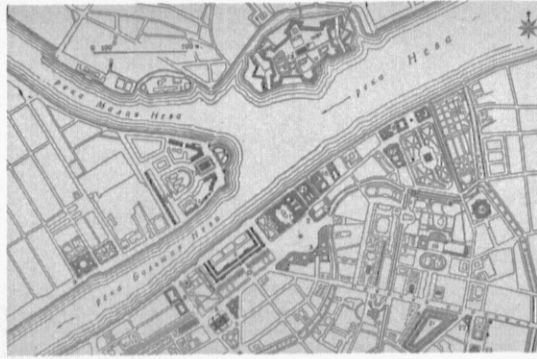


Figure 12 – View of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan, 1830s. From an engraving by Fedor Alekseev.



Figure 13 – Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan (S-Peterburg/St. Peterbourg, p. 7)

Figure 14 – Plan of the central area of St. Petersburg in the mid-19th century. (Bunin, *Istoriia gradostroitel'nogo iskusstva*, p. 421)



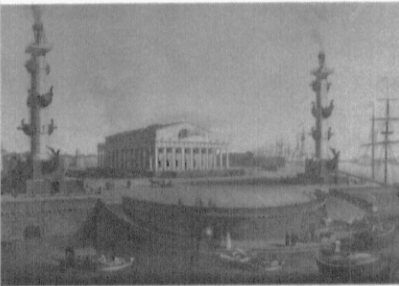
style of architecture became the style of the French Empire. Arguably, the most vigorous and benign expression of this empire style was built not in France but in Russia. The monumental new imperial planning program inaugurated by Alexander I concentrated on the erection of government offices and ministries as demonstrations of Russia's newly acquired power and prestige following Russia's victory over Napoleon in the War of 1812.

Alexander was blessed with good taste and a profound affection for St. Petersburg. During his long reign he sought to enhance the city with buildings in a consistent and harmonious style. The final classical homogeneity of the city as a whole is attributable to Alexander as much as to any of his predecessors. Alexander also seems to have had the capacity to summon the best in his architects. The greatest works of his best architects evinced a masterful propensity for a bold but harmonious urban design, one informed by an innate ability to manipulate monumental buildings to organize and shape an effective sequence of major spaces in the central areas of the imperial capital. These spaces were conceived as ceremonial stage sets for enacting the new rituals of imperial grandeur, ranging from military parades to civic and religious festivals.

Inaugurating this triumphal age of the architectural ensemble was the Cathedral of the Virgin of Kazan (1801-11), designed by Andrei Voronikhin, a pupil of Charles de Wailly in Paris.<sup>14</sup> The cathedral was erected to house the miraculous icon of the Virgin of Kazan, one of the most ancient relics of Russian Orthodoxy (fig. 12). In the process of designing the cathedral, Voronikhin created a harmonious square on Nevsky Prospect, thus inaugurating the construction of a series of new ensembles that related spatially to the main thoroughfare of St. Petersburg. Although derived from Bernini's Piazza of St. Peter's in Rome, Voronikhin's Neoclassical conception was quite novel in its disposition (fig. 13). Given the obligatory Russian Orthodox orientation of altars to the east, Voronikhin set his church on a Latin cross parallel to Nevsky Prospect. In so doing, he made the north side of the building rather than the customary west side the formal entrance off Nevsky Prospect, accentuating it with a pedimented columnar portico. From the northern portico he projected a semi-circular colonnade that opens out onto and frames the square fronting on Nevsky Prospect.

The full measure of the Alexandrian Empire style was revealed in the Exchange (now the Naval Museum) by the French architect Thomas de Thomon, begun in 1805 (fig. 15)<sup>15</sup> Thomon transformed the ragged contour of the cape into a harmonious ensemble aimed at creating a

Figure 15 – View of the ensemble of the St. Petersburg Exchange at the cape of Vasili Island, 1817. From an engraving by I.V. Chesky. (Gordin, *Pushkinskii Peterburg*, fig. 8)





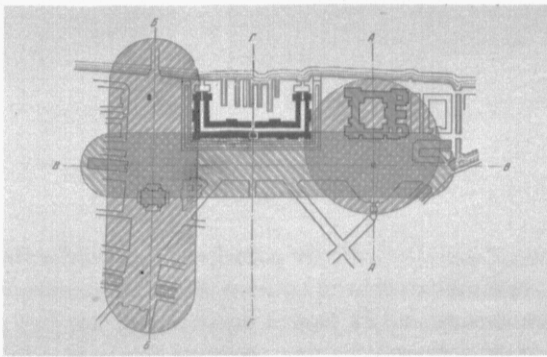


Figure 16 – Plan of the five central squares and their axes of composition. Drawing by Iu. A. Egorov. (Egorov, *Ansambli' v gradostroitel'stve SSSR*, p. 114)

monumental setting for civic and commercial ceremonies. This ensemble consisted of a monumental temple housing the exchange, combining elements taken from Ledoux and from temples at Paestum, which de Thomon had visited; a granite embankment with a semi-circular promontory and ramps descending to the river; and a square in front of the exchange framed by two lighthouses in the form of rostral columns with seated figures of marine divinities at their feet.

Thomon oriented his ensemble toward the cape of Vassily Island, washed by the Greater Neva on one side and by the Little Neva on the other. This masterful orientation served to enhance the Exchange's connection to the Peter and Paul Fortress, the Admiralty and the Winter Palace – the symbolic and spatial core of the imperial capital. The result was a singular urban ensemble that encompassed both land and water as integral parts of a dynamic spatial whole.

### The Central Squares

In the 18th century there had been no functional requirements that would have called for the creation of large squares or the development of a strong spatial network in the center of St. Petersburg. Around 1802, however, a major reorganization took place of the whole governmental structure of the Russian empire. A large number of ministries was set up to replace Peter the Great's Collegia, creating a demand for major new governmental buildings to house the new ministries (fig. 14). Similarly, Russia's victory over Napoleon in the War of 1812 created a demand for a system of squares in the ceremonial center of St. Petersburg to accommodate the frequent military parades in honor of Russian victories. The construction of the new ministries and the need for large open spaces



Figure 17 – The Admiralty from Palace Square, 1820s. Lithograph. (Gordin, *Pushkinskii Peterburg*, fig. 112)



Figure 18 – View of the original Admiralty, looking north along Nevsky Avenue, 1753.

From an engraving by M.I. Makhaev. (*Saint Pétersbourg: Ville et granit de gloire et de malheur*, fig. 16)

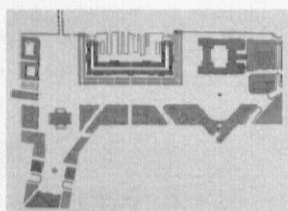
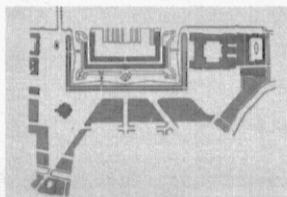


Figure 19, 20 – Plan of the central squares of St. Petersburg at the beginning of the 19th century (before and after reconstruction).

Drawings by Iu. A. Egorov. (*Egorov, Ansambl' v gradostroitel'stve SSSR*, p. 78-9)



Figure 21 – View of Palace Square toward the General Staff Building, 1836. Lithograph of L.P.A. Bichebois and A.G.B. Bayot from a drawing by A.R. de Monferrand. (*Gli Architetti italiani a San Pietroburgo*, p. 294)

around the Winter Palace for military parades provided the final impetus for creating the ensemble of central squares in St. Petersburg, including Admiralty, Palace, Senate and St. Isaac's Squares (fig. 16).<sup>16</sup>

The centennial jubilee of the laying of the foundation of the old Admiralty by Peter the Great in 1706 provided the occasion for the monumental reconstruction of the facility by Adrian Zakharov, who had trained under Chalgrin in Paris.<sup>17</sup> His new Admiralty building (1806-23) was a U-shaped structure for the Ministry of Naval Affairs, arranged in a double row separated by a narrow court (fig. 17). Zakharov's design succeeded in integrating the ensemble into its immediate surroundings while making it the effective center of the city. In the process, it established a framework for developing the other central squares.

Zakharov's design is a superior example of the way traditional elements can be shaped into something strikingly new. By 1800 Korobov's century-old complex, with its outmoded facilities, was no longer an appropriate monument for the center of an emerging great city and imperial capital (fig. 18). Zakharov's solution retained the basic length of Korobov's facade but transformed it into an expression of the emerging Alexandrian empire style. The main facade, a quarter of a mile long, overlooks Admiralty Square, projecting an imposing facade to the city proper. Its most compelling feature is the central entrance pavilion. Here, Zakharov retained the basic silhouette of Korobov's building – the tall, slender spire, which had become a symbol of imperial St. Petersburg – while transforming it into a bold, fresh monumental design. Brilliantly conveying the aspect of upward striving, the structure becomes lighter as tier succeeds tier, and as the square Ionic colonnade erodes the building mass. The whole is crowned by a golden spire, boldly thrusting toward the sky as the pivotal focal point for the three great avenues converging upon the Admiralty tower.

Zakharov's initial conception of Admiralty Square had envisioned it as an island complex surrounded by a canal and fronted by a minor boulevard (fig. 19).<sup>18</sup> As parades in honor of Russian victories were becoming a frequent occurrence, it was decided to widen the passage in front of the Admiralty in order to accommodate them. Doing so entailed removing the moat and earthen ramparts and widening the passage in front of the Admiralty to provide a broad boulevard passing in front and parallel to the main facade of the building (fig. 20). That boulevard was to be part of the axial vista extending from Senate Square to Palace Square to form a continuous parade route. In developing Admiralty Square, Zakharov anticipated the spatial significance and relationship of the future squares surrounding the complex and laid the groundwork for their ensuing development.

Palace Square represents Carlo Rossi's masterful urban design solution for creating imperial Russia's grandest ceremonial review and parade ground. Italian-born but Russian-trained, Rossi became the principal architect and

urban designer in St. Petersburg after 1816.<sup>19</sup> His work proved decisive in giving definitive form to the imperial capital. Whether commissioned to build a palace or a theater, he transformed the entire area involved, molding buildings to create spacious new squares that, in turn, succeeded in completing other ensembles already in existence. He shaped huge reservoirs of space into squares and streets, lining them with buildings and opening up remarkable perspectives.

To create the urban space of Palace Square, Rossi actually joined the building housing the General Staff to the one containing the Ministries of Finance and Foreign Affairs to create an integral hemispherical building ensemble (fig. 21). Originally, the street had entered the square at a very awkward angle, running alongside a row of structures that was at once part of and detached from the complex (fig. 22). Rossi's solution was to unite the two buildings with a bold triumphal arch and to situate the resulting complex directly across from, and integrally linked to, Rastrelli's Winter Palace. Although Rastrelli's palace and Rossi's building are in completely different styles, Rossi succeeded in making his own spare but superbly proportioned complex blend admirably with Rastrelli's exuberant frontage. He did so by focusing attention on the bold triumphal arch in the center of the complex (fig. 23). This triumphal arch was actually a complex assemblage of three arches, the first two framing an unroofed cubical pavilion; the third, extending from the second and set at an angle to it to frame a bending of the street that connects Palace Square to the city's main thoroughfare, Nevsky Prospect. The triumphal arch also frames a magnificent view of the Winter Palace, whose entrance pavilion is precisely on axis with Rossi's arch.

Rossi's brilliant scheme, which Edmund Bacon has cited as an example of great design produced by accepting an existing plan and turning its problems into assets,<sup>20</sup> is an imaginative solution to the problem posed by the irregularity of the square and the need to create an impressive public building worthy of its place opposite the Imperial Residence (fig. 24). In the center of the square the French architect Auguste Ricard de Montferrand built the Alexander Column (1829) to commemorate Alexander's victory over Napoleon. The granite monolith, the largest in the world, serves as one of the primary visual foci of the classical center of the city

Between 1829 and 1834 Rossi erected two more buildings – the Senate and the Synod, the highest judicial and ecclesiastical bodies of the imperial Russian government.<sup>21</sup> Once more the architect was confronted with the difficult problem of designing a unified facade for two separate buildings to house two different government ministries (fig. 25). Although the buildings had to be of different sizes because of the off-center entrance of the street between them, they appear to be identical. The greater length of the Synod, to the right, was disguised as a curving colonnaded pavilion turning the corner toward the Neva. The two buildings are linked by a

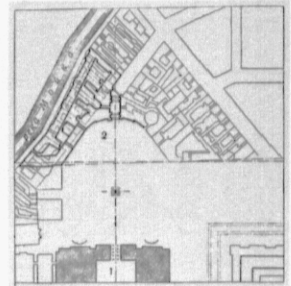


Figure 22 – Final scheme by Carlo Rossi for the reconstruction of Palace Square. (Bunin, *Istoriia gradostroitel'nogo iskusstva*, fig. 393)

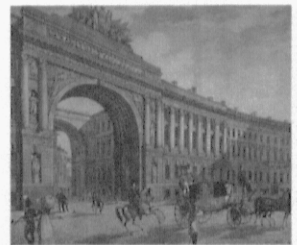


Figure 23 – Arch of the General Staff Building, 1822. From an engraving by K.P. Beggrov. (Gordin, *Pushkinskii Peterburg*, fig. 14)



Figure 24 – View of Palace Square, showing the lateral axis employed as the principal parade route (engraving from drawing by A.R. de Montferrand, 1836). (Egorov, *Ansaml' v gradostroitel'stve SSSR*, p. 117)



Figure 25 – View of Senate Square, framed by St. Isaac's Cathedral and the Senate and Synod complex to the right. 1830s. Lithograph. (Gordin, Pushkinskii Peterburg, fig. 119)

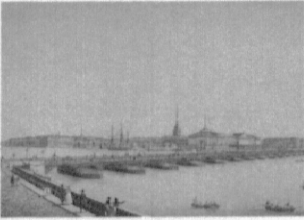


Figure 26 – View of the southern embankment along the Neva River, from St. Isaac's Cathedral to the Admiralty and the Winter Palace, 1820-30 (Saint Pétersbourg: Ville et granit de gloire et de malheur, fig. 139)



Figure 27 – St. Isaac's Cathedral (S-Peterburg/St. Peterbourg, p. 4)

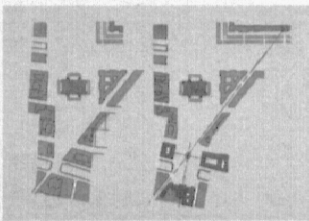


Figure 28 – Plan of the St. Isaac's Square. (before and after reconstruction). Drawing by Iu. A. Egorov. (Egorov, Ansambl' v gradostroitel'stve SSSR, p. 111)

triumphal arch whose supporting pylons are the inner pavilions of the buildings on each side.

In ways similar to those employed at Palace Square, Rossi related the facade of the Senate and Synod Building to the side facade of the Admiralty Building by aligning the axis of symmetry and the secondary axis of the square (fig. 26). St. Isaac's Cathedral forms the square's southern boundary.

In the mid-19th century another square, St. Isaac's, was added to the already established network of three squares.<sup>22</sup> It was completed in 1858 with the completion of the enormous St. Isaac's Cathedral (1817-58), designed by Auguste Ricard de Montferrand (fig. 27). The church was built on a Greek-cross plan with a dome and four Corinthian porticoes, two of which are flanked by a pair of smaller cupolas relating uneasily to the monumental central dome. The great gilded dome, inspired by Soufflot's dome at Ste-Genevieve and Wren's dome at St. Paul's Cathedral, is supported on a cast-iron framework that was the earliest use of this material in Russia on such a scale. A dominant focal point in the city's skyline, St. Isaac's dome is visible from miles around.

St. Isaac's Square was the last classical ensemble to be completed in the center of the city. Besides the cathedral, the square is fronted by the Lobanov-Rostovsky Mansion (1817-19), by Montferrand, and the Marinsky Palace (1839-44), designed by the architect A. I. Stakenschneider. In 1856-59, a monument to Nicholas I, designed by Montferrand and the sculptor Peter K. Klodt, was raised in the center of the square. After the Marinsky Palace had been completed it was found to be totally cut off from the square by the houses located on either side of the Moika Canal. Carlo Rossi was summoned out of retirement to create a plan for opening up the square toward the palace and thus completing this portion of St. Isaac's Square (fig. 28).

### Nevsky Prospect Ensembles

The construction of Nevsky Prospect, the city's main thoroughfare proceeded concurrently with the replanting of the central areas (fig. 29). It was gradually transformed into a fully developed sequence of spatial compositions through the insertion of several carefully placed ensembles designed as spatial and functional linkages (fig. 30).<sup>23</sup> As a result, Nevsky Prospect and its immediate ensembles were effectively linked to the



Figure 29 – Nevsky Prospekt (St. Petersburg/ St. Peterbourg, p. 17)

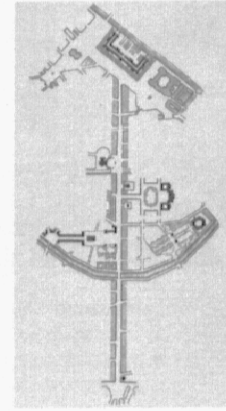


Figure 30 – Plan of the central squares and ensembles along Nevsky Avenue. Drawing by Ia. A. Egorov. (Egorov, *Ansambli v gradostroitel'stve SSSR*, p. 122)

major ensemble created within the spatial corridor of Nevsky Avenue. Rossi's Michael Palace complex and Alexandrian Theater complex round out the Nevsky Prospekt series.

Built for Grand Duke Michael, youngest brother of Alexander I, the superbly proportioned Michael Palace (1818-25) now houses the State Russian Museum. Although Rossi's first major commission, it already reveals Rossi's urban design sensibilities (fig. 31).<sup>24</sup> Following Voronikhin's example at the Kazan Cathedral, Rossi created a square in front of the Palace, which was placed on axis with the palace and its adjoining dependencies. He also cut a new street, placed on the same axis, to Nevsky Prospekt, creating a striking spatial ensemble within urban core of the imperial capital. Rossi also positioned the palace's side wings to create an entrance court of decidedly urban scope and scale.

In this brilliant ensemble for the Alexandrian Theater complex (1816-32), Rossi created a network of streets and squares linking Nevsky Prospekt to Lomonosov Square on the Fontanka River, with connections to other adjoining districts (fig. 33).<sup>25</sup> The theater, a highly articulated geometrical mass with lofty Corinthian porticos on the longer sides, a second Corinthian colonnade on the front, and a range of flat pilasters on the rear facade, stands at the head of a square set between the Public Library and the Anichkov Palace and opening out onto Nevsky Prospekt. At the opposite end of the square, the rear facade of the theater serves as a terminus for Theater (now Rossi) Street, a new thoroughway that Rossi cut to the

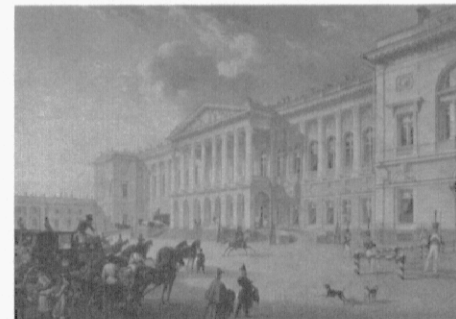


Figure 31 – The Michael Palace, 1832. From a watercolor by K.P. Beggrov. (Gordin, *Pushkinskii Peterburg*, fig. 204)

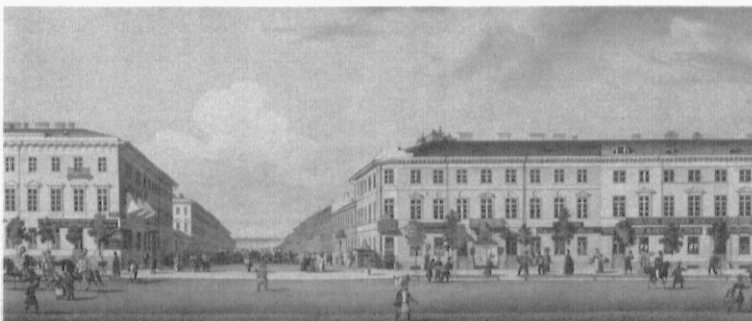


Figure 32 – Panorama of Nevsky Avenue, fragment of the left side at Great Gables Street, 1835. From an elevation lithograph by P. Ivanov from a drawing by Vasilii Sadovnikov. (Gordin, *Pushkinskii Peterburg*, fig. 204)

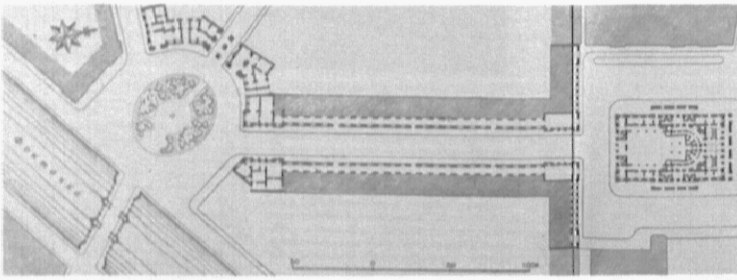


Figure 33 – Plan for the Alexandrian Theater complex, 1827-32, with Theater (now Rossi) Street. (Bunin, *Istoriia gradostroitel'nogo iskusstva*, p. 414-15)

Anichkov Palace and opening out onto Nevsky Prospect. At the opposite end of the square, the rear facade of the theater serves as a terminus for Theater (now Rossi) Street, a new thoroughway that Rossi cut to the Fontanka River, where it terminates at the semi-circular Lomonosov Square. Rossi treated it as a “corridor” street akin to Vasari’s Uffizi in Florence: the shaft of space is contained on each side by a long colonnaded facade of identical design (fig. 34). Rossi designed the facades of all the buildings on the squares and streets as parts of a single monumental ensemble.

The urban ensembles that Rossi and his immediate predecessors had created constitute a superbly integrated urban design oeuvre of unequalled power, fluidity and grace, the final triumph of Petersburg classicism. Through their concerted efforts, St. Petersburg had successfully become, and would remain, a city of truly imperial proportions, especially within the complex of dynamic ensembles of buildings and squares that had developed around and beyond the Admiralty, Winter Palace and Nevsky Prospect.

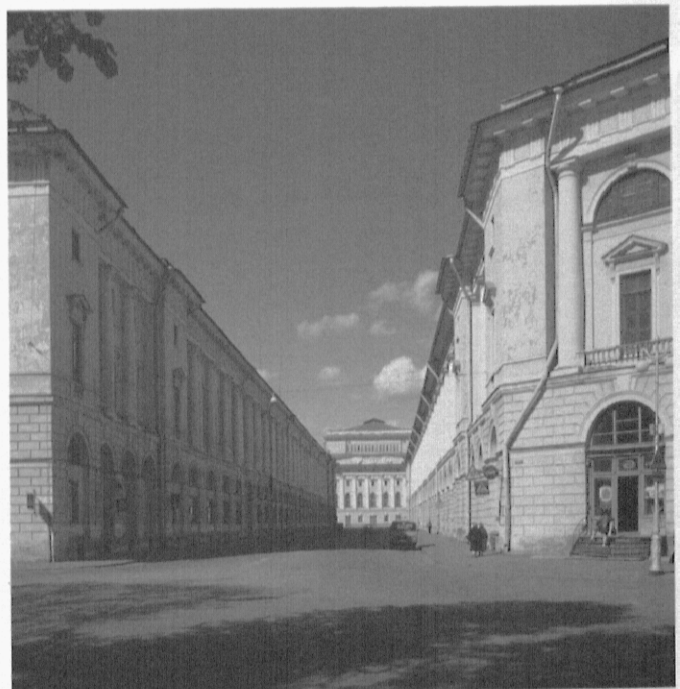


Figure 34 – Theater (now Rossi) Street, by Carl Rossi



1. Grigorii Z. Kaganov, *Sankt-Peterburg: obrazy prostranstva* [St. Petersburg: Images of Space] (Moscow: Izd-vo "Indrik," 1995), p. 24.; Engl. transl. by Sidney Monas, *Images of Space: St. Petersburg in the Visual and Verbal Arts* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Pr, 1997), p. 16. 2. Nicola Navone, *Domenico Trezzini and the Plans for Vasilyevsky Island, Domenico Trezzini e la costruzione di San Pietroburgo* (Florence: Octavo, 1994), p. 68. 3. Boris Lossky, J.-B.-A. Le Blond, *Architecte de Pierre le Grand* (Prague: Russkii svobodnyi universitet v Práge, 1936).

4. Igor E. Grabar, *Zhan Batist Aleksandr Leblond*, in *Peterburgskaia arkhitektura v XVIII i XIX veke*, vol. 3 in his *Istoriia russkago iskusstva* (Moscow: Izdanie I. Knebel', 1909), 124-125. 5. V. Shil'kov, *Proekty planirovki Peterburga 1737-1740 godov*, *Arkhiturnoe nasledstvo*, p. 4 (1953), p. 7-13. Cf. P. Petrov, *P. M. Eropkin*, *Zodchii*, no. 5 (1878), p. 54-5; A. Gorin, *Arkhitektor Petr Eropkin*, *Arkhitectura SSSR*, no. 7 (1940), p. 66-8. 6. Shil'kov's article includes several of the planning studies associated with the preparation of Eropkin's plan. 7. Edmund N. Bacon, *Design of Cities* (2nd ed.; New York: Viking Press, 1974), p. 197. 8. Andrei V. Bunin, *Istoriia gradostroitel'nogo iskusstva*, vol. 1 (2 vols.; Moscow: Stroiizdat, 1979), p. 374. 9. Iurii Ovsiannikov, *Franchesko Bartolomeo Rastrelli* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, Leningradskoe otd-nie, 1982); see also Iurii Ovsiannikov, *Velikie zodchie Sankt-Peterburga: Dominiko Trezini, Franchesko Rastrelli, Karl Rossi* (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo SPB/Severo-Zapad, 1996). 10. Natal'ia A. Evsina, *Russkaia arkhitektura v epokhu Ekateriny II* (Moscow, Nauka, 1994). 11. *Ob uchrezhdenii Komissii dlia ustroistva gorodov S.-Peterburga i Moskvy*, No. 11723 in *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii*, XVI (1762), p. 127-128. Although the Commission's initial purpose was to direct the planning and future construction of the two Russian capitals, it actually carried out all of the town planning done in Russia between 1763 and 1796. In addition to the rebuilding of old towns, the Commission also directed the planning of the hundreds of new towns created as part of Catherine's major urban planning reforms. The official plans prepared by the Commission were published in a supplement to the *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii* in a separate volume entitled *Kniga chertezhei i risunkov* (St. Petersburg, 1839). 12. B. Vasil'ev, *K istorii planirovki Peterburga vo vtoroi polovine XVIII veka*, *Arkhiturnoe nasledstvo*, 4 (1953), p. 14-29. The plates accompanying the article are superb and are most descriptive but of poor quality. 13. The first of a projected five-volume work, this volume was the only one to appear before Ledoux's death in 1806. The work had been a long time in preparation. Originally, the book was to have been dedicated to Emperor Paul I of Russia, who had agreed to the dedication of the book on his visit to Paris in 1782; Paul finally received a collection of 273 drawings in the spring of 1789, with the title page simply reading *L'Architecture de C. N. Ledoux*. With Paul's assassination in 1801, the book that finally appeared in 1804 under the expanded title *L'Architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art, des mœurs et de la législation* was dedicated to Paul's son and successor, Emperor Alexander I, who was then still an ally of Napoleon in 1804. 14. German G. Grimm, *Arkhitektor Voronikhin* (Leningrad-Moscow: Gosizdat lit-ry po stroitel'stvu, arkhitektura i stroitel'nym materialam, 1963), Chap. 3. 15. Valerii K. Shuiskii, *Toma de Tomon* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1981). 16. A detailed examination of the central squares of St. Petersburg is contained in Iurii A. Egorov, *Ansaml' v gradoistroitel'stve SSSR* (Moscow: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1961), Chaps 2-3. For English translation, see *The Architectural Planning of St. Petersburg*, trans. Eric Dluhosch (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1969). 17. Valerii K. Shuiskii, *Andreian Zakharov* (St. Petersburg: Stroiizdat, 1995). 18. Egorov, *Ansaml' v gradoistroitel'stve SSSR*, p. 81-91. 19. *Ibid.*, pp. 92-101. See also Marianna Z. Taranovskaia, *Karl Rossi – arkhitekt, gradostroitel', khudozhnik* (Leningrad: Stroiizdat, Leningradskoe otd-nie, 1980) and Iurii Ovsiannikov, *Velikie zodchie Sankt-Peterburga: Dominiko Trezini, Franchesko Rastrelli, Karl Rossi* (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo SPB/Severo-Zapad, 1996). 20. Bacon, *Design of Cities*, p. 198. 21. Egorov, *Ansaml' v gradoistroitel'stve SSSR*, pp. 102-12; see also Taranovskaia, *Karl Rossi–arkhitektor, gradostroitel', khudozhnik*. 22. *Ibid.* See also Ol'ga A. Chekanova, *Ogiust Monferran* (Leningrad: Stroiizdat, 1990) and Aleksandr L. Rotach, *Monferran* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1979). 23. Egorov, *Ansaml' v gradoistroitel'stve SSSR*, p. 123-5. 24. Egorov, *Ansaml' v gradoistroitel'stve SSSR*, p. 24. Taranovskaia, *Karl Rossi–arkhitektor, gradostroitel', khudozhnik*. 25. *Ibid.*