

# MOSCOW, RUSSIA

## AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE, SPASO HOUSE

Few buildings associated with American diplomacy over the past century carry the same resonance and have played such an important role in the U.S. overseas diplomatic heritage as Spaso house, the residence of the U.S. Ambassador in Moscow. Since it was first selected as the American ambassador's residence in late 1933, Spaso House has hosted a long list of distinguished guests, from musicians to presidents of the United States and Russian heads of state. Spaso House has been in continual use by the U.S. Government since the United States first established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, as both an ambassador's residence and, occasionally, as a chancery building.

While much of its fame rests upon the legendary diplomatic parties and state dinners that have been held within its confines, over the past eight decades Spaso House has also served as a venue for both traditional diplomatic negotiations and public diplomacy. Social and cultural events hosted at the house have played an essential role in easing tensions and maintaining contact between the United States and Russia, even when official relations were strained. As such, the history of Spaso House provides a unique perspective on the twentieth century diplomatic relationship between the United States, the Soviet Union, and its successor, the Russian Federation.

The original owner of Spaso House, Nikolay Vtorov, was a renowned Russian industrial magnate. In 1913, Vtorov purchased a lot in the Arbat district from Princess Lovanova-Rostovskaya and hired noted architects Vladimir Adamovich and Vladimir Mayat to design and build his new home. It was constructed in the New Empire style that was popular within Russia's wealthy business class. The interior wall paintings were produced by a well-known artist, Ignatij Nivinskiy. Fêted by contemporaries as a masterpiece, Spaso House remains one of the best surviving examples of early twentieth century Russian neoclassicism.

The structure has served as home to some of the greatest practitioners of American diplomacy during the past century: George Kennan, Chip Bohlen, Averell Harriman, Llewellyn Thompson, and Thomas Pickering, among them. What truly defines Spaso house, however, is its status as a symbol of hope for Russian-American amity. Although this hope has often been frustrated, either by the Stalinist excesses of the 1930s or the decades-long superpower struggle of the Cold War, such failures tell but half of the story. The record of Spaso House as a backdrop to the triumphs of the Grand Alliance in World War II, détente in the 1970s, and glasnost in the 1980s proves that the dream of Russian-American friendship is both valid and lasting.

