**The Tretyakov gallery**

The Tretyakov Gallery , founded by Pavel Mikhailovich Tretyakov (1832-1989), a Moscow merchant and art patron, is a national treasury of Russian pre-revolutionary and Russian art.

The Gallery’s centenary was widely celebrated throughout Russia in May 1956. Tretyakov spent his life collecting the works of Russian painters which reflected the spirit and ideas of all progressive intellectual of his day. He began his collection in 1856 with the purchase of «Temptation» (1856) by N.Shilder and «Finnish Smugglers» (1853) by V.Khudyakov. These paintings are on permanent exhibition. In order that his collection better reflect the centuries-old traditions of Russian art he acquired works of various epochs and also began a collection of antique icons. Tretyakov was one of the few people of his time who realised the great intrinsic value of ancient Russian art. He was on friendly terms with many progressive , democratic Russian painters, frequenting their studious, taking an active interest in their work, often suggesting themes for new paintings, and helping them financially. His collection grew rapidly; by 1872 a special building was erected to house it.

Tretyakov was aware of the national importance of his vast collection of Russian art and presented it to the city of Moscow in 1892, thus establishing the first museum in Russia. An excerpt from his will reads: « Desirous of facilitating the establishment in my beloved city of useful institutions aimed at promoting the development of art in Russia, and in order to hand down to succeeding generations the collection I have amassed I hereby bequeath my entire picture gallery and the works of art contained therein, as well as my half of the house, to the Moscow City Duma. By special decree of the Soviet Government, Issued on June 3 1918 and signed by V.I. Lenin, the Gallery was designated one of the most important educational establishments of the country. It was also decreed that the name of its founder be retained in honour of Tretyakov’s great services to Russian culture.

The Gallerie’s collection has grown considerably in the years since the Revolution. In 1893 it consisted of 1805 works of art, but by 1956 the number had increased to 35276.The early Russian Art department and the collections of sculpture and drawings were considerably enlarged, and an entirely new department- Soviet Art- was created. By a Government decision of 1956, a new house is to be built for the Gallery within the next few years.

At present, the more interesting and distinctive works, tracing the development of Russian art through nearly ten centuries, are exhibit in the Gallery’s 54 halls.