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HOUSING FOR THE MASSES

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Housing the masses was indeed one of the major problems of the immediate post-revolutionary years in the Soviet Union. The condition of mass housing in Russia before 1917 is known largely through statistical material, surveys and the literature of those days. For instance, the basements of the "bourgeois" apartment houses (rabochie kazarmy)[1] organized near the large industrial plants of the Donbass mining region were, at the beginning of the twentieth century, an exact replica of the living conditions of the English working class as described by the classics of Marxism in the middle of the nineteenth century.[2]

A few figures can help us understand the housing situation in the years immediately preceding the Revolution. In 131 towns located on the territory of the actual RSFSR which before the First World War had a sewer system, only 12.5 percent of the buildings were connected to these facilities. Even in St. Petersburg this connection existed for only half of the buildings and for only 25 percent of them in Moscow. In the great commercial center of Nijnii Novgorod only the houses located in the immediate central area were connected to the water distribution system. Gas for cooking and lighting was practicaly unknown in the major Russian towns. The sanitary situation may be elucidated by the fact that between 1906 and 1910 infant mortality was 14 per 1000 in London, 25.8 per 1000 in Petersburg, 28.1 in Moscow and between 35.2 and 42.9 in cities like Krasnodar, Tver, Taganrog, Omsk or Nijnii Novgorod.[3]

FROM THE SLUMS AND THE BASEMENTS OF THE "BOURGEOIS APARTMENTS."

It is well known that the first measures taken after the revolution to improve the housing conditions of the masses were those recommended by Engels in "The Housing Question" (1872). The question posed was that of rehousing the workers in the former "bourgeois apartments" made available by emigration or requisition. According to Engels:

> What is certain is that there are already, in the large cities, enough buildings meant for housing which can be, if used rationally, a remedy for any real "housing crisis". ... As soon as the proletariat has conquered political power, this measure will be as easy to enforce as the expropriations and requisitions of lodgings by the state are today.[4]

Inasmuch as the population of the large towns had considerably decreased between 1919 and 1921 (many of the inhabitants having fled the hunger of the cities and returned to the village), Engels' remedy worked for a short period of time. Not only did it minister to the obvious need for immediate and spectacular measures on behalf of the working class, it had the advantage of having been borrowed from the arsenal of marxist quotations and therefore not subject to discussion!

Nevertheless, the limits of this rehousing policy appeared as soon as the migration process from town to country was reversed after 1921 (the end of the Civil War). At that point, the usual phenomenon in migration from the country and urban growth resumed its course, further due to the relative improvement of living conditions resulting from the New Economic Policy. The resulting housing crisis, with its legal, administrative and statistical aspects, has often been described, particularly in the well known study of T. Sosnovsky, The Housing Problem in the Soviet Union.[5] Let us add just a few figures given in 1927 by one of the architects working on new housing solutions, V. Vegmann. While reminding

us that the official theoretical norm was 9 square meters per person (excluding kitchen, bath and circulation surfaces), Vegmann shows that the real situation was quite different. In provincial towns, the figure was 6 square meters per person, in the Moscow suburbs it was 6.3 square meters per person, and in Moscow itself 5.2 square meters. Is it necessary to remind the reader that these are but average figures, which means that (certain social categories being privileged), a large part of the population of Moscow and the major towns had less than 5 square meters per person, which explains the well known Kommunalki and the "corners" sublet by private persons.

It is well known today that one of the major reasons for the housing crisis in the USSR (which has continued from the twenties until the present period) was the obvious fact that--in addition to migration into the towns and cities--no housing or almost no housing was built in urban areas, due to the state of the economy and to the priorities set by the State. The very limited amount of private--and speculative--building permitted under NEP was but a drop in a bucket compared to the tremendous existing needs.[6]

T. Sosnovsky has thoroughly described the measures taken and the results obtained in the field of housing by the Soviet authorities during the early days of Soviet power. My objective in this paper is to show that despite the poor results which Sosnovsky and others have demonstrated,[7] despite the fact that housing space and the quality of the housing offered decreased through the years, some of those concerned with the housing problem were not prevented from imagining a housing theory and a housing ideology in total contradiction with the objective results but of great interest with respect to subject of our conference: THE ORIGINS OF SOVIET CULTURE.

THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND THE "PERESTROIKA BYTA" (THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE WAY OF LIFE)

I believe that the different theoretical propositions made during the twenties with respect to "housing the masses" are one of the most interesting aspects of that rich cultural period which we call "the Twenties." I believe that these theoretical propositions illustrate--better perhaps than other fields of culture--the global project of reconstructing the whole society, which was the proclaimed goal of the kulturnaia revolutsiia[8] and of which the main tool was to be the perestroika byta.[9] What I intend to show is: how the major ideological orientations of the twenties are illustrated (and have shaped) the theoretical conceptions of the Soviets in the field of housing during the same period; how the proclaimed attitude toward industrial work, agricultural labor, family life, social relations, sexual problems, women's liberation etc., are illustrated by (and have shaped) the housing theories; how the utopian conceptions of the "utopian socialists" of the nineteenth century (Fourier in France, Chernyshevsky in Russia) and also, after the revolution, the ideas of Alexandra Kollontai ("Svobodnaia liubov")[10] constitute some of the major roots of Soviet housing ideology in the twenties; and finally, how a powerfully utopian point of view served as the foundation of a housing "project" for the masses.

Socialism was to be--according to the classics of Marxism--the collective appropriation of the means of production and exchange, but it was also thought of as an entirely new organization of society, the shaping of a "new life" for this "new man,"[11] the future inhabitant of the socialist society in the making.[12] According to Krupskaia:

> With respect to economy, it seems that...we are well under way. In this field we have achieved clarification, rationalization and collectivization. But the organization of the economy is but one component of the construction of socialism. How do we stand as far as another component of socialist construction is concerned: the socialist organisation of all the elements of our public life? ...It is indispensable to give constant attention to the problem of the socialist reconstruction of life. In this field work has only begun.[13]

Lunacharsky expressed a very similar point of view, writing about the problems of everyday life:

> When K. Marx attempted to determine...the ways in which a given social order could be assessed, he said that the criteria (of such an assessment) were determined by the capacity which a given society had to insure the development of all possibilities a man had in him....Thus the economy is useful only inasmuch as it makes possible the organisation of a happy and fraternal life for all men, inasmuch as it makes it possible for all the talents buried within the human psyche to blossom within the framework of a brilliant and productive existence. Well, it is precisely this type of life which is our goal as far as everyday life is concerned.[14]

This ideal view of the world of tomorrow meant that the suppression of the exploitation of men by men would lead to the disappearance of all antagonisms. Work would become an "honor and a joy." To everyone culture would become as necessary as food and everyone would have the right to culture. Women would of course be emancipated. They would become the equal of men, both in production and in everyday life, in family life. The <u>old family</u> was understood as the result of existing economic conditions.[15] When the economic "basis" of the traditional family would disappear, the family itself, as a "superstructure," would be totally transformed; it might even disappear completely. "Free love"--meaning love freed from all economical and social chains, as Alexandra Kollontai put the matter--was to become the rule between men and women.

This then, would be the new life: productive, cultural, healthy, and with collective equipment and facilities replacing wherever possible the individual domestic tasks. At this point we encounter one of the key ideas of the Soviet twenties: The collectivization of the way of life. Collective laundries, collective workshops for small household repairs, collective kitchens (fabriki-kukhni), worked by professionals, and collective dining rooms to replace individual cooking and housework. Kindergartens, libraries, centers of culture and "workers' clubs"--all these new services were to replace the old notion of "home." And this collective way of life was to lead, in the view of its promoters, to new social relations, new possibilities for human contact, to the end of the segregation and isolation so often found in the large cities.[16]

Thus there existed a global social project whose aim was to totally transform all aspects of everyday life. The architectural and town planning project of that same period, the housing project meant for the masses, was to be one of the tools of the projected reconstruction of the way of life, the environment constructed to be the cradle of the new society, adapted to its new rules and habits. As Maiakovsky put it, this environment was to be built:

From blueprints,	S chertezhei
Seriously and rigorously	Seriozno i tochno
We are building	My stroiem
Tomorrow's world.	Zavtrashnii mir

Later, during the thirties, when the "Stalin period" was in full swing, one of the main arguments of hose who criticized the "decadent," "alien to our reality," "modern" architecture of the twenties, was that the constructivist architects had invented so called "new social" programs in order to satisfy their individual "petit-bourgeois" appetite for innovation and self-promotion. All that was said and written in the

early years of Soviet power attests that the architects merely tried to "build" the political and social ideas of their time. We shall now study the forms they devised and built.

A "SOCIAL CONDENSER": THE "DOM-KOMMUNA".

Among the "social condensers", as the constructivist architects called the new types of buildings,[17] one concerned the housing problem directly: it was the dom-kommuna or House-Commune. This type of building, directly inspired by Fourier's phalanstere, was imagined as a complex which was to contain both the housing facilities and the collective equipment necessary for communal life. Inasmuch as important areas were devoted to collective activities--dining rooms, gymnasiums, spaces for child care, rest, etc.--the spaces used individually (essentially for sleeping) could be, it was thought, reduced to a bare minimum. And, all members of the future socialist society being equal, every man or woman was entitled to the same minimal sleeping cell, of 9 square meters according to some, of 5 square meters (for 2) according to others (as in the case of the house-commune built for students of Moscow university by the architect A. Nikolaiev.)[18] The exiguity of the individual cell was to be compensated for, it was believed, by the collective spaces, while the global reduction of the built volume would help shrink building costs and save building materials.

But these material considerations were not the essential ones. The dom-kommuna was also meant to prefigure the future social order and to facilitate its birth. The individual cells were symbolic of the equality among individuals but they were also the architectural representation of the disappearance of the family, inasmuch as the "traditional" apartment

had always been considered (and studied as if it were) the cradle of the "traditional" family. Proposing, in one of his projects, to have doors between all cells, the architect Kuzmin wrote: "When I marry, I open the door. When I divorce, I close the door".

Of course, most of the projects, and the few which were actually built in those days, were less extreme than Kuzmin's project and one must pay more attention to more moderate examples, the most interesting being the dom perekhodnovo tipa[19] built by the architect M. Ginzburg, one of the leaders of the constructivist movement, in association with I. Milinis. In this building, known as the "House of the Narkomfin", the main idea, according to M. Ginzburg, was not to force the inhabitants into the new collective way of life but to create the conditions which would induce them to choose it. It is in this sense that the "Narkomfin[20] building" was of a transitional (perekhodnyi) type. Such buildings were of course meant to generate new habits, new social relations:

> Essentially a complex of one-room type "F" apartments,[21] (the Narkomfin building) is a new organism which will lead us toward a socially superior mode of life--the communal house. The presence of a horizontal artery--the external corridor--makes it possible to link such units organically with a communal dining room and kitchen... the well lit access corridor could become a sort of a forum, a setting for the developement of purely collective functions and social exchanges.[22]

It would be a mistake to think of the dom-kommuna as being nothing but the crude draft of the apartment hotel as it exists in the United States and in other parts of the world. It was meant for special groups of people, as is clear from the regulations established by the tsentrozhilstroi[23] for the house-communes. They were at first to be organized for the "elite" of the Soviet population, essentially for industrial workers "with a high class-consciousness." who belonged to the same plant. In this way a dom-kommuna was to be both a housing and a production unit

organized among people knowing each other and making up a real community. The obligations were quite strict:

> All the members [of the cooperative] housed in the house-commune must pledge themselves to practice voluntary work (samodeiatel'nost' i samoupravlenie)[24] and to institute the new communist way of life. All members [of the cooperative] living in the house-commune engage themselves to take an active part in the household, in militant and cultural activities as well as in its management. They engage themselves to liquidate their and their family's analphabetism within one year. ...not to bring old furniture or objects which would not correspond to the living conditions desired in the house-commune (kitchen utensils etc.) into the house...to fight energetically against drunkards, hooligans, bigots...and other survivals of the old way of life. ...access to the house-commune is forbidden to the above mentioned categories. It is also forbidden to have icons. The members (of the cooperative) pledge themselves to fight for the new way of life not only in the house-commune but also... in the neighborhood and in the factory.

Needless to say, in the house-commune regulations, provisions were also made for the form in which general assemblies were to be held, about the division of the earnings of the members, about physical culture, child care etc....

"KOMMUNY NOVOVO BYTA" (THE COMMUNES OF THE NEW LIFE)

As already mentioned, this novyi byt[25] was partially borrowed from the utopian socialists but it also sprang from spontaneous experiences of the years immediately following the Revolution. The "communes" as the were called (their members were called "communards"), organized mostly by young people, were the experimental prototypes of the future projects and their actualization in the field of collective way of life. Many articles and propaganda brochures were written during the twenties about such communities; much of this material disappeared during the thirties. Wilhelm Reich was one of the few foreigners to have visited one of these communities and some written material can still be found in Soviet libraries.[27] It is difficult to know today precisely how important

this commune movement was or how many people participated in it. But its relative importance is attested by the fact that such important revolutionary leaders as Trotsky considered it important and that the VI congress of the Komsomol in 1929 devoted some time to this problem. In "Questions of Life," Trotsky wrote about the commune movement in the following striking terms:

> The experience of such groups, however imperfect they may still be ...is a step toward the communist way of life and must be studied with great attention. ...In housing construction--we will someday begin to build houses--we must anticipate the need of collective households.[28]

These "roots of a new life," as Trotsky called these early communes, disappear at the beginning of the thirties, when Stalin and his group took the totality of power in their hands. Does the existence of the commune movement in the thirties prove that these attempts at collectivization of the way of life corresponded to a "demand" for a different way of living? When the literature of the period speaks of the "commune" movement, it not surprisingly gives an idealized picture of their activities and how they functioned. When negative examples are described, it is usually with a "pedagogical" purpose, to demonstrate the possibilities for improvement, as for example about the student commune organized in the dom-kommuna designed by the architect I. Nikolaiev.

The journal Krasnoe Studenchestvo (Red Students) often wrote critically about such phrase-mongering:

> We sometimes try to create the new life by the means of slogans. We read slogans, approve of them, talk about them. "Forward toward the reconstruction of life!" is a very beautiful sentence. In these few words, there is a whole revolution. But if this formula is not grounded on solid foundations, it will be nothing but an empty pistol...it scares you but does not work".[29]

A few years later, the same journal described the recently erected dom-kommuna for students:

> The young architect I.S. Nikolaiev has succeeded in capturing... what the principles of the "avant-garde" student should be. This house is finished today; the scaffolding is gone and life exists within the walls. But this blood has not given life to the constructed forms. What we have there is not the exemplary commune of the progressive student; what we see is just a furnished lodging, a banal canteen.[30]

But the communes, spontaneous or organised, no matter how elaborate their architecture may have been, were solutions concerning only very limited groups of men and women. "Housing for the masses" required a much broader and much more general approach to the problem. And this problem arose in its full dimension when the first Five Year Plan was launched in 1929. The question was no longer that of building a dom-kommuna here or there, for limited groups of people, or of allocating space for groups wishing to organise a commune in an existing building. The question was how to solve the housing problem on a massive scale, how to build, not separate buildings, but whole cities, and how to plan these new cities according to the social project of the "new Life." The question was: what the characterictics of a socialist city ought to be.

"WHY WE MUST AND CAN BUILD SOCIALIST CITIES"[31]

If the city was, as stated by the classics of Marxism, the "built reflection" of a given social order and of a given production process, then the human settlements of the socialist society were to be totally different from those built under capitalism. What were these new socialist cities to be like--and should there even be cities, in the traditional sense of the term? What housing principles should prevail in the new human establishments? How was the settlement itself to act as a "social

condenser, helping in the shaping of new social communities? These were some of the central questions in the major debate that went on in the Soviet Union at the end of the twenties, most essentially from 1929 until 1931. One of the aspects of this debate was of course "WHAT KIND OF HOUSING FOR THE MASSES SHOULD THERE BE?"

This debate is known to have opposed two orientations in the field of planning represented by two groups of professionals, the "urbanists" and the "disurbanists." We cannot, within the scope of this paper, describe in detail these two theories, both of which concerned the totality of the planning problem for the whole territory of the Soviet Union. Both groups thought that the existing towns and cities were to be replaced by new types of human settlements; both believed that one of the main goals to be achieved was the elimination of "the contradictions between town and country" (in the language of Marxist theory); that urban concentration and city growth ought to be stopped; that decentralization of industry ought to be promoted and that the collectivization of the way of life--experimented with so far only on a small scale--had to become guiding principle of mass housing in the new socialist system which was coming into existence.

The main difference between these two tendencies--the "urbanists," led by L.M. Sabsovich, and the "disurbanists," with M.I. Okhitovich at their head--was that the "urbanists" imagined the organization of the human settlements as small agglomerations of 30,000 to 60,000 inhabitants, combining the functions of industry and agriculture, while the "disurbanists" rejected the conception of agglomerations and favored a scattering of the population over the entire territory, so as to obtain ways of living totally different from the old conceptions of "town" and country".

How did each of these groups approach the Housing question? For both the collectivization of the way of life was a fundamental principle, but they diverged sharply as to the architectural forms in thich this collectivization was to take place. The "urbanists" imagined their small agglomerations as made up essentially of "house-communes" of the type already being tried out in the existing towns. They were to be completed by the addition of a certain amount of basic equipment, but the essential structure of the new "towns" was simply the interconnection of "house-communes" and production units with a scattering of centers of culture, health etc. Thus the "urbanists" did not really innovate in the field of housing; they merely generalized the previous experiments of the twenties. The "disurbanists", on the other hand, proposed something entirely different from all existing schemes. They regarded the "house-communes" as too bulky and, therefore, wasteful of building materials, noisy, dirty, and cramped. They devised a new conception of collective life based on individual housing! According to them, the total decentralization of human settlements was to be achieved in the form of minimal individual cells built on stilts and scattered throughout the countryside, sometimes in rows, sometimes in clusters, giving to each man or woman direct contact with nature and a mix of social contacts and isolation:

> Exploitation is not only an economic phenomenon. Moral exploitation is just as frequent in capitalist society....The architect who constructs socialist social relations, must take this experience into account. ...It teaches him...that each housing cell must have its own separate access. A couple will live in two cells linked by a communication door. The relations between wife and husband, between two individuals are voluntary relations. As soon as these relations become a constraint imposed by the conditions of everyday life, they become a form of exploitation. What permits the women and men to be alone or not is the direct link with the outside.

The individual cells, on stilts and with generously glazed wall surfaces, were to be built of light and cheap materials and were to be disassembleable, for both technical and social reasons:

> Assembleable houses! And never mind if the first ones are not a success. But what a lucky break that they are as easy to take apart as to assemble. Nobody will protest if a husband and wife, two friends, or a group of inseparable comrades place their individual houses next to one another. ...but if discord breaks out, if the friends quarrel or if one of them gets married, this has no effect on the problem of the living space, for it is possible at any time to separate the units, to enlarge or to reduce them, to dissassemble them completely and to reassemble them in a new spot".

This quotation, which insists on individual freedom, must not lead one to believe that the "disurbanists" were opposed to the collectivization of life. Collectivization was, on the contrary, understood as favoring individual freedom by liberating the individual from domestic work, so wasteful of time and energy. The preference of the "disurbanists" for indivudual housing did not oppose them to the idea of the socialization of most of the functions traditionally performed within the family cell. But they opposed including the facilities for this socialization--as they were in the "house-communes" within the building, preferring that they be located at a distance from the housing cells in the form of "collective bases" near the main highways. These "collective bases" were also to act as stations for the fleet of busses and cars linking the residential areas to the industrial plants.

We have mentioned above the utopian and ideological roots of the idea of the collectivization of life. But more immediate considerations also militated in favor of this orientation. The period during which the USSR had known unemployment was over, with the launching of the First Five Year Plan. Soon labor shortages replaced unemployment, and the collectivization of the way of life appeared one of the ways to put

the famale population to work in industry and construction. Thus the emancipation of women ceased to be a goal in itself and became a tool to effect the industrialization of the country. Freed from domestic drudgeries, from child care etc., the women were now available for the building of socialism. From the point of view of the state, it was not only the female population which was concerned by these measures. For the male too, collectivization served to limit the demand for comfort, for living space, for goods in general.

The collectivization of the way of life also appeared as a time-saver, for it was believed that the strict organization of everyday life would reduce the amount of time which each individual was obliged to waste in order to obtain the minimal quantity of goods necessary to survive under conditions of Soviet commercial scarcity. The well known Soviet economist G.S. Strumilin was, at the beginning of the thirties, among those who were definitely in favor of the collectivization of the way of life. In an article called "The Problem of Socialist Towns" he tried to prove with figures how the construction of "socialist towns" would benefit the general economy of the country, how it would cost less to build than towns along "traditional lines":

> In a worker's family the use of a stove amounts to 2 rubles and 10 kopecks per month per person. 30 percent of this sum (i.e. 63 kopecks) is spent for the preparation of meals. The expenses in manpower used to cut wood, clean the house, wash the dishes amounts to at least one hour per person or at the going price for this type of work, to 15 kopecks per meal. Thus a family meal of 1000 calories with 200 grams of bread used to cost 39.7 kopecks per person in 1927, including the cost of labor or, if the free labor of the housewife was to be deducted, 24.7 kopecks.

And Strumilin goes on to compare these prices with the figures obtained in the fabrika-kukhnia (industrial kitchen) of Ivanovo-Voznesensk and "proves" that industrial cooking and collective meals are cheaper in time as well as in money. Strumilin's conclusion and that of most other specialists in the field of planning and housing: ONE MUST BUILD SOCIALIST CITIES.

NEW LIFE AND OLD CITIES

If a great many of those concerned with the industrialization of the country seem to have believed that the total reconstruction of the housing facilities was necessary and possible, both for economic and social reasons, (Sabosovich had thought that it was possible to erase the existing towns and villages "from the face of the earth"), some were less optimistic. Among the latter was Yuri Larin, an "Old Bolshevik" involved in the cooperative movement and interested in housing problems. It was clear to him that the State could not erect the "industrial giants" of the Five Year Plan and at the same time reconstruct the existing towns and villages according to the norms prescribed for the "new way of life." In his several publications and particularly in Zhilishchei byt' he proposed a method which he believed would make possible the immediate introduction of the "new way of life" in existing housing, without any major work of reconstruction.

Individual kitchens and individual bathrooms were to be demolished in the existing buildings and replaced by collective facilities. This would free up about 20 percent of the building space, which would then be devoted to collective activities: dining rooms. centers of culture, kindergartens etc. Larin was not a technician, which explains the facility with which he transformed existing buildings, tore down partitions etc.

Larin imagined that these transformations would be acieved by groups of people organised voluntarily, more or less on the "commune" system. This movement would, he believed, progressively demonstrate its advantages and thus become more and more general. Inasmuch as it made it possible to convert old buildings to the uses of the "new life," it made unnecessary the construction of expensive "socialist human settlements," at least during the industrialisation period.

In sum, from the "disurbanists" to Yuri Larin and from Sabsovich's schemes to Strumilin's careful calculations, the general trend of Soviet housing theory is evident: the replacement of the functions performed within the family by collective services; a less individual and more social life; the creation of forms in which the "obligations" of marriage would be replaced by voluntary relationships between equal people, etc. Such a society needed, in the opinion of its promoters, an entirely new type of housing, and the talented group of avant-garde architects (essentially the Constructivist members of the O.S.A.) devoted most of their efforts to this problem. HOUSING FOR THE MASSES was their main preoccupation.

Some recent "experiments" such as, for example,those which took place in Cambodia under the Pol Pot regime have shown, in a tragically caricatured form, what the results of a voluntaristic "reconstruction" of social relations and of society as a whole can be. And there is no doubt that some of the particans of radical measures for the collectivization of the way of life could have, if they had passed from theory to practice, obtained catastrophic results. On the other hand, had the more moderate experiments of the Soviet twenties in the field of housing been put into practice, they might have given better results than the well known kommunalki of the Soviet towns. The "F type cells" of the Narkomfin Building were unquestionably more livable than the cramped "bourgeois-type" apartments of the thirties, invariably divided among several families, but the Narkomfin Building remained one of the rare examples of its kind. A more widespread application of its principles might have helped to ease the housing crisis.

BACK TO TRADITIONAL CONCEPTIONS

Few structures remain in the Soviet Union to bear witness to the research pursued during the twenties on mass housing. In fact little was built and the research, due to the difficult economic situation and to industrial priorities, had more to do with design and theoretical activity than with real construction. But even this theoretical activity was to come to an end during the first half of the thirties.

The first signal of a change in direction was the well known resolution adopted by the Central Committee of the Party on the 16th of May 1930, which critisized not only the architectural and planning research of the twenties but the very idea of the "reconstruction of the way of life":

> The Central Committee notes that parellel with the movement for a socialist way of life, highly unsound, semifantastical and hence extremely harmful attempts are being made by certain comrades... to surmount "in one leap" the obstacles that lie along the path to a socialist transformation of the way of life. ...These attempts ...are linked with recently published projects for the reorganization of existing cities and the construction of new ones, exclusively at the expense of the State, with the immediate and complete collectivization of every aspect of the worker's life: feeding, housing, education of the children in isolation from their parents, abolition of normal family life and an administrative ban on the private preparation of meals etc. The implementation of these harmful and utopian proposals, which disregard both the actual resources of the country and the degree of preparation of the population, would lead to vast expenditures of money and would seriously discredit the very idea of a socialist transformation of the way of life.

One can read this resolution in the way Soviet architectural historians have read it in retrospect--as simply a call for moderation in the face of unquestionably utopian and unrealistic proposals. But the real meaning of the resolution was different. When published in Pravda, it was clearly understood as a signal that all speculations about a transformation of the way of life were to be stopped. This is obvious if one considers the decisions which followed shortly thereafter. In 1931, the June

Plenum of the Central Committee "rehabilitated" the traditional towns, up to then unanimously criticized as a product of capitalist society. The existing cities, according to Kaganovich had become "socialist cities" simultaneously with the October Revolution; research as to what a "socialist city" might be was therefore useless.

In February 1932, the committee in charge of the construction of the Palace of Soviets, under the chairmanship of V. M. Molotov, announced the results of the competition. The first prize went to a monumental and traditional project. In April 1932, the Central Committee proceeded to the liquidation of all artistic and literary organizations which up to then had represented different orientations and tendencies. They were soon replaced by monolithic organizations, working on the basis of "socialist realism". In 1934 the Architectural Academy, which had disappeared with the Revolution, was restored, along with some of its prerevolutionary members. In 1953 the "General Plan for the Reconstruction of Moscow" was adopted. It confirmed the "historical" characteristics of the town. Of this plan, one of the architectural "historians" of the Stalin period wrote:

> This plan has properly been called Stalinist by the people...established through the initiative and under the leadership of comrade Stalin, it has opened a new era for architecture and planning.

And finally in 1937 came the First Congress of Soviet Architects in Moscow. It adopted statutes which specified that "socialist realism was to be the fundamental method of Soviet architecture".

This return to traditional conceptions in architecture and planning meant of course that all research in these fields dealing with a "new" type of housing had to be stopped, not only because problems of the "reconstruction of life" were no longer the order of the day, but also

because research to discover a "new" type of housing"--for what M. Ginzburg called "new architectural organisms" cannot be separated from the research for a "new" architecture, for "new" forms of expression, for "new" compositional principles.

Thus, from the middle of the thirties on, all research for a new type of housing was abandoned and traditional apartment schemes again came to predominate: two to three room apartments, conceived for "traditional" families, rather than the communicating cells for free men and women that Alexandra Kollontai had imagined. And these two to three room apartments, due to the housing shortage, were of course shared among several families, with two or more families sometimes even sharing a single room. On the other hand, there were the few privileged ones for whom real bourgeois apartments were soon being built, with many more than two or three rooms, with imported fixtures, with servants quarters, etc.

I have tried to understand this return to traditional and historical forms and conceptions by noting that at the beginning of the thirties a certain layer of the population (some call it the "bureaucracy," others the "new class") finally took the totality of power into their hands, under the leadership and the protection of Stalin. Their life was comfortable, their housing conditions good; they had special shops so that they should not have to wait in line and maids to take care of household, cooking and child care. The collectivization of the way of life had been imagined, apart from its social aspects, as a way to facilitate the everyday life of ordinary, unprivileged people. The bureaucracy did not need these facilities. Their demands were of a different nature and concerned other subjects. Progressively adopting in public and

private life the place and functions of the privileged elite of the Ancien Regime, they progressively adopted their tastes and living habits as well.

This set of assertions of course remains to be proved and would necessitate a research activity associating specialists from different fields. I do however think that a certain amount of truth is contained in this explanation. One can of course argue that in every type of society, modern forms are at first rejected by the vast majority of the people and that this happens without the intervention of any sort of "bureaucracy." One can also say that in Germany under tha Hitler regime and in Italy (though to a lesser extent) under Mussolini, a phenomenon of the same type may be observed. But in Italy as in Germany, the political changes which brought fascism to power were not superficial shifts in political alignments but the result
of profound social changes with deep consequences for the ruling groups and in this sense they can be compared to the events in the USSR in the thirties. And in any case the great changes in architecture and planning during the thirties did not concern, I have tried to demonstrate, merely architectural and planning forms. It is the whole conception of life in society, a conception which shaped the housing theories, which changed radically during the thirties. No wonder then that the housing theories of the twenties, the solutions proposed during those years for HOUSING FOR THE MASSES remain among the most original ever produced anywhere in the world. The problem today of course is neither to defend them nor to condemn them. Their main interest in my opinion is that they illustrate clearly the relations existing between housing projects and social projects. This relationship exists in my opinion in every country and under any sort of social and economic system.

E N D N O T E S

1. Workers' barracks.

2. F. Engels. The Condition of the Working Class in England. 1843.

3. These figures are taken from a study by G. Puzis, "Gorodskie i zhilishchnie postroiki v SSSR za poslednii 15 let". Moscow 1932. G. Puzis was a collaborator on Gosplan. (See his interview in A. Kopp "L'architecture de la periode stalinienne".) Puzis was of course tempted to paint a particularly harsh constrast between pre-revolutionary reality and the Soviet period. These figures however have never been questioned.

4. F. Engels. The Housing Question. 1872 (Translated from the French edition by A.K.)

5. T. Sosnovsky. The Housing Problem in the Soviet Union. Research Program on the USSR. New York 1961.

6. The systematic destruction of wooden buildings during the early years of the Soviet regime for heating needs further worsened the situation.

7. In this same article (Sovremennaia Arkhitectura, No. 1, 1927) Vegmann showed that the growth of the population was more rapid then the growth of built living space.

8. Cultural revolution.

9. We always translate "perestroika byta" by reconstruction of the way of life.

10. Free love.

11. New men.

12. Whether any among the leaders of the party and the state really believed in this project lies beyond the scope of this paper. What is certain is that the political literature of those years constantly refers to it.

13. N. K. Krupskaia. "O voprosakh byta" (Questions of Life). Moscow 1930. (Collection of articles published between 1922 and 1930).

14. A. Lunacharsky. "O Byt'e" (About the way of life) Moscow/Leningrad 1927.

15. F. Engels. The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State.

16. The political and "agitatsionnaia" literature of the twenties bears witness to this constant preocupation with the problems of the "reconstruction of the way of life". See a short bibliography on this subject in my bibliography for Changer la vie/Changer la ville.

17. The constructivist movement in architecture was organized in 1925 within the Soyuz sovremennykh arkhitektorov (Union of Contemporary Architects, or O.S.A.). It lasted until 1931. Their journal was Sovremennaia arkhitektura (Contemporary architecture), 1926-1930.

18. Still existing in the "Tretii Donskoi Proiezd", in Moscow.

19. House of a transitional type.

20. On the Tchaikovsky Boulevard in Moscow. Built for the housing cooperative of the employees of the "Narkomfin" or People's Commissariat for Finances.

21. The type F cell provided separate spaces for night and for day life. It was meant for three persons, constituting a family, and had a small built-in kitchenette. The total surface was of 27 square meters (9 square meters multiplied by three persons).

22. M. Ginzburg. In Sovremennaia arkhitectura, No. 1, 1929.

23. Complete French text in: A. Kopp, Architecture et mode de vie.

24. Selfhelp and selfgovernment.

25. New Way of Life.

26. Accounts of these visits appears in:W. Reich. La revolution sexuelle. Pour une autonomie caracterielle de 1'homme. (French edition) Paris, Plon 1935.

27. On the subject of the communes, see the short bibliography in my Changer la vie/Changer la ville.

28. L. D. Trotsky. "Voprosy byta" (Questions of Life), Moscow, 1923.

29. Krasnoe studenchestvo, No. 6, 1929/1930.

30. Krasnoe studenchestvo, No. 5/6, 1932/1933.

31. "Pochemu my mozhem i dolzhny stroit' sozialisticheskie goroda" was the title of one of L.M. Sabsovich's publications. See Revoliutsiia i kultura. Moscow 1930, No. 1.

32. Several articles about this debate in Sovremennaia arkhitektura and in Planovoe khoziaistvo. See also the recent book of V. E. Khazanova, Sovietskaia arkhitektura pervoi piatiletki (The Soviet Architecture of the First Five Year Plan). Moscow 1980.

33. "Zelenyi gorod. Sotsialisticheskaia rekonstruktsiia Moskvy, in Sovremennaia arkhitectura No. 1/2, 1930.

34. A. Pasternak in: Sovremennaia arkhitektura, No. 1/2, 1930.

35. Planovoe khoziastvo, No. 5, 1030.

36. Ivanovo-Vosnesensk was one of the industrial centers where the "collective way of life" had been massively introduced during the first Five Year Plan.

37. A short bibliography of Larin's work is to be found in the bibliography of Changer la Vie/Changer la ville.

38. Housing and way of life.

39. O.S.A.: Union of Contemporary Architects.

40. Kommunalki: traditional apartments occupied by several families.

41. See note #22.

42. Another building of the same type exists on the Gogol Boulevard in Moscow.

43. Resolution of the Central Committee of the Party of May 16, 1930, published in Pravda on May 29, 1930.

44. M. Tsapenko. O sotsialisticheskikh bazakh sovetskoi architektury (On the socialist bases of Soviet architecture). Moscow 1953.

45. Statute of the Union of Soviet Architects, enacted at the First Congress in 1937.

46. A. Kopp. L'Architecture de la periode stalinienne. Presses Universitaires de Grenoble. 1979. For an interesting opposing view, see S. Frederick Starr, "The Social Character of Stalinist Architecture," Architectural Association Quarterly, 1979, Vol. II, No. 2, pp. 49-55.