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Sotsgorod

The Problem of Building Socialist Cities

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FOREWORD

The unprecedented rapidity with which our country is being industrialized presents us with the question of creating new large-scale manufacturing centers, as well as the necessity for intensified construction in those industrial cities that already exist. Each year these problems become sharper and more pressing in direct proportion to the accelerated tempo of our industrialization.

However, in order to solve these questions of construction, we cannot travel along the old, well-worn paths of pre-Revolutionary Russia—paths which are still being followed in capitalist countries. We cannot build according to those archaic methods which are inescapable where there is no single planned social economy, where every owner of a factory or apartment house can build wherever he fancies and however he chooses. Our socialist building cannot and must not repeat all the mistakes and absurdities of the past. A more **rational** construction of industrial enterprises and their contiguous residential areas is possible: that is the problem that faces us and

for which, in solving, the outmoded methods and old plans are almost completely futile.

But there is another factor that makes the old model unacceptable for us. In a capitalist society apartment houses are produced either in the interests of those wealthy persons who, having put up a building exclusively for themselves, then live there luxuriously, taking up gigantic spaces with their small families and arranging the house to their own capricious taste—or else it is built in the interests of those landlords who break it up into apartments and cruelly exploit the tenants. In such houses all the interests of tenants and all questions of their comfort are sacrificed to the greed of the landlord-exploiters. Our constructions must be carried out only in the interests of the working people who are to live in them.

Finally, the ever-increasing drive toward collectivization of life impels us to build houses in an entirely different way than they have been up to this time and as they are still constructed in capitalist countries, where the basic economic unit is the family, each with its individual economy.

All this brings us to realize that these questions of new city building have become unusually acute in the last year. During the winter of 1929–30, they were frequently and heatedly discussed in a number of speeches and papers before various societies and institutions. At the present time one notices everywhere tremendous interest in these questions. In the future this interest will grow even more in proportion to the building of our cities and dwellings.

Unfortunately we have hardly any literature on this subject. It is almost entirely limited to short articles in newspapers and magazines. It is, therefore, a great pleasure to welcome new books on the subject, especially when the author treats the problem from a position of real knowledge of the matter.

The present volume is of this category. The author, N. A. Miliutin, has extensive knowledge of the subject, since he is the chairman of the government commission on the construction of new cities.

N. A. Miliutin's book is distinguished by two advantageous circumstances:

1. Many writers, discussing questions of contemporary construction in the USSR, confuse two issues: the building of dwellings at the present time (a period of transition to socialism or of the beginning of socialism) and the planning to be done at a more distant date in the period of a fully developed socialist or even communist society. This leads them into two kinds of errors. On the one hand, they do not take into account the great progress in techniques and transportation which will have been made in the future, but instead carry over into the future the same handicaps which we so keenly experience in the present; as a result of this their picture of the future assumes a dim and miserable character (for example, they retain in the socialist era the same crowded living conditions in dwellings which we, due to insufficient means, have to accept in the present). On the other hand, in planning both for the present day and the near future, they make demands that cannot be fully realized at present (for example, the immediate and complete collectiv-

ization of life, the elimination of the family, etc.). Comrade Miliutin's book does not suffer from these drawbacks. He says nothing about the far distant future. He is only interested in those questions of constructions that are before us **at the present time**. "In order to establish new principles for the residential sectors of Soviet settlements **for our transitional epoch**," he writes, "we must first enunciate clearly those problems which will present themselves **in the immediate years ahead**." This clear distinction between the building of the near and distant futures saves Miliutin from a number of the mistakes of those visionary and fantastic projects of which many have been guilty in their discussions on the subject of planning during this past winter 1929-30.

2. The second outstanding feature of N. A. Miliutin's book is the author's solid knowledge of the subject at hand. He presents the questions under discussion not in a general way, not as bare theoretical plans, but practically, accompanying his presentation with a number of examples and plans taken from actual life. This aspect further enhances the interest and usefulness of the volume.

In view of all this, one must warmly recommend N. A. Miliutin's book to all who desire to familiarize themselves with the issue of our new building, with the problems that it involves, and with the devices and resources which may bring about its practical realization.

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