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Sotsgorod

The Problem of Building Socialist Cities

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OA Funding Provided By:

National Endowment for the Humanities/Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Humanities Open Book Program.

The title-level DOI for this work is:

[doi:10.7551/mitpress/6353.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/6353.001.0001)

OF THESE NOTES, THE FOLLOWING HAVE BEEN TAKEN FROM THE MANUSCRIPT OF THE TRANSLATION THAT ARTHUR SPRAGUE LEFT: 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 11, 18–21, 23, 25, 26, 28–32, 35, 36, 40–42, 57–60, 64, 66, 70–72. OUR NOTES 9 AND 27 ALSO INCORPORATE HIS MATERIAL — G. R. C.

NOTES TO TRANSLATION

1. *Problema Stroitel'stva Sotsialisticheskikh Gorodov*. See "Sotsgorod" in Glossary. The word *stroitel'stvo* can signify various professional usages in English and, depending on the context, is in our text translated as "planning," "construction," or "city building."

2. An Aleksei Petrovich Smirnov (b. 1899) was one of the first Soviet archaeologists to do sociological and economic research on the Volga Bulgarians and the Finnish feudal cities. See *Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia (Larger Soviet Encyclopedia, BSE)*, 2nd ed. (1956), XXXIX, p. 405.

3. N. L. Meshcheriakov (1865–1942), from 1920 to 1938 chief editor of the *Malaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia (Shorter Soviet Encyclopedia)* and chairman of the board of the *BSE*. See the latter, 2nd ed. (1954), XXVII, p. 403. As a theorist of the socialist city, Meshcheriakov suffered attacks in the later period of reaction along with Miliutin, Okhitovich, and others. This came at the hands of Svetlov and Gornyi in their

piece, "The socialist city in a society without classes" (1934).

4. Nicholas Barbon (c. 1640–98), English economist, as quoted by Karl Marx in his footnotes to the opening paragraphs of *Das Kapital*. Marx printed the following extract from Barbon's *A Discourse concerning Coining the New Money Lighter*, London, 1696 (pp. 2, 3): "Desire implies Want; it is the Appetite of the Mind, and as natural as Hunger to the Body. . . . The greatest Number (of things) have their value from supplying the Wants of the Mind." Barbon also wrote on trade and on the economics of building, although we do not know whether Miliutin was aware of this. The exploits of Barbon, an entrepreneur involved in rebuilding London after the Great Fire, are described by J. Summerson in *Architect and Building News*, CXLIX, 15 Jan. 1937, pp. 86–89. Barbon's publications are not actually as rare as is suggested in Summerson's article, existing in several editions in the Columbia University libraries, for instance.

5. Preface to the first edition of 1867. The remark "Le mort saisit le vif" follows this.

6. Kitaigorod: the old market to the west of the Kremlin, which once included what is now Red Square; in Russian, literally "Chinatown." It is, however, more probably derived from the Tartar word for fortress, *Kitai*, than from the Russian word for China, *Kitai*.

7. The XVI Party Congress opened on 26 June 1930. Miliutin cites it more than once, indicating that his book was completed in the latter part of 1930.

8. S. I. Syrtsov, a Communist official for many years, was elected to the Politburo in July 1930 and expelled therefrom in December of the same year for criticizing the new industrialization (he called it "eyewash") and for having

termed the Stalingrad Tractor Plant, which figures so largely in this book, a "Potemkin village." See Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (1960), pp. 390–91. Quoting Syrtsov may have proved a source of embarrassment to Miliutin after the appearance of his book.

9. Probably Tommaso Campanella (1568–1639) whose *Civitas Solis* of 1623 described an ideal communist utopia. This work had significant influence on Lenin and Lunacharskii and is widely read in the Soviet Union. According to Lunacharskii, Lenin took his idea of creating an inspiring and instructive artistic environment for the citizenry from a description in Campanella. The conversation between Lenin and Lunacharskii is described and quoted in Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, *Art under a Dictatorship*, NYC, Oxford, 1954, p. 227. The exclamation points in parentheses (!) are Miliutin's. They are used as signs of astonishment or, as inserted in brackets in the quotation from Lunacharskii that follows, sarcasm.

10. Regarding Miliutin and Lunacharskii see Introduction, note 27.

11. Quoted from Goethe by Engels in *Zur Wohnungsfrage*. See F. Engels, *The Housing Question*, Marxist-Leninist Library, XXIII, NYC, International Publishers, 1935, p. 96.

12. That is, in the USSR. See note 41.

13. This quotation from Lenin was a favorite with the group. Ginzburg cited it in his correspondence with Le Corbusier in 1930, as recounted in Kopp, *Town and Revolution* p. 254.

14. Close-up of the model (1930) of the Plan Voisin of 1925 for Paris.

15. Marx's statement continued: "by a more equitable distribution of the population over the countryside."

16. See note 11. Oddly enough, Kaganovich quoted a similar passage from Engels the following year to prove the exactly opposite position.

17. This analysis of the difference between capitalist and communist cities was apparently current; Ernst May used almost the same phraseology in his "Der Bau der Städte in der UdSSR," in *Das Neue Russland* (1931), which was a report he had given twice in Germany that year about his experiences in the Soviet Union.

18. This chapter was translated into Italian in Ceccarelli *La costruzione della città sovietica 1929–31*, pp. 68–80, as far as our p. 73 "machines in them."

19. *v svoem navoze*: literally, "in their own dung" or "excrement."

20. *potochnyi*: usually given as a method of conveyor belt production. To Americans this is Ford's familiar "assembly line" and is so translated here.

21. i.e., as industrial workers.

22. Night soil is still extensively used as fertilizer in many countries; we are one of the few cultures in history that has not exploited human and industrial wastes. Miliutin was aware of the benefits of organic cycling in the agricultural process. Kaganovich in his 1931 Bolshevik Party Plenum Address (in Kaganovich, *Socialist Reconstruction of Moscow and other Cities in the USSR*, p. 44) said, "these sewage beds must be transformed into soil fertilization beds. This can produce a large quantity of vegetables."

23. *Kapital* (translated from the third German edition), Moscow, n.d., I, p. 484. Marx relates this idea to the factory system and apparently derives his wording from Robert Owen, *Observations on the Effects of the Manufacturing System*, London, 1817, which he included in the bibliography of *Kapital*.

24. This is not found in English editions of the *Manifesto*.

25. *gorsel'sovet*: A soviet combining the functions of both town and village organiza-

tions.

26. *internat*: dormitory for school children; also translated as boarding school.

27. It is curious that in his emphasis on efficiency, Miliutin does not discuss the tremendous economic significance of the USSR's extensive inland waterway system (except for a passing comment in connection with his Stalingrad plan—see p. 71). He sees water as useful for attractive recreational spots and for its hygienic advantages at a time when one of the major thrusts of the Five-Year Plan was to develop water transport as a supplement to the overburdened rail system. No quays or docks seem to be provided in his plans. See also Introduction, note 54.

28. This appears to be the plan given in G. B. Minervin (see Bibl.), p. 16, Fig. 3, as that of the "engineer" R. Brillung. There was a competition for the design of Magnitogorsk in 1929 but no serious work took place until S. Chernyshev and Ernst May went to the site in the late fall of 1930. The American engineering firm of Arthur G. McKee (Russian *Mak-ki*) was also involved in the planning of Magnitogorsk, and a contract for drawings was drawn up and signed in New York in 1930.

Professor Samuel Lieberstein of Temple University is doing interesting, as yet unpublished work on the Ural-Kuznetsk Combine.

29. This is a schematic representation of the plan drawn up for Magnitogorsk by I. I. Leonidov in 1930. See p. 23.

30. This is apparently the plan referred to in Minervin, p. 16, as "urbanistic." It splits the town in half, placing industry on one bank and a ribbonlike residential strip on the other; it was planned for 50,000 inhabitants. It is discussed further in *Stroitel'naia Promyshlennost' (Construction Industry)*, 1930, No. 3, pp. 195–99. It is hard to understand Miliutin's approbation—with the exception of his approval of the linear residential area—since travel to and from work would necessitate crossing the river.

31. *Stalingradstroii*: construction committee for the project. Stalingrad, formerly Tsaritsyn, is now Volgograd.

32. For comparable aerial-view-oriented thinking in Russia see Kasimir Malevich, *The Non-Objective World*, Chicago, Theobald, 1959 (originally published as *Die Gegendstandslose Welt*, Bauhausbuch 11, Munich, 1927). Illustrations 28–35 give "The environment (reality) which stimulates the Suprematist." Paul Scheerbart and Bruno Taut had popularized these ideas.

33. Nizhegorod, short for Nizhninogorod, renamed Gor'kii in 1932.

34. The Russian text here erroneously cites "Fig. 9."

35. *xylo-lite*: an artificial "woodstone."

36. *tol'*: tar paper, roofing felt or roofing pasteboard.

36a. This chapter appeared, translated and somewhat abbreviated in "V.O.K.S.," II, No. 2, 1931, pp. 29–31, and extracts are also printed in App. 8 of Kopp, *Town and Revolution*.

37. The standard English translations of the German original vary somewhat from this.

38. Kaganovich also quotes this in his Bolshevik Party Plenum Address of 1931 which is discussed in our Introduction. It is from "A Great Beginning" of 1919.

39. From the *Communist Manifesto*. Again, the standard English translations of the German vary somewhat from Miliutin's quotation.

40. Compare Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward, 2000–1887*, Modern Library, 1951, p. 104: "We have a separate grade, unconnected with the others,—a sort of invalid corps, the members of which are provided with a light class of tasks fitted to their strength. All our sick in mind and body . . . belong to this invalid corps . . ." And further on, Dr. Leete snaps, "There is no such thing in a civilized society as self support."

41. The reference is most probably to Leonard Moiseevich Sabsovich, an originator of the

“sleeping cabin” theory. A rabid collectivist, he had written a book entitled *Sotsialisticheskie Goroda* (*Socialist Cities*), published by the Moscow State Technical Publishing House the same year as Miliutin’s. He belonged to a militant organization called VARNITSO, an abbreviation for Vsesoiuznaia Assotsiatsiia Rabotnikov Nauki i Tekniki Sodeistviia Sotsialisticheskomu Stroitel’stvu (The All-Union Association of Workers in Science and Technology Working toward Socialist Reconstruction). This is a title artificially chosen so that its initials would spell *varnitso* (boiler). Sabsovich wanted to collectivize everything immediately and to eliminate not only the difference between town and country and the difference in work status between men and women, but the difference between mental and physical work. He wanted to “change the face of the earth, change mankind” (*SSSR cherez 10 Let* [1930], p. 117). On Sabsovich see also Kopp, *Town and Revolution*, passim, and our Introduction, p. 28.

41a. This is the bedroom designed for Erwin Piscator by Marcel Breuer in Berlin, 1927.

42. This project (Figs. 24–30) was published by Ginzburg and Barshch as part of their “Green City” in SA, 1930, No. 1-2.

43. It should be noted that Miliutin also designed a nursery building. See Introduction, pp. 31–32.

44. Narkompros was Miliutin’s parent organization. See Glossary.

45. El Lissitzky in his *Russland* (1930) describes a project by A. Nikolski that also emphasized single-story construction (p. 52 in the MIT Press edition).

46. Le Corbusier’s Unité de Habitation was designed for 1600 inhabitants in 360 units.

47. On the communal body or *dom-kommuna*, see Kopp, *Town and Revolution*, passim, especially pp. 144–55.

48. Figs. 31–55 are from SA, 1930, No. 1-2. They are illustrations of Ginzburg’s and Barshch’s “Green City” project for the decentral-

ization of Moscow and a linear decentralist project for Magnitogorsk by Barshch, Okhitovich, and others.

49. Figure 36 has been inverted. See Ceccarelli, Fig. 21.

50. Figure 37 is actually only a portion of the complete rendering. See Kopp, *Town and Revolution*, Fig. 154.

51. Figure 38 is a detail of Fig. 52; it represents a station with its attendant communal facilities, i.e., “communal body.”

52. Figure 48 is an inverted detail of Fig. 52.

53. On the function of clubs in the USSR at this time see El Lissitzky, *Russia*, pp. 43–45, and Kopp, *Town and Revolution*, pp. 116–26.

54. Figures 56–61 are actually from I. I. Leonidov’s project of 1930 for Magnitogorsk (published in SA, V, 1930, No. 3). See Introduction, p. 23, and note 29 above.

55. The structures at the right in Fig. 59 are similar to Leonidov’s “Clubs of a new social type” of the previous year. See Kopp, *Town and Revolution*, Figs. 103, 104.

56. The Russian text erroneously cites Figs. 20–23 and 72–76.

57. This building was also ridiculed by being compared with a medieval castle in an anonymous article attacking the continued use of pre-Revolutionary styles in SA, II, 1927, No. 2, pp. 47–50. It resembles superficially Vignola’s Villa Farnese at Caprarola of 1547–59.

58. The fanciful frames around illustrations 73–75 are typical pseudo-folkish vignettes which were popular in Russian typography in the late 1880s and 1890s. Their use here is purely ironic.

59. In the Russian text, *na Tverskoi*. With *Ulitsa* understood as following, Miliutin is saying “on Tver Street,” now Gor’kii St. From the fourteenth century Muscovites called the road to Tver *Tverskaia Ulitsa*, and it was so called when the academician I. I. Rerberg designed the ponderous Central Telegraph and Post Office (between Belinskii and Ogareva Streets) in 1927. Rerberg,

a well-known eclectic before 1917, designed in 1914 the Kiev Station in Moscow which incorporates all manner of styles—including a downstairs waiting room which has columns tapered in the Minoan fashion. The Telegraph building caused great controversy even before it went up; SA took up the cudgels against its design in its first issue, in 1926.

60. I. V. Zholtovskii (See Introduction, note 9) was a favorite target of the Soviet modernists because of his unrelenting eclecticism. (The term “academician” was not derogatory, however, but merely identified him as a member of the Academy.) Zholtovskii’s position is admirably summarized by Kopp in *Town and Revolution*, p. 222, note 27. The Gosbank (State Bank) at No. 12 Neglinnaia Street was originally built by K. Bykovskii in the 1890s in a “Late Renaissance” style (see M. A. Il’in, *Moskva*, 1963). Zholtovskii redesigned the building in 1927 in an “Early Renaissance” style, and major reconstruction took place at the time.

61. In the project for Magnitogorsk that was published in SA, 1930, No. 1-2, by Barshch, Okhitovich, and others—from which Miliutin drew for some of his illustrations—a great deal was made of these blocks (invented by the engineer Nekrasov) and of their preparation. Being made of sand, lime, and fibrous organic matter and unkilned, they had good insulating properties, were light in weight, and could be inexpensively manufactured locally. The discussion is reprinted in Ceccarelli, 1970, pp. 218ff.

62. This is a preliminary design for Domnarkomfin by Ginzburg and G. A. Zundblat. It was reproduced in Ginzburg’s *Zhilishche* (*Housing*) of 1934 (Fig. 132, p. 107) where it formed part of a considerable promotion (pp. 81–119) of the building, there called the “second apartment house for SNK,” i.e., for the Supreme Soviet (see Glossary).

63. By Walter Gropius, Dessau, 1925.

64. The usual English translation from the

German reads quite differently: "With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought."

65. Second project for a glass skyscraper, c. 1921.

66. Bernau School, 1929–30, by Hannes Meyer; drawing done by Paul Klee while he was on the Bauhaus faculty, and these four renderings were published in *SA*, III, 1928, No. 5, pp. 149–152. Meyer replaced Gropius as director of the Bauhaus and served from 1928–30. After that time he worked in brigades in the Soviet Union, and his dispatches, lectures, and recollections form some of our most valuable documentation of the period; we have cited one of these in our Introduction, and both Kopp's *Town and Revolution* and the augmented MIT Press edition of El Lissitzky's *Russland* reprint pieces by Meyer. The attribution of Fig. 79 to Klee is by Gustav Platz in the second edition of *Die Baukunst der neuesten Zeit*, Berlin, 1930, p. 95; we have been unable to verify this.

67. Figs. 83–85 are of the Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau, at the Paris Exposition of Decorative Arts of 1925.

68. Figs. 86–88 are from the Cook House in Boulogne, 1926.

69. This is the Church House at Ville d'Avray, a sitting room with bar and library.

70. This is Le Corbusier's 1927 project for the League of Nations headquarters in Geneva. Miliutin's caution about giving its correct name probably reflects the distrust the USSR had for the League; it did not join until 1934.

71. All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions. Le Corbusier was disillusioned with the subsequent modifications to his design. His Soviet collaborator, N. Kolli, told Arthur Sprague that the main reason was a shortage of materials, especially glass, but the Stalin period criticized it as bad design. It was to have had a complicated ventilation system consisting of hot or cold air piped between the double glass of its facade;

this was omitted, and the building is unbearably hot in summer, cold in winter. Now the great expanse of green glass is incongruously hung with old-fashioned draperies. The building was further disfigured by enclosing the ground floor, which rendered its pilotis meaningless and created a fenestration that clashes in scale with the rest of the facade. The building was actually finished as the Ministry of Light Industry and since has been converted into a central office for statistical research. It is in generally good condition.

72. Moscow Electrical Engineering Institute, 1929. By V. Movshchan, G. Movshchan, L. Meilman, A. Fisenko, I. Nikolaev, G. Karlsen, under the direction of Professor Kuznetsov. Figs. 93–94 were published in *SA*, IV, 1929, No. 5, p. 170.

73. This chapter is translated into Italian, more or less completely, in Ceccarelli, pp. 131–34.

74. That is, both the "usual dwellings" and Miliutin's socialized dwellings. In the following three paragraphs Miliutin concludes that the greatest expense for the collective system (i.e., at 9 m³ per person) would run to about 36 million rubles, which is $\frac{1}{2}$ of the 72 million cited above for the usual dwellings at 9 m³ per person and $\frac{3}{4}$ of the 48 million needed for 6 m³ per person in the usual dwellings.

75. This chapter is also more or less completely translated into Italian in Ceccarelli, pp. 134–39.

76. Again, this is Miliutin's theme and that of the resolution printed in his Appendix 2.

77. Kopp is of the opinion that these demographic studies were undertaken at Miliutin's initiative. (*Town and Revolution*, p. 185).

78. For Sabsovich's heresies, see note 41 above. Larin's position is described in Kopp, *Town and Revolution*, pp. 106–109.

