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## **Sotsgorod**

### **The Problem of Building Socialist Cities**

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## 1

## THE ESSENCE OF THE PROBLEM

In the light of the Five-Year Plan and, therefore, even more so for those of longer range, the problem of construction of settlements in the USSR takes on an exceptional significance. The fate of billions of rubles for new construction depends on how and what we decide to build. Suffice it to say that in the current Five-Year Plan, as much as 15 to 20 billion rubles are required for even one nonindustrial construction.

Hundreds of new settlements are being created; vast construction is taking place in existing cities; the construction of agricultural cities [*agroroda*] as a nucleus for large-scale state farms [*sovkhozy*] and for the complete collectivization of entire districts and provinces is being considered.

DIALECTICS TREATS THINGS AND THEIR INTELLECTUAL REFLECTIONS, MOST IMPORTANTLY IN THEIR INTERRELATIONSHIPS, THEIR LINKAGE, THEIR MOVEMENT, THEIR EMERGENCE AND DISAPPEARANCES. F. ENGELS

WE SUFFER NOT ONLY FROM THE LIVING, BUT FROM THE DEAD.  
K. MARX, *KAPITAL*<sup>5</sup>

The massive reconstruction of the economy on socialist principles inexorably demands a reconstruction in culture and in our way of life. Appreciable numbers of workers and peasants even now are not satisfied with the existing conditions of life. Our daily struggle to root out the remains of capitalism in the economy and the great successes that we have attained in this pursuit have opened the eyes of wide masses of the laboring class to the abominations of the petty bourgeois way of life, for “after the revolution, millions of people will learn more in a week than in an ordinary year of the old somnolent life.” (Lenin)

The reconstruction of our way of life on new socialist principles is the next problem facing the Soviet Union.

Along with this, we are confronted with the overall problem of sanitary and health improvements in settlements throughout the USSR; nor can we allow the kind of criminal anarchy in construction procedures that characterizes the capitalist world. The Soviet village must be built in such a way as not to perpetuate the very conditions we are struggling against, but rather to create the basis for organization of a new socialist, collective way of life.

The millions of rubles we spend on our housing and socialist construction must serve the cause of inculcating the new way of life, i.e., the socialist system for the care of cultural and living conditions among the population, which is a necessary precondition to the freeing of women from

domestic slavery. This problem is perfectly stated by V. I. Lenin in the following words:

*Woman continues to remain a domestic slave in spite of all our liberating laws, for she is weighed down, smothered, stupified, and humiliated by petty domestic tasks which chain her to the kitchen and to her nurseries, rob her of her effectiveness by viciously wasteful, cheap, nerve-wracking, strangling, stultifying work. The real liberation of woman, the real communism, will begin only when and where begins the struggle (led by the proletariat which derives its power from the State) against this petty domestic economy or, more accurately, with a massive restructuring of our economy into a large-scale socialist one.*

In the meantime, we are not only building dwellings according to the old merchants' concept, but even the construction of our cities goes on most often according to old-fashioned (traditional) methods. The distinguishing features of this type of construction are: the small family apartment, designed for individual maintenance in all respects, and the historical city laid out around a central market.

The most characteristic example of this type of construction is our own capital, Moscow, where, in spite of the tremendous wastes involved, we have not built anything basically new and where until now all construction still gravitates toward Kitaigorod, i.e., the ancient market.<sup>6</sup>

The attempt to depart from these forms of city building by erecting skyscrapers is basically a mechanical copying of the usual capitalist forms of residential arrangement. The skyscrapers are the peak

—the last cry of capitalism. Interspersed throughout the city, they change nothing in its way of life, in the edification of the masses, or in production. The skyscraper both expresses and finalizes the idea of capitalist centralization, deriving as it does from the concentration of trade and production in large centers. These centers spring up independently of the presence of natural resources or of power facilities, because capitalist cities have popped up primarily as a function of the position of a market or trade route and not at all in connection with the productive process.●

All these principles of the anarcho-capitalist system of city building must be decisively repudiated as being in no way related to the problems of reconstructing our economy and to the way of life based on socialist principles.

We must shrug off this "historical legacy" unequivocally.

It should be all the more easy for us to do this since the fund for municipalization (i.e., the assets at the disposal of the city and village soviets) is at present about 11 billion rubles. In view of the tens of billions of rubles, which, due to new planning principles, will be available in the next few years, it is evident that any other course would be criminal sabotage, not only in

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● It must be mentioned, however, that one should not make a general indictment of the skyscraper as a form of construction, since there are those instances where it is expedient that it be used as a means of freeing the ground for the planting of greenery, etc., in extant cities that are under reconstruction, viz., in the changeover to new principles.

considering future generations but so that present-day youth, too, can leave behind the rotten old stoves and dusty beds of their grandfathers' era.

Finally, the exceptionally high cost to us of building houses and communities forces us to seek a radical cutting of costs by changing a number of deeply ingrained principles (actually prejudices) in our construction methods. Without solving this problem we will be unable to eliminate overcrowding, one of the most serious obstacles in the cause of socialist construction and in the reconstruction of our way of life.

**"The organization of the advance of socialism on all fronts" (J. Stalin) must also signify an advance in the struggle for a new and healthy life for the working classes.**

