

## 2 THE AVOIDANCE OF EXTREMES

It would be groundless and foolish for us today to solve the problem of our settlements by thinking of them as future residential areas under fully developed socialism. We have now neither the technology nor the material means that will be developed in the future to do this. It is only necessary to glance back at the utopian socialist settlements of the middle ages to see that they reflect precisely the economic and social conditions as well as the technological conditions in which men lived at that time. Thus, one of the great utopians in the sixteenth century thought of the socialist city as a fortified city, beginning a new era in which young people (!) could take a bath once a month (!) and change their underlinen! <sup>9</sup>

THE TASK CONSISTS OF THE NECESSITY OF CONTINUING AN IMPLACABLE STRUGGLE ON TWO FRONTS.  
J. STALIN, SPEECH AT THE XVI PARTY CONGRESS <sup>7</sup>

Things are no better in contemporary attempts to describe the city of the future. As A. V. Lunacharskii writes in *Revolution and Culture*, No. 1, 1930:<sup>10</sup>

*Thus the general character of the socialist city will present itself as a disciplined unit of great diversity. In the center of the main square (we are discussing a typical city) will be concentrated all the buildings in which is located the real heart of the entire city [!]. Here will be the greatest monumentality [!], the greatest variety of forms. This will be the architectural center-of-gravity of the city. From here in radii [!] and rings [!] will be arranged the wide streets [!] perhaps interrupted from time to time [!] by gardens, boulevards, special squares, pools of water, fountains, etc. From it [the center—A. S.] will spread these communal dwelling houses, also monumental [!], built in such a way as to clearly, but [!] with variety, divide its internal essence, i.e., that arrangement whereby the industrial living quarters will be arranged around their grouped individual hearts [!]: their cultural clubs and other such general quarters.*

In this excerpt in which the author summarizes his article about "The architectural character of socialist cities," it is easy to see that even as exceptionally talented and up-to-date a person as A. V. Lunacharskii, in attempting to construct an architectural

IN THIS MATTER, AS IN A GREAT MANY OTHERS, THERE IS UNDER THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES A DOUBLE DANGER. ON THE ONE HAND THERE IS A SLUGGISH AND CONSERVATIVE RESISTANCE TO EACH FRESH THOUGHT AND IDEA ON THE PART OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF MORE CONSERVATIVE TENDENCIES WITHIN OUR APPARATUS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE CAN BE DISTRACTIONS AND PROPOSALS WHICH IN THE GIVEN SITUATION ARE UNREAL AND FANTASTIC.

S. I. SYRISOV, SPEECH AT A CONFERENCE ON THE QUESTION OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIALIST CITIES, 11 FEBRUARY 1930 <sup>8</sup>

plan for the future socialist city, was prisoner of the aristocratic Russian Empire, with its individual "hearts," "monumentality," "rings and radii," etc.

We will leave it to the novelists to draw the pictures of the city of the future under developed socialism. Today, in the words of Goethe, "it is as much a secret for fools as for sages."<sup>11</sup> Today we are interested in our contemporary construction **on the basis of contemporary technology and the material means presently at our disposal**. We must keep in mind that the problem of "overtaking and surpassing" the capitalist countries is one of strengthening the defense capabilities of a proletarian state that is surrounded by an inimical capitalist world—and a problem of making over both our industry and our agriculture. These problems force us to limit in every way possible those resources that might otherwise be used to satisfy consumer demands.

From this it inevitably follows that in trying by all possible means to solve the problems of building a new way of life and to achieve new forms for the construction of settlements, we must seek those procedures which will allow of a solution to these problems without any proportional increase in expenditures.

Along with this, we must start from the prevailing wage level of the workers. It would be possible to come up with a lovely plan for a socialist dwelling unit which in actuality would be completely impractical and unrealistic since it would in no way correspond to the standard of living available to us today.

**In this way the problem of building**

**socialist settlements today is primarily reduced to the root and basically new rationalization of constructing and reconstructing our way of life on the basis of those material means which are at our disposal at the present time.**

However, this in no sense means that we must reconcile ourselves to an animal level of dwelling existence in which wallows the major part of the working class of the rest of the world and a significant proportion of the workers of the USSR. Any such interpretation of our current problems must be refuted with the same resolve we would use to meet any other reactionary postures. **"The establishment of socialism in our country cannot help but entail the systematic betterment of the material condition of the workers."** (J. Stalin). The masses of workers and peasants must see that the dic-

tatorship of the proletariat not only opens before them the broadest perspectives into the future but also brings a real, actual raising of the standard of living and of the level of culture, and reinvigorates and reconditions the tenor of their life. Any different solution to this question (as once expounded by certain Trotskyites) would be, objectively speaking (i.e., regardless of what one wished) a reactionary one.

**While raising the tempo of accumulation in the country (capital investments in agriculture) we must simultaneously raise the living standard of the laborer. The basis for this should be the increase in labor productivity and the socialist rebuilding of our economy and way of life.**

In this way and only in this way can the question of the establishment of a new social milieu in the USSR be resolved.



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# Sotsgorod

## The Problem of Building Socialist Cities

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