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Sotsgorod

The Problem of Building Socialist Cities

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4 CHOOSING SITES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION

Existing cities were created in the interests of the ruling classes, the enemies of the proletariat. These cities sprang up on the basis of trade capital and were laid out on trade routes which, in most instances, have lost their function today. As a result, existing cities, as a rule, are not particularly related to natural resources of raw materials and to centers of power. Industrial construction in these cities derived least of all from the interests of their population; instead it has concentrated around markets which have also lost their previous significance. There was, of course, no question of planning. In choosing sites for new construction, we are forced to reject categorically the mechanical following of tradition in the selection of administrative, industrial, and other such centers. We must proceed from an assessment of the economic, political, and natural conditions that give us the most

CIVILIZATION HAS LEFT US THE LEGACY OF HUGE CITIES, AND TO GET RID OF THEM WILL COST US MUCH IN TIME AND EFFORT. BUT IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO GET RID OF THEM, AND THIS WILL BE DONE. F. ENGELS

expedient solution to the building problem in each instance.¹⁷ **This is why our growing tendency to build new installations where there are already existing cities and villages containing similar establishments must definitely be stopped.**

The possibility and necessity of settling this question was shown by V. I. Lenin in the following words:

At the present time, when the transmission of electrical energy over long distances is possible and when the technology of transportation is improved, there are absolutely no technical obstacles to resettling the population more or less evenly over the entire country, and still taking advantage of the treasure houses of science and art which have for centuries accumulated in only a few centers.

Any piling up of separate enterprises at one point, when the processes involved are not directly interconnected, must be immediately curtailed because of its obvious inexpediency.

New construction must be carried out as a unified and economically complete industrial combine which will insure more economic use of raw materials, of waste materials, of accessory energy, etc. In addition, each of these new undertakings must be judiciously coordinated with its residential zones and the corresponding auxiliary commodity sources (dairies, private vegetable and flower gardens, collective farms [*kol-khozy*], state farms [*sovkhozy*], farms [*fermy*], etc.). **In this way, at the basis of**

the solution to the problem of the choice of sites for new construction must lie the creation not of industrial and other centers, but of productive-agrarian centers which will be the basis for creating the populated settlement with its corresponding cultural, social, scientific, educational, and other similar institutions and collateral enterprises.

Only with this solution to the question of the choice of sites for new construction will we be able to proceed to the decision of **how to redistribute mankind on the basis of socialist production.** It must be remembered that **if the pivot for capitalist economy is the market and its laws, then the pivot for socialist economy must be production and its planning.**

Does it follow from this that the now-existing cities, settlements, etc., as well as routes of communication, must be altogether ignored? Of course not. In a number of cases extant sites will be satisfactory for the conditions we are establishing for socialist production. More than that, the existing means of communication are as needed as the air we breathe. However, it does not follow that they must determine the locations for new construction. The immense investments we are now making in arteries of communication make it possible for us to choose an economically more expedient approach, and this lowers (but does not eliminate) our dependence on extant routes for the choice of new sites. It is highly likely that, with time, the technical development of air communication will put the problem in a new light. However, today, if we do not wish to lose contact altogether with reality and lapse into the visionary, we must in no

case drop off into fantasy but keep both feet solidly on the ground.

We cannot throw into the trash basket indiscriminately everything which we have inherited from the past. We must transform and assimilate this heritage in such a way as to have it serve our purpose and not interfere with its realization. We must not forget for one minute that—***the elimination of the differences between the city and the country is one of the first conditions for collectivization (K. Marx).***

From this, the conclusion must be drawn that the construction of new enterprises, of scientific and special educational institutions, etc., in existing cities can only be permitted where there exists a direct productive linkage between these new undertakings and those already in existence in the settlement—as well as the presence of raw materials and power supplies. The “pros” and “cons” must be carefully weighed in the choice of the site. One must not repeat those mistakes made when we added to a trifling shop worth from 100,000 to 200,000 rubles, a plant, by way of “reconstruction,” that was worth some millions of rubles. In this way we spoiled both the old shop and the new plant.

In any case, expansion of existing settlements, if it turns out to be absolutely necessary, must be done either by creating satellite towns, or by replanning these settlements, or (in extreme instances for particularly large cities) replanning their separate parts. This replanning must be based on those principles by which we build new settlements, i.e., affording maximum dispersion of the population, creating the

premises for the organization of a new way of life, improvement of these cities by freeing large areas for the planting of greenery, etc. No matter what happens, we must avoid being strangled by the dead past. **It is therefore inadmissible to make significant capital investment in the old cities without formulating a general preparatory scheme for the reconstruction of these cities and settlements.**

Only then will we have avoided the great and useless (and, it follows, harmful) wastes of undertaking new construction in old settlements.

A few words about architectural construction. The problem of abolishing the distinction between industrial and agricultural production, as well as the problem of the industrialization of agriculture, is understood by many comrades to signify the installation of a variety of small-scale industrial enterprises within *sovkhozy* and *kolkhozy*.

Putting it this way reveals a misunderstanding of the question. The slogan **“industrialization of agriculture”** first of all means **mechanization of the process, and not propagation of small-scale industry throughout the countryside.** All the advantages of large-scale mechanized production (industrial as well as agricultural) must be exploited fully. **The combining of the advantages of city and village life must be brought about through a “new distribution of mankind” (Lenin) and not through a propagation of small-scale handicrafts throughout the countryside.**

Integration of the production of agricultural raw materials and their processing in a single enterprise must be allowed only in cases where it would be economically ex-

pedient (for example, in the sugar and distilling industries, in the initial processing of market-garden products, of milk, etc.).

General conclusions: in choosing sites for new construction, priority must be given to the interests of the proper organization of production (both industrial and agricultural), while taking into account the interests of the population at the same

time. We must not follow mechanically the lines of existing cities and transportation arteries, nor must we pile up on one spot a variety of undertakings that are not connected by their industrial processes; we must solve correctly the problem of inter-relating industry and agriculture on the basis of the redistribution of mankind.

HOWEVER WE DEVELOP OUR NATIONAL ECONOMY, WE CANNOT AVOID THE QUESTION OF HOW CORRECTLY TO DISTRIBUTE INDUSTRY [SO THAT IT BECOMES] THE MAIN ELEMENT OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMY.
J. STALIN