

THE DIALECTIC OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT



A STUDY IN THE HISTORICAL TRANSFORMATION
OF LABOUR AND SPACE

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PhD Dissertation
University of Strathclyde
December 1994

Acknowledgements
To my family, teachers,
friends and colleagues in
England, Scotland,
Russia and Brazil

Abstract

Born out of a long term interest in history and social change and nearly two decades of involvement in building and architecture, this dissertation aims to make a contribution to both a materialist theory of the production of the built environment and to our knowledge of the history of the Russian and Soviet experience. It is not however intended as a history book, rather the spatial and temporal co-ordinates of the text, Russia and Moscow, and the historical period from the end of the eighteenth century to the early 1990s, offer a framework within which theoretical and historical questions of a more general nature concerning the social character of labour and space can be explored.

The emphasis throughout is on the concept of the *social production of the built environment* at the centre of which lies the *labour process*, understood in its most general sense as purposeful human activity. The dissertation seeks to show how changes in the dialectic of the forces of production, the physical and mental means by which the built environment is created, and the relations of property, control and power within which the production process occurs, are central to an understanding of the historical transformation of human labour, the form of buildings and the organisation of space.

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INTRODUCTION

notes from the underground

"In my personal opinion, if you like, something definite has been accomplished; new and useful ideas have spread, new and useful writings disseminated in place of the old dreamy and romantic ones; literature has assumed a tinge of maturity; many harmful prejudices have been uprooted and held up to ridicule - In a word, we have irrevocably severed ourselves from the past and that, in my opinion, is something worthwhile, sir "

In this passage from *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky reminds us that the desire to break with history, to speculate on the effective end of time is not a particularly new conceit.¹ It represents but one more stage in the epic construction of myth - the burning imperative to rid ourselves of uncomfortable memories and ghosts.² Thus we stand at the brink of a new era of 'absurdists', untainted by the legacies of past lives and crimes.

In the burning of mythologies new ones are born. The mythologisation of history is a characteristic shared by all class societies. A skill that is possessed by rulers as a means of reproducing their own hegemony, and by the ruled as a means of believing that resistance to domination remains possible. The production and dissemination of myth is one way in which a social system seeks to reproduce itself. For myth enables us to mystify the present and forget the past though the construction of distorted and idealised visions of both.

myth and ideology

This aspect of mythology is but one building block in the production of ideology as a form of consciousness that makes the recognition of the real and actual conditions of our existence

¹ It is inevitable that in the 1990s we should suffer a plethora of *fin de siècle, fin d'histoire* theses. A pre occupation of some of the protagonists of the post modern, it has been celebrated most recently in Fukoyama's work, a text that McCarney, NLR, indicates is heavily indebted to Hegel. It was Lukacs in *History and Class Consciousness* who pointed out that Hegel's whole theory of history ending as it does with the identification of the absolute in the Prussian State, implies exactly the possibility of the final accomplishment of the historical project. Hegel made his visionary comments fifty years before Dostoevsky's creation in the mid nineteenth century of the above St Petersburg character dressed and speaking like a late twentieth century post modernist. Inevitably, under the management of far less accomplished thinkers than Hegel, profound insights into the nature of history become transformed into the flippant sound byte that masquerades as an authoritative statement on human destiny. Tafuri has argued that this 'anti historicism' not only finds an expression in the avant gardes of the early 1920s but is a recurrent theme that has its roots way back in Brunelleschi's attempt to build a new urban spectacle and by implication to inaugurate a new phase in history. See the chapter *Modern architecture and the eclipse of history* in Tafuri Manfredo - *Theories and history of architecture* - Granada-1980

² Within Russian architectural history of the twentieth century the most vivid manifestation of this is to be found in the proclamations of *Proletkult*, advocates of the 'year zero - tabula rasa' approach to history. To reject history is as Tafuri comments is to give oneself up "to the most vulgar and, and at the same time, the most subtle mystifications". See *The tasks of Criticism*, in Tafuri Manfredo - *Theories and history of architecture* - Granada-1980-p232. It is important here to see the historical link between the modern movement and post modernist thinking. It is an inescapable paradox that the post modernist obsession with an undefined present and equally elusive promise of a future, rather than distancing itself from the world of Fordism, automation, and enlightenment, reproduces many of the same contradictions. In its desire to transcend the ruptures that mark the Modern World, there is revealed an equally profound hope that utopia is coming in to land. If the avant garde and the Moderns erected myths, then what distinguishes post modern thinking, is pure mythomania, what Jameson might have referred to as a symptom of social and historical impotence. See Jameson Frederick - *Post Modernism, or, the cultural logic of late capitalism* - Verso 1991 - p369

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increasingly elusive.³ It is not something that people willingly participate in. It is a condition that we are forced into independently of our desire. Its true dangers are revealed when the representation of dreams becomes inseparable from material reality. For Katerina Ivanovna⁴, as the chasm widens between her poverty and her dreams of salvation, the dialectic of real illusions and unintelligible realities are revealed in the creation of a fictitious world, one which protects her and keeps her alive, yet inexorably leads to her madness and death.

It is when such hallucinations emerge from the novel to stake a claim on social life itself, that the full materiality of ideology is revealed. As if to celebrate the point at which legends cease being imaginary, the clichéd phoenix awakes from its slumber as a two headed imperial eagle and nestles on the new one rouble coin. In one piece of tin the tragedy of historical memory is confirmed. In a curious twist of dialectical logic, the apparent crimes of a seventy year regime are negated by the invocation of the memory of a despotic regime that was the equal of the tyrannical phases in Soviet history. It is inevitable that in the race to commemorate the twentieth century, history will suffer intense time compression. It is quite another for real time to be eradicated by a manufactured nostalgia.⁵ The quest for knowledge and understanding becomes ever more fragile and transient. Even Maxim Gorky cannot escape historical banishment. Gorky Street reverts to Tverskaya Ulitsa. Meanwhile, more notorious bronzed individuals lie with their legs broken and their heads cleaved in two next to the House of Culture opposite Gorky park.

the conquest of capital

We arrive at a moment in time when capitalism, appearing as the historic victor and standard bearer of social justice, becomes synonymous with nature. This, symptomatic as it is of the erosion of opposition and the assimilation of resistance makes it even more important

³ The concept of ideology is a major pre occupation of this work. Like other theoretical categories, the tradition of explanatory introductions are avoided. Rather the historical transformation of their use and meaning is to be elaborated within the main text itself. It is however important to emphasise that ideology is not used in any pejorative sense, or reduced solely to the 'positive' set of beliefs belonging to a particular social group or class. The work of Marx (*Capital* and the *German Ideology*), Luckacs (1983), Adorno (1989, 1991), Larrain (1979, 1983, 1986), and Eagleton (1991) have been of particular importance and influence in the development of my ideas. See bibliography

⁴ Katerina Ivanovna, the mother of Sonia, befriended by Raskolnikov, is just one of many characters that Dostoevsky explores in *Crime and Punishment* who are depicted as having deeply rooted psychological problems that gives rise to behaviour which astonishes and intimidates those around her

⁵ It comes as no surprise that money, the principal means of communication in modern life should become the focus of a new phase in the production of propaganda. Just as, after his death, Lenin against his wishes was to be immortalised on the rouble note and St Petersburg eventually became Leningrad it was perhaps inevitable that things should be inverted. However, this apparent "playfulness" hides a far more insidious process of historical revisionism whereby the Bolsheviks, Gorky and even Mayakovsky are held up to ridicule and effectively criminalised.

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to reclaim from history attempts which have been made to build a *society*, and thereby an *architecture*, that aspires to values and beliefs that do not appear to correspond with the institutions and practices that define a capitalist society. It is not so much a question of simply redressing the balance as rearming ourselves with a critical memory.

It is inevitable that to engage with the historical project is to enter into the zone of confrontation. For histories that marginalise the transformative consequences of class struggle, that exorcise the labour process and offer instead a story made up of 'objective facts' reproduce under the cloak of objectivity a journey in historical self deception. These stories however are concerned with trying to capture the moments of conception and production, to grapple with the origins of ideas and their material realisation, before the transformation of meaning through time, renders memory irretrievable.

ghosts in the landscape

It is the labour process which lies at the heart of all human history. What Marx called "the everlasting nature imposed condition of human existence"⁶. This is where our story begins. Considered in the breadth of all of its manifestations, it is within the labour process that men and women acquire consciousness, create use values, transform nature.⁷ In so doing they reproduce the 'material' and 'spiritual' pre-conditions of human life.

In the *Theses on Feuerbach*,⁸ written in the late 1840s, Marx gave a warning about the consequences of a materialism that depicts reality as an external object. His argument was that "the thing, reality, sensuousness" should be conceived as "sensuous human activity, practice". In so doing, Marx suggests that it is through human activity that we not only transform the world but become conscious of it. Within such a proposition the notion of

⁶ Marx, Karl- *Capital Volume I* - p163-164 - Swan Sonnenschein and Co Ltd London 1908 This is taken from chapter VII *The Labour Process and the process of producing surplus value*

⁷ Whilst Marx restricts the concept of the labour process to the production of commodities that generate surplus value, in the conditions of the late twentieth century when we face the effective commodification of almost everything from water to knowledge, it seems important to extend the category to include the production and sale of information. In the discussion of the built environment the design process can be considered as much a labour process as that part of production that takes place on site and in factories. The production of drawings, specifications, design concepts and ideas have become indispensable to the mass production of buildings. Without becoming embroiled in the debate over productive or unproductive labour, whilst the process of design might not always produce surplus value the production of buildings is inconceivable without it. In addition architectural and design workers are just as much victims of exploitation, be it of a different kind as building workers. This is particularly so in the old Soviet Union, where both building workers and architectural workers were State employees. It was frequently the case that architects earn considerably less than building workers, a rather crude way of redressing the historical balance between the working class and the intelligentsia and petty bourgeoisie.

⁸ "The chief defect of all hitherto materialism (that of Feuerbach included) is that the thing, reality, sensuousness is conceived only in the form of an object or of contemplation, but not as sensuous human activity, practice, not subjectively", Marx, Karl - *Theses on Feuerbach* - in *The German Ideology* - Lawrence and Wishart - London - 1985 - p121

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thinking can not be separated from and indeed forms part of *actual human practice*. The concept of production assumes even greater significance and allows us to think of both the act of making and thinking as labour processes, as the processes of production of objects and knowledge. This theme was one of the major pre-occupations of the controversial but influential Soviet philosopher Ilyenkov. Ilyenkov sought to construct a philosophical system (described as a radical realism) that attempted to reconcile 'materialism' and 'objective idealism', by treating "the thinking subject as located in material reality, in direct contact with its objects".⁹ Whilst Ilyenkov was dealing with fundamental philosophical questions concerning the relationship between thinking and being and between object and subject, at the centre of his enquiry remained the notions of *human labour* and *practical human activity*. Thus labour becomes both the end and the starting point for an investigation not just into the physical transformation of the world but into the manner in which we objectify and idealise it.¹⁰

Inevitably, the labour process has been the terrain on which the great classes of modern times, have battled and struggled to fashion the world according to their own aspirations. Successful control over the labour process, and therefore space and time, becomes the key test on which all social systems flourish or flounder.¹¹

But such a view of history and of the creation of buildings is contradicted when confronted by the spring glow of the Catalonian sun. Because here the Barcelona Pavilion beams, the unblemished virgin that tells us that buildings are born through magic¹². (See fig 1) In the

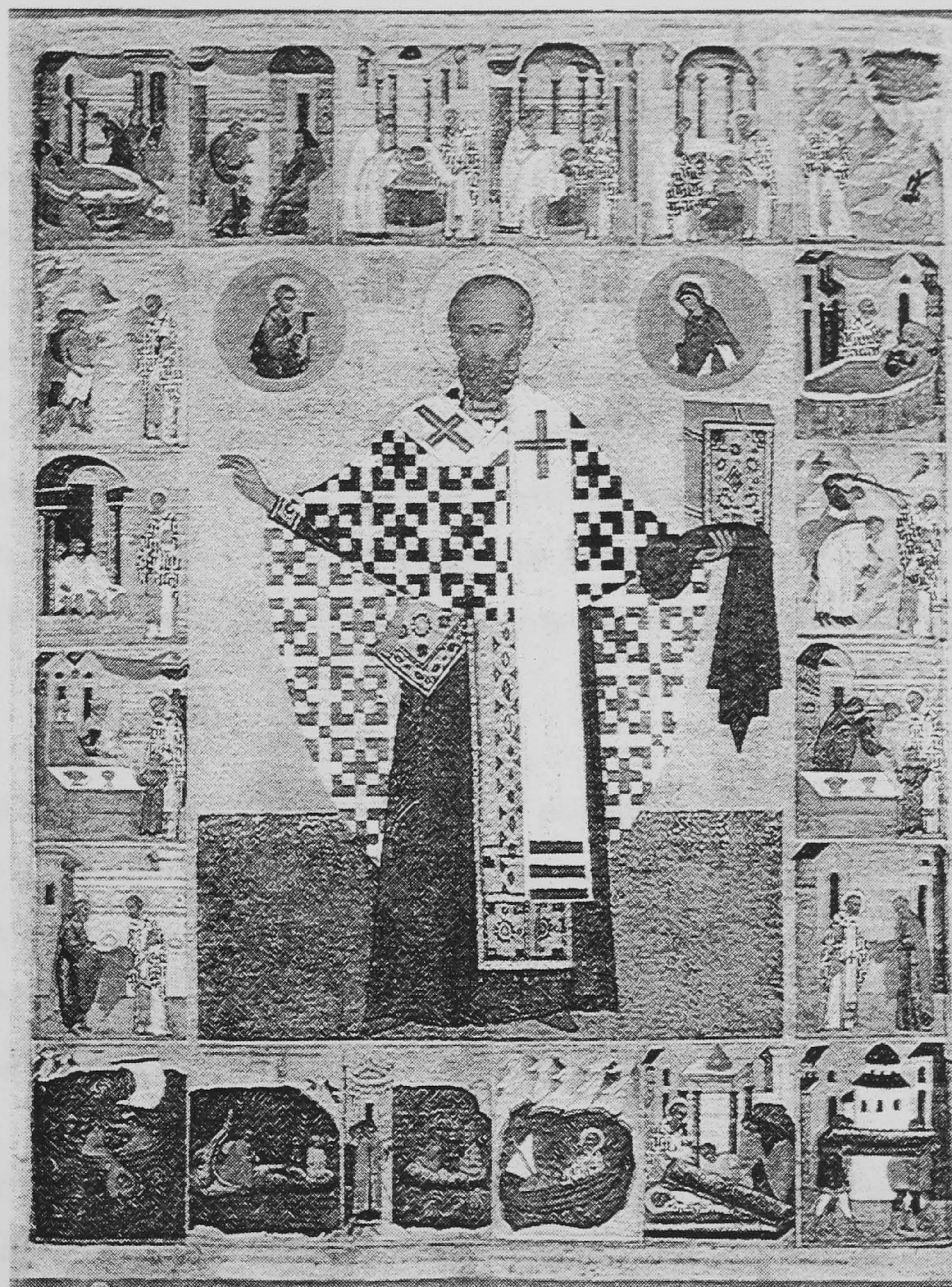
⁹ Bakhurst, David - *Consciousness and Revolution in Soviet Philosophy* - Cambridge University Press - 1991- p215

¹⁰ "Human beings exist as human beings, as subjects of *activity* directed upon the world around them and on themselves, from such time, and for so long, as they actively produce and reproduce their own lives in forms created by themselves, by their own *labour*. And this *labour*, this real transformation of their surroundings and of themselves, performed in socially developed and sanctioned forms, is just that process ...inside which the ideal is born...It is the process in which the idealization of reality, of nature and of social relations takes place, in which the language of symbols is born, as the external body of the ideal form of the external world. In this lies the whole secret of the ideal and its solution". Ilyenkov, E, V - *Idealnoe* - (The Ideal) - originally published in 1962 in *Filosofskaya entsiklopedia* Vol 2- quoted in Bakhurst, David - *Consciousness and Revolution in Soviet Philosophy* - CUP - 1991- p187 Under the suffocating orthodoxy of 'official' Soviet intellectual life in which labour was consistently mythologised and eulogised in order to obscure its real social character, such a project that argued for an elaboration on the character and 'problematic' of labour was extremely controversial, a controversy that was obscured in the predictable accusations of idealism.

¹¹ The use of categories such as class, ideology and the labour process are controversial, in how we define them and their explanatory potential. They therefore require terminological clarification. But this in itself falls into the trap of erecting new theoretical statues. Rather it seems more valid with an accepted caution to elaborate the way in which these tools are useful within the main text itself, than to detach what is the essence of the whole story to the appendices. There are nevertheless a series of axioms which should not be cast for ever in stone but have guided the work from its very beginning. Theoretical tools by themselves do not guarantee anything. Their evaluation can only be based on how and why they are used and the extent to which they increase or diminish our understanding of the way cities are produced.

¹² This is a reference to the Barcelona Pavilion designed by Mies Van de Rohe, one of the icons of the modern movement and one which every architecture student is required to study. A celebration of the

"..the pilgrimage to the summits of high art."



"St Nicholas with scenes from his life"
Novgorod school 1551-1552

FIG 1

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suffocating pilgrimage to the summits of high art, we take comfort in the pretence that such objects of beauty were not delivered by human kind. For to speak of their production by labour is to reveal the tragic impossibility of their generalised construction. We are left with the worship of isolated objects, the subject matter of the immaculate conception and most art histories.

As our collective consciousness seeks to deny or at least misrepresent the centrality of the human labour process in the explanation of historical transformation, we are left with the tale of the city as a ghost story, dimly recalling the reasons why it was built and of the vast armies of labour that congregated for a fragment of time and then vanished. Meanwhile, over the back from the Mies pavilion lies the industrial zone and the multi storey blocks that house a working class. They are well removed from the "real" city and from history, both of which begin where the workers disappear. To reinstate the labour process and the categories of class and ideology is to begin to sing the unsung ballad of these ghosts in the landscape.¹³ (See fig 2)

We are forced to confront the fact that all of our great built spectacles, those we revere and pay homage to, are tumultuous expressions of 'free' and 'unfree' labour, of the propertied and the propertyless. St Petersburg, Moscow, London, Paris are the physical structures and consequences of classes engaged in struggle. It is the meeting point of conflicting aspirations that appear as universal truths.¹⁴

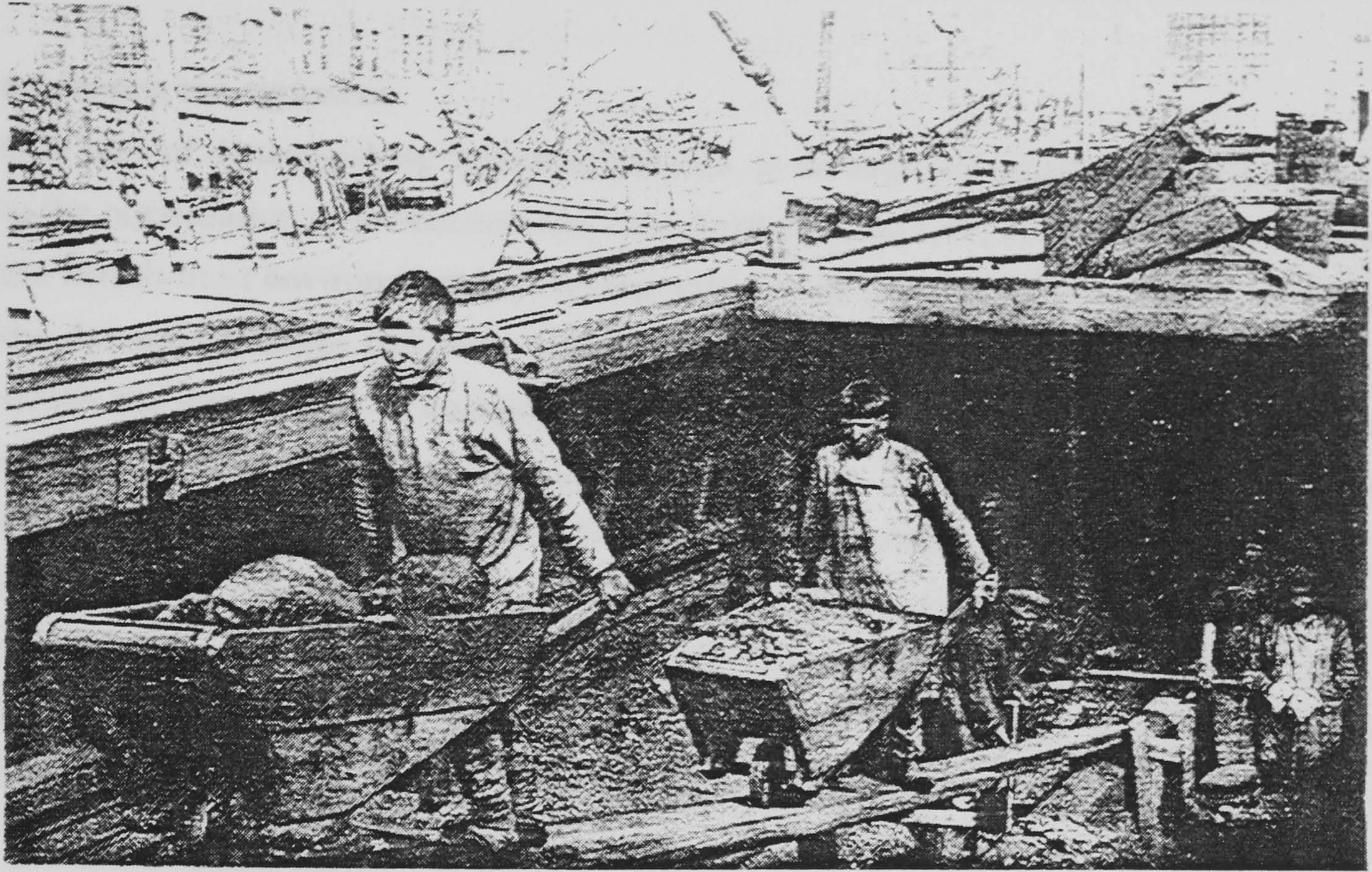
Buildings at this point finally lose any pretensions towards the status of disassociated objects. At the very least they exist as dynamic repositories of memory. The desire to understand them solely as objects drives us to mask a building's origins in human labour.

modernist ideals of space, light, and materials, and a poignant reminder even at a formal level of the absurd comparisons that are drawn between systems-built tower blocks and the modern movement.

¹³ As is perhaps already clear the approach taken departs from the conventions of traditional architectural history in that it draws on the social sciences, critical theory and political economy. It also attempts to shift the subject matter away from the discussion of individual buildings to embrace the built environment, understood as a collective noun that includes along with buildings, infrastructure, land and the category of space.

¹⁴ This refers to the way in which tourist literature, urban histories, books on architectural history continue to represent the history of the built environment as an almost contradiction free 'given'. This leaves us thinking of Glasgow's and London's architectural ensembles as natural embodiments of nineteenth century municipal pride and beauty, rather than the natural embodiment of Imperial expansion and the exploitation of workers in Africa, India and the Americas. To question the basis on which we evaluate such historical objects is to court condemnation. Yet nothing exposes the disintegration of memory more than the fact that the mass slaughter of tens of thousands of workers in the construction of St Petersburg and the Moscow metro mean nothing to how we evaluate them in the contemporary world.

"..the unsung ballad of the ghosts in the landscape.."



"The labour process ..is the everlasting nature-imposed condition of human existence.."

Marx, Karl

FIG 2

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Labour appears as an invisible fingerprint, at once entirely self evident but shrouded in mystery. We are left with the pursuit of beauty without acknowledging it as utopia¹⁵.

rehearsing the argument

One way of distinguishing historical periods is through the relative shifts that take place in the organisation of production and class formation. As such, each recent transformation in the British built environment has corresponded to the shifting balance of class forces and to the dynamic changes that have taken place in the relations of ownership and control to which the production of buildings are subordinate.¹⁶ Just as the pursuit of monetarism, privatisation and a free market in land and buildings belong to the speculative office and housing developments of the late 1980s, so state regulation and a militant working class belong to the inauguration of a social building programme after world war two. It is the juxtaposition of these forces that not only determines what gets built but how. The triumphant pedestals and mirrored glass of Canary Wharf are as much a symbol of the vanity of capital, as the Finsbury Health Centre was the dream of labour.

extending the argument

The analysis begins with the social relations that dominate daily life, and proceeds to the examination of the general characteristics of social production of which the production of the built environment is one branch¹⁷. To understand the predicament of cities like Glasgow or

¹⁵ Like many before and no doubt many after, the reading of Marx's chapter *The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof* in *Capital*, was a revelation and a turning point in my own intellectual development. As Lukacs pointed out, it is the starting point for any understanding of the nature of ideology in capitalist societies.

¹⁶ Another way of understanding this, is as the dialectic of the forces and relations of production- the principal determinant of the structure and practices that distinguish different social formations and cause them to change. Neither the forces nor relations have explanatory primacy - they can only be understood as a dialectical unity. For architecture the term *force of production* refers not only to the means of building production, that is to the relevant, machinery, tools, materials and factories, but to the architectural design process that takes place in schools, research institutes, offices and publishing houses and which therefore includes knowledge, books, journals, and the equipment with which drawings and images are realised and mass produced. The *relations of production* refer to the broad patterns of ownership and control under which production takes place, and implies the distribution of resources and the separation of labour along class, ethnic and gender lines. It would prompt us to ask questions such as - Who owns and controls the land and construction firms? How is labour bought and sold? What kind of technology is available? How is need determined, through the market, plan or both? Who disseminates knowledge and how? Who are the teachers and managers? Who runs the design office?, Where do their ideas come from? Who makes the profits and how are they distributed?

¹⁷ This draws on what within Marxist theory has been labelled the *modes of production debate*. It is a complex and controversial area, not least because of the explanatory potential of such an abstract category. In addition Marx's periodisation of human society into successive modes of production - *primitive communal, slave, feudal, capitalist, socialist* has been interpreted far too literally, resulting in a theory of history that is teleological and preordained. In the spirit of Marx it seems more important to approach them with caution. It seems increasingly clear that modes of production can co-exist even though one might pre-dominate. It also seems vital to entertain the possibility of different modes of production that are more suited to the concrete analysis of social formations in Africa, Latin America and Asia. The question of how we characterise the old Soviet Union is a case in point. Clearly not a socialist or capitalist country it could be argued that it displayed features of both including residual forms of feudal social

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London we would follow a similar logic. Speculating on the character of capitalist development in the late twentieth century, the simultaneous globalisation and concentration of capital, the emergence of transnational finance blocs and the pursuit of free market economics have been major features. As a willing partner in these shifts of power, the British state has attempted to regulate economic activity overwhelmingly in the interests of capital. This led to an inevitable confrontation with political movements who continued to fight for greater social ownership and local democratic control. This in turn all helped set the framework whereby needs in the built environment have been overwhelmingly met through the market place and control over the building industry has been concentrated in the hands of a few large corporations. These changes have contributed to the increasing penetration of the commodity form into all areas of the production and use of the built environment. Manifest most sharply in the proliferation of speculative offices, speculative housing, retail and leisure outlets, it is the architectural mirror of the tendency towards the total commodification of everyday life.

structure of the work

This method of tracing contradictions at different levels of generality forms the basis of an approach to understanding the process of historical change in Russia. It asks questions in relation to the precise character of economic and political regimes, it does this largely through an analysis of the form that labour takes at historical moments. This unavoidably and inevitably requires a discussion of how we might characterise the Soviet Union as a mode of production. Thus we proceed from the most general of theoretical discussions into the nature of social production and class, proceeding to the examination of particular tendencies in the *production of the built environment*.

The complexities of social life cannot of course be reduced solely to the conflicts between classes and social groups. But neither can social life be explained without such concepts. Seen in this light the history of Soviet architecture is a history of a struggle between contradictory ideas and practices, the history of the replacement of one set of contradictions by another, a history that corresponds to the emergence and continual transformation of social relations, one in which changes in the production of architecture and political and economic practice are interdependent¹⁸. It tells the tale of the negation of the commune by the

organisations. That it was a society in transition there is of course no doubt. It does however expose the danger of hanging on to a theory of a single mode of production as a cast iron law.

¹⁸ This again makes what are controversial assumptions about the character of the Soviet Union, in particular the application of categories that have been developed primarily through the critique of capitalist society. The detailed elaboration of these issues can only be made through the concrete analysis of the Soviet experience, however it is an implicit assumption throughout the work that whilst the Soviet

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prestigious apartment, it tells the tale of the negation of liberated space by the imperial city, it tells the tale of the negation of universal access to the institutions of the city by new technologies of discipline and spatial segregation, and it tells the tale of the negation of the free factory by new satanic mills. These transformations correspond to contradictions that exist at other levels within the social totality such as the atomisation of a politicised working class, the defeat of Soviet democracy and the workers' movement, the suppression of the fight for gender and racial equality, and of the renunciation of internationalism. In this there is a mutual interdependence between the periodisation of Soviet architecture and the periodisation of Soviet political and economic practice.

Chapter one - The Development of Capitalism

This initial chapter explores the extent to which capitalism had developed within the Russian building industry, and the degree to which Moscow had by the revolution shed the characteristics of a feudal city. It argues that the most important indicator of the transition from feudalism to capitalism is the emergence of wage labour, that is the commodification of labour power. A theory of the relationship between class and the built environment is explored, and it is argued that it is the contradictory character of class relations that largely accounts for *what* gets built, *how* and *where* . Accordingly, the transition from feudal to capitalist social relations, that establishes the pre-conditions for the emergence of capital and labour is central to our understanding of the history of Moscow.

Whilst by the turn of the century the commodification of space and the development of a market for buildings in Moscow was still in its infancy, it is clear that large joint stock companies and contractors were increasingly common and a considerable market for building labour had emerged particularly in connection with the construction of infrastructural projects. Accordingly the chapter looks at the changes which occur in the midst of continuing social and political upheaval, to the building labour process and to the physical character of Moscow, that is to the form and types of buildings, and to the socio-spatial structure of the city .

The chapter refers to three main areas of theory: to the development of a theory of alienation as explored by Hegel and Marx , to the debates on the mechanics of historical transformation, and to the work by Marx, Lenin and others on the process by which the 'free wage labourer ' appears. It concludes with a description of the development of organised

Union did not fit into the traditional framework of what constitutes a class society, it was nevertheless a class society of a new and hybrid variety.

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construction labour and the class conflicts in which it becomes embroiled in the late nineteenth century and in the turbulent years in the run up to the revolution.

Chapter two - the origins of ideology lie in the unity of opposites ¹⁹

This chapter explores the years up to the beginning of the 1930s, a period of experiment and innovation in all branches of social life. Remembered in particular for the introduction of a State regulated mixed economy, NEP, and for the flowering of the avant garde, of all the periods of Soviet history, whether it be in the arts or politics, this is probably the most controversial and carefully documented. ²⁰.

Despite the eventual predominance of forms of State property, it argues that the Soviet labour process shared many of the fundamental features by which we would define a capitalist labour process. Whilst this was to be expected under the conditions of the New Economic Policy, NEP, the greatest contradiction is that many of the features that define capitalist social relations in the labour process, far from vanishing at the end of the twenties were transformed and consolidated. Our evaluation of the avant garde proceeds therefore to explore the dialectical relationship between the attempt to spatialise new social relations a practice that was premised on an ideal notion of democracy and equality and the materialisation of social relations in the building labour process that can be seen to stand in almost direct contradiction to them. Thus it is argued that there was nothing intrinsically utopian about the avant garde. It became utopian only in the context of the negation of social relations on which much of the work was founded.

Such conclusions are arrived at through the exploration of key areas of theory that deal with the concept of labour and of space. It begins with a discussion of Marx's theory of the commodity and proceeds to a description of the work on fetishism conducted by Isaac Rubin and Evgeny Pashukanis. In parallel the work refers to a debate on the character of the labour process under capitalism, and to those started by Kollantai, Shliapnikov and Leon Trotsky

¹⁹ The use of Engels' three laws of dialectics as titles for the first three chapters is not wholly arbitrary; on the contrary, they will be seen to be remarkably apt descriptions. Whilst this work is not a philosophical work it has consciously drawn on ideas from within what became known as dialectical and historical materialism. Despite the well grounded criticism of the validity of applying what were observations of the natural world to that of society, and of erecting them as universal generalisations, they nevertheless were an important benchmark in the development of my own thinking about the social world and the history of architecture. Despite their controversial canonisation in orthodox Soviet philosophy, it should be remembered (as pointed out by Scanlan, James - *Marxism in the USSR. A critical survey of Current Soviet thought* - Cornell-1985), that there were considerable differences between what occurred in the corners of the Academy of Sciences and the unanimity displayed and printed in text books.

²⁰ In particular there are now countless texts that deal with the architectural and art avant gardes. For a comprehensive bibliography of texts that deal with the art and architecture of this period see bibliography.

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into the nature of the bureaucracy and into the character of social relations in the Soviet Union as it emerged from the 1920s. Lastly, it investigates the basis on which we might understand the materialisation of social relations not only in the building labour process, but in the built environment more generally.

Chapter three - the consolidation of dictatorship and the negation of the negation

This period spans the years from the early 1930s to the late 1950s. It is the era in which we see the creation of the gulag labour camps and the annihilation of all political opposition. Political and economic power, including control over cultural production, becomes centralised and concentrated in the hands of the Party-State Bureaucracy in Moscow. "Socialist Realism", the guiding principle in the arts, in theory was a method for the critical representation of social life. However, it was to become a deeply idealistic project seeking an aesthetic of 'truth'. The production of architecture was reduced to an indulgent formal programme founded on an eclectic mixture of nationalist and classical symbols and meanings, an architecture that could be described as 'heroic and monumental'. Constructed by forced labour, armies of shock brigades and 'heroic' Stakhanovite bricklayers, Moscow becomes a stage set for spectacles and propaganda. Both labour and space become subject to an *absolutist* tyranny.

Here we argue that the dialectical relationship between social relations as manifested in the labour process and in space are removed to a whole new plane. If they existed in a contradictory relationship in the 1920s, there now emerges a direct correspondence between the two. The negation of political democracy and of the workers' movement is inseparable from the creation of Moscow as an Imperial city. This is to be explained by the emergence not only of a Dictatorship but of what were in effect new class contradictions and these were to be seen not only in the planning of the capital city but in the heart of the labour process where the regime resorts to methods for the extraction of surplus labour that in itself persuades us to think of the bureaucracy in the State and Party as a ruling class.

It is in this period that ideology matures in both the positive sense, ideas belonging to a class or social group, and in a negative sense, as a form of distorted consciousness which emerges as a real organising social force, in which the identity of labour and space become inverted and the realities of social life and practice become represented as their opposites. Accordingly, the chapter embraces important areas of theory in relation to debates on *ideology, realism* and *dictatorship*, that is to be found in the work of Marx, Lenin, Gramsci, Lukacs and that of Adorno, Marcuse and the Frankfurt school.

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Chapter four - the collapse of reason in the victory of quantity over quality

This passage begins with the death of Stalin and spans the period up to the late 1980s and the advent of 'perestroika'. It is characterised by the rapid industrialisation of the building industry, the equally massive expansion of its working class, and the complete institutionalisation of the command administrative system of economic management. The Soviet landscape witnessed the explosion of prefabricated concrete panel construction that swept across all time zones and all cultures within a situation where the architectural profession became marginalised within the new construction *combines*. It is in this period that the greatest contradiction of all is revealed when the negative aspect of ideology bore its greatest fruit, the cold war.

The propaganda machinery on both sides of the great divide, began to construct an image of two mutually incompatible social systems. Nothing of course could be further from the truth. In both social systems we find administrative and management systems that are centralised and concentrated under the jurisdiction of a ruling class within which the military industrial complex predominates. In both cases we see these elites supervising an accumulation process, tempered by oppositional forces, but overwhelmingly geared to the private accumulation of capital in the west, and the State appropriation of surplus and its redistribution to individuals in the east. For beneath the housing statistics and May day parades, we find a Soviet bureaucracy immersed in an all embracing rationalised plan of accumulation, a desperate recourse to technological determinism that was breathtaking in its efficiency at channelling surplus into the arms race and equally accomplished at wasting human labour and natural resources. These features it shares with the ruling class in the west, the great distinguishing feature being the scale at which the Soviet bureaucracy achieved these goals particularly within the building industry, which at its high point employed up to thirteen million workers in the mass production of factory pre fabricated buildings, what is equivalent in strictly capitalist terms to the wholesale transition from the production of absolute to relative surplus value.

It is at this point and for clear reasons that crude economic imperatives dominate architectural production in both east and west, signalling the subordination of qualitative social transformation to the unrestrained quantitative expansion of commodities. This manifests itself in the west and east in the identification of freedom with shopping and the replacement of non administered time and space with a culture industry that differs only in the forms within which it expresses our progressive alienation, vulgar Marxist textbooks and

INTRODUCTION

Lenin badges, versus Sun newspapers and the Royal Mint²¹. Thus the increasing reification of consciousness that concurs with the full scale commodification of social life in the capitalist countries, is mirrored by a distortion of consciousness in the east symptomatic of a complete rupture between the ossified rhetoric of 'developed socialism' and the conditions of human existence. In both situations the avenues towards the critique of class rule and of access to communication networks are barricaded.

²¹ Somewhat predictably these and other comments have been deeply influenced by the work of **Horkheimer**, Max and **Adorno**, Theodor - *The Dialectic of the Enlightenment* - Verso - 1989. In particular the essay *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as mass deception*, and the selection of essays by **Adorno** - *The Culture Industry* - Verso - 1992, raise vital questions as relevant to the organisation of culture in the old USSR as they are to life in the USA or western Europe. Take for instance the following passage from the *Culture Industry reconsidered* - "The total effect of the culture industry is one of anti-enlightenment, in which, as Horkheimer and I have noted, enlightenment, that is the progressive technical domination of nature, becomes mass deception and is turned into a means for fettering consciousness." - p92

CHAPTER

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAPITALISM IN RUSSIA

1



Fragments of true stories

1994

Kolya peeled away the gluey mucus that held his eyes shut. Stumbling upwards his head spun with the alcohol nausea that rushed through every limb. He had never dreamt that his journey to Moscow would have ended like this prostrate beneath the statue of Yuri Gagarin. The hangover lurked with a vengeance and Kolya became uncontrollably hungry. Searching his pockets he found one last gulp of vodka and a piece of black bread. Feeling better he squatted down on the pavement and stared up the Lenin Prospect. For a moment the spring sun seemed to pick out the gilt on horse drawn carriages and the whole street seemed to be ablaze as he thought of god, tsars, monasteries and peasants.

1864

Kolya is the ghost in the landscape. The grand labourer whose hand print is buried in every metre of the railways that streak the Russian landscape, whose footprints lie underneath every metropolitan construction and whose price of labour lies etched into every grain of dust in the industrialised world. Kolya is the grand drunk whose mouth has touched every bottle in the journey from the medieval village commune to the nineteenth century urban labour market. His is the distant voice of the dispossessed serf, the wandering free labourer, liberated from all property save his power to labour on the building sites of Russia. Kolya is the absent memory of the hero who appeared as a vagabond. Olga was his love, the idealised peasant woman without whom the migration could never have begun. She is history's prostitute, farmer, mother and wage earner, and her story lies hidden even deeper in the matter that makes up the commodity world.

"And the nature of history is precisely that every definition degenerates into an illusion: history is the history of the unceasing overthrow of the objective forms that shape the life of man" ¹

" Besides, it is not difficult to see that ours is a birth-time and a period of transition to a new era. Spirit has broken with the world it has hitherto inhabited and imagined, and is of a mind to submerge it in the past, and in the labour of its own transformation. Spirit is indeed never at rest but always engaged in moving forward. But just as the first breath drawn by a child after its long, quiet nourishment breaks the gradualness of merely quantitative growth - there is a qualitative leap, and the child is born - so likewise the Spirit in its formation matures slowly and quietly into its new shape, dissolving bit by bit the structure of its previous world, whose tottering state is only hinted at by isolated symptoms. " ²

To write a chapter in the history of the *production* of the built environment, is to be dragged into the tempestuous story of humankind's transformation of nature. This refers not only to the creation of buildings and settlements, but to the technologies, systems and infrastructures through which we have altered the time and space of social life.

Adrift and unarmed within this maelstrom we grasp despairingly at fragments of knowledge that like mythological sirens beckon us with promises of understanding. Many of the tools that have equipped us with the necessary confidence to face history have been inherited from Hegel and Lukacs, and in the above two passages alone we are offered tantalising glimpses of the critique of history. History variously confronts us as illusion, as myth, as dynamic struggle, as the resolution and transformation of contradictions, as the dialectical relationship between qualitative and quantitative change, and as the quest to find the indices by which we might measure progress and freedom.

This particular story begins with the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Russia, and is nothing else than the dissolution bit by bit of the structure of a previous world, a process punctuated by the "unceasing overthrow" of that which is familiar.

on the imagery of feudalism

Our images of medieval Russia are more than anything formed through the Russkie Skazki, the icon and the glistening onion domes of Zagorsk³. (See fig 3) Only the most bitter amongst us can fail to be impressed and moved in ways that we might not comprehend by the sad yet majestic tranquillity of the Orthodox church resplendent in the Easter snow. The fact that

¹ Lukacs, Georg - *History and Class Consciousness* - Merlin Press - London -1983 - p186

² Hegel, Georg, Wilhelm, Friedrich - *Phenomenology of Spirit* - Oxford University Press (OUP) - The Preface - p6

³ Skazki is Russian for fairy tale, Zagorsk is the home of the Russian orthodox church

from a seat of political power they have become commercial centres peddling trinkets and other idols is an acute exposition of either modern freedom, or the spirit's self alienation.

Our images of Russia might alternatively have been informed by the films of Eisenstein such as *Ivan the Terrible* and *Alexander Nevsky*, apparent celebrations of Russian nationhood that covertly nurture uncertainty and doubt. (See fig 4) The imperative to search for knowledge and truth encounters many barriers, not least the realisation that we may not be prepared for it. As Hegel comments "We must hold to the conviction that it is in the nature of truth to prevail when its time has come, and that it appears only when this time has come, and therefore never appears prematurely, nor finds a public not ripe to receive it;.. "4 . At the end of the twentieth century it seems perhaps incomprehensible why two of the most magnificent Soviet films that depict the feudal world, Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev*, the story of the icon painter, and Paradjanov's *Colour of Pomegranates* should have been suppressed. It is a testament to the Soviet regime's paranoia and deeply held conservatism that two films which dealt with historical truth in such a metaphorical and painterly way should become so great a threat. If anything the suppression of films like these only fuelled the desire of many individuals to resort to mysticism and mythologies within which the realities of not only serfdom but their own contemporary conditions could be ameliorated and smothered.

It is when access to history is blocked that we have recourse to mythology which according to Lukacs "is simply the reproduction in imagination of the problem in its insolubility" 5. To misrepresent history is one problem, to prevent access to it is another altogether. In the history of the development of capitalism and of Soviet type social formations, we are dealing with both. We are not able to enter into history because in the removal of the human labour process we are no longer able to recognise ourselves within it. History inevitably becomes represented as something that must end in the attainment of some absolute condition or idea, the tragedy being that this absolute "is nothing but the fixation of thought, it is the projection into myth of the intellectual failure to understand reality concretely as a historical process" 6

4 Hegel, *ibid* p44

5 Lukacs *History and Class Consciousness* - Merlin Press - London -1983 - p194

6 *ibid* p187

SERGEI EISENSTEIN - film maker - 1898-1948

Clip from "IVAN THE TERRIBLE" completed in 1944



The Tsar, Zhenitsin, is shown in the
consequence of the rebellion, the
administration of the city.

FIG 4

the ugliness of work

To make an argument then for placing the labour process at the centre of historical explanation is to do more than simply add another ingredient to the list of things to be included in the narrative, it is to shift the focus of analysis and to redefine ourselves politically as the makers and interpreters of the world we inhabit. Accordingly the reproduction and representation of labour, and of the labour process occupies a central position in the reproduction of a social system. By the way in which the subject of labour is represented in theory, literature and art, we are given powerful indicators of the social character of an historical period, such that two of the principal ways in which the contradictory character of social life becomes hidden is either through the production of mythologies about labour or through its disappearance from the text. This process of myth-making in relation to Soviet history is a recurrent theme of this work and is explored in more detail in chapter three.

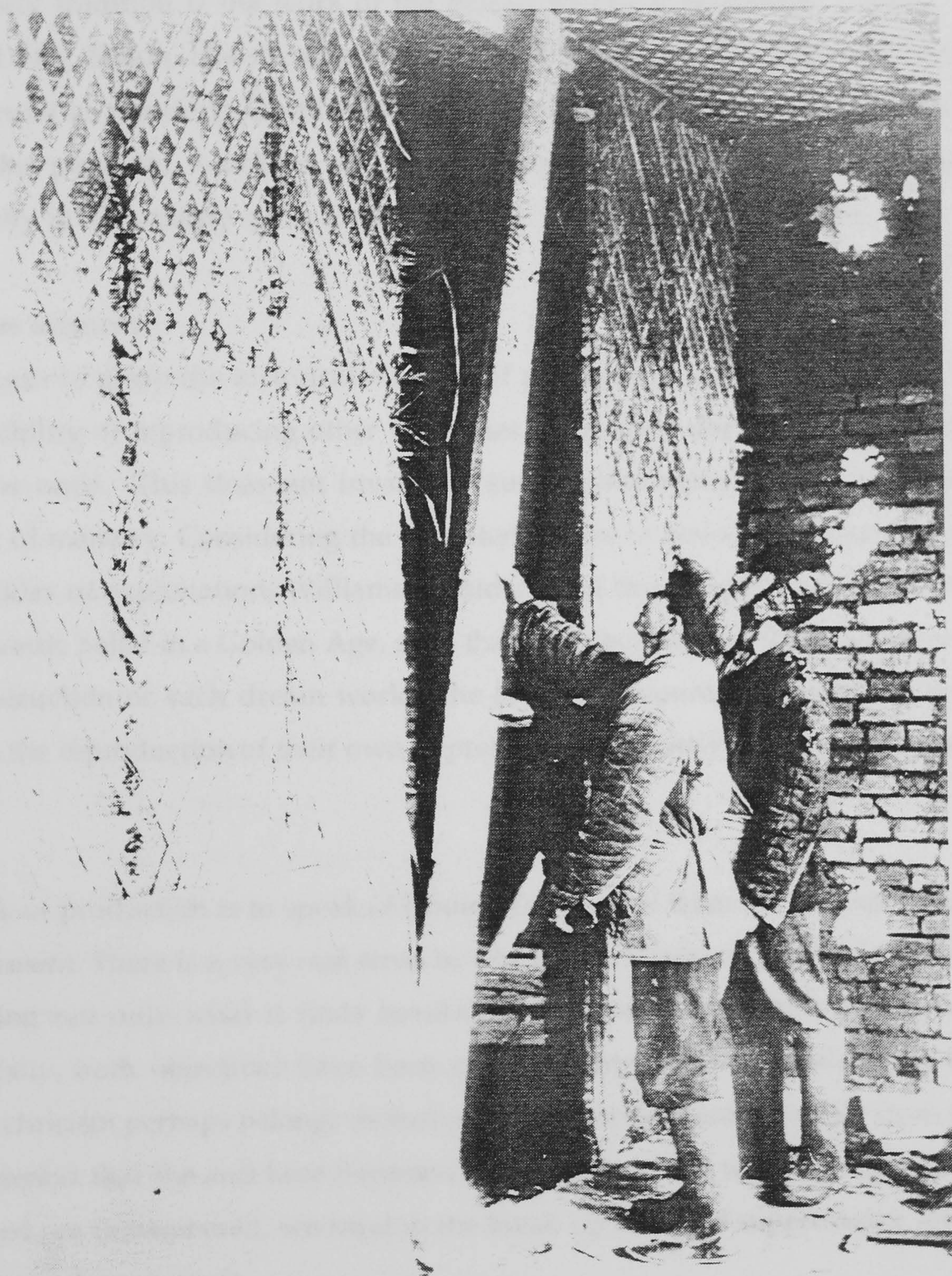
It is within the history of the transition from feudalism to capitalism that the material pre conditions of modern alienation are laid, an alienation that is confirmed when labour vanishes from the script. The relentless pursuit of a world free from the ugliness of work reveals itself not only in the *Utopia of More*, but is most prevalent in literature, a central theme in Raymond Williams' *Country and the City*. Here he begins his argument about the representation of the country and the city in English literature with a discussion of the celebration of the rural order by Johnson and Carew, a story in which the "magical extraction of the curse of labour is in fact achieved by a simple extraction of the existence of labourers".⁷ (See fig 5) Nowhere does this reveal itself more than in the history of the building worker. Undoubtedly compounded by the migratory nature of building labour, as much a feature of medieval as late capitalist building production, it is notoriously difficult to stitch together these historical threads. Even painstaking archival work can prove to be fruitless. Zemstvo⁸ statistics in the latter half of the nineteenth century in Russia provide some clues, but often building workers were not considered to fit into the category of either industrial or agricultural workers and therefore remain buried in the administrative records.

This is one reason why the nineteenth century literature of authors like Zola, Dostoevsky and Dickens has remained so important to the historical memory dealing as they do with the

⁷ Williams, Raymond - *The Country and the City* - Hogarth Press - London -1985 - p32

⁸ The Zemstvos were the equivalent of a County Council set up throughout most of Russia as a consequence of the reforms introduced by Alexander II in 1864. They were mainly responsible for the administration of education and health.

History becomes indistinguishable from mythology, when the serfs, workers, rebels and makers of the world vanish from the text and image



"..a story in which the magical extraction of the curse of labour is in fact achieved by a simple extraction of the existence of labourers.."

Williams, Raymond

lives of ordinary people and in examples such as *Hard Times* and *Germinal* directly with the struggles of labour. In tackling the experience of life of the majority they offer some of the most enduring descriptions of the city and of the built environment. Linked historically with this literary tradition is the work of the British School of historians, a group which would include Dobb, Hilton, Hobsbawm, Williams, and Thompson. This band of writers have been instrumental in remaking the history of the last three hundred years in Britain, a history in which the peasants, workers and rebels reappear, a magical return celebrated most powerfully in *The making of the English working class* by E.P. Thompson.

arcadia as memory

In the quest to grasp the historical moment of production in all of its entirety, there remains the possibility of reproducing other memories of arcadia, and of replacing old mythologies with new ones. This does not invalidate such mythologies. It does however expose the dialectic of memory. Considering the persistent desire to believe in a past that was free from the shackles of exploitation, Williams considers that the Diggers and the Chartists retained this romantic belief in a Golden Age, such that myth began to function as memory.⁹ Through the construction of such dream worlds the landless peasant and exploited worker actively assist in the reproduction of their own oppression, desperately clinging to the impossibility of Eden.

To speak of production is to speak of labour. To speak of labour is to speak of alienation and estrangement. There is a very real sense in which each historical period finds new methods of expressing not only what it finds beautiful but what it finds strange and uncomfortable. Historically, both objectives have been mutually interdependent, although the latter as a form of criticism perhaps belongs exclusively to the modern era. It is only from the beginnings of this period that the anti hero becomes hero, peasants and workers move centre stage, the oppressed are remembered, we revel in the break up of moral supremacies, and learn to find nourishment from despair.

notes from the history of a theory of alienation

Alienation remains a favourite subject of artists and writers, and whether in literature, painting or film, there is a consistency in the themes that are dealt with. It is that paradox of pleasure, that we know so well and comes from languishing in a sense of deep loss, of betrayal, of being adrift from the means by which we might not only recognise the world but

⁹ Williams, 1985, op cit p43

come to understand it. Recalling the words of Hegel to the effect that "By the little which now satisfies Spirit, we can measure the extent of its loss",¹⁰ we can acknowledge that it is only through the profound fact of dispossession that we come to comprehend the notion of liberation.

Most contemporary discussions of alienation refer to Marx. However the roots of Marx's thinking on what he called "estrangement" are not surprisingly to be found in the work of Hegel. Marcuse reminds us that it was Hegel in his early theological writings who struck "the pervasive note that the loss of unity and liberty - a historical fact - is the general mark of the modern era and the factor that characterises all conditions of private and social life" a fact that is manifest "in the numerous conflicts that abound in human living, especially in the conflict between man and nature."¹¹ The comments below seek to elaborate on this central issue and on the links detailed by Marcuse in *Reason and Revolution* between the early work of Marx and Hegel. That is between *The Economic and Philosophical manuscripts*, *The German Ideology* and *The Phenomenology of Spirit (Mind)*.

Hegel and alienation

Because of the complexity and richness of Hegel's work he has always been open to appropriation from thinkers of quite different persuasions. It is not difficult to pluck out of context particular quotes where he is discussing such things as the Idea, as if it was irrefutable proof of the heinous crime of idealism. Such accusations like others miss his greatest contribution, which remains his use of the dialectical method for the analysis of human, or in his terms, *world history*. Hegel considered history to be "the process whereby the spirit discovers itself and its own concept"¹². As such one of the tasks of humankind is to gain knowledge of the spirit. This is doubly important. Firstly because it is the unfolding knowledge of the spirit that guides human activity: "The spirit as it advances towards its realisation, towards self satisfaction and self knowledge, is the sole motive force behind all the deeds and aspirations of the nation. Religion, knowledge, the arts, and the destinies and events of history are all aspects of its evolution."¹³ Second, because the progressive self realisation of the spirit is entwined with our path towards freedom. "The spirit is free; and

¹⁰ Hegel, Georg, Wilhelm, Friedrich - *Phenomenology of Spirit* - OUP - 1977 - p5

¹¹ Marcuse, Herbert - *Reason and revolution* - RKP (Routledge and Kegan Paul)- London -1986 - p35

¹² Hegel, G,W.F. - *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* - C.U.P. (Cambridge University Press) - 1988 - p62

¹³ *ibid* p56

the aim of the world spirit in world history is to realise its essence and to obtain the prerogative of freedom." 14

self alienation and disrupted consciousness

There can be no greater form of alienation than that which obstructs this passage to emancipation. This is a central theme of the *Phenomenology* which Marcuse rightly regards as aspiring towards a "philosophy of a self conscious humanity that lays claim to mastery over men and things and to its right to shape the world accordingly, a philosophy that enunciates the highest ideals of modern individualist society."¹⁵ Indeed the work is imbued with the revolutionary notion of the long haul from bondage to liberation. It is however in the nature of the dialectic that freedom only has meaning in relation to unfreedom and opposition. Every step in the process of self knowledge gives rise to its opposite. Even though the ultimate aim of the spirit is to know itself "...this very success is also its downfall, and this in turn heralds the emergence of a new phase and a new spirit." 16. Even though Hegel retains an optimistic belief in the immanence of freedom, the impediments towards self knowledge of it are great and many. Accordingly as Marcuse notes the *Phenomenology* is equally concerned with the process by which the human subject is unable to recognise him or herself beyond "the fixed form of things and laws".¹⁷ Here of course lies the roots of the later theory of 'reification' elaborated by Lukacs. However for Hegel, alienation finds its greatest expression in the self alienation of the spirit. The first step in the resolution of this contradiction is to be found in the process of self consciousness where the human subject uncovers the truth first about him or herself, and consequently about the world.

Hegel proceeds to elaborate at great length on how the self-alienated spirit constructs "for itself not merely a world, but a world that is double, divided, and self opposed",¹⁸ a world characterised by what he calls "disrupted consciousness"¹⁹, one in which the Enlightenment has completed the alienation of the Spirit by bringing into the household of faith, "the tools and utensils of this world" 20.

14 *ibid* p63

15 **Marcuse, Herbert** - *Reason and revolution* - RKP - London -1986 - p97

16 **Hegel, G.W.F.** - *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* - CUP - 1988 - p56

17 **Marcuse, Herbert** - *Reason and revolution* - RKP - 1986 - p112-113

18 **Hegel, Georg, Wilhelm, Friedrich** - *Phenomenology of Spirit* - O.U.P. (Oxford University Press) - 1977 - p295

19 *ibid* p317

20 *ibid* p296

When he speaks the "language of this disrupted consciousness" ²¹, that belongs to a world of culture, a "pure culture" that is synonymous with the "absolute and universal inversion and alienation of the actual world and of thought", the deep influence that he had on Marx and on modern theories of ideology are clear. This is of course hardly a new observation, but it was not simply a case of Marx inverting Hegel. This was clearly a polemical statement against idealism that has been wrenched out of its historical context. Marx of course acknowledged his debt, as did Adorno. When Hegel speaks of the "struggle of the Enlightenment with errors, that of fighting itself in them, and of condemning in them what it itself asserts" ²² and concludes that "Thus what Enlightenment declares to be an error and a fiction is the very same thing as Enlightenment itself is" we see the origins of Adorno and Horkheimer's the *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*.

Marx and estrangement

Hegel's critique remains within the resolution of contradictions as they afflict consciousness. Marx was interested how these might in themselves be rooted in the material transformation of social life. Hegel describes the relationship that exists between Lordship and bondsman in terms of the unequal opposition of two aspects of consciousness. To the Lord he ascribes "an independent consciousness whose essential nature is to be for itself" and for the bondsman a "dependent consciousness whose essential nature is simply to live or to be for another.", a consciousness in the form of what Hegel calls "thinghood". ²³ It is a fairly short step from the Lord and Bondsman of Hegel to the Capital and Labour of Marx.

Drawing simultaneously on this work of Hegel and on a critique of political economy, Marx develops a theory of *estranged labour*, that has three main characteristics which with modifications were to inform the rest of his work. It is worth recalling the comments of Marcuse that Marx's analysis of labour goes much further than the structure of economic relationships and penetrates to the actual content of human relations at the heart of social existence.²⁴

Under the conditions of private property, the process of production gives rise to three main contradictions. The first concerns the product of labour, which appears to the worker as " an

21 *ibid* p316

22 *ibid* p333

23 *ibid* p115

24 Marcuse, Herbert - *Reason and revolution* - RKP - 1986 - p278

alien object exercising power over him or her" ²⁵ a theme that was explored at greater length in the chapter in *Capital* on commodity fetishism. The second concerns what Marx called "The relation of labour to the act of production within the labour process." ²⁶ Here he has in mind the way in which the labour process appears as an activity which is turned against the worker, assuming the character of an "alien activity not belonging to him or her." ²⁷ . Marx summarises the first contradiction as the "estrangement of the thing" and the latter echoing Hegel's notion of self-alienation as "self-estrangement". The third contradiction concerns the realm of nature. The first point is that "in creating a world of objects by their practical activity, in their work upon inorganic nature, humans prove themselves as a conscious species being...Through this production, nature appears as their work and their reality." ²⁸ . But to tear then the object of labour, from labour, is also to take nature away too. Marx concludes that, "estranged labour turns thus: *Humankind's* species being, both nature and its spiritual species property, into a being alien to it, into a means for its (individual) existence. It estranges from the human being his or her own body, as well as external nature and his or her spiritual aspect, his or her human aspect" ²⁹ . We are left with the estrangement of humankind from itself. Marx finishes this section of the manuscripts with two propositions; the first, that since the concept of private property is derived from alienated labour, it is possible by analysis to develop every other category of political economy, and second, and this appears of great importance in later discussions of class societies "that everything which appears in the worker as an activity of alienation, of estrangement, appears in the *non-worker* as a state of alienation, of estrangement." In other words the ruling and propertied classes are as much subject to alienation as the ruled and propertyless.

the germs of the fetish

Here then in 1844 Marx summarises the main features of alienation that continue to define the modern condition, and are central to any understanding of the production of the built environment. Our alienation *from the products of labour, from the means of production and from nature*. The first two are familiar as cornerstones of radical criticism. The third, whilst never developed in great detail, ironically predicts not only the contemporary "Green" and "Sustainability" debates, but places into focus and context the 'pastoral' reaction to rapid

²⁵ Marx, Karl - *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* - Lawrence and Wishart - London -1981 - p61 - 74

²⁶ *ibid* p66

²⁷ *ibid* p67

²⁸ *ibid* p68 - 69

²⁹ *ibid* p69

industrialisation and the continued search for a rural idyll. The profound desire to reconcile ourselves with nature and to escape the commodity world.

It is in the existence and reproduction of the commodity status of labour that we find one of the sources of our alienation. This only occurs with the development of capitalism. Indeed, the generalisation of human labour power as a commodity, that is of *wage labour*, remains one of the characteristics by which we define the development of capitalism. What begins to emerge from this, is that the early ideas of both Hegel and Marx concerning alienation, far from being antagonistic are in fact complimentary. It is obvious that alienation as an issue (to borrow the vocabulary of the early twentieth century), is simultaneously material and spiritual. It is revealed as much in the "unhappy, inwardly disrupted consciousness" of Hegel, as it is in the estrangement from the material production of Marx. As such not only is the "servile consciousness of the bondsmen" entwined with Marx's concept of "alien activity", but the imperative for Labour to undermine the rule of Capital is ultimately dependent on the point at which the bondsmen's consciousness will "turn into the opposite of what it really is; as a consciousness forced back into itself, it will withdraw into itself and be transformed into a truly independent consciousness."

The depth to which the commodity legislates human life, that is the penetration of the commodity form into all human relations, is the measure by which we can gauge the extent of the development or transcendence of alienation within the capitalist world. This makes the question of the origins of the commodification of labour power and the development later of the theory of commodity fetishism in Capital central to the whole work. Rubin went as far as saying that the theory of fetishism, represented the basis of Marx's entire economic system, and we know that Lukacs considered it to lie at the centre of the eternal question concerning consciousness.³⁰

³⁰ Rubin, I.I - *Essays on Marx's Theory of value* - Black Rose Books- Montreal -1990 - p5. First published in Moscow 1928

a general theory of architecture ?

Can there be a universal theory of art and architecture ? We instinctively shy away from such totalising questions that seek to locate general rules which guide our lives. If though we were to ask what is our need for art ?, we might well be inclined to answer like Hegel, that it lies "in man's rational impulse to exalt the inner and outer world into a spiritual consciousness for himself, as an object in which he recognises his own self. He satisfies the need for this spiritual freedom when he makes all that exists explicit for himself within, and in a corresponding way realises this his explicit self without, evoking thereby, in this reduplication of himself, what is in him into vision and into knowledge for his own mind and for that of others. This is the free rationality of man, in which, as all action and knowledge, so also art has its ground and necessary origin."¹ Hegel suggests then that our universal need for art is bound up with the processes of self recognition, self consciousness , free rationality, and ultimately the expression of this to others. What then is it that guides and/or prevents the realisation of these objectives ?

In that all art and architecture hitherto has been produced by class societies we might tentatively propose a general theory of the class character of architectural production. But we encounter many fears in doing this. It is our overwhelming desire to believe in freedom and trust in its immanence that makes the subject of class, dealing as it does with inequality, ownership, control and power so difficult, and the class analysis of art and architecture so deeply unpopular and painful.

This has always and quite legitimately led us to celebrate form as an autonomous category. The corresponding revolts against 'formalism' can be argued as admissions of our own repression, of the shackling of the mind as opposed to its freedom. Accordingly, our desire to search for and to liberate form is inextricably tied to the need for our own general social liberation. Our misunderstanding of this link is however revealed in the separation of form from any notion of social relations which structure political and aesthetic practice. A general theory of architecture that locates social relations at the heart of any analysis , would suggest that it is the dialectical relationship between classes that determines *what gets built* (building type), *how it gets built* (the labour process) and *where* (space and location). It will not inform us of all of the peculiarities of a building's form but it will indicate what are the general historical tendencies in the transformation of the production of the built environment.

¹ Hegel, G,W,F - *Introductory lectures on aesthetics* - Penguin- London -1993-p 36. First published in 1886

In addition, whilst this work concentrates on the class character of social relations, our knowledge of nineteenth and twentieth century Russia can only be enhanced by considering, gender relations as reproduced through patriarchy within the church and the *obschina*, (village commune) and ethnic relations which are expressed most clearly in the crisis of national identity that gave rise to slavophilism and imperialist pretensions in Central Asia, the far East and Eastern Europe.

nineteenth century Russian architecture

Architectural histories of nineteenth century Russia, whether Russian or western offer the same periodisation. They tell of a journey from classicism up to 1830, to eclecticism which is split into two periods that of 1830 - 1850 and that of the years between 1870 - 1890², to the Moderne 1890 - early 1900s³, to a combined neo Russian and neo classical period that takes us up to the first world war. As formal transformations they correspond to the architectural experience of most European countries in the transition from feudalism to capitalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.⁴

Conceived of at the most general level, such buildings are linked together within the dialectic of the history of form. Here stylistic forces and theories of spatial organisation fight and contradict each other, eventually merging to produce new forms and spaces that are in turn transformed under the pressure of new stylistic tendencies. Such transformations are inseparable from the nineteenth century transition from one dominant set of social relations to another. That is from those between the landed aristocracy and peasantry to those between the working class and bourgeoisie. The Neo Classical corresponds to the rebirth of the Russian nation and Imperial expansion, the Eclectic to the crisis of autocracy and popular rebellion, the Moderne to the new bourgeoisie, and the brief resurgence of Neo Classicism to the years of conservative reaction after 1905. These are observations that are of course not lost on Russian authors whose work on this era achieves a critical status in the discussion of class that disappears in the debates on architecture in the twentieth century.

² Eclecticism can be considered as a relative of Romanticism in western Europe. Within Russia it implied the construction of form through the opportunistic and largely uncritical application of any historical style. In this it has populist pretensions that make it the historical ancestor of post modernist thinking about the language of architecture.

³ The Russian equivalent of art nouveau led by Shektel.

⁴ Such a periodisation of form is generally accepted and is elaborated by Ikkonikov, Andrei - one of the more productive of Russian architectural historians - see for instance the initial chapters and introductions on the origins of twentieth century Russian architecture in - *Russian Architecture of the Soviet period* - Raduga- Moscow - 1988, and Shuralev, A, M and Rohegov, G, A, - *Arkhitektura Sovetskaya Rossia* - Stroizdat - Moscow - 1987 In addition in English there are several books by Brumfield of a mostly descriptive character that are useful as introductions (See bibliography)

nationhood

The concept of nationhood, is one area in which the dialectic of form finds its expression and provides continuity between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Just as the battle to define the "Soviet" identity forms the backdrop against which argument about architecture was to be conducted in the 1930s, so the whole of nineteenth century Russian architecture grapples with the problem of the Russian identity, of self-knowledge and recognition⁵. This always happens at historical moments when the class structure of an existing society is called into question. Although distinctions are drawn by prominent historians like Kirichenko and Ikonnikov between the 'eclectic', one of the most distinguished examples of this latter period being the History Museum on Red Square, the 'neo-Russian' which includes the Tretyakov gallery, and the Kazan Station designed by Schusev (later to become one of the prominent Socialist realist architects in the 1930's), and the Moderne, all three display elements that are connected with the formal devices to be found in traditional Russian arts and crafts and in the construction of medieval kremlin and ecclesiastical buildings.(See fig 6)

form and labour

The transition from feudal to capitalist social relations is first apparent in the transformation of the labour process. Subsequently however we witness major changes in the formal and physical character of the city, as the structure of the feudal city is slowly undermined and is replaced by a specifically capitalist organisation of space and place. Both of these processes are historically continuous but temporally and spatially uneven. There is no direct one-to-one correspondence, but just as we might associate meaning in a tower block with the consolidation of wage labour in a rationalised labour process centrally controlled by a ruling class, so meaning in the transition from the Muscovite baroque to the classicism of the early nineteenth century and the eclecticism of the mid century can be found in the uneven process by which a capitalist class tentatively began to emerge in Russia, and the first tremors are felt that lead to the commodification of space, technology and the labour power of building workers.

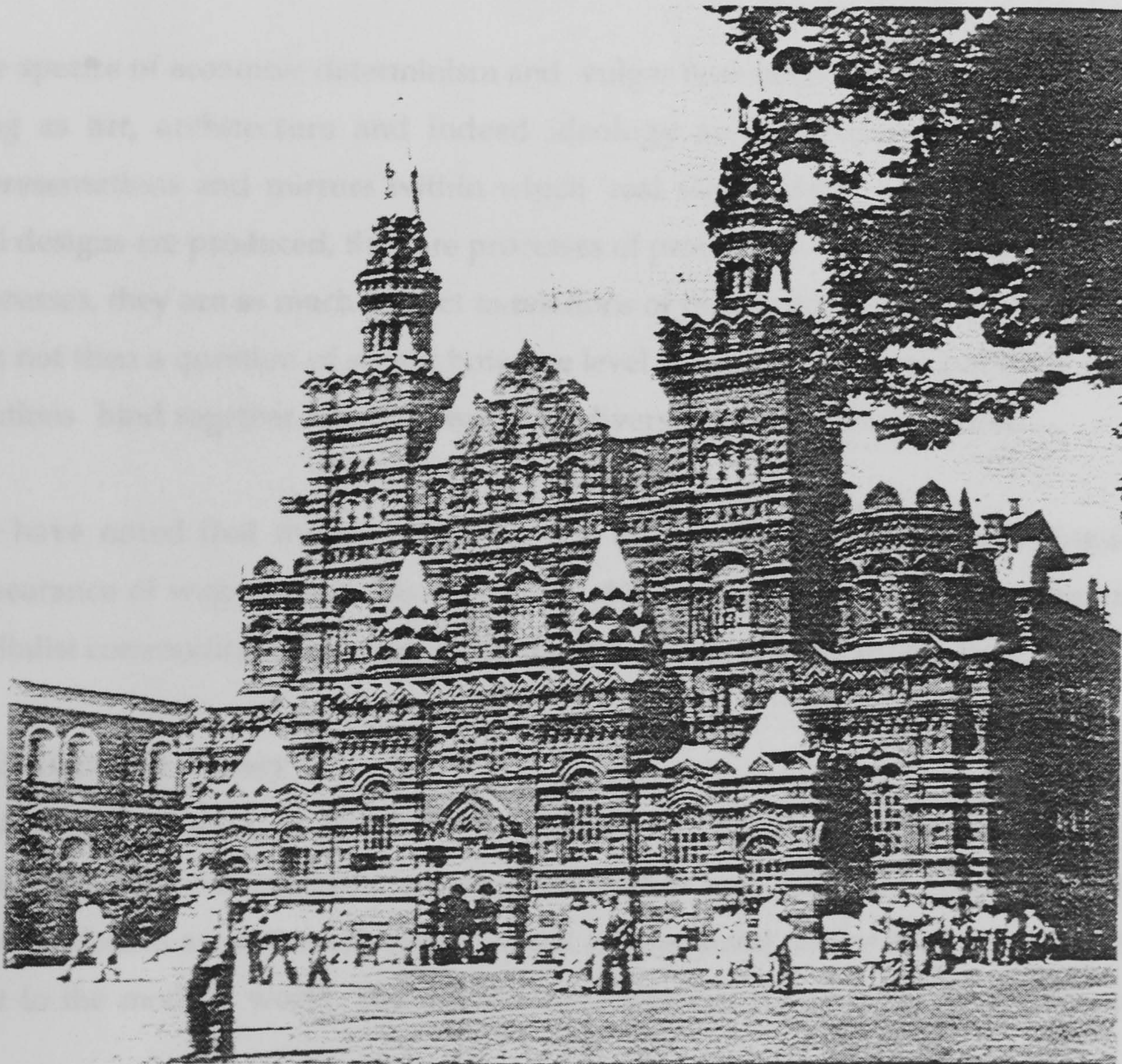
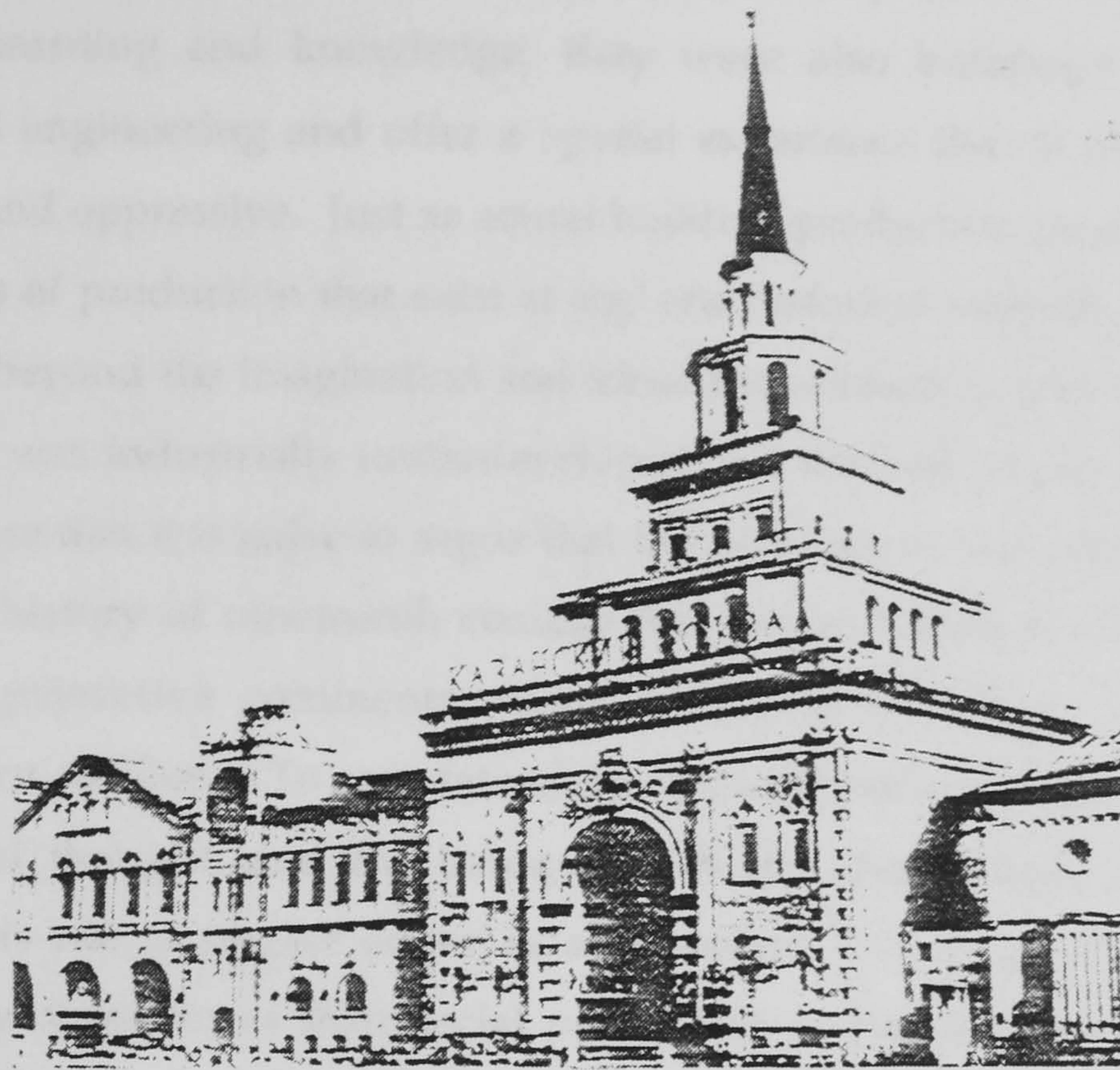
truths and absolutes

It should of course be emphasised that the objective is not to evaluate any particular period of architecture in a positive or negative sense but to grasp the contradictory character of each historical moment as it inherits and transforms previous structures and phenomena. The

⁵ For an introductory essay relating to Moscow see Kirichenko, E - *Moskva - Pamiatiniki arkhitekturi 1830 - 1910 godov* - Moskva - 1977 - In Russian with a translation into English. The sort of text that might now be dismissed as 'sociology' but pinpoints some of the questions relating to class and nationhood.

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century Muscovite architecture

Below- The Neo -Russian - The Kazan Station- 1913-1926 -Architect Shchusev, A



Above - The eclectic The history museum Red Square, Moscow 1875-1883 Arch- Sherbood

FIG 6

mediaeval churches of the Golden Ring express this paradox most acutely. (See fig 7) As centres of learning and knowledge, they were also buildings at the cutting edge of architectural engineering and offer a spatial experience that is at once both uplifting but mysterious and oppressive. Just as actual building production cannot step beyond the forces and relations of production that exist at any one historical moment, so architectural practice cannot step beyond the imagination and ideas bequeathed to it in an era like the nineteenth century that was industrially underdeveloped and marked by deepening social conflicts. In the same sense that it is naive to argue that the avant garde was right or wrong, good or bad, so with the history of nineteenth century Russian architecture. There are no architectural truths. All pejorative comments about particular buildings tend inevitably towards discriminatory absolutes. To associate early Russian classicism with an epoch of developing social critical thought, and the baroque with the conspicuous consumption of the old aristocracy, is not to negate either as architecture but is an attempt to understand the contradictory character of their social production as building types. This is in essence the difference between the dialectical method and that of vulgar sociology.⁶

The spectre of economic determinism and vulgar base-superstructure metaphors only arise as long as art, architecture and indeed ideology are understood as objects or simply as representations and mirrors within which 'real social life' is projected. Architectural ideas and designs are produced, they are processes of production. Understood as practices, as labour processes, they are as much subject to relations of production as any other aspect of social life. It is not then a question of seeing how one level influences another, but how particular social relations bind together what appear to be diverse and different practices.

We have noted that the passage from the old world to the new is distinguished by the appearance of wage labour. How precisely does this occur and what are the implications of capitalist commodity production for the built environment and for Moscow ?

capitalism and history

Whilst we are able to speak with a certain amount of confidence about the specific characteristics of a capitalist society, the spatial and temporal patterns of the transition from feudalism are extremely complex and controversial, as are the motive forces in the great shift to the modern world. The debates over whether the roots of the collapse of the feudal

⁶ For an introductory essay in english to Russian attitudes to classicism in the nineteenth century see Schmidt, Albert - *The architecture and planning of Classical Moscow: a cultural history* - American philosophical society - Philadelphia - 1989 - p195 -201

Ecclesiastical architecture of the Golden Ring - Zagorsk



FIG 7

system are to be found in the conflicts between the peasantry and landed aristocracy, or in the introduction of trade are to be found in the now celebrated set of essays edited by Rodney Hilton.⁷ The polarisation of the debate seems in retrospect to be rather strange, if nothing else because it is difficult to conceive of class conflict as being separate from the manner in which surpluses were exchanged and distributed. They represent what Marx called a simultaneous duality, mutually interdependent categories.⁸

A parallel debate on "the nature of the relationships between structure and subject in human history and society," has led to equally heated exchanges.⁹ Much of the confusion it has been suggested stems from ambiguities in Marx's own writings as to whether we should give primacy in historical explanation to the contradiction between the forces and relations of production, (structure), or to the class struggle, (subject). Anderson argues that these apparently irreconcilable positions set the framework for much intellectual activity throughout western Europe, a debate to which, Althusser, Foucault, and Sartre, inevitably referred and to which historians such as E.P. Thompson was to respond. Again at a purely intuitive level such a polarisation in retrospect seems very peculiar. It would not be the first time that the contradiction between the issue of the Althusserian structuralist manifesto that marginalised the subject, and the simultaneous student and worker uprisings of 1968 has been noted. But if such an ambiguity can be read in Marx, then so can its opposite. It seems theoretically unfounded to separate the notion of class struggle or to put it more generally, class contradictions, from that of the dialectic of the forces and relations of production. They are mutually interdependent categories. The human subject cannot be separated from the structure of a society any more than society can be conceived as existing independently of the human subject. The relations of production always imply the division of human beings into classes, that are inevitably in conflict, whether we become conscious of it and enter into struggle or whether we remain content within such antagonistic relationships. At the very least as Anderson argues structure and subject have always been interdependent.¹⁰

urban and rural

If we retain both categories in our explanation of the process of historical change, when we begin to think about the locus of capitalist development we encounter further controversies.

⁷ Hilton, Dobb, Hill, Sweezy et al - *The transition from Feudalism to Capitalism* - Verso - London - 1984

⁸ Marx, Karl - *Production, consumption, distribution, exchange* - Appendix to *A contribution to the critique of political economy* - Lawrence and Wishart - London - 1981 - p 188 - 199

⁹ Anderson, Perry - *Structure and Subject* - *In the tracks of historical materialism* - Verso - 1984 - p33

¹⁰ *ibid* p54

For the discussion of the built environment, the relationship, and indeed the validity of the 'urban' 'rural' distinction, has been called into question as a spatial framework for thinking about the process of transition from feudalism to capitalism. Given the twentieth century history of cities like Detroit, Sheffield, or Ivanovo, cities that have grown very much in relationship to one particular branch of economic activity, automobiles, steel, and textiles, the equation that reads industrialisation-capitalism-city as synonymous is hardly surprising. Yet it is becoming increasingly clear that the identification of industrial development with the city in the transition from feudalism to capitalism is far from universal. Whilst Moscow and St Petersburg eventually became the main industrial centres in the Soviet Union, the transition to manufacture indicative of the first stage in the development of capitalist production first begins to gather pace in rural locations, an historical tendency confirmed by Trotsky who in answer to the question "Where, then, were manufacturing industry and crafts?" answers, "In the country, attached to agriculture."¹¹

The attempt to define the urban has engendered another set of contradictory positions. Did feudal towns hinder or help the development of capitalism? Were they centres of progress and learning or decadence and reaction? It is increasingly clear there was no single type of town in feudal Europe. Certainly, the identification of the urban with 'civilisation' has increasingly been brought into question not only in relation to the pre history of Europe, but the history of Asia and Africa.¹² In terms of either concepts of progress or the process of capital accumulation the significance of urban and rural distinctions in the transition from feudalism seems problematic.

wage labour

The categories 'urban' and 'rural' retain a usefulness in terms of describing cultural and demographic differences, but can be subsumed in a new approach to the study of the transition to capitalism which emphasises the "wider polycentric patterns of property relations as they effect the extension of a division of labour and the commodification of labour."¹³ In other words, the locus for the development of capitalism is determined by the places and spaces in which we witness the appearance and consolidation of the transformation of serf into wage labour. This is born out in Russia, where the largest concentrations of wage labour in the building industry occur in the lumber trade and in the construction of railways. Again it is

¹¹ Trotsky, Leon - *The Permanent revolution* - Pathfinder - New York -1986 - p47. First published in 1937

¹² Holton, R, J - *Cities, capitalism, and civilisation* - Allen and Unwin - London - 1986 - p1-18

¹³ *ibid* p117

important to realise how this is of immense contemporary significance. As the process of de-industrialisation gathers pace in western Europe and the developing capitalist nations in the southern hemisphere industrialise, whole regions like Ayrshire in south west Scotland, Wales, and Northern England are being transformed into ghost regions. Once the heartland of mining and steel, rural locations in which wage labour first becomes consolidated, their decimation is a testament to the almost incomprehensible spatial agility and mobility of capital.

The most comprehensive study to date of the transition from feudalism to capitalism within the building industry is to be found in the work of Clarke.¹⁴ In "Building Capitalism",¹⁵ Clarke reviews theories of urbanisation from Weber to Castells and Lefebvre, concluding that despite their relative merits they share a common flaw in their failure to elaborate on a theory of urbanisation as a process of production. In relation to the process of transition Clarke offers three arguments. In Way I, the development of capitalism in the building industry is to be explained principally through the introduction of new contracting, leasing or farming out systems promoted by merchants.¹⁶ Way II, concentrates on the emergence of the master builders of the eighteenth century attached to the building materials industry and employing wage labour.¹⁷ Clarke argues that the emergence of both merchants and artisans, wedded as they were to feudal class structures were not able in themselves to bring about change. A third way is offered which suggests that the capitalist originates from "production by wage labour, whereby labour is employed outside craft regulations and totally separated from its means of production. With such an alternative, or Way III, capitalism represents the dominance of production by wage labour, with labour power just as much a commodity as the product it produces." The rest of this important book attempts to explain just how this occurred through a study of the development of a part of North London and in the construction of parts of London's early infrastructure. The emphasis then is on the emergence of wage labour. Within Russia this begins to happen later than in Britain, but in a similar fashion it was out of the ranks of newly proletarianised serfs that some of the first contractors were to emerge.

14 **Clarke, Linda** - *Annual Proceedings of the Bartlett International Summer School* - Volume 3 - 1981 - *The transition from a feudal to a capitalist mode of building production* - p 1-52 - with **Janssen, Jorn** - Volume 4 - 1982 - *On a theoretical approach to the study of labour in building and construction* - p7-39

15 **Clarke, Linda** - *Building Capitalism* - Routledge - London- 1992

16 *ibid* p40

17 *ibid* p41

The transition from feudalism to capitalism in architecture



The serf builds the mansions and monasteries for immediate use by the lord Zagorsk. One of the homes of the Russian Orthodox church



The wage labourer builds the speculative house and office for the market place The *Banestan Tower*. A bank and the tallest building in South America. Sao Paulo

the origins of the commodity status of labour

One of the pre-requisites of wage labour and one of the historic conditions for capital is free labour and the exchange of free labour against money. Another pre-requisite is the separation of free labour from the objective conditions of its realisation - from the means and material of labour.¹⁸ Marx argued that this requires the dissolution of all previous relations; of the labourer to the soil, to the lord of the soil, of relations of property that makes the labourer a yeoman or petty landowner, of guild relations which pre-suppose the labourers property in the instruments of production and in addition all relations of 'clientship' where the former serf was required to participate in rituals, feuds and acts of personal service at the bequest of the Lord¹⁹. Capitalist production thus requires a labourer who possesses nothing more than his or her labour power in a contract where all the objective conditions of production appear as alien, as non property. Thus freedom for the capitalist means freedom to accumulate capital. For the workers to become free is to become free of all property, save labour power²⁰. The paradox for the workers is that it is not the worker that the capitalist wants but his or her power to labour, and if this work can be conducted by a machine then so much the better²¹. With the inauguration of capitalist commodity production the reign of capital and the commodity form commences its journey that will result in no stone being left unturned. Labour power, buildings, building materials, land, space, tools and equipment all become commodities and possess the twin character of any commodity - use value and exchange value. Thus, the transition from feudalism to capitalism can be characterised as the dissolution of relations of production in which use value predominates. At the extremes of architecture this can be understood as the difference between a mansion built by serf labour, that is coerced labour producing buildings for the use of the aristocracy, and a speculative house built by wage labour for sale in the market. (See fig 8)

use and exchange

One of the most important distinctions between the feudal city and the capitalist city is the progressive domination of the latter by the commodity form. Buildings and land assume two aspects, a *use-value* and an *exchange value*, a relation in which the use-value of an object has to perpetually seek approval from the world of exchange, such that its existence is dependent on its ability to be sold. Within feudal Moscow land ownership and building production

18 Marx, Karl - *Pre-capitalist economic formations*- Lawrence and Wishart - 1978 - p67

19 *ibid* p104-105

20 *ibid* p111

21 *ibid* p99

Heroes of a different class



Tsar Alexander II -
"The enlightened
monarch"
who introduced the
reforms of 1861
that emancipated
the serfs



Emelka Pugachev
Leader of the peasant
rebellions
of 1773-1775

takes place under the jurisdiction of monarch and church. It is also the state that has a virtual monopoly of decision on not only what gets built but how and where.

Changes in the formal and spatial organisation of the city occur when feudal relations commence their disintegration. This gathers pace with the development of class conflicts between the landed class and peasantry and is completed with the emergence of capital and a class of capitalists and wage workers. In turn this sets the structure not only for accelerated changes in building types and technology as capitals enter into competition, but for the development of differential land rents and zoning patterns that accentuate the spatial hierarchies and social division within the city according to function, (industrial, residential, governmental...), and increasingly along new class lines (i.e. defined working class and bourgeois housing regions). In the building industry this is most prevalent in the rapidly expanding markets in Moscow for labour and building materials. It is less clear to what extent a market for land and buildings emerges in late 19th century Moscow, although there are clearly signs not only in the construction of town houses for merchants and industrialists but in the construction of what appears to be housing for rent.

St Petersburg - symbol of modernity

Whilst the transition to capitalism only gathers pace in the latter half of the nineteenth century after the reforms of Alexander II in the early 1860s, it is not entirely romantic fancy to argue that the symbolic starting point of the modern revolution is the founding of St Petersburg. (See fig 9) As the locus of the 19th century development of modern literature and culture in general, St Petersburg's pre-eminence has been well described by Marshall Berman²².

But like all great public works, their splendour belies their cruelty. Inevitably, Hegel's concept of the alienation of the spirit pervades the novels of Gogol, Dostoevsky and of course Pushkin's masterpiece the *Bronze Horseman* (1833). Much of the Russian intelligentsia including such figures as Bakunin, Chernyshevsky, and Herzen were deeply influenced by Hegel and German philosophy. Whilst the fiction writers may not have been students of Hegel themselves, it would have been impossible in the St Petersburg of the mid nineteenth century to avoid the discussion provoked by Hegel not only into the subject of the loss of spirit but of course on the nature of history and of the State.

22 Berman, Marshall - *All that is solid melts into air. The experience of modernity* - Verso-London- 1989

It is in the construction of St Petersburg that we encounter the origins of these modern dilemmas. The city is the most vivid example of the union of free and unfree labour, of the wildest dreams of progress and the most bitter of repressions. Within architecture the reforms of Peter the Great set in motion the widespread replanning of Russian cities, which under the reign of Catherine saw four hundred settlements altered along European lines.²³ (See fig 10) This was a serious attempt to break the courtyard structure of villages and towns that were if anything Asian in origin. Weber considered feudal Moscow to be a 'land rent' type of consumer city²⁴, sharing the characteristics similar to a large Oriental city of the time of Diocletian,²⁵ and a characteristic Trotsky argued to be true of most Russian towns from this period.²⁶ (See fig 11) Indeed Peter is reputed to have pledged himself to destroying the "Asiatic sprawl" of Moscow. This desire to emulate Europe is deeply contradictory, not least because of Moscow's geographical position, Russia's centuries-long occupation by the Mongols, and the crude identification of the 'west' as progressive and the 'east' as primitive. The 'window to the west' nevertheless remained an obsession with the ruling class right up to the contemporary period. It has also been a point of bitter contention for those who wished to maintain a distinctly Slav identity, and those inhabitants of the Russian and then Soviet empire who had little connection with the Judeo Christian tradition apart from one of subservience. (See fig 12)

rationalising space

Like his twentieth century counterparts, Peter the Great imported western European ideas and architects, who, combined with Russian labour, were given the task of transforming the spatial characteristics of Russian life. St Petersburg was of course the epitome of this rationalisation of space - the grid, the boulevard, the street, the pavement, the square and the monument. It also revealed one of the most arrogant of modernist conceits, the attempt to tame and ultimately conquer nature. A grandiose project unmatched in urban history in its battle not only with the swamps and ice of the Baltic but with the limits of human labour itself.

Seen at its most conceptual in the scheme of Le Blond (1717), (See fig 13) the organisation of space through the 'reasoned geometry' of grid and boulevard, historically situates St

²³ The revolution in architectural production inaugurated by Peter the Great has been elegantly documented by Cracraft, James - *The Petrine revolution in modern architecture* - University of Chicago - 1988

²⁴ Weber, Max - *The city* - Free Press - New York - 1966 - p68

²⁵ *ibid* p200

²⁶ Trotsky, Leon - *The Permanent revolution* - Pathfinder - New York - 1986 - p47 First published in 1919

The modern revolution begins in St Petersburg



The Nevsky Prospect in 1988



The Winter Palace

The asiatic sprawl of Moscow in 1661

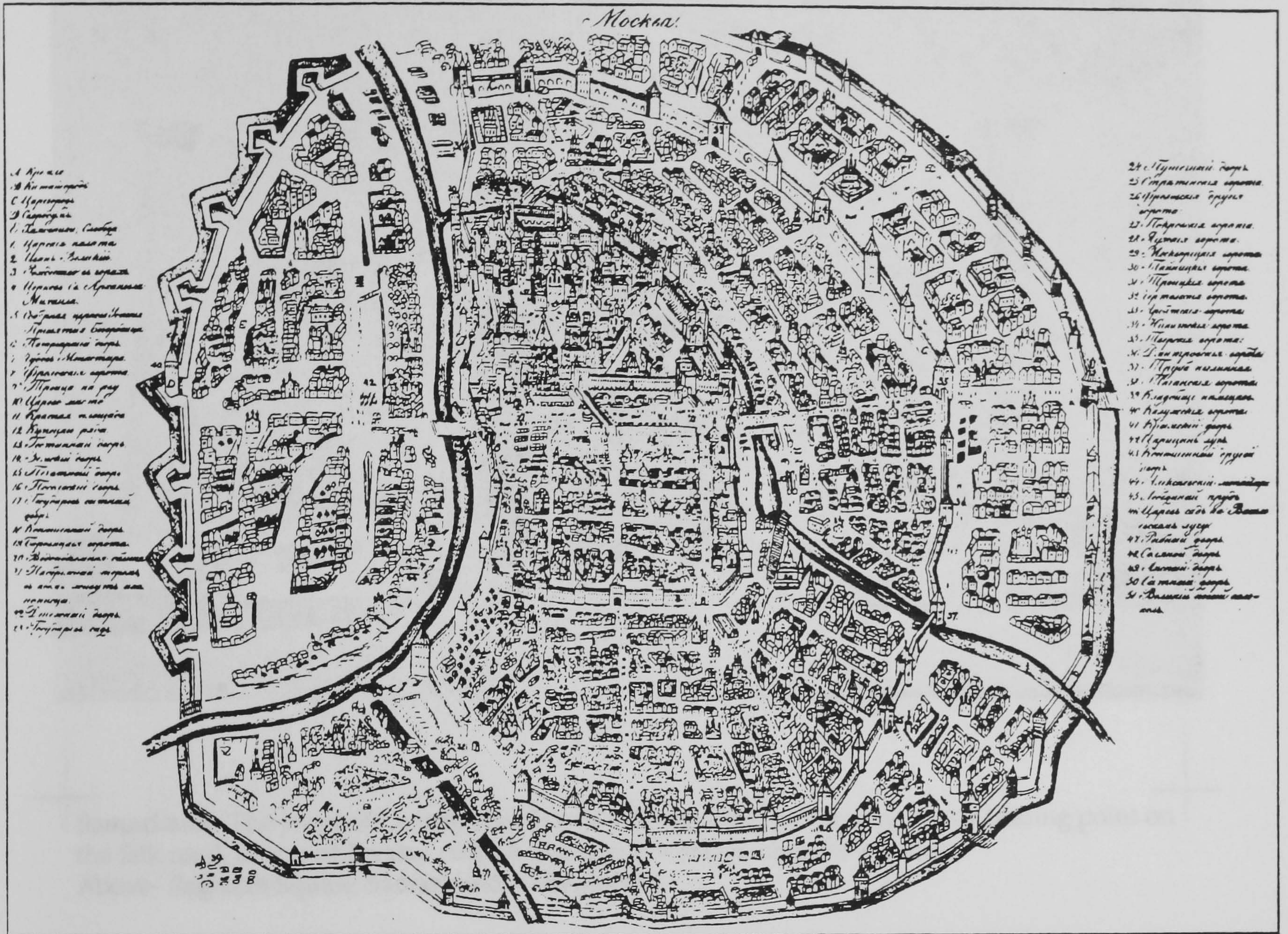
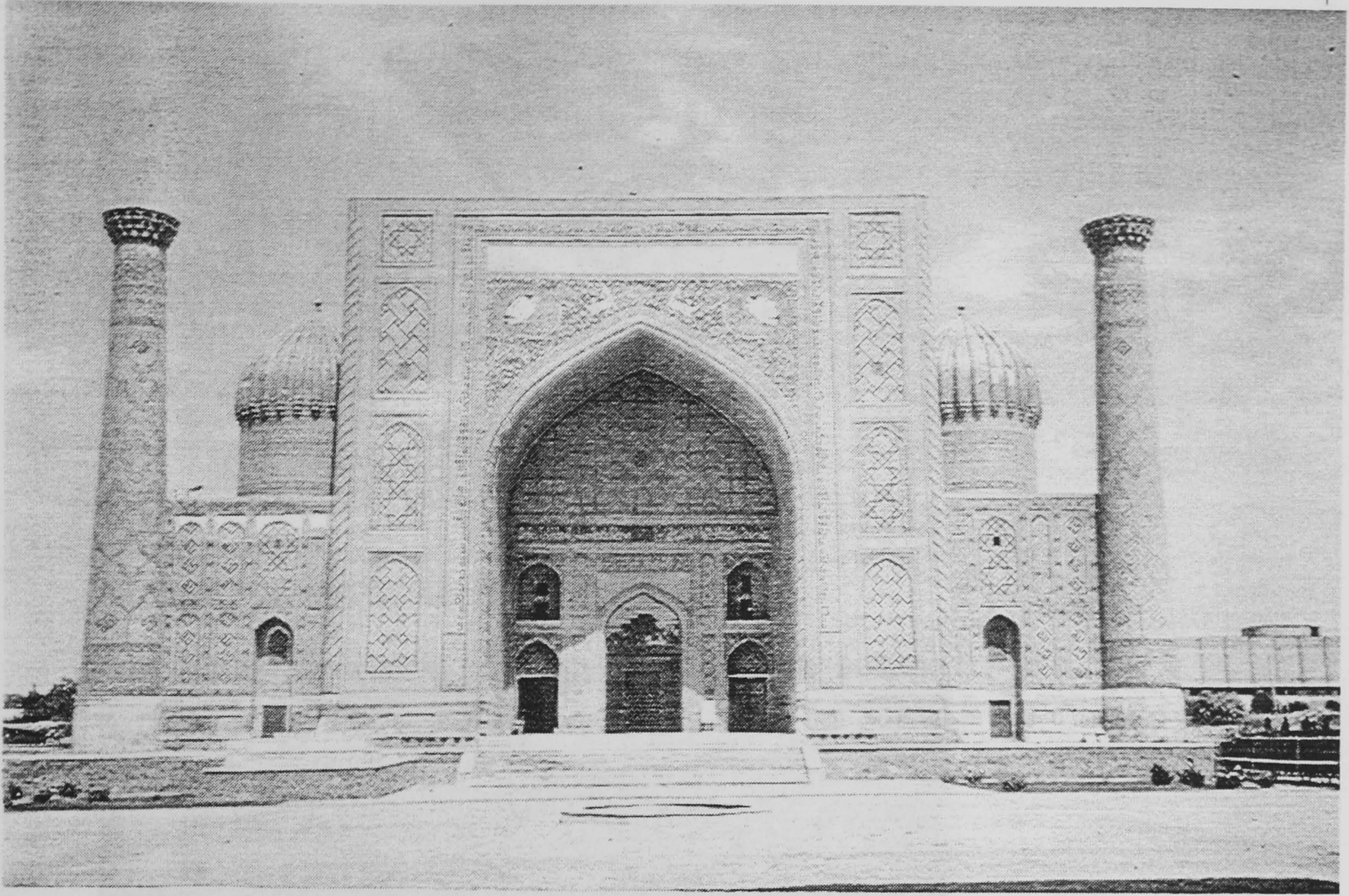


FIG 11

The non-slavic cultures of the Russian and Soviet empires



Samarkand- The jewel of Central Asia Home of Tamurlane, astronomy, major trading point on the Silk road, centre of Persian culture and point of pilgrimage for muslims
Above- Registan Square Samarkand. 17th century

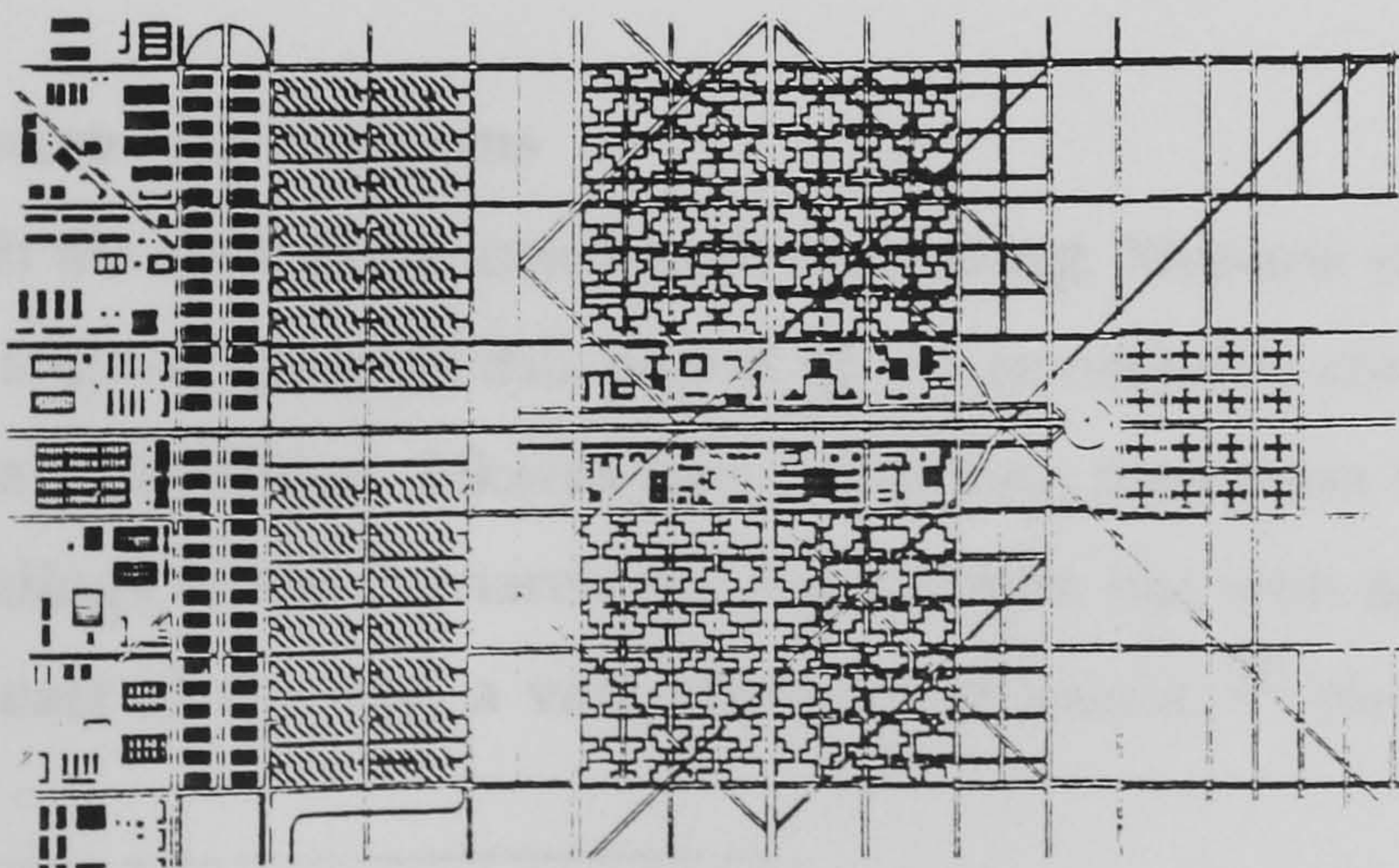
The bringing of a rational order to space



Le Blond's scheme for St Petersburg 18th century



Barcelona 19th century



Le Corbusier's Ville Radieuse-Early 20th century

Petersburg within the modern tradition of classical Urban design.²⁷ This would include Hausmann's spatial revolution a hundred years later in Paris, the planning of nineteenth century Budapest, the Burnham plan for Chicago, Barcelona, New York , Glasgow, Speer's plan for Berlin, Pagano's for Milan and Soviet urban design in the 1930s, schemes which despite differences share the need to bring discipline to the city. In so doing the degree to which a rationalised grid structure can represent the democratic divisions of space or the physical incarceration of populations, is entirely dependent on the balance of class forces. However, such plans universally belong to the history of class societies and in this sense always retain a function in relation to the control of social life, of which the enlightenment imperative to order is a lifeline between centuries. St Petersburg betrays this dialectic. At one and the same time a call to authority yet a call to progress, to be conducted of course under the scrupulous eye of the Tsar .

rationalising labour

This distinctly modern attempt to rationalise space was accompanied by the greatest rationalisation of all, that of construction labour. This is significant for two reasons. First is the sheer scale of the operation. Between 1703 and 1725 it is estimated that anywhere between 10,000 and 30,000 ordinary workers laboured annually on the construction of St Petersburg, a good many of them perishing in the process of making firm land out of a swamp²⁸. Second, whilst on the whole 'conscripted' labour, labour effectively rounded up and sent to St Petersburg by provincial governments, and therefore not yet fully fledged wage workers, they represented an historical pre-figuration, the ancestral grandparents of similar armies of construction workers who over one hundred years later were not only to work in the factories and on the railways and building sites, but as waged labourers for private contractors.

Moskva - the city burns

With the shift of the court to St Petersburg, Moscow entered into a relative decline. Some of the engravings from this period give a remarkably convincing picture of what Moscow must have looked like. Pikart's two metre long panorama of 1707 shows a city dominated by the buildings of the Patriarch and the Kremlin but with an urban sprawl stretching away out to the east of the city, a vast timber-built *favella*.²⁹ (See fig 14) Delabart's engravings in the

²⁷ It should of course not be forgotten that the image of St Petersburg as the rational 'Venice of the North' had already begun to crumble by the beginning of the nineteenth century.

²⁸ Cracraft op cit p176-178

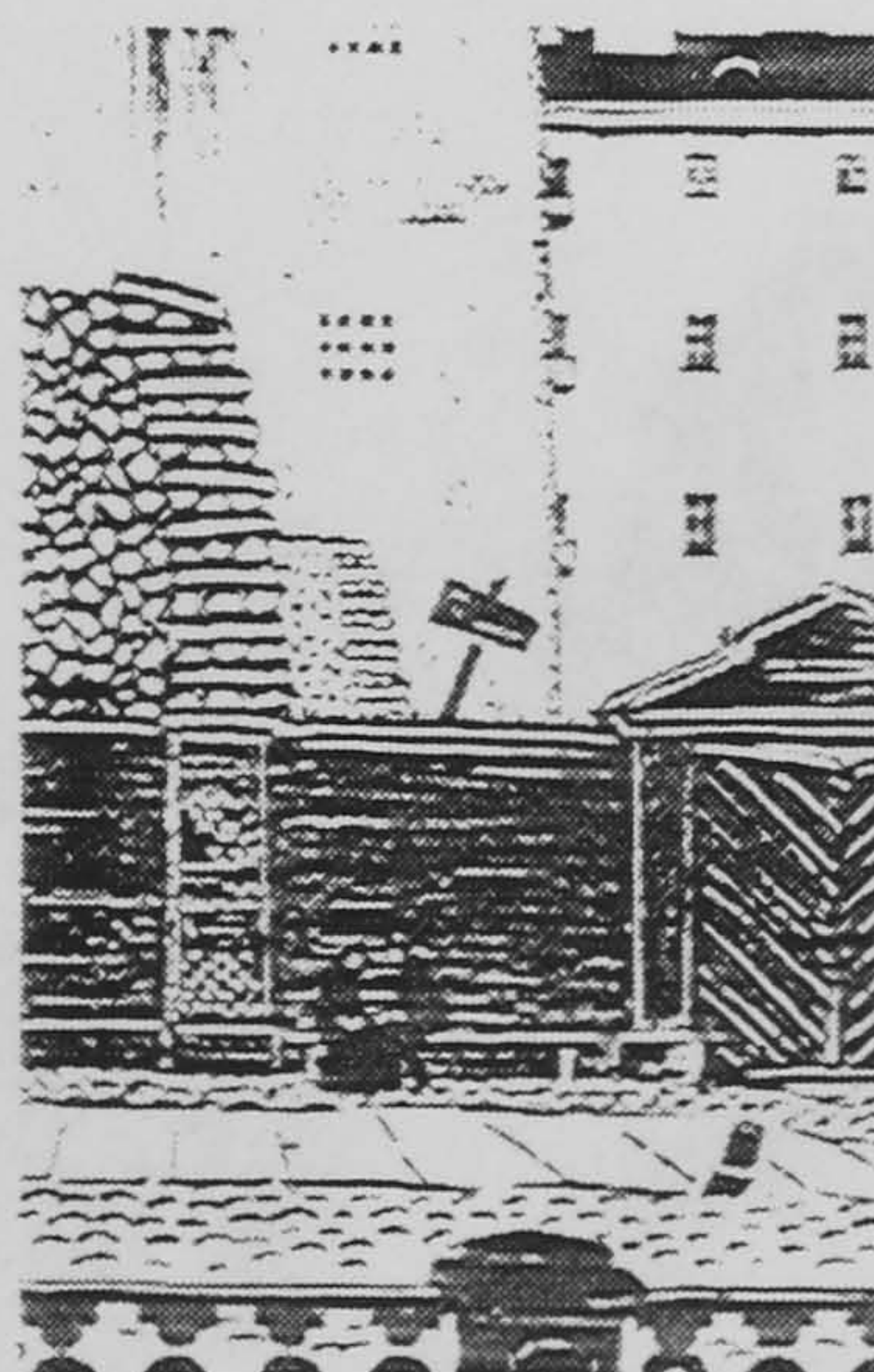
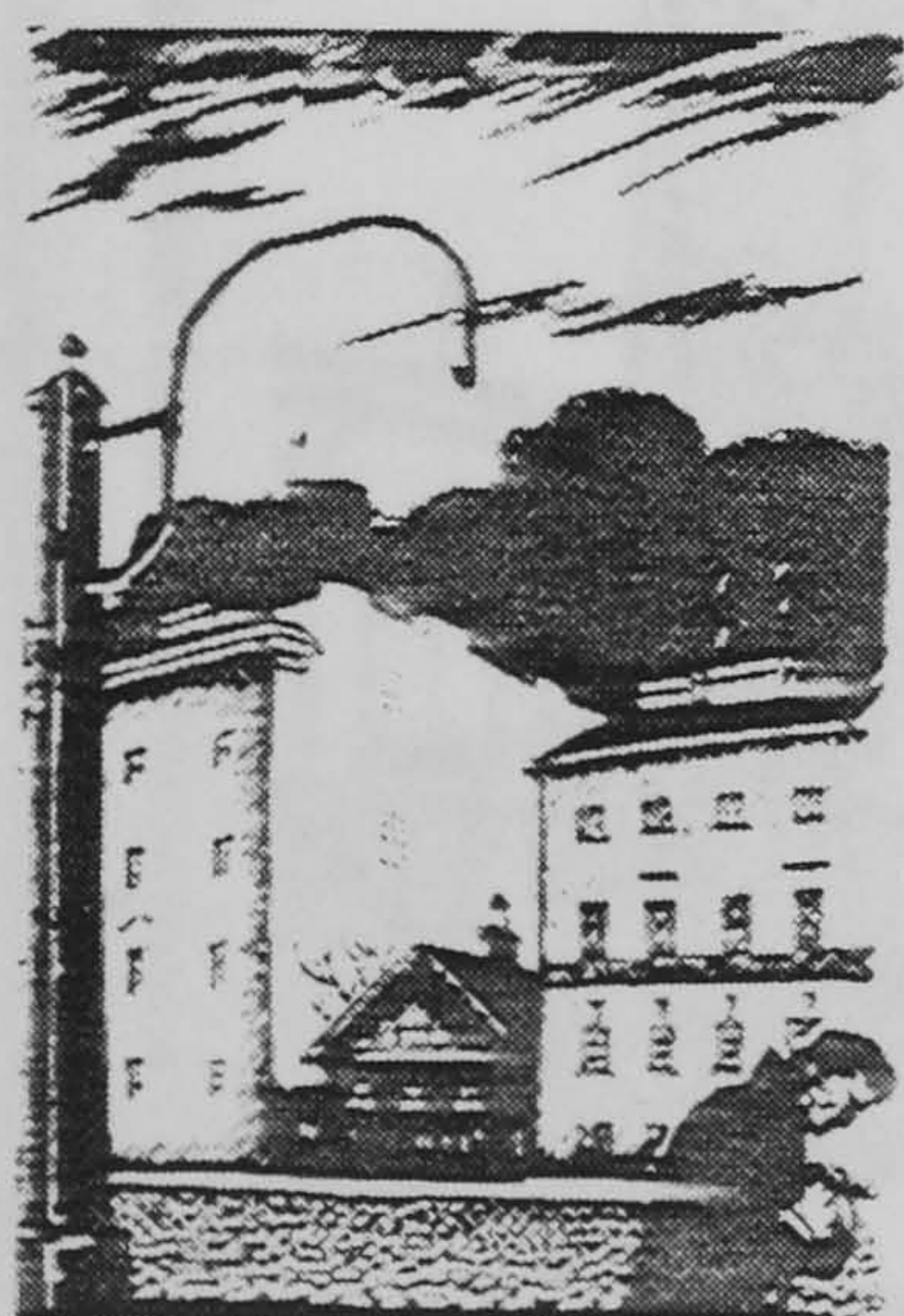
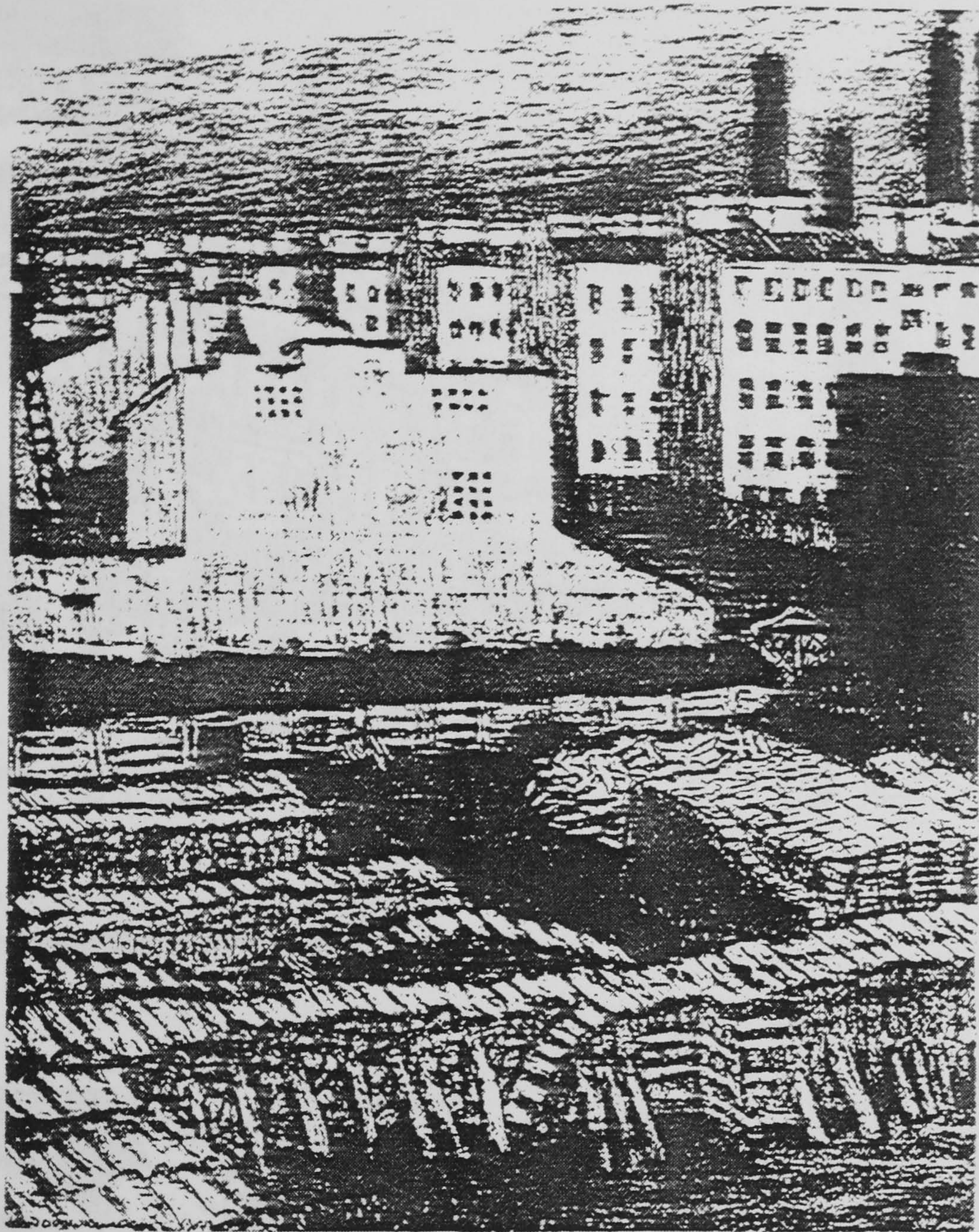
²⁹ Ruban, B, G, - *Opicanie Moskvi* - Priloshenie k fakcilomi- Moskva - 1988 - p60 - 63

Moscow in the early eighteenth century



Fragment of a gravure by Pikart circa 1707

Images of dystopia
Mstislav Dobhuzhinsky- The city - 1904



Above- Illustrations by Dobhuzinsky for Dostoevsky's *White Nights* - 1922

1790s are equally impressive. While inevitably stylised, they show a ramshackle city in which timber huts jostle with neo classical facades, pristine buildings with obviously decaying ones, women bathing, children skating, and many people trading and travelling.³⁰ For all of the need to locate the pastoral idyll, images like these and even more so those of Piranesi, of Fritz Lang, and of the late twentieth century urban nightmare film genre, endure because we know and secretly gain comfort from the knowledge that even as imaginations they touch closest to the hope and tragedy of life. (See fig 15)

This juxtaposition of ruin and prosperity is not confined to the artistic imagination. Moscow's development at the start of the nineteenth century was arrested by the Napoleonic wars and by a fire on the scale of Ludwig Meidner's paintings of the apocalyptic city. Whilst from afar Moscow had glistened like a fairy tale city, the outbreaks of fires had been frequent given the preponderance of timber buildings. A major fire had threatened to engulf the city for years which eventually broke out in 1812 in which 6532 houses out of 9158 were destroyed.³¹

rebuilding the city

By 1831, Moscow's reconstruction was well underway boasting 10,200 houses. Its architectural re-emergence had been greatly assisted by the introduction of design catalogues in 1803 that were republished in the 1840s and 50s, by the creation of the first architectural school in Moscow in 1809³², the formation in 1832 of new State Organs to regulate building production including the organisation and training of construction labour, and the eventual publication in 1839 of handbooks that dealt with construction details.³³

An architectural guide from the same years gives a detailed picture of the city in the midst of a rapid transformation into a busy if somewhat dilapidated cosmopolitan and commercial centre³⁴ surrounded by an increasing number of factories which in 1814 had numbered 253 and had increased by 1853 to 939 employing 58,000 wage workers.³⁵ (See fig 16)

³⁰ *ibid* p112 -123

³¹ *ibid* p192. See also Muraev, V, L, - Moskva 1812 - in *Arkhitektura i stroitelstvo Moskvi* - No 12 - 1987 -p25 -27

³² For an essay on the history of the Moscow school of architecture see Ivanovna, L, V, - *Chto myi znaem ob istoria Moskovskoi arkhitekturnaya shkoli* - in *Arkhitektura i stroitelstvo Moskvi* - No 10 - 1989 p 9 - 13

³³ Zvorikin, D, H, - *Razvitia stroitelno proizvodstva v SSSR* - Moskva stroizdat - 1987 - p84 -96

³⁴ *Guide to Moscow - Containing a description of the public edifices* - London - 1835. It possessed 159 principal streets connected by pavements constructed out of small stones embedded in sand. "All houses within the boulevards must be built of brick, those beyond them may be wholly of wood, if not of one story, but of two stories, the lower story at least must be of brick, The foundation is laid with soft calcereous stone, brought from Metchova, a village in the circle of Bronitsa. sandstone is found at Tatarova, in the circle of Kolomna. The brick used comes from the vicinity; and is both ill made and insufficiently burnt. The

Late nineteenth century Moscow in postcards

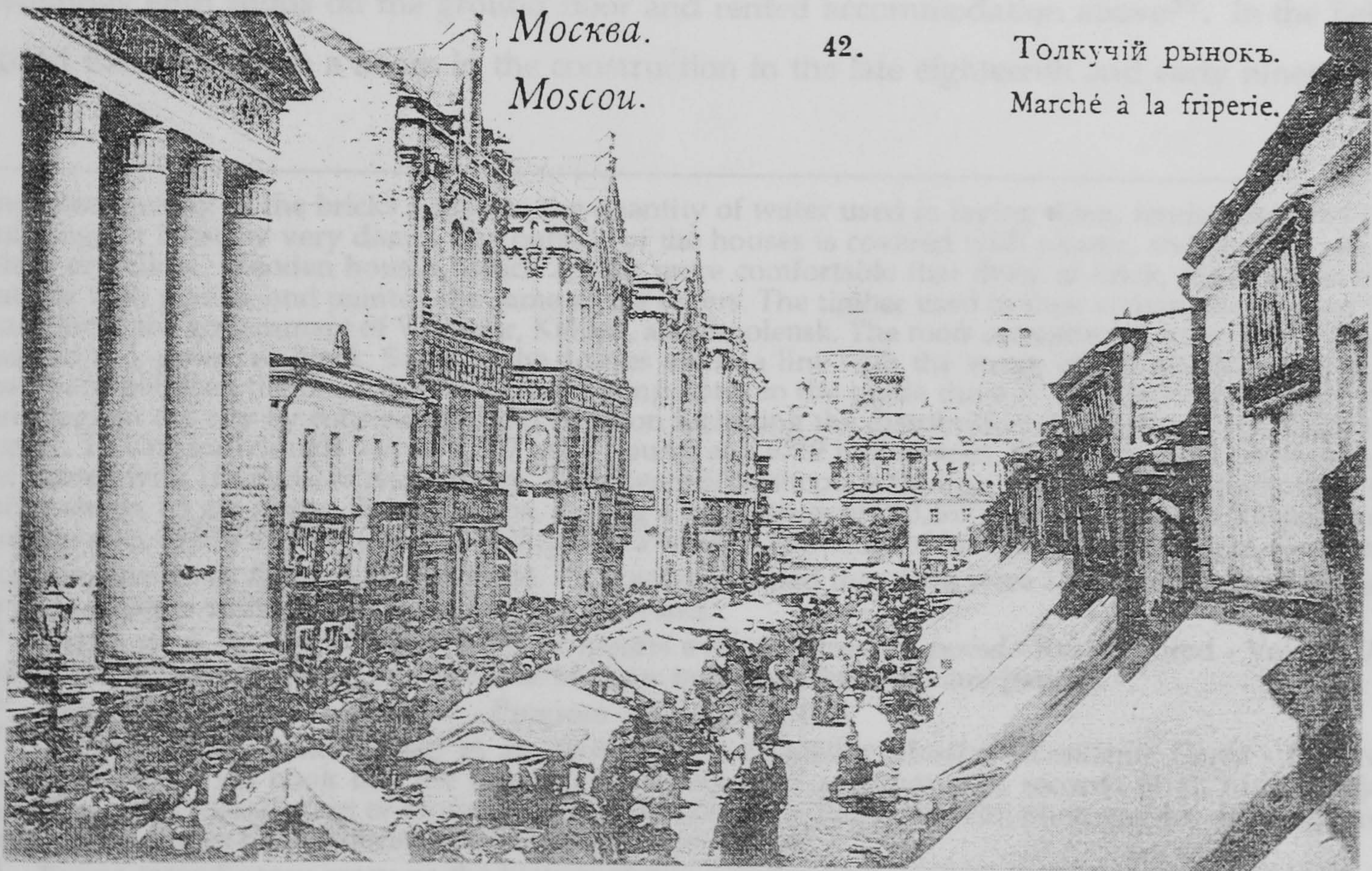


Москва. Уг. Софийки и Лубянской пл.
По фот. А. Павловича.

40-46. 2-е изд.

Moscou. Coin de la Sofica et de la
Place Loubianca.

View up towards the Lyubianka



Москва.
Moscou.

42.

Толкучий рынокъ.
Marché à la friperie.

Street market in the city centre

The decline in the feudal character of the city was simultaneous with the increasingly weak position of the "enlightened monarchy". Tsarist rule had been confronted with the advocates of new social and political ideals, beliefs and attitudes which had been inherited from the French revolution of 1789, the peasant rebellions and the Decembrist uprising. The slow dissolution of the old regime was to manifest itself within the city in a number of ways. First, the restructuring of space, the attempt to apply order and reason. Although a project for Moscow's restructuring had been proposed in 1775 the rebuilding of the city only gathered pace at the beginning of the 19th century when the Sadovoye ringroad came into existence. The process of reconstruction was further accelerated by the introduction of a new plan in 1818³⁶, which was to lay the pattern for the development of the historic centre of the city for the rest of the century and which the town planners of the avant garde were to inherit in the 1920s. (See fig 17) This plan sought to maintain the four historic areas, yet to emphasise the neo classical character of the city, strengthening not only the Sadovoye Ring road around the Zemlyana Gorod³⁷ but the inner ring road around the Belyi Gorod³⁸ and that of the radial streets that dissected these historic areas of the city.

Whilst in the years immediately following the fire, timber construction continued, by 1838 it had been banned along the main boulevards, such that by 1856 all new construction in the Zemlyanie was out of stone. Many of the new buildings constructed were two or three storey dwellings with shops on the ground floor and rented accommodation above³⁹. In the Belyi gorod there had been a boom in the construction in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth

imperfect quality of the bricks added to the quantity of water used in laying them, renders most of the buildings in Moscow very damp. The outside of the houses is covered with plaster, and painted either white or yellow. Wooden houses, which are far more comfortable than those of brick, are lined on the outside with planks, and painted the same as the others. The timber used in their construction comes by water from the government of Vladimir, Kaluga, and Smolensk. The roofs are either of iron, or of planks, painted red, green, or black. Some of the houses are in a line with the street, others stand back with a courtyard between them....." In the accompanying notes to the guide there is a breakdown of all of the buildings in the city by construction and function including the distribution of housing in the different wards. Private individuals owned 2,947 brick houses and 6,712 timber ones, the next biggest owner being the church with 166 and 218 respectively. There were 5,644 shops, including 41 hotels, 57 eating houses, 19 coffee shops, 65 gin shops, 50 beer shops, serving a population of 263,469 that included 125,308 peasants and servants, 19,914 members of the nobility, and a whole community of foreigners; Arabs, Turks, Germans, Sicilians, Spaniards Armenians and so on.³⁴ It was estimated that there were 1,379 small workshops run by 2,498 Masters with 13,545 apprentices and servants.

³⁵ Trifinov, A, A - *Formirovanie naselenie Moskvi v dorevoluzionnyy period* - Russki gorod - Volume 7 - 1984-p192 (Formation of the population of Moscow in the pre-revolutionary period)

³⁶ Posokhin, M - *Towns for people* - Progress - Moscow - p103

³⁷ See Posokhin, Makarevich et al - *Pamiatniki Arkhitekturi Mosckvi - Zemlianie Gorod* - Moskva Iskusstvo-1989. This book like the one below are excellent and thorough records of all of the major buildings in the historic part of Moscow. The book is lavishly illustrated with photographs, drawings and plans, and includes brief histories of all of the principal streets.

³⁸ For an introductory essay on the history of this area See Makarevich et al - *Pamiatniki Arkhitekturi Moskvi - Belyi Gorod* - Moskva Iskusstvo - 1989 - p11 -35

³⁹ See Posokhin, Makarevich et al - *Pamiatniki Arkhitekturi Moskvi - Zemlianie Gorod* - Moskva Iskusstvo 1989 - p23

MOSCOW IN PLAN 1835

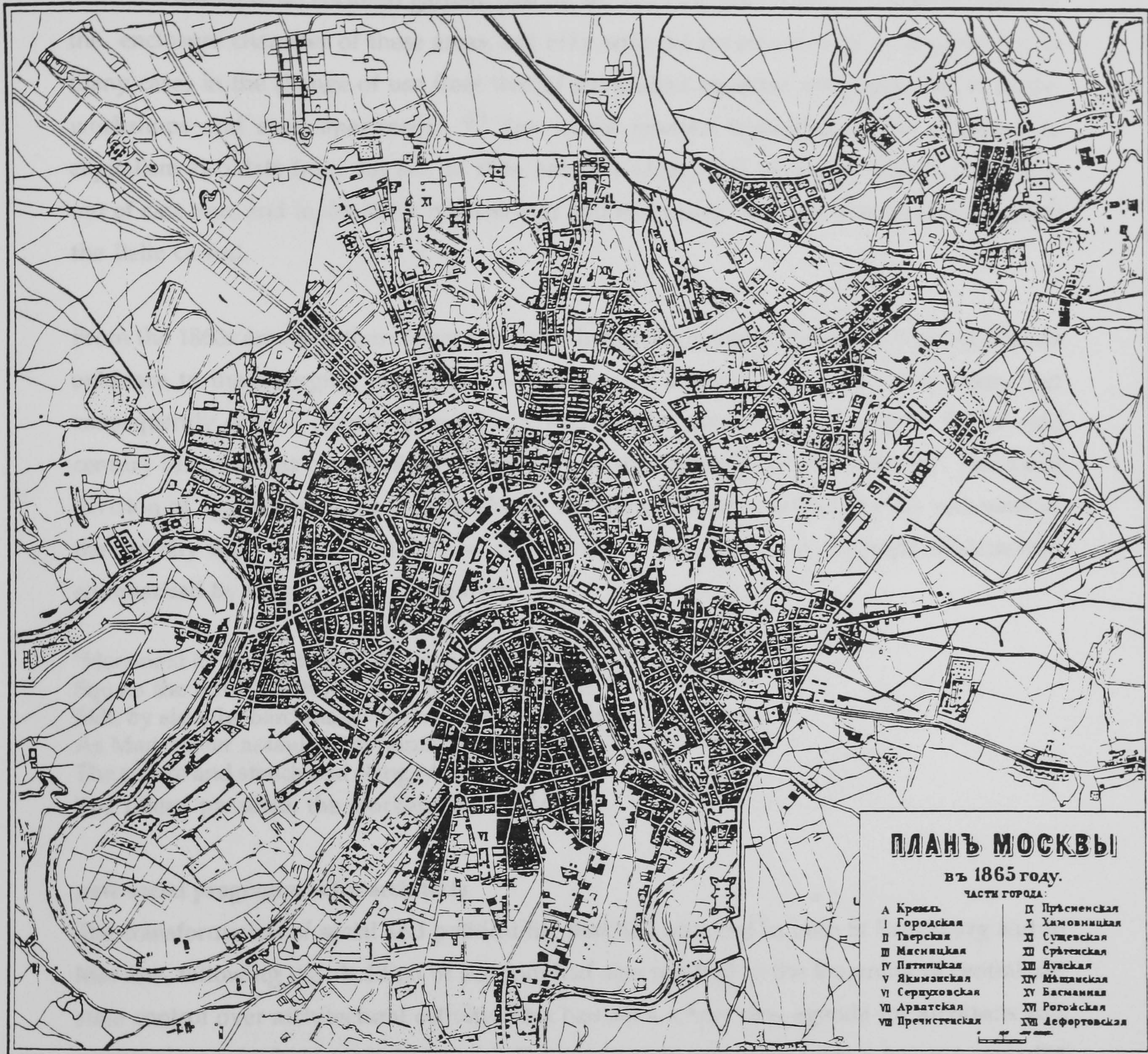


FIG 17

century of what were called "urban garden - estates", relatively prestigious neo classical mansions sitting in an enclosed garden. (See fig 18) The new plan however began to fragment the enclosure character of these areas, not only with the construction of boulevards but in many cases in the change of use from that of the unified mansion with outhouse, to shops, workshops and even apartments.⁴⁰ Two of the greatest testaments to the transition to capitalism also date from this era. In 1836, Moscow's first stock exchange is built, much of it out of cast iron, and in the 1840s the first four and five storey workers' barracks were built in the Belie Gorod.

From the 1860s onwards these inner city areas increasingly boasted cheaper housing, further evidence to the emerging importance of Moscow as a trading and industrial centre, and consequently of new classes of merchants and smaller owners of property.⁴¹ By the mid century Moscow was commonly acknowledged as the 'merchant capital of Russia'. The social division of space thus takes on a markedly different character, displaying the remnants of the old city with the origins of a new class structure and a new set of spatial relationships summarised by the poet P.A. Vyazemski;

"Here next to the nobleman's mansion
Squats the wretched hovel with its cabbage plot.
Side by side the bard makes verses and the merchant - bargains,
As Manchester assaults Constantinople,
The smoke and stench and clang of engines,
The idlers' paradise, the workers' hell ..."⁴²

new social programmes for architects

The transformation of social and political life that had occurred in both St Petersburg and in Moscow, following the abolition of serfdom had also resulted in the loosening of centralised state control over architectural activity. This had set a whole new agenda for architects and artists, many of whom were faced with the prospect of patronage from a nascent capitalist class, a class growing in confidence, prosperous and eager to rival the old order. This not only finds an expression in the populist sentiments of the Russianess of both the Eclectic and the Moderne but in the work profile of architects themselves. K. Ton (1794-1881), the architect for the 'eclectic' Grand Kremlin Palace (completed in 1849), and the Church of Christ the Saviour (completed in 1854 and destroyed by Stalin), was also involved in the design of

⁴⁰ Makerevich et al - *Pamiatniki Arkhitekturi Mosckvi - Belie Gorod* - Moskva Isskustvo - 1989 - p32-35

⁴¹ ibid p26

⁴² Quoted in Kirichenko, E - *Moskva - Pamiatniki arkhitekturi 1830 - 1910 godov* - Moskva -1977 - p30

The garden estates of the historic core of Moscow

Top-Late 18th early 19th century Below-Gagarin garden estate.Early 19th century

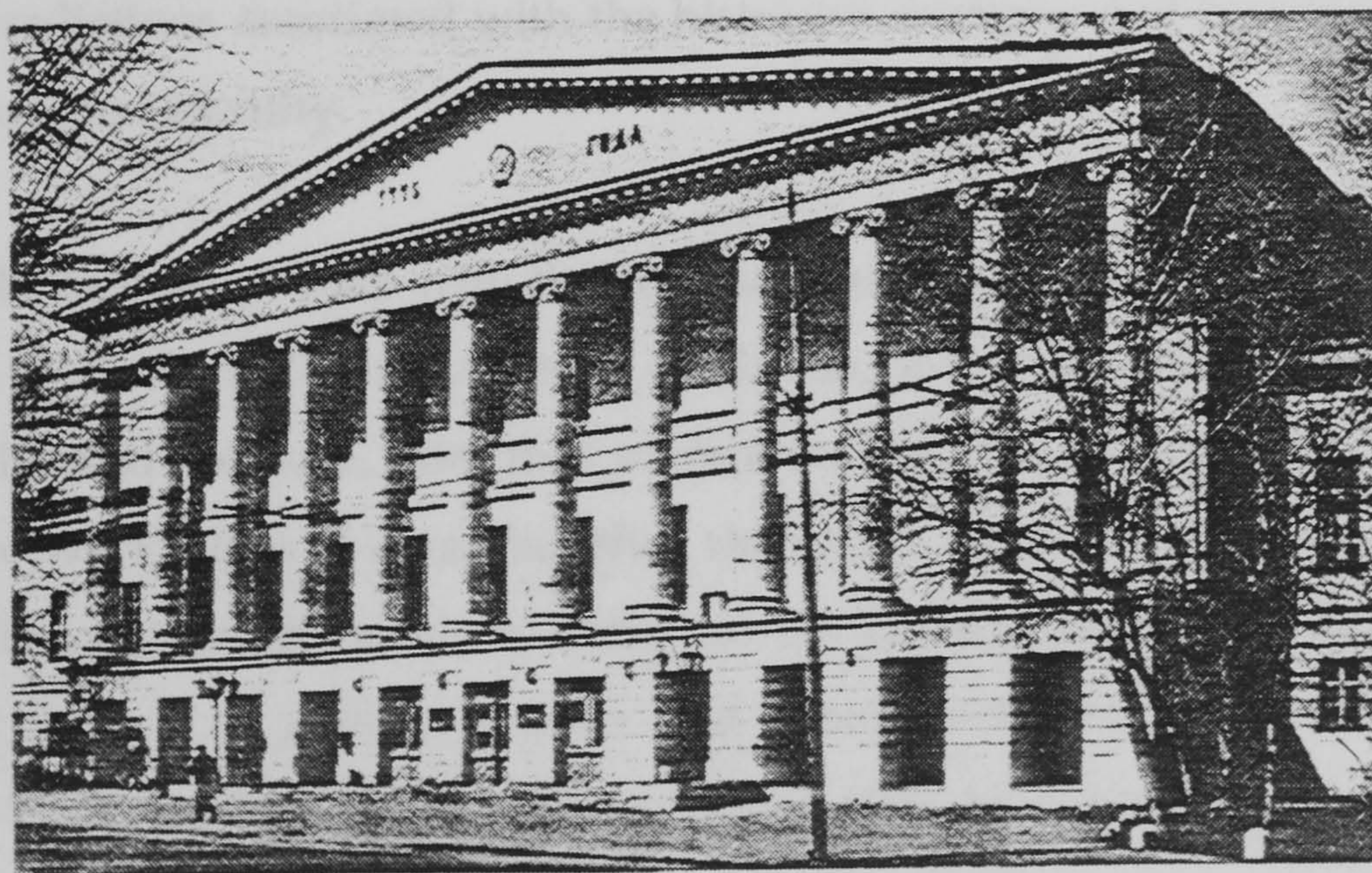


FIG 18

railways stations and town houses. ⁴³ (See fig 19) Other prominent architects of the nineteenth century were confronted by similar and new social tasks. The portfolio of Pomerantsev (1848-1918) the designer of what became known in the Soviet period as GUM (The State supermarket) on Red Square and a leading exponent of the eclectic, also included hotels, shops, museums and railway stations. One of the most prolific was Klein (1858 - 1924), who not only designed over sixty major buildings in Moscow for a similar variety of use functions but utilised virtually the whole of the architectural vocabulary - ancient Russian, mediaeval, the gothic in the famous Muir and Mereliz shop and the neo-classical in the Museum of Fine Art.

Shektel

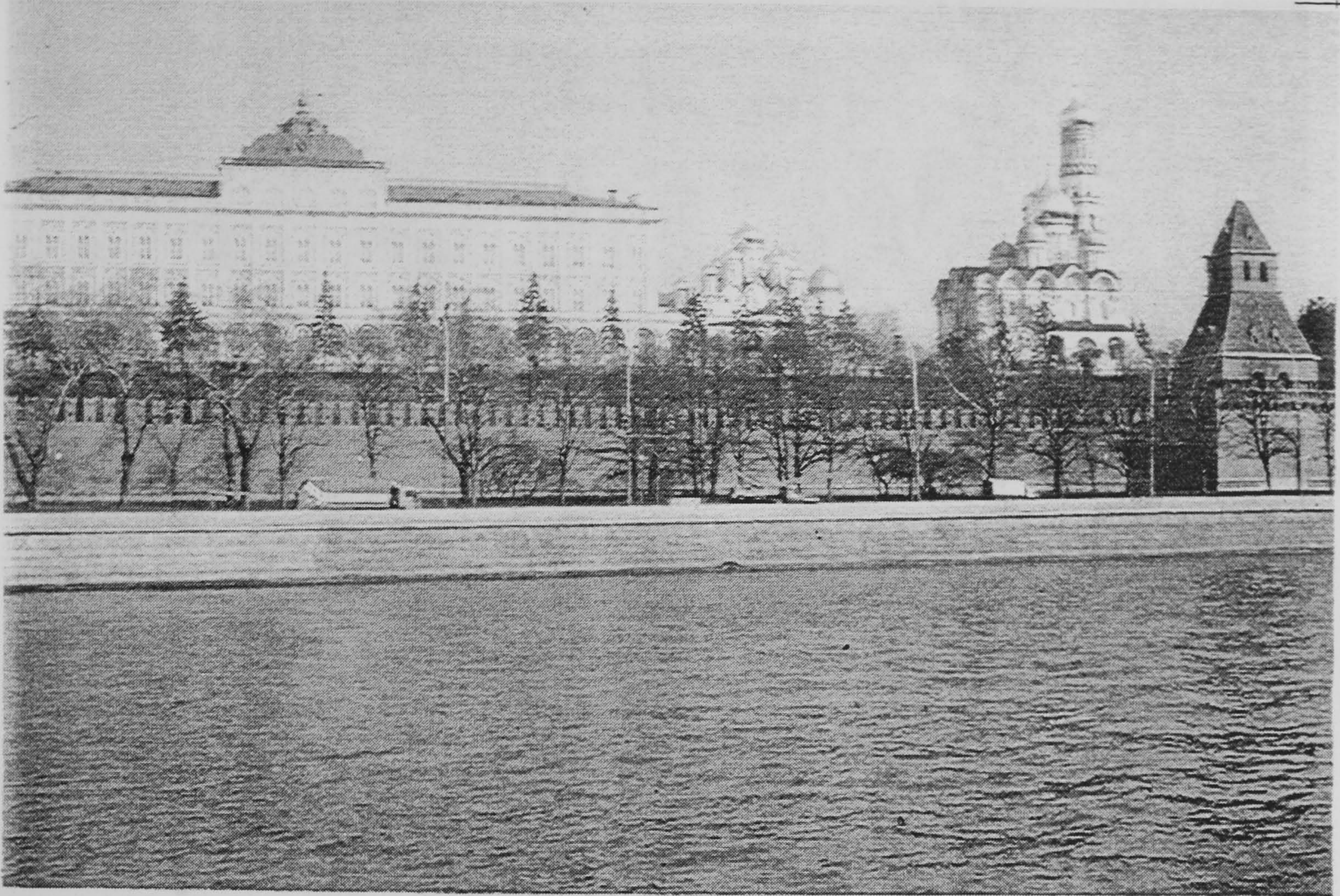
A fitting end to the century was of course to be found in *The Russki Moderne*, headed by Feodor Shektel (1859 - 1926) the aesthetic relative of Mackintosh in Scotland, Horta in Belgium - France and Saarinen in Sweden.

Much of Shektel's and his contemporaries' work was commissioned by the new breed of merchants and industrialists who required not only residential but commercial and industrial buildings. In this respect, the problems that Shektel faced were remarkably similar to those of the grand masters of the Modern Movement. At the most general level they were confronted with the task of describing within architecture the aspirations of a new class of property owners. Modern, forward looking but at the same time very Russian. Thus Shektel, like Mosei Ginzburg and the Constructivists after him, Klein and Ton before, was confronted with the contradictions associated with the historical emergence of new class forces and new concepts of national identity.

All of Shektel's buildings play with the contradiction between that which is recognisable as lying within a distinct Russian historic tradition, the architectural language of ancient Russian myths and folklore, and that of modernism, the architectural expression of an idealised new world. It is this relationship that gives his buildings their particularity and peculiarity. The most well known of these are the Zinaida Morozova House, 1893- 1896, an idiosyncratic collage of gothic, Russian and Islamic references, the Stefan Riabushinski House, 1900 -1902, and the Derozhinsakaya House, 1901, all of them in Moscow. (See fig 20)

⁴³ For essays on Ton, Pomerantsev, Klein, and Shektel see - Kirichenko et al - *Zodchiye Moskvi - Moskovskii Rabochi* - 1981 - p243 - 300

Architecture for the state, the church and the market



The Grand Kremlin Palace Arch -Ton, K (1794-1881)



Shopping arcade on eastern edge of Red Square known as GUM in the soviet era (State Supermarket) Arch-Pomerantsev (1848-1918). Decorated for May Day 1988

FEODOR SHEKTEL - Architect - 1859-1926
Housing and headquarters for the bourgeoisie



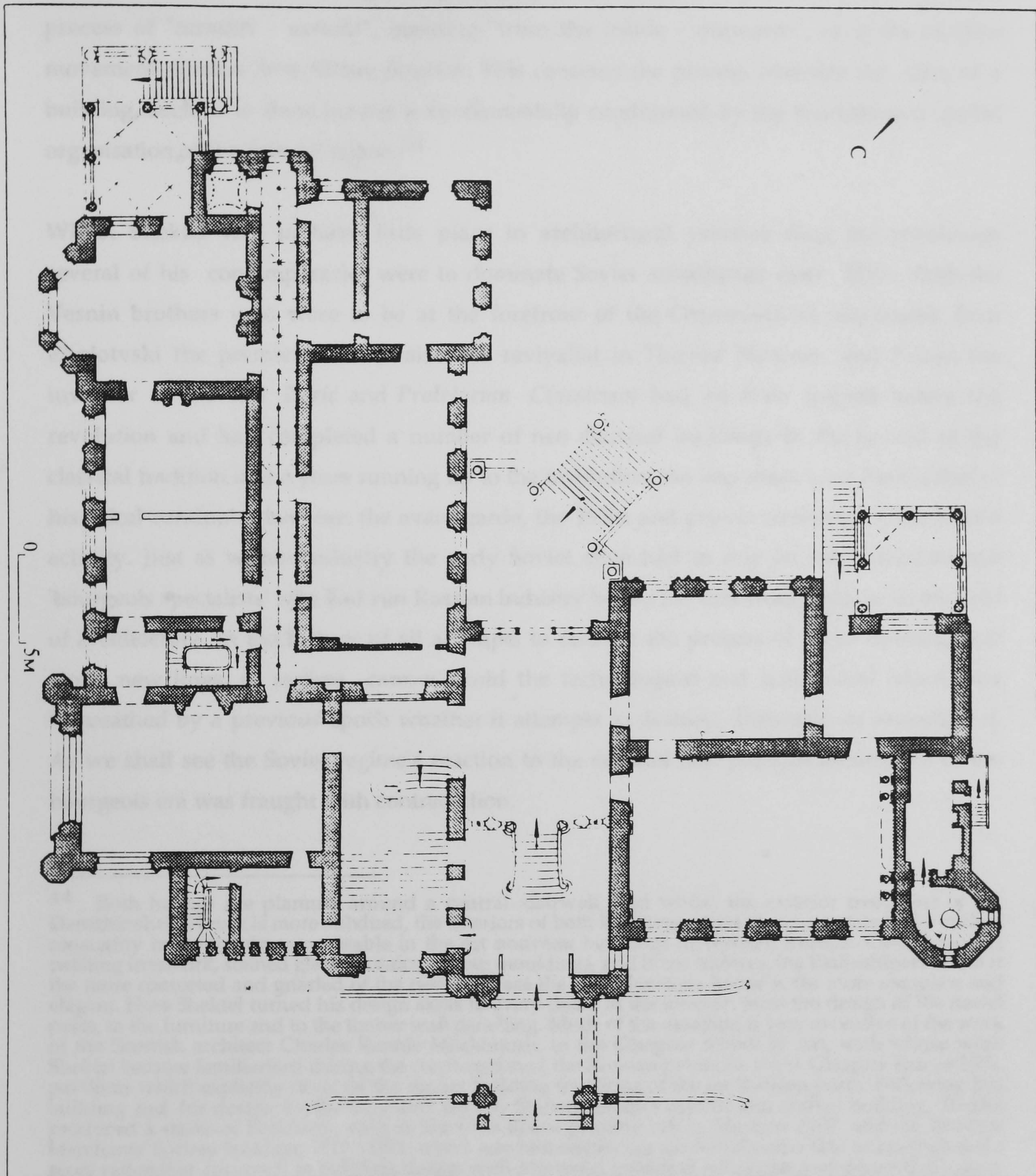
Riabushinski house 1900-1902 ShekTEL was the acknowledged leader of the Moderne, the Russian equivalent of the art nouveau movement. The aesthetic relative of architects like Macintosh and Saarinen



Yaroslavl railway station 1904

FEODOR SHEKTEL

Plan of the Riabushinski House, Moscow, 1900-1902



The last two houses, it has been suggested, are examples of Shektel's early experimentation with what was to become an organising design principle of the Modern Movement. That is the process of "*easnutri - narushi*", meaning "from the inside - outwards", or in its modern movement version *form follows function*. This concerns the process whereby the form of a building, such as in these houses is fundamentally conditioned by the function and spatial organisation of the interior spaces.⁴⁴

Whilst Shektel was to have little place in architectural practice after the revolution several of his contemporaries were to dominate Soviet architecture after 1917. Both the Vesnin brothers who were to be at the forefront of the Constructivist movement, Ivan Zholotvski the premiere neo-renaissance revivalist in Thirties Moscow, and Fomin the inventor of the *Red Doric* and *Proletarian Classicism* had all been trained before the revolution and had completed a number of neo classical buildings in the revival of the classical tradition in the years running up to the revolution. An important issue here is that of historical continuity between the avant garde, the 1930s and pre-revolutionary architectural activity. Just as within industry the early Soviet state had to rely on the managers and 'bourgeois specialists' who had run Russian industry before the first world war, so in the field of architecture. In the history of all attempts to redirect the process of social development along new lines, a regime cannot avoid the technological and intellectual inheritance bequeathed by a previous epoch whether it attempts to destroy, dismantle, or assimilate it. As we shall see the Soviet regime's reaction to the cultural and political inheritance of the bourgeois era was fraught with contradiction.

⁴⁴ Both houses are planned around a central stairwell, and whilst the exterior treatment of the Derozhinskaia House is more subdued, the interiors of both buildings stand as monuments to the crafted sensuality immediately recognisable in the art nouveau buildings of western Europe. Complete with twisting ironwork, stained glass, mosaics, timber mouldings, and brass features, the Riabushinski house is the more contorted and gnarled of the two, whereas the Derozhinskaia house is the more complete and elegant. Here Shektel turned his design skills to every detail of the interior, from the design of the newel posts, to the furniture and to the timber wall panelling. Much of the detailing is very evocative of the work of the Scottish architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh, in the Glasgow school of Art, with whose work Shektel became familiarised during the construction of the Russian pavilions at the Glasgow Fair of 1901, pavilions which explicitly drew on the timber building traditions of the far Russian north. Following this building and his design for the Yaroslavl railway Station, another eclectic and crafted building, Shektel produced a series of buildings, such as the Utro Rossii printing office, Moscow 1907, and the Moscow Merchants' Society building, 1910 - 1911, which saw him embracing modern construction technology and a more rationalist approach to building design with less overt historical references and decorative excess. The merchants building in particular clearly expresses its reinforced concrete frame, possesses a flat roof, with gridded, repetitive and geometric elevations, broken up with large areas of vertical glazing and piers, a stark contrast to his earlier work, and in many ways a precursor of subsequent Modern Movement buildings of the 1920s. He did not however become a firm and committed adherent to the design approach of the Constructivists and Rationalists, preferring to pursue even as a member of the first post revolutionary state committee on construction his own highly eclectic and idiosyncratic idealism, perhaps best summed up by his comment that "Love conquers all. Loving art, we create a magical fairytale, giving meaning to our lives." His legacy and influence as the leader of the Russian art nouveau movement, and in his contribution to the development of not only modernism but the Russian tradition, have ensured him a lasting and prominent position in the history of 19th and early 20th century Russian architecture.

the dual character of the city

If we consider the Enlightenment to be the cultural revolution of the bourgeoisie, then it is clear that the call to reason and order should be heard in both architectural design and the scientific and technological development of building production. Similarly despite the feudal inheritance of building production many of the aspects of a modern capitalist construction industry were already established.

The last two decades of the 19th century had seen Moscow establish itself not only as an administrative and trading centre but as an industrial region with a large textile sector. Its population had risen from 350,000 in 1848, to 1,171,700 in 1902, almost reaching 2 million by 1917, taking its place as one of the largest metropolises in the world alongside New York, London, Paris and Berlin¹. It was of course unlike these cities not least because of the fact that out of the 1.1 million living in the city at the turn of the twentieth century 789,000 are estimated to have been peasants entering the urban world for the first time, over a quarter of whom were between the ages of twenty and twenty nine.² Nevertheless Moscow in 1900 still possessed many of the ingredients of a modern metropolis not only because of the 77,000 workers labouring in the seven hundred metal, textile and brick workshops and factories, but because in 1899 the first electric street lamps and trams appeared.³ (See fig 21)

In terms of plan and building it portrayed many of the same features of other cities still dominated by the contradiction between the legacy of 'organic' mediaeval concepts of form and space and those of the 'planned and rational' enlightenment. These dual features were also manifest in the building industry. Despite the use since 1880 of reinforced concrete for piping and railway construction, and the widespread use of metals, in 1913 on-site building construction was still largely based on labour-intensive methods rooted in traditional handicraft production with many building workers organised in *artels*. Nevertheless the formation of capital in the previous two decades had accelerated, indicated by the operations of thirty large Russian and Foreign Joint Stock Companies, *aktzionerniye obshchestvo* and over 450 large construction firms⁴. The central feature of this transition is of course the formation of capital and the transformation of the serf into the wage worker, and it is to this that we turn next, to the people who built Moscow.

¹ Trifinov, A, A - *Formirovanie naseleeniya Moskvi v dorevoluzionnyy period* - Russki gorod - Volume 7 - 1984 - p 194 -195

² *ibid* 196-197

³ *Istoria, Moskvi* - Nauka - Moskva - 1980 -p 139-159

⁴ Zvorikin, D, H, - *Razvitiya stroitel'nogo proizvodstva v SSSR*- Moskva stroizdat - 1987 - p97-98 see also Zvorikin, D, H, - *Razvitiya proektnogo dela v SSSR*--Moskva stroizdat - 1984 (The development of building production in the Soviet Union, and The development of design activity in the USSR, respectively)

The transformation of Moscow into a world metropolis - 1903
Two views of Tverskaya Street (in Soviet times known as Gorky street)

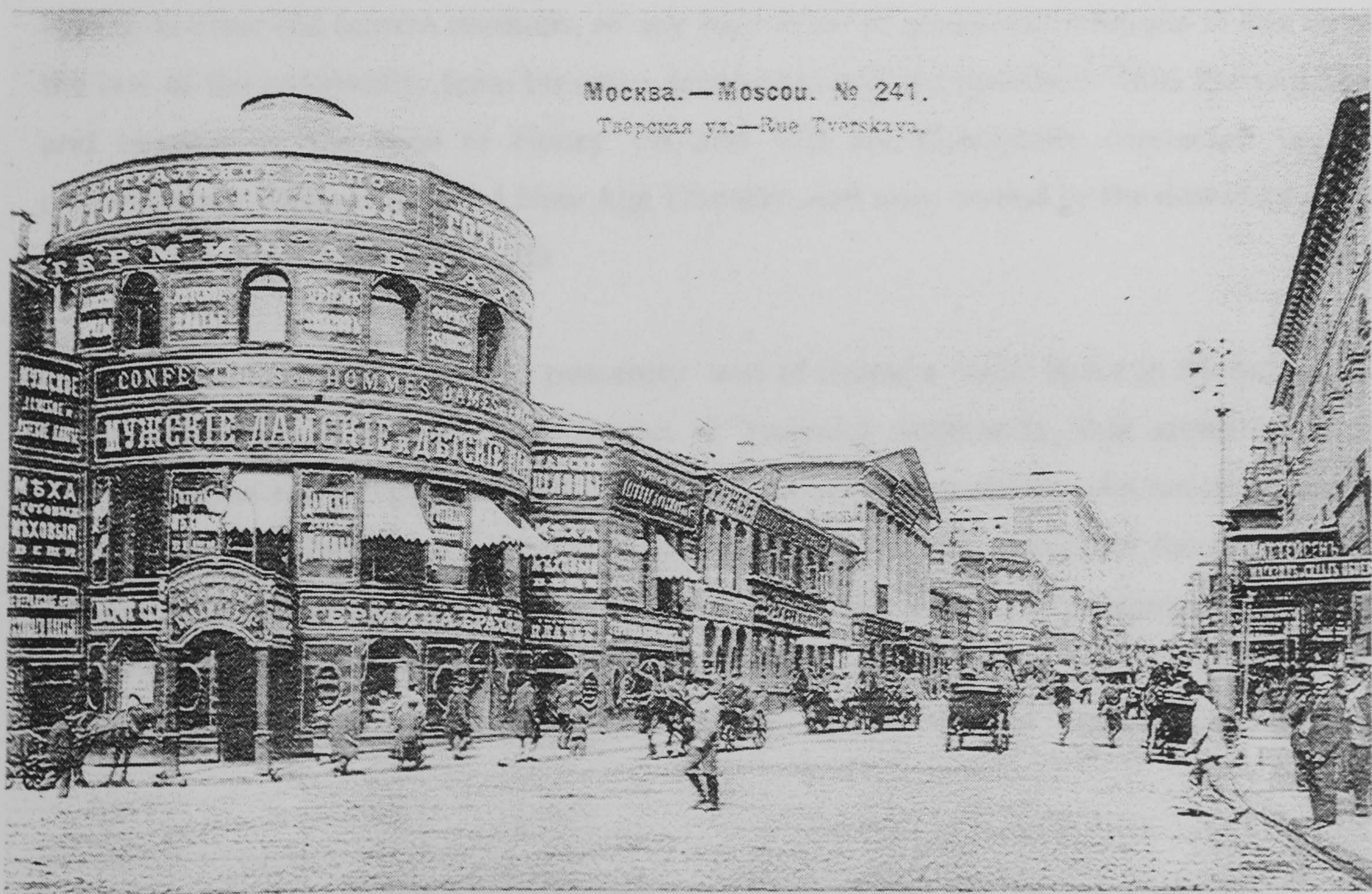


FIG 21

Vagabonds

Whilst the detailed mechanics of the transition from feudalism to capitalism are spatially and nationally variable, the process that sees the peasant separated from the land, transformed first into semi proletarians and then wage workers, finds parallels "in almost every region of the world"⁵. The descriptions of wandering 'vagabonds' made landless by the enclosures that concentrated land ownership in Britain finds its expression at some point in the history of every nation. The explosion of shanty towns throughout Latin America, is precisely due to the capitalist transformation of agriculture that sees peasants deprived of the means of subsistence and unable to find work in an increasingly mechanised agrarian economy. A large proportion of the inhabitants of the favelas that surround Rio De Janeiro and Sao Paulo are landless peasants from the north east, migrating partly due to drought and the lure of the big city, but more to do with the patterns of concentrated private landownership. Furthermore, albeit at a different scale it is a process which is still continuing in Northern Europe, not least within the Highlands and Islands of Scotland where the consequences of the clearances of crofters from the land to make way for sheep farming in the 18th and 19th century are still being felt.⁶ It appears almost as an iron law of capital that it must destroy all relations that are hangovers from different ways of organising life. The crofter, the peasant, and the journeyman, cannot escape the diffusion of the commodity form. Equally, just as they are required to renounce previous social rituals and customs that belong to these old human relations, so any individual or group that attempts to live outside the law of the commodity form becomes demonised and marginalised. Thus the vagabonds and beggars of the time of Henry VII and VIII are historically connected with the contemporary Hippy, Punk and New Age Traveller, and were treated by the dominant powers in much the same way. (See fig 22)

Class differentiation amongst the peasantry was of course a major factor in the fate of these newly dispossessed masses. The armies of "roaming vagabonds" that appeared in 17th century France and Germany, mostly comprised the poorest peasants, who not only had been evicted from the land, but with the introduction of guild restrictions in the cities by new artisans who often came from the ranks of wealthier peasants, were prevented from gaining access to employment. Similar stories are to be found following the introduction of an enclosure system similar to the English type in 18th century Sweden, Denmark and Schleswig

⁵ Dobb, Maurice - *Studies in the development of capitalism* - Routledge- London -1981 p253

⁶ The indigenous populations are still unable to eke a living out of crofts that are diminishing in size, and are frequently unable to gain access to the local housing market

vagabonds, marginals and migrant building workers



FIG 22

Holstein.⁷ In the Baltic States under Tsarist rule in the post reform period, peasants were simply dispossessed of the land, a process that constituted them very much as a landless proletariat.⁸ What we are witnessing here is not only the capitalist transformation of agriculture, but the beginnings of the commodification of space itself, a process that becomes progressively more intensive as capitalism develops.

The slow proletarianisation of peasants is one of the great untold human stories. Back in Russia it has a particular resonance not least because it was only in the 1960s that the number of urban dwellers surpassed those living in predominantly agrarian circumstances.⁹ It is generally felt that one of the biggest catalysts in the transition to capitalism were the reforms of Alexander II which formally emancipated the serfs, introduced limited local self government, and instituted changes within the legal system. There is every reason to argue however that these reforms were introduced as a result of a protracted period of class struggle within Russia epitomised by the peasant wars and by the Decembrist uprising amongst the nobility in which the desire for serf emancipation and a constitution had been articulated. The introduction of reforms was also due to the genuine fear amongst the ruling class of the revolutionary wave sweeping Europe that had been sparked by the French revolution and culminated in the insurrections of 1848.

Capitalism in the countryside

Throughout the eighteenth century the centralisation and concentration of political and economic power in the hands of the autocracy intensified at the time when it was being ameliorated in the west. A combination of seigniorial duties and a draconian passport system kept the peasantry landlocked and tied to the estate. This however began to change with the introduction of the *obrok* system whereby rent in the form of labour services could be transmuted into monetary rents, enabling serfs to seek employment as hired workers in other estates, in one of the new manufactories, or as we shall see in the building industry.

Following the reforms of the 1860s, serfs were permitted to retain land, although they were required to pay redemption fees to former serf owners. The land controlled by such serfs progressively decreased in size, resulting in peasant holdings that could not yield enough to support the communes. This increasingly vulnerable part of the poor peasantry Lenin labelled

⁷ Dobb op cit p240

⁸ Dobb op cit p241

⁹ Vaskina, L, I - *K izucheniu chislenost gorodov i gorodskovo nacilenia SSSR* - in Russki Gorod (Russian town) - Volume 1 - 1976 (A study in the number of towns and the urban population in the USSR)

allotment holding wage workers, workers who were forced to sell their labour power to owners of other estates or often to contractors in the building industry.¹⁰ The landowners' transition from corvee to capitalist economy, whilst an uneven process, had by the late 1880s been completed in the majority of the *gubernias* the European part of Russia¹¹. The increased concentration of capital in production, of capitalist co-operation and competition combined with machinery within agriculture had signalled the death knell for a *feudal* agrarian system in the west of Russia.

Construction labour has a special place in this story not least because of the seasonal nature of building work in Russia and the migratory character of labour itself. Even though by the end of the eighteenth century in St Petersburg, there were a considerable number of resident bricklayers and masons,¹² artisan labour largely responsible for the construction of the Petrine architectural monuments from this era, the overwhelming majority of building workers right up until the 1920s were *otkhodniki*, seasonal workers from peasant backgrounds who would migrate into the cities and towns for the building season in the summer months. As semi-proletarians, *otkhodniki* were prevalent in many branches of early capitalist manufacture and light industry. It is not until the 1930s that we can really speak of an established working class in the building industry, and this was to be very short lived as it became decimated by war and repression in the years that followed. The greatest impetus in the proletarianisation of building workers was to be the wholesale industrialisation of building production in the 1950s.

otkhodniki migrants

If on site building production was to retain its essentially transitional character right up to the end of the century, there were nevertheless indications of important changes taking place especially in the production of building materials. It is in the latter half of the 18th century that the seeds of capitalist production began to take root. By 1760 light industrial enterprises had increased by a factor of 18 times that of 1730. This happens not only in the textile industry but in brick production, a branch of early manufacturing which by 1770 was attracting peasants from the Tula, Kostrom, Kalushskaya and Moscow regions.¹³ By as early as 1785 it is estimated that there were seventy five brick manufactories in the Moscow area

¹⁰ Lenin, V.I. - *The development of capitalism in Russia* - Progress-Moscow- 1977 - Collected works - Volume III - p177

¹¹ *ibid* p197

¹² *ibid* p239

¹³ Prokorov, M, F, - *Otkhodichestvo krestian v Moskvu v tretie chetvortie XVIII veka* - Russki Gorod - Volume 7 - 1984 - p 153 - 155 (Migrant workers in Moscow in the third quarter of the 18th century)

and region.¹⁴ These peasant building workers began to enter into contracts to supply amongst other things bricks to Moscow house building agents, in the construction boom that followed 1760, a period in which we have noted that many of the "urban garden estates" of the nobility in the historic centre of Moscow were constructed. It was from the ranks of the more well to do peasants from the same regions that contractors emerged to co-ordinate the flow of bricklayers, painters, plasterers and carpenters.¹⁵ The migration into Moscow, that had followed the Moscow peasant uprising of 1771 and the peasant wars of 1773 - 1775¹⁶, had reached massive proportions at the close of the 18th century. From Yaroslavl and Kostrom alone it is estimated that up to 65,000 and 75,000 peasants respectively, many of them women had entered into the Moscow area,¹⁷ amongst whom building workers were the second largest group. Given that the population of Moscow city in 1790 was only 175,000, the impression given is of a whole nation on the move.¹⁸

labour on the move in the nineteenth century

In the second building boom that followed the great fire and the classical revival literally swarms of building workers descended upon Moscow. Many of these were skilled craftsmen who would have been responsible for the construction of not only the mansions in the Zemliyani and Beliye Gorods, but the new commercial buildings and small town houses. In these years from the Kostrom district, over eleven thousand building workers left for Moscow and St Petersburg, an estimated 18.5% of all *otkhodniki*. Throughout the 1850s from the Vladimir region renowned for its skilled construction workers 30,500 carpenters and 15,000 bricklayers descended on Moscow, many of them becoming permanent residents and eventually members of the urban proletariat.¹⁹ (See fig 23) Well off peasants from the same villages increasingly organised themselves in *artels* with anything up to 100 members. They were able to take on increasingly large contracts, that necessitated some of them taking on the role of foremen, many of whom subsequently became contractors.²⁰ Slowly but surely artisan forms of building activity in which 'artel' members would have owned their own means of production began to compete with the first large capitalist construction organisations in which the principle means of production became privately owned and to whom incoming

¹⁴ Prokorov, M, F, - *Vedomosti k mesheevim atlasam po istorii promishlennosti i trgovli v gorodax Podmoskoviya v serediniye 80 ix godov 18 ovo veka* - p71-73

¹⁵ *ibid* p164 - 5

¹⁶ *ibid* p170

¹⁷ Fedorov, V, A, - *Krestian otkhodnik v Moskve* - Russkie Gorod - Volume 1 - 1976- p166 (Peasant migrants in Moscow)

¹⁸ Trifinov, A, A - *Formirovanie nacelenie Moskvi v dorevolutzionnie period* - Russki gorod - Volume 7 - 1984 - p194

¹⁹ Fedorov, V, A, - *Krestian otkhodnik v Moskve* - Russkie Gorod - Volume 1 - 1976

²⁰ *ibid* p177

The Moscow region at the turn of the eighteenth century



FIG 23

'propertyless' peasants were to sell their labour power. In this transitional period between modes of production, we see mixed forms of property and co-existent different social forms of labour. The long term tendency in the changes in the social form of labour in the building industry that points towards the generalised commodification of labour power, develops hand in hand with the changes in land use, building type and urban design, the first steps in the commodification of the built environment which the capitalist revolution accelerates but which has its genesis as noted away from the big settlements.

Free labourers on the railways

For the poor unskilled peasants without any capital and unable to join *artels*, life in the building industry was rather different. These are the real 'free labourers' of Marx. Unlike the artisan, these workers possessed neither objects nor instruments, nothing but their labour power. They could find themselves moving earth in one of the large infrastructural projects, of which the biggest was the Moscow to St Petersburg railway begun in 1843 and finished in 1851.²¹ This represented a massive concentration of wage labour, with an estimated 49,000 *otkhodniki* working in 1850 on the southern part of the railway line alone²². That the railways were central to the development of capitalism hardly needs reiterating. Politically, within Russia, USA, India and Africa, they were vital in helping to secure the territorial acquisitions that came with imperial expansion. Economically they were crucial, not only for transporting freight and passengers, but as a sponge for capital investment and therefore as a pivot in the process of accumulation. This had two aspects, first the production of pig iron and then steel, and second in the profits that could be made through the exploitation of labour. In Russia this is revealed in the formation of large scale Joint Stock Companies, some of them with foreign capital, and in the employment of colossal numbers of workers in construction, that it was estimated had reached a quarter of a million in 1890.²³ Railways are pivotal not only in the formation of a working class but also as a catalyst in the development of science and technology within the building industry. This received one of its biggest boosts in the construction of the St Petersburg Alexandrovski Iron foundry, a massive factory that not only produced metal building components for the Winter palace and the Cupola Dome for St Isaac's cathedral, but from which was produced the first Russian made

21 Kazantzhev, B, N, - *Rabochie Moskvi i Moskovskie Guberniye v seredinie XIX veka* - Nauka - Moskva - 1976 - p94-5

22 *ibid* p96

23 Kromov, P, A - *Ekonomicheskii razvitiia rossii v XIX - XX vekax* - Gosudarstvennoye Izdalestvo. - Moskva -1950 - p206-210 and 338-340

steam engine.²⁴ It was also on the Moscow St Petersburg railway that the first steam driven earth mover makes its appearance in Russia.²⁵

If these labourers were not to be found working on building sites and infrastructural projects they were very likely to be found in the lumber industry, at the bottom of the social hierarchy of labour. Lenin considered these lumber workers to be one of the biggest sections of the "rural proletariat" ²⁶ estimating that there could have been anything up to two million peasants involved in the lumber industry²⁷. He argued that whereas "the lumber industry leaves the producer a peasant; the coal industry transforms him into a factory hand."²⁸ In this sense the alienation of peasants in the timber industry like that of those working on infrastructural projects was doubly compounded. They in effect got the worst of both worlds. "The lumber industry leaves all the old patriarchal way of life practically intact, enmeshed in the worst forms of bondage, the workers are left to toil in the remote forest depths where their ignorance, defencelessness and isolation, is taken advantage of "²⁹.

a working class emerges

The numbers of peasants entering into the building industry, selling their labour power as a commodity, grew larger and larger as did the number of contractors hiring migrant labour. The spatial mobility of labour makes it difficult to fix the exact number but it was reckoned that in the European part of Russia there was not less than one million building workers by the end of the 1870s.³⁰ Other sources suggest that as a category of the proletariat construction workers in 1860 numbered 350,000, this had grown to 700,000 by 1880, a million by 1890 and by the turn of the century was estimated at 1.4 million.³¹

Kautsky and the Mensheviks, Axelrod and Dan had argued that the conditions were not available in Russia for a proletarian social revolution to be successful, citing amongst other things the weak position of the working class. Whilst there is a danger in over estimating the scale of the process of proletarianisation in a country still overwhelmingly agrarian in character, these brief notes would seem to indicate that not only had there been considerable

²⁴ Zvorikin, D,H, - *Razvitia proektnovo dela v sssp* - Moskva stroizdat - 1984 - p94

²⁵ Zvorikin, D,H, - *Razvitia stroitelnovo proizvodstva v SSSR*- Moskva stroizdat - 1987 - p86

²⁶ Lenin, V, I, - *The development of capitalism in Russia* - Progress 1977 - Collected works - Volume III - p528

²⁷ ibid p527

²⁸ ibid p529

²⁹ ibid p529

³⁰ ibid p533

³¹ Kromov et al - *Istoria rabochevo klassa SSSR* - Nauka Moskva 1983 - p203

leaps forward in the development of the productive forces, but that out of the peasantry had emerged a fledgling working class within the building industry, and from the merchants, artisans and the ranks of the more prosperous peasants had emerged a class of contractors. Whilst this was far from generalised, the industrial revolution was well underway by the end of the 19th century and was to accelerate still further in the following 15 years³². More importantly the socialisation of workers was far more widespread than we might like to think. A million plus semi-proletarian building workers many of whom had a strong sense of collective solidarity inherited not only from the village communes but from the collective character of *artel* organisation and from being concentrated in such large numbers in the big building projects, were a ripe army. As Hobsbawm reminds us no misinterpretation of Marx is more grotesque than the one that suggests that he expected a revolution exclusively from the advanced industrial countries of the west.³³ He also points out that many of Marx's views were inclined towards the position of the Narodniks who believed that the Russian village could be the foundation for the transition to socialism, a thesis that led them into a confrontation with Lenin.

class confrontation

One of the clearest signals of the emergence of wage labour is the development of political organisations amongst the working class and of the strike movement. Whilst building workers were not as organised as textile or metal workers, they nevertheless figure prominently in labour history. These notes are of far more than historical interest, because they clearly show the development of a class consciousness amongst building workers that led many of them to support the revolution. It also indicates the depth of betrayal that many subsequently felt during the years of NEP.

Railway construction workers in Siberia, bricklayers building the Kronstadt docks and workers in the St Petersburg brick factories were all to go on strike during the seventies, a decade in which nineteen strikes were reported in the building industry mainly concerning wage disagreements.³⁴ This culminated in 1878 in what according to the police reports was an orchestrated and simultaneous strike movement involving several hundred workers in four

³² Solovieva, A, M, - *Promishlenaya revolutsia v Rossia XIX beka.* - Nauka - Moskva - 1990 . A detailed statistical analysis of the development of industry, that unfortunately excludes construction.

³³ Hobsbawm, Eric - *Introduction* - in Marx, Karl - *Pre capitalist economic formations* - Lawrence and Wishart - 1978 - p49 -51

³⁴ Korolchuk, E, A. - *Robochie dvizhenie semideciatik godov* - Moskva - 1939 - p12, 17,23, 114, 123, 151-156 (Workers movements in the 1870's)

St Petersburg brick factories. The largest confrontation occurred in 1875 when eight hundred workers on the construction of the Orenburg railway went on strike over wage reductions.³⁵

Apart from two reported strikes during 1883 due to poor working conditions in a cement factory and in the construction of a canal, the records would appear to indicate the construction industry as being relatively conflict free in the early eighties³⁶. The early 1890s were another matter with reports of strikes all over the place. Bricklayers on site, workers in Moscow and St Petersburg brick factories, sewer builders, canal construction workers, labourers all along the Siberian railway, cement factory workers, and joiners are all documented as having walked off the job mainly in disputes over wages and working conditions.³⁷

The frequent arrest of leaders did not deter workers from striking again, such as in 1899 when 4-5,000 workers in fifty Moscow brick factories went on strike for a wage increase.³⁸ Their demands were refused on the basis that they had acted "vney zakona", outside of the law. Equally outside of the law, was the fact that in 1900, there were still no laws on the protection of labour. In St Petersburg alone it was estimated that 2,500 youths under the age of 15 were working a 15-16 hour day living with another 3,500 older building workers in barracks and lofts.³⁹ By the turn of the twentieth century, the working class found itself concentrated in tremendous numbers confronted by and frequently in conflict with a bourgeoisie standing between the masses and the autocracy. Fuelled by its own sense of vulnerability, the bourgeoisie was particularly reactionary in character, a class described by Trotsky as "isolated from the people, half foreign, without historical traditions, and inspired only by the greed for gain." ⁴⁰

When in 1903, 200 carpenters and 300 stonemasons were shot upon and whipped in Elisavertade in the Ukraine, the pattern was set for future developments, not only in terms of repression but in the fact that some of the "kustari"⁴¹ and other workers in an expression of solidarity joined the building workers in their protest.⁴² Workers were being shown that

³⁵ Bogdanov, N, et al - *Kratkaya Istoria Soyuz Stroitel*- TK - USSR - Moskva-1927- p4 (A short history of the union of construction workers)

³⁶ *Robochie Dvishenie v Rossii v XIX veka* - Tom II - Chast vtoraya - 1875 -1884 - Politicheskovo literatura - 1950 -p521, 539 (The workers' movement in Russia in the nineteenth century)

³⁷ See *Robochie Dvishenie v Rossii v XIX veka* - Tom III - Chast vtoraya - 1890 -1894 - Politicheskovo literatura - 1950 - numerous entries p22, 31, 44, 215, 289, 296, 351, 493, 520, 532.

³⁸ Bogdanov, N,-*Kratkaya Istoria* op.cit p.5

³⁹ Boev, B -*Stroiteli v revolutzia* - Slavnie iubeli Sovietskik profsoyuz - Moscow -1958 -p180 (Builders in the revolution)

⁴⁰ Trotsky, Leon - *The Permanent revolution* - Pathfinder - New York - 1986 - p51

⁴¹ Kustari were similar to the British Guilds, that is craft based building organisations

⁴² Bogdanov, N-*Kratkaya Istoria* op.cit p6-7

they would be met not only by the full weight of Tsarist law, but also by physical violence, an omen of what was to happen in 1905.

In the revolution of 1905⁴³, bricklayers, cementworkers, carpenters, painters, stonemasons and other building workers all participated in the strike movement which at its height involved nearly three million workers in all sectors of the economy, with a third of strikes raising directly political demands.⁴⁴ Construction workers joined the strike movements in Moscow (where several became members of the Soviet), St Petersburg, Temin Khan Shure, Saratov, Odessa, Simferopol, and Novopossiski. In Novopossiski, cement workers linked with railway and other workers to organise a Soviet of Workers and Peasants Deputies that was to stay in power for two months and eight days.⁴⁵

a united building workers' union

Whereas at this stage building workers were organised around craft based unions such as painters, and stucco workers,⁴⁶ of which it is estimated that in 1907 there were forty three with over twelve thousand members⁴⁷, by 1906 the call for a united building workers' union began to spread across Russia. By the end of July workers had actually succeeded in acquiring legal status only to see it subsequently withdrawn, although they continued to meet illegally. Two years later as the era of reaction tightened its grip, all of the fledgling trade union branches in Moscow, St Petersburg and Saratov had been closed. By 1910, the number of workers involved in strike activity had dropped to a sixtieth of that of 1905.⁴⁸

Nevertheless the formulation of a declaration of intent by delegates at a Moscow Conference of building workers on the 23rd of January 1907 had left its imprint on the labour movement, many of its demands being destined to resurface in 1917. Its principal demands were as follows: a united union, a library and lecture programme, an eight hour day, wages to be determined locally by trade unions on a time basis, to continue the struggle against the exploitation of seasonal workers and the undercutting practices of "artels" willing to work on

⁴³ For a detailed analysis of the organised workers movement in English see **Bonnell, Victoria** - *Roots of Rebellion - Workers politics and Organisations in St Petersburg and Moscow, 1900 - 1914* - University of California - 1983 and **Smith, S,A** - *Red Petrograd. Revolution in the factories. 1917-1918* - CUP -1986

⁴⁴ **Bolshakov, A, M, Roshkov, N, A** - *Istoria khoziastvo Rossii v materialax i dokumentax - 1905-1925* - Moskva 1926 - p93 - (Economic history of Russia in materials and documents)

⁴⁵ **Bogdanov,N-** *Kratkaya Istoria* op.cit p 9,10,11

⁴⁶ See **Sindeyev, S** -*Professionalnie Dvishenie Rabochik stroiteli v 1917 - Moskva- 1927* (The construction workers trade union movement)

⁴⁷ **Bolshakov, A, M, Roshkov, N, A** - *Istoria khoziastvo Rossii v materialax i dokumentax - 1905-1925* - Mosckva 1926 - p100

⁴⁸ *ibid* p93

piece rates, the replacement of food by money wages, a state insurance scheme, training schools, and overtime only to be allowed where there was no unemployment.⁴⁹

The demands at this point were still of a typical trade union character, but during the period from 1914 to 1917 more directly political issues to do with the ownership and control of production were to be added to the list.

In Moscow on the 31st August 1914, the Society of Architectural and Construction Workers of the Moscow Industrial region was formed. Its expansion over the next three years was to be hampered by the semi-proletarian nature of building workers, conscription for the war, the arrest of activists and attempts to shut the Union down.

During this period the Bolsheviks, who had assumed the leadership of the Union, were quick to erect the rallying slogan - *doloi gnet*- 'down with oppression', and despite resistance had by July 1917 expanded its membership to 10,000.⁵⁰ These heady months were further complicated by the rise of unemployment, largely due to soldiers returning from the war front willing to work for lower wages. This prompted the creation of a Labour Bureau and law office to deal with the unemployed as well as the creation of a private contractors organisation to fight the workers union.⁵¹

The turning point for building workers as in other industrial sectors occurred in the summer months of 1917 which saw a dramatic rise in workers' unrest on building sites. Between May and October, St Petersburg experienced fifty strikes by building workers.⁵² Meanwhile in Moscow, strike funds had been set up and a wage demand sent to all contractors along with instructions to building workers to refer all disputes to the Union.⁵³ The Union in Moscow was comparatively strong and well prepared to meet the inevitable refusal of their demands by building employers. Following a series of conflicts on Moscow building sites and brick factories, the Union eventually called a Moscow-wide strike that was to continue throughout September with the participation of twelve thousand building industry workers. In all from April to November in the Moscow region alone twenty one thousand building workers took part in strike action.⁵⁴ Furthermore the "mini general strike" was to end in victory for the

49 Bogdanov,N -Kratkaya Istorია op.cit p14-16

50 Boev,B-Stroiteli v Revolutzia op.cit p183

51 Sindeyev,S-Professionalnie Dvishenie op.cit p13

52 Boev,B-Stroiteli v Revolutzia op.cit p184

53 Sindeyev,S--Professionalnie Dvishenie op.cit p15-21

54 ibid p30

workers. With a strike fund of five thousand roubles, the Moscow workers appealed to peasants and out of town workers not to enter Moscow, as contractors began to organise strike breakers. Despite the attempt by contractors to bypass the courts and approach the administrators of factories and sites demanding lists of activists and issuing threats to have workers sent to the war front, the then Moscow Commissar for Labour proposed a court of arbitration which eventually adjudicated in favour of the workers.

Whilst these strikes were primarily concerned with "economic issues" such as wages, rates, and hours, the often unprincipled behaviour of some contractors undoubtedly contributed to the politicisation of workers. Contractors such as Yakobi and Vinogradoff who would hire workers at Rubles 5.5 per day but pay them only Rubles 4.5, agreeing to pay the hired rate but only on condition that workers dismantled their committees and broke links with the Union. Such actions increased demands for workers' control within the building industry and one source suggests that over a third of the strikes in 1917 had this as one of their objectives.⁵⁵

building workers in the revolution

By the end of 1916 Russia had become irrevocably polarised between a deeply repressive autocratic regime in alliance with a reactionary class of capitalists and landowners, and a propertyless impoverished mass of workers and peasants. An antagonistic situation had been created where the essential pre-conditions for the reproduction of working class and peasant life could no longer be guaranteed. This ensured the break-down of any widespread social contract between the rulers and the ruled that had first exploded in the Russian Revolution of 1905 and was to ignite again in the February and October of 1917. In the days of October, many building workers were to join the red guard. Others scattered, some such as the Union of Plumbers joined the Mensheviks and many simply returned to the countryside as the building season had ended.

With these conditions exacerbated by the First World War Russia was plunged into a deepening crisis. Under their leadership, the Bolsheviks believed this could only be resolved by the replacement of the Tsar and the State Duma, (the parliament founded after 1905), with a form of government that declared the mass of workers, peasants, and soldiers, through their representatives in the Soviets (councils) as the new ruling class in Russia.

⁵⁵ Koenker, Diane - *Moscow Workers and the 1917 Revolution* - Princeton - 1981-p311-322

However, they were inheriting a country which was hungry, decimated by war, and industrially underdeveloped. Nevertheless, the revolutionary government forged ahead in their plan to change the structure of Russian society and began to advocate long-term programmes for future social and economic development which included the nationalisation of land, the creation of a socialised construction sector and the taking into social ownership of banks and factories. This helped plunge the Bolshevik government into civil war not only against forces opposed to the revolution within Russia, but against the Western Imperialist countries who were panic stricken at the Bolshevik desire to spread the proletarian revolution throughout Europe.

However throughout this period of what became known as *war communism*, the Union continued to meet. In Samara from the 12th-15th May 1918, a conference of the All Russian Union of Construction Workers was held that sought amongst other things to further unite the disparate smaller unions and groups of building workers into one organisation. The proceedings of the conference were published in the new journal "Stroitel" (Builder). The declarations indicate the transcendence of traditional trade union politics. The paper explicitly called for the nationalisation of the key branches of industry including construction. More importantly it called on workers to think beyond issues of wages to questions of a more general economic and organisational character. In particular strong demands were made for the introduction according to the decree of November 14th 1917 of *workers' control of production*, in all construction enterprises employing more than thirty employees. Additional demands for the introduction of an eight hour day and time based wages were accompanied by a polemic against the "artels", a demand for the liquidation of private contractors and for the socialisation of the building industry where all of its branches would be brought under the organs of "socialist state power".⁵⁶

At its first congress in January 1919, the Union consolidated the preparatory work of the previous years conference' and set about building up its membership, that in Moscow during the course of 1917 had expanded from ten to twenty three thousand but had fallen back to around ten thousand during the civil war.⁵⁷

This excursion into labour history is important for several reasons. Firstly it shows that at the beginning of the introduction of NEP, an organised and politically conscious working class

⁵⁶ *Stroitel* - No 2 - May 1918 - p1-15

⁵⁷ *Sindeyev, S-* Professionalnie Dvishenie -op.cit p39

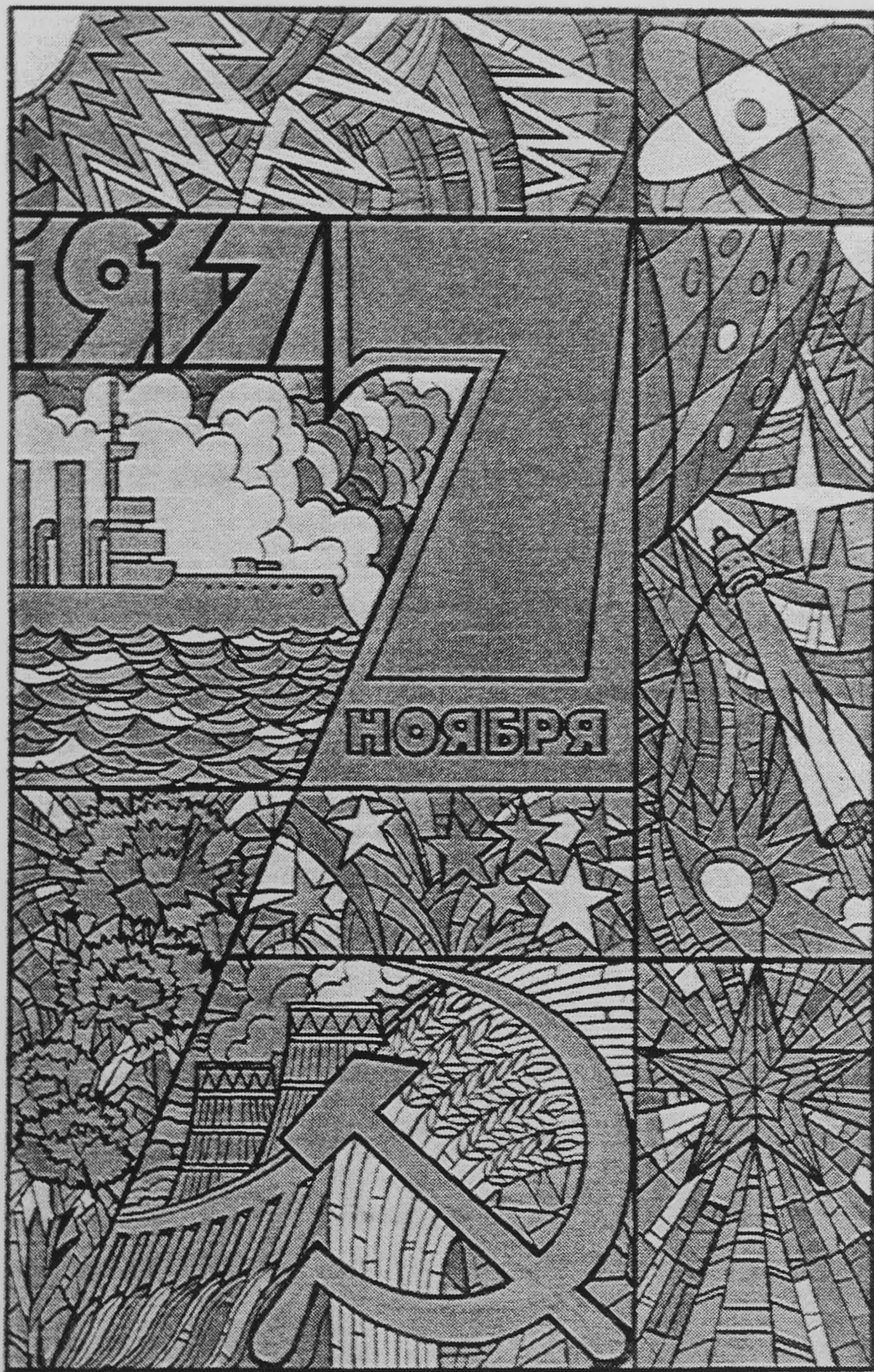
had begun to emerge in the building industry, which led by Shalkov, Bogdanov and other Bolsheviks had already begun to formulate a clear set of political and economic demands .

Much of what subsequently occurred in the 1920s was justified on the grounds of the immediate necessity of raising productivity which in 1920 had stood at a quarter of its pre-war level. But the long term fate of the revolution rested not only on recommencing industrial production but on maintaining the political authority of the working class. This was progressively undermined by a series of contradictions within the construction labour process. These concerned the social composition of the labour force, labour organisation, wages, organisational structure and management, and underpinning all of these, fundamental questions to do with workers' control and the character of social ownership.

CHAPTER

THE ORIGINS OF IDEOLOGY
LIE IN THE UNITY OF OPPOSITES

2



Fragments of true stories

1934

Ludmilla gazed with astonishment as the workers pushed the architect into a wheelbarrow and carted him off site. She had heard stories of how in the revolution of 1917 the carting off ceremony had been the ritual by which workers literally threw the factory managers out of the building. But this was all rather different. There had been a heated argument between state officials and the architects on one side and the building workers on the other. Many of the rank and file workers still felt sympathetic to the Left Opposition and Lev Davidovich who had been such a popular speaker in previous years at the Building Workers Trade Union Congress in Moscow. The argument had started when the visiting authorities declared themselves to be supporters of Stalin and had started to issue barbed warnings to angry workers who had objected to the productivity increases being demanded.

Everyone had laughed as the ridiculed officials brushed down their suits at the edge of the site, but Ludmilla felt sure that their actions would have far from amusing consequences. There were stories circulating of people being arrested for what were called 'anti-soviet' activity. She was frightened not least because she was determined not to jeopardise her newly won position as a painter and decorator. Ten years before she had tried to read some of Kollantia's articles and although she did not understand everything, she liked the talk of how life for women would be completely different under socialism. In anycase it seemed to her that the dispute was more a case of boys toughing it out.

They were building a block of flats not far from the Moscow river. It was designed by a man called Golosov, and was dominated by a triumphal arched entrance, flanked by statues of armed workers. Sitting high on the scaffold it struck her how different the shapes of the constructions were, compared with those she had seen in street demonstrations and in pictures at one of the new public art exhibitions a few years before. There she had seen paintings by women that were colourful and dynamic if a little bit odd and she had liked the images of shiny metal buildings. She thought that the front wall that she was painting was rather disappointing in comparison, too solid, and too sad, but she was happy working alongside her two close friends Katiya and Ira.

SOCIAL RELATIONS AND THE SOCIAL FORM OF LABOUR

Nowhere is the dialectic of history so acutely expressed as in the political and cultural inheritance of Russian society in 1917. Whilst industrially underdeveloped and with a small working class, it was as ripe as any country could have been for revolution. As we have seen, questions concerning the future of democracy in Russia, the character of political revolutions, the organisation of work and of the role of art had all been rehearsed in the preceding seventy years of turmoil.

The nineteenth century had been dominated by the clash between revolutionary and reactionary traditions, between the memories of autocratic despotism, absolutist tyranny and those of popular revolt and peasant rebellions. What we see in Russian social life throughout the nineteen twenties and early thirties is the unfolding at another level of complexity, of similar contradictions concerning political democracy, the labour process, and culture¹. This is why we should dispense with any ideal notion of the avant-garde and understand it as a deeply contradictory movement produced out of the collision between interdependent but antagonistic tendencies that were deeply rooted in the 19th century political and philosophical traditions of the Enlightenment. In this sense we are left to confront as much the transition from feudalism, Herzen and Dostoevsky, as the passage to socialism, Lenin and Mayakovsky.

It is only through a montage that throws together the films of Eisenstein, with the books of Bulgakov, the polemic of Trotsky, the paintings of Malevic, the architecture of Melnikov, and the memories of workers and revolutionaries, that we can begin to capture the tremors and vibrations, madness and optimism which had shaken all deeply held beliefs and dismembered bodies and lives. (See fig 24)

As we have seen this had happened in the midst of an historic collision between the remnants of feudalism, the bastions of capitalism and the embryos of socialism. The need to understand this period has assumed ever greater significance as the world becomes convulsed by contradictions that were instrumental in the development of the Russian revolution and

¹ It is worth remembering here that the influence of cubism, dada, and futurism had already begun to grip the minds of Russian artists in the years running up to the revolution. Many of Malevic's explosive Suprematist paintings were completed in the five years before 1917. Whilst not consciously aligned with any political movement there advocacy of new techniques and new forms of representation implied a critique of the dominant Beaux Arts traditions that prevailed within the Academies and in so doing played a role in the undermining of the established order. Trotsky's essays in *Literature and Revolution* are of great importance here in giving us an insight into the debates of this time. "The October Revolution appeared to the intelligentsia, including its literary left wing, as a complete destruction of its known world, of that very world from which it broke away from time to time, for the purpose of creating new schools, and to which it invariably returned. To us on the contrary, the Revolution appeared as the embodiment of a familiar tradition, internally digested". Trotsky, Leon - *Futurism - In Literature and Revolution - Pathfinder - University of Michigan - 1971 - p131*

"Mui stroieem sotsialism" - "We are building socialism"



FIG 24

which far from being ameliorated have been transformed and intensified in the late twentieth century. As ever we should be wary in the analysis of this epoch that we do not fall foul of the construction of new romantic legends, for which this decade has proved to be the most fertile territory.

history and revolutions

"No social order is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed, and new and superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society. Humankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation"².

Here undoubtedly inspired by the turmoil of the 1840s, Marx had summarised the whole problematic of revolutionary historical transformation. Revolutions are only catalysts in a historical process. To represent them as complete breaks with history is to idealise them. In addition, a social revolution does not guarantee the overthrow of existing structures, rather it assists in the creation of the material pre conditions by which revolutionary goals can eventually be achieved. Revolutionary demands only have any real sense if they are anchored in the actual transformation of the relations and practices by which the world and knowledge of it is produced. It is this problematic that provides the backdrop to the historic distinction made by Marx and Engels between 'utopian' and 'scientific' socialism, to many of the debates of the 1920's between Lenin and the Left Communists, and to the economic arguments such as those between the advocates of the restoration of commodity relations and communists who continued to demand the abolition of money.

The revolution simply raised the possibility of new forms of social labour and social space. As such any desire for a rapid transformation of the building industry and of the production of architecture had inevitably to confront the limits that were historically set on the character of labour and the development of technology.

² This quotation is taken from Marx, Karl -*Preface to the Critique of Political Economy* - Lawrence and Wishart - 1981- p21 - first published in 1859 , an earlier version is to be found in Marx, Karl -*German Ideology* - Lawrence and Wishart - 1985 - p57 - written by Marx between 1845 and 1846 "History is nothing but the succession of the separate generations, each of which exploits the materials, the capital funds, the productive forces handed down to it by all preceding generations, and thus, on the one hand, continues the traditional activity in completely changed circumstances and, on the other, modifies the old circumstances with a completely changed activity."

periodisation of contradictions

Historical periodisations always run the risk of creating major ruptures in time that obscure the forces that bind together what appear to be qualitatively different epochs. However the reverse is also true, such that we fail to distinguish between periods that are demonstrably different. Similarly, within the history of the Soviet Union dilemmas occur with regards to the basis on which we make distinctions. There is for instance common agreement that the period of the New Economic Policy was an experiment in a mixed economy where plan and market rubbed shoulders, and that it was introduced, rightly or wrongly in order to raise productivity and to re-generate the economy, a period distinguished by heightened class conflict. The important question to ask however, is whether the contradictions that re-emerged during NEP were resolved during the first and second five year plans (1929-1932), (1933-1937), or were consolidated and transferred to a higher level. There is every evidence to show that the later was the case. There was not so much a complete break between the NEP and the first five year plan as a minor fracture that acts more in the way of a catalyst in an ongoing historical process. Nothing contradicts a materialist theory of history more than to surgically remove one epoch from history and hold it up to the light as an isolated symbol of what might have been. In many ways the experience of the NEP is insignificant compared with what followed, except as we shall see later it was viewed with much 'disconnected' nostalgia by the architects of the Gorbachev reforms .

executing criticism

The Russian Revolutionary movement inevitably spawned some of the most insightful thinkers that sought to re-examine the works of Marx and increase our understanding of how capitalism operates and by implication how socialism might, and who, apart from Lenin, were all executed. The economists Bukharin and Preobrazhenski, are two who were to be removed at the end of the thirties. For our discussion here there are three authors in particular who are important who dealt explicitly although not exclusively with problems associated with politics, law and economics, namely Leon Trotsky, Evgeny Pashukanis, and Isaac Rubin. There are many things that these authors shared in common, not least their murder. Their grasp on the theoretical origins of class and on the nature of exploitation also bind them together and provide one of the reasons for their deaths. In the *Permanent Revolution* and *The Revolution Betrayed*³ Trotsky was undoubtedly the fiercest and most open critic of the degeneration of the revolution, but Pashukanis's text *Law and Marxism*,⁴

3 Trotsky, Leon - *The revolution betrayed* - Pathfinder - New York -1989

4 Pashukanis, Evgeny - *Law and marxism. A general theory* - Pluto - London- 1989 - (Moscow 1924)

and Rubin's *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value*⁵ implicitly, however unconsciously, offered a damning critique on the emergent regime.

Pashukanis's work on law, ideology and the state, makes it quite clear that the need for law is based on the structure of antagonistic social relations of production, and that the measure of the extent of liberation can be judged therefore by the dissolution of legal forms that enshrine the right to property. Rubin's work also makes it quite clear that value as a category is specific to capitalism, and the commodification of labour power. Both authors were aware that such social forms and categories would be inherited in the process of transition. However in the situation of the 1930s when the rule of Law and of the State were being strengthened, and the commodity form was being transformed rather than disappearing, their conclusions asked some very uncomfortable questions about the regime as it emerged out of the New Economic Policy.

the revolution betrayed ?

It has been frequently argued that in the period of NEP many of the social objectives of the revolution were not only temporarily suspended but dispensed with altogether, never to return. There is a general consensus in the work of authors such as Trotsky, Bettelheim, Cliff, Burawoy, Filtzer and Kagarlitsky, that the process of the betrayal of the revolution commenced in the early 1920s and was consolidated throughout the 1930s. If we were to condense out of the many arguments offered particular reasons then the following would predominate: the alienation of workers from the means of production; the corresponding rise of a Party bureaucracy which whilst not formally owning nevertheless controlled the means of production and reaped the surplus produced by the working class; the introduction of work practices more consistent with a capitalist organisation of the labour process; the marginalisation and progressive undermining of the local Soviets as democratically elected political organisations and the dissolution of Trade Unions as independent workers' organisations; the policy of trying to build socialism in one country. These are the objective contradictions that emerged in the 1920s and were to become intensified throughout the thirties up to its eventual collapse. The prophetic comments of Trotsky on the character of the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of *The Revolution Betrayed* are one indication of his insight into the problems that the country faced. He foresaw in 1936 many of the tendencies that are now unfolding in the 1990s, the attempt to privatise state property, the

⁵ Rubin, Isaac - *Essays on Marx's theory of Value* - Black Rose - Toronto -1990 - (Moscow 1928)

bonds between enterprises collapsing and with the return to capitalist relations a catastrophic decline in industry and culture.⁶

It is not the intention here to offer another version of events or another all-embracing definition as to whether the USSR was 'State Capitalist', a 'Degenerated Workers State', or a new mode of production such as 'Bureaucratic Collectivism'. The task nevertheless remains to determine the character and extent of the transformation of social relations as a key to comprehending the changes that take place in the production of the Soviet built environment.

the value of value

This has dragged us into controversial areas of debate, particularly those that surround the categories of *value*, *labour power*, and *class* in relation to the Soviet formation. Value is perhaps the most controversial of all. By non-marxist economists, it is dismissed as illogical and flawed, amongst marxist economists it is equally contested. Some argue that it is superfluous to Marx's analysis of exploitation, others that it is central to any understanding of the dynamics of capitalism.⁷ Rubin falls into the last camp and a part of his *Essays on Value* is devoted to a critique of Bohm Bauwerks analysis of Capital, arguing that he misconstrues Marx's method. The details of these arguments are extremely complex. However it seems clear that the category of value as an abstract category is indispensable in the understanding of Marx's theory of capital, labour power, commodity fetishism, bourgeois law and ultimately it might be argued class. As we shall see, much of the criticism of value theory concerns the transformation of the value of a commodity into its price. Rubin and others have argued that this misses the central issue, and that the starting point for Marx was not an analysis of the processes of exchange, but of the historical form of labour. The importance of this for the historical development of the Soviet working class in the building industry is self evident.

Soviet orthodoxy

It is acknowledged in Soviet textbooks on Political Economy published in the 1980's, that the Law of Value and Commodity Money relations that were re-established in the 1920's continued to operate after the end of NEP.⁸ The persistence of commodity money relations was explained by the relative isolation of co-operative enterprises from each other, and from enterprises in the state sector, such that relations between them took on the form of an

⁶ Trotsky, Leon - *The revolution betrayed* - Pathfinder - 1989 - p250-251

⁷ Mohun, Simon - *Value - In A Dictionary of marxist thought* - Ed Bottmore et al - Blackwell - 1985 - p507-511

⁸ See for instance Avdakov, Y, Borodin, V - *State Industry during the transition period* - Progress-1977

exchange of commodities. Another reason was given as resulting from the "incomplete maturity of direct social labour under socialism" indicated by the fact that workers retained an economic interest in the end results of production through the state's use of money incentives to stimulate productivity.⁹

However, within the conditions of a consciously planned economy, where social ownership was considered synonymous with state ownership and where neither labour power nor land were any longer commodities, the analysis of the operation of the law of value was effectively separated from any notions of exploitation and appropriation. It was argued, that whereas under capitalism the law of value regulates social production, under socialism, "social production is regulated on the basis of the law of planned, proportionate development".¹⁰ Accordingly, the law of value was represented as an objective economic law but one that concerned the relationship between value and price, and the general formation of the prices of goods and commodities, rather than as the starting point for an analysis of labour and production relations. Thus, not only was it claimed that "the law of value operates in socialist society through the mechanism of planned price formation",¹¹ whereby labour inputs into the production of goods can be compared, but that "The law of value is manifested as the law of price,.."¹² Such propositions it will be seen are extremely problematic, not least because of the underlying and profoundly utopian presumption that in the USSR the means of production existed as common social property.¹³

Marx and the commodity

As a means of perhaps clarifying these problems we return to our building worker, newly emerged from the peasantry, possessing nothing more than his labour power and confronted by a contractor who owns and controls the means of building production in a brick manufactory. We remember from Marx that the contractor is not actually interested in the worker but, in the absence of machinery like a modern automatic brick maker, only in the building worker's power to labour, his capacity for labour. This labour power has two aspects: it has a concrete

⁹ Ryndina et al - *Fundamentals of political economy* - Progress - Moscow- 1980 -p251

¹⁰ ibid p256

¹¹ ibid p258

¹² Kuznetsov et al - *Political economy* - Progress - 1985 - p189 For another version See also Kulikov, A - *Political Economy* - Moscow - Progress - 1986 - p198 "In accordance with the law of value, the prices of commodities should be determined by their social value, i.e. by the socially necessary inputs in their production.....In the socialist countries, price formation is planned. The State plans supply, demand, social inputs and prices..."

¹³ In one the most celebrated accounts of the Soviet Union as a State Capitalist formation by Tony Cliff, he argues that seen in isolation there is a partial negation of both the law of value and the status of labour power as a commodity, but seen in its integration with the world capitalist economy, the law of value reasserts itself within the context of the permanent arms economy where the soviet economy enters into competition with the west. See Cliff, Tony - *State capitalism in Russia* - Bookmarks - 1988 - p214-24

useful aspect, his ability to mould clay and operate hand tools to make a brick that has a use value and can be laid on site, and it has an abstract form "his productive expenditure of human brains, nerves and muscles"¹⁴. It is the common expenditure of this identical abstract labour which creates and imparts value to commodities, in this case the brick. That is it gives a common basis to diverse commodities that makes them reducible to a common abstract measure, value. But the value of this commodity, this single brick, has "a purely social reality" being the embodiment of one identical social substance, human labour, Marx's conclusion being therefore that "*value can only manifest itself in the social relation of commodity to commodity*"¹⁵

It is true of course that commodities and money pre-date capitalism, but in the pre-capitalist era the great mass of objects are intended for the immediate requirements of the producers. Although the increasing circulation of commodities and money are a pre condition for the emergence of capital, capital only springs into life, "when the owner of the means of production and subsistence meets in the market with the free labourer selling his labour power."¹⁶ Marx characterises the capitalist epoch as one where the "labour power takes in the eyes of the labourer himself the form of a commodity which is his property; his labour consequently becomes wage labour. On the other hand, it is only from this moment that the produce of labour universally becomes a commodity"¹⁷. We would expect then to find tendencies within the new Soviet State that point towards the transcendence of these pre-conditions of capitalist production.

Rubin on Marx

Rubin reminds us that the whole project of *Capital* is primarily an exposition of social relations, Volume I between capitalist and workers, Volume II between capitalists and members of society who buy and sell, and Volume III social relations between particular groups within the capitalist class¹⁸. All of the basic concepts of political economy express in his eyes different production relations among people. All categories of political economy in this sense then can be seen to shield the real relations between people that lay at the heart of the capitalist economy. Rubin argues that this is born out by the trajectory of *Das Capital* itself. Thus if Marx begins *Capital* with the Fetishism of Commodities, in which social relations take the fantastic form of a relation between things, where value "converts every

14 Marx, Karl - *Capital* - Swan Sonnenschein - 1908 - London - p12

15 ibid p14-15

16 ibid p 148

17 ibid p 149

18 Rubin, Isaac - *Essays on Marx's theory of Value* - Black Rose - 1990 -p33 -34

product into a social hieroglyph"¹⁹, it is entirely consistent that Volume III, should end with the statement that within the trinity formula of 'capital - profit, land - ground rent, labour -wages', all the secrets of the social production process are hidden, signing off that in this trinity "we have the completed mystification of the capitalist mode of production, the conversion of social relations into things... It is an enchanted, perverted, topsy turvy world in which Monsieur Le capital and Madame la terre do their ghost walking as social characters and at the same time directly as mere things" ²⁰.

Rubin and fetishism

This fetishisation of social relations is a central pre-occupation of Rubin's work which contains a whole series of penetrating insights that predict the contemporary discussion of ideology. Here ideology is understood as a an organising social force rooted in the material structure of society and which refers to an aspect of consciousness where the actual conditions of social life remain obscured. He distinguishes quite clearly between 'alienation' and 'reification'. The former he argues concerns the alienation of human relations and is rooted in the early works of Marx such as the Holy Family. It subsequently becomes transformed through the *Poverty of Philosophy*, the *Critique* and arrives at *Capital* Volume I as a theory of the reification of social relations.²¹ These aspects of the 'fetish' can however be understood as complimentary. There is no reason to exclude one from the other, a point that seems to be confirmed by Rubin when he comments that *fetishism* is a phenomenon of *social being* and *social consciousness*.²² Furthermore just because the world is 'perverted and topsy turvy' does not make it any less real. Capital, money and wage labour, are not phantoms of the imagination " but concrete products of the self alienation of the worker", the power of capital then is not illusory but very real. ²³

the value of labour

In Rubin's work the central concept is that of abstract labour and more precisely the status of this social labour in a simple capitalist economy as a commodity. Rubin constantly reminds us that value is not based on a theory of exchange relations but on the social production relations expressed in these transactions. As such he saw his task in relation to the theory of value in demonstrating that value "is a social relation between people which assumes material form

¹⁹ ibid p 45

²⁰ Marx, Karl - *Capital* - Volume III - Lawrence and Wishart - London - 1984 - p830

²¹ Rubin, Isaac - *Essays on Marx's theory of Value* - Black Rose - 1990 p55 -62

²² ibid p59

²³ ibid p57

and is related to the process of production."²⁴ The point of departure for research then is not so much value as labour, the form of value being a material expression of abstract labour. Indeed, this is similar to the conclusion of a recent volume of essays that observes that it is not "a matter of seeking an explanation of why prices are what they are and finding it in labour. But rather of seeking an understanding of why labour takes the form it does, and what the political consequences are. Not so much a "labour theory of value" as a "value theory of labour"²⁵.

It is not difficult to see then why Rubin considered the concept of reification to be perhaps the most important aspect of Marx's work, arguing that all Marx's later work is constructed on his early contemplation of the opposition between free labour, free production and enjoyment in life, that is the conception of an *unalienated ideal human subject* and the *alienated subject* of the capitalist world.²⁶

The test of the transition towards socialism concerns not so much an argument about the relationship between value and price as an argument about the form of labour and the persistence of the reification of social relations. The conclusions from Rubin's essay's then can be seen to be a 'phrophetical' indictment of the historical development of production relations in the Soviet Union. If value is inextricably tied to the historic form of labour under capitalism, then for it to survive in any way is to suggest that the fundamental contradiction of capitalist society, the commodity status of labour survives as well. It will be argued that labour power indeed remains a commodity after the end of the NEP if in a somewhat different manner, and production relations become reified if in a somewhat changed form. When we turn to the work of Pashukanis the deeply contradictory character of the Soviet Union is pulled into focus even more sharply.

Pashukanis and the legal fetish

Similarly to Rubin, Pashukanis argues for the dual character of the categories of political economy. The commodity, value, exchange value are "indubitably ideological constructs, distorted, mystified mental images", but they are also very real reflecting objective social relations.²⁷ The same can be said for the state, for law and by implication for ideology itself.

²⁴ *ibid* p63

²⁵ Elson, Diane - *Value theory of Labour* - in the *Representation of labour in capitalism* - CSE books - London -1979

²⁶ Perlman, F - *Commodity Fetishism* - in Rubin, Isaac - *Essays on Marx's theory of Value* - Black Rose - 1990 - pXV

²⁷ Pashukanis, Evgeny - *Law and marxism. A general theory* - Pluto - London -1989 - p73-74

Law he argues is the mystified form of a specific social relation, or as he alternatively phrases it "the regulation of social relations assumes a legal character". By locating the origins of bourgeois law in the contradictory character of capitalist social relations, he proceeds to generalise that the basic pre-requisite for legal regulation is a conflict of private interests arising at the point when differentiation and opposition of interests begin. In contrast then to the technical regulation of say something like "railway traffic" it can be argued that "controversy is the fundamental element of everything juridical".²⁸ Capitalist society however enshrines the 'controversial juridical category' as something natural, expressed in no greater way than in the formal equality of capitalist and wage labourer. As capitalist society develops and matures so law becomes increasingly abstract, to the point where "bourgeois capitalist property ceases to be unstable, and precarious and is effectively transformed into "an absolute fixed right".²⁹

This abstraction and legal fetish reaches its apogee within the realm of Soviet law and the constitution. Much of this reads as a deeply utopian novel. Not unlike capitalist society, it too enshrines all subjects as being equal under the law, as well of course as maintaining the inviolability of laws with regards to the sale of labour power and private ownership of the means of production. The simple point being made is that Soviet law was free from controversy. It wrapped the real contradictions of Soviet life in a parody of an ideal world.

a doubly mysterious form

At the same time then that labour power, and the products of labour become commodities man "acquires the capacity to be a legal subject and a bearer of rights".³⁰ The reification of social relations is encapsulated in law, Pashukanis concluding that "the social relation which is rooted in production presents itself simultaneously in two absurd forms: as the value of commodities, and as man's capacity to be the subject of rights". The absurdity is to be found in the way that all of the particularities and peculiarities that distinguish one human being from another that gives the social world its richness and diversity are dissolved into the abstraction of man and woman as a legal subject, as the owner of nothing else but labour power in which the "concrete types of human labour are dissolved into abstract human labour as the creator of value."³¹ Marx himself describes exchange value "as a generality, in which all individuality and peculiarity are negated and extinguished"³²

28 *ibid* p81

29 *ibid* p115

30 *ibid* p113

31 *ibid* p115

32 Marx, Karl - *Grundrisse* - Penguin - London -1981 - p157

Our building worker then is faced with a double problem. The social relations in which he finds himself with the owner of the brick manufactory, assume a "doubly mysterious form". On the one hand they appear as relations between things (commodities), and on the other, as relations between the wills of autonomous entities equal to each other - of legal subjects. Thus legal fetishism accompanies commodity fetishism, a "homogeneously integrated relation assumes two fundamental abstract aspects at the same time : an economic and a legal aspect"³³. A brief glance at the police and official reports of labour unrest in the Russian building industry of the late 19th century bears this out particularly strongly, the language of the reporting official often couched in a shocked outrage that workers could question a contract into which they had freely entered.

The problems of such insights as a critique of the emerging regime are clear. Like Rubin the departure point of research is labour. Pashukanis fully expected residual forms of the legal fetish and the commodity fetish to be inherited, especially so given the character of NEP. But, following Lenin's famous comment on the "withering away of the state" he also expected them to slowly vanish as "the relations based on commodity exchange and the huckstering mentality have been overcome (in the realm of production)."³⁴, concluding that the "legal form only encompasses us within its narrow horizon for the time being, it exists for the sole purpose of being spent."³⁵. In the circumstances where both the State and its legal machinery were being strengthened, Pashukanis was faced like many other Bolsheviks with the choice of collaboration or opposition.³⁶ He chose the former, siding with the Stalinist general line against the Opposition . He went on to edit a number of journals , a three volume encyclopaedia on law, and became a renowned teacher in the Law Faculty of Moscow State University especially amongst the young.. However as criticism of him grew , Pashukanis attempted to redeem himself with the publication of 'apologetic' articles in the early thirties.³⁷ But his previous work with its implicit criticism of the role of the state , was there for all to read and in 1937 he was executed. Although rehabilitated in 1980 with the

³³ Pashukanis, Evgeny - *Law and marxism. A general theory* - Pluto - 1989 - p117

³⁴ *ibid* p132

³⁵ *ibid* p133

³⁶ Born in 1891 he had been a member of the Russian social democratic party since 1907.

³⁷ See for instance Pashukanis, E, E, - *Rekonstruktsia gosapparata i borba c burakratiom*- Moskva-1934. Addressing its attention to the question of bureaucracy, was a convenient political tactic for deflecting attention away from the real actual usurping of power. Pashukanis's ten point plan contains predictable remonstrations against the evils of bureaucracy, but saving some of the more aggressive criticism for what he termed "right opportunist and liberal bourgeois tendencies", and "leftwise men, dreaming of higher forms of communism, and not wishing to think about 'contemptible commerce' or the control of the ruble". See also Pashukanis, E, - *Pitanadzat lyet* - in *Pitanadzat lyet sovietskovo stroitelstvo* - Sbornik statii - Mosckva - 1932

republication of the "General theory ", no attempt was made to employ his analysis in a reassessment of the history of the Soviet state. ³⁸

"But in fact, remnants of the old, surviving in the new confront us in life at every step, both in nature and in society" ³⁹

It would appear consistent from the analyses of Rubin and Pashukanis to argue that central to the long term goals of the revolution must be the transformation of capitalist social relations and of the specifically capitalist character of the social form of labour. In the context of the New Economic Policy, described by Preobrazhensky as an historic "combination of two economic systems, the socialist and the capitalist, the combination of socialist management with regulation by the capitalist market" ⁴⁰, and against the aftermath of the civil war, discussion of the details of the transition to a new form of labour process could justifiably be dismissed as premature and even utopian. From a position similar to that taken by Lenin, economists like Preobrazhensky had argued that in the period of transition "experience showed that socialism could successfully use many capitalist forms (capitalist calculation) and categories of simple commodity production (money) long after the political power of the class which represented all these forms taken together had been destroyed".⁴¹ Leaving aside that this was making a number of questionable assumptions, it was acknowledged that NEP was a contradictory stage in the development of socialism, bound to engender controversy amongst workers and Party members, many of whom considered NEP not just a temporary retreat but an historic betrayal. ⁴² With the reappearance of a labour market, unemployment, speculators, and other spectres and symbols of capitalist society, the Party central committee increased its calls for discipline and patience amongst workers, arguing that any violation against socialist legality by capitalists could be dealt with through the courts.

³⁸ See, Pashukanis, E, - *Izbranie proizvedeniya po obshniye teorii prava i gosudarstvo* - Hauka - Moskva - 1980 . As well as the main text this volume includes a short biography acknowledging his contribution to a marxist theory of law. As of 1994, along with the works of Pashukanis , Rubin's essays were freely available in the Lenin library. His essays on the theory of value have to my knowledge yet to be given the official state rehabilitation awarded to Pashukanis. It will be interesting to see whether they ever will be. In one of the later copies of his "*Ocherki po teorii stoimosti marxa*" published in 1928 in Moscow, there are series of essays entitled "*Otvety kritikam*", answer to my critics, where he responds to the criticism made at the time by other economists such as Dashkovski, Konstantin, and Ton.

³⁹ Lenin, V, I - *State and Revolution* - In *Lenin, Selected works* - Progress - Moscow - 1977 - p332 Completed on November the 30th 1917

⁴⁰ Preobrazhensky, E, A - *The organisation of State Industry* - In *From NEP to Socialism* - New Park Publications - London - 1973 - p48 - First published in 1922

⁴¹ *ibid* p49

⁴² The specific consequences of this for the development of the construction industry are discussed below

Lurking within the problem of how new non-reified social relations and forms of non-alienated labour were to develop, we encounter a number of dialectical relationships that came to characterise not only the period of the NEP but the whole of Soviet history. The relations between long term objectives and short term necessities, between the inheritance of capitalist forms of social life and the creation of embryonic socialist organisations, all come to rest in the contradiction between the juridical expression of social ownership and the actual practice of workers' democracy, how workers' power was to manifest itself not only in law, but in the workplace at the point of production.⁴³

the character of social relations

From the very beginning of the Soviet state, demands for workers' control at a local level had to be reconciled with more general conceptions of social ownership and property. The Bolshevik seizure of State power was an obvious pre condition of granting rights to producers and workers but no guarantee of their practical realisation. The aspirations of the early Bolsheviks towards the transformation of capitalist relations is summarised most eloquently in two documents drafted by Lenin. Both written in the revolutionary optimism of November 1917, one was the decree on workers' control, that guaranteed workers' rights through the factory committees and trade unions to control the activities of enterprises.⁴⁴ The second document and probably the most famous of Lenin's works, was of course *State and Revolution*. In *State and Revolution* Lenin explores the pre-conditions for the transformation of social relations in the transition from capitalism to the first and 'higher' stages of communist society. It is a crucial document for a number of reasons. First is the inflamed language of social justice, a text rich with such phrases as the "immense expansion of democracy", and abundant with an almost romantic belief in the immanence of the moment when "equality is achieved for all members of society in relation to ownership of the means of production, that is , equality of labour and wages"⁴⁵. Second, is his elaboration of Engels theme of the withering away of the State, the notion that it only becomes possible to speak of freedom

⁴³ It could be argued that the State Ownership of the means of production becomes social ownership only when it ceases to be State property such that jurisdiction over it lies in the hands of democratically elected workers organisations. This dialectic is explored further in this chapter in the context of Trotsky's critique of the bureaucracy, and again in the context of Stalinist industrialisation (chapter 3). It was a central dilemma in the attempt to restructure social relations in the 1980s (Chapter 4). This first passage looks at how leading Bolsheviks conceived of the notion of workers control.

⁴⁴ "In order to provide planned regulation of the national economy, workers' control over the the manufacture, purchase, sale and storage of produce and raw materials and over the financial activity of enterprises is introduced in all industrial, commercial, banking, agricultural, and other enterprises which employ hired labour or give work to be done at home. Workers' control is exercised by all the workers of the given enterprise through their elected bodies, such as factory committees, shop stewards' councils.....Decisions of workers' control bodies are binding upon the owners of enterprises and may be revoked only by higher workers' control bodies..." quoted in Cliff, Tony - *Lenin. Volume Three. The revolution besieged* - Pluto Press 1978 - p10

⁴⁵ Lenin, V, I - *State and Revolution* - In *Lenin, Selected works* - Progress - Moscow - 1977 - p333

when the state ceases to exist. Third is his conception of workers' control. This takes two fundamental forms. On the one hand it relates to the expropriation of the capitalists by a state of armed workers⁴⁶, and second to the process of accounting and control in the first transitional period, where all citizens "become employees and workers of a single country-wide state syndicate" in which the "majority of people begin independently and everywhere to keep such control over the capitalists (now converted into employees..."⁴⁷. Nowhere in the text does Lenin restrict his concept of new socialist relations to that of state property. The state plays a merely transitory role in guaranteeing workers' control and in the long term tendency towards the establishment of "common property".

As one of the first steps in the development of post capitalist social relations, Lenin envisaged a system of "the most precise and most conscientious accounting and control, of workers' control of the production and distribution of goods", a system of "countryside accounting and control of production".⁴⁸ Somewhat intriguingly in other passages he comments that "The socialist state can arise only as a network of producers and consumers communes..."⁴⁹ But workers' control was very much defined as a supervisory function in relation to the activities of capitalists, a prelude to the development of fully socialised production and to the introduction of *full workers' regulation of the economy*. Lenin does not however seem to have addressed the actual character of work itself, and as we shall see his attitude to aspects of capitalist work practices and such things as Taylorism was rather ambiguous.

In the early 1930s Trotsky endorsed Lenin's distinction between workers' control and full scale workers' management. He distinguished between control as a system of observation and checking, and *full management* which belongs to a quite different stage of political development. Trotsky argued that, "Control is a transitional measure, in the conditions of an intensive class struggle and has a sense only as a bridge towards the revolutionary nationalisation of industry "⁵⁰ In addition he drew attention to the dangers of idealising and 'fetishising' slogans such as "workers' control" and "All power to the Soviets", for more important than the organisational form was the *class character* of such organisations.

⁴⁶ *ibid* p331

⁴⁷ *ibid* p334

⁴⁸ Lenin, V, I - *Can the Bolsheviks retain state power ?* - In *Lenin, Selected works* - Progress - Moscow - 1977 - p371-374 . First published in 1918

⁴⁹ Lenin, V, I, - *The immediate tasks of the Soviet Government* - In *Lenin, Selected works* - Progress - Moscow - 1977 - p410

⁵⁰ Trotsky, L, - *Rabochii Kontrol i sotrudnichestvo c SSSP* - In *Niemetzkaya Revolutzia i stalinskaya burokratia* - Uzdatelstvo Bulletinia Oppositsia - Berlin - 1932 - p140-141 (Workers' control and co-operation with the USSR)

Workers' Councils and indeed Soviets were not by definition either progressive or socialist in character. As such Trotsky argued that the goal was not the "workers' control of production, but the control of production by the workers' State".⁵¹

There were few Bolsheviks in the early 1920s who would have disputed this. But there were several who were already questioning the credentials of the new government and the extent to which the seizure of State power by the Bolsheviks had resulted in a Dictatorship of the Party rather than the Proletariat. At some point, fundamental questions concerning the relationship between the mass of workers and the state would have to be resolved. To what extent was the State a 'workers' state'? Were workers to be allowed to organise independently of State organs, and to what extent could workers actually exercise real control over production in the transformation not only of the *labour process* but its *products*?

"canonised functionaries of the state" and the Workers' Opposition

These questions formed the backdrop to the platform of the Workers opposition led by Kollantai and Shliapnikov in 1921. The inevitable accusations of syndicalism and political naiveté hurled at them at the time and posthumously misses the point that not only were many of their criticisms prophetic, but that behind their critique was the crucial question "what form shall labour take?" Shliapnikov had been a member of the Party since 1901 and participated in all three Russian revolutions. He was also a worker rather than a middle class intellectual. In his memoirs of the revolution he offered a particular thesis that emphasised that the St Petersburg insurrection had been not only Bolshevik-led, but by working class cadres, and that worker' Bolsheviks had been the backbone of the Party.⁵² He himself had been a leader of the St Petersburg workers, and it was this allegiance to the working class rank and file that led him to formulate the demands of the workers' opposition with Kollantai. After the revolution he was elected to the Central Committee of the Party. However he frequently came into conflict with the leadership for breaches of Party discipline, and even after the abolition of factions at the Tenth Party Congress in March

⁵¹ Trotsky, L - *Workers control of production* - In *The struggle against Fascism in Germany* - Pathfinder - 1971 - p78. In response to the programme of German workers, he argued that "Die Aktion has transformed the soviets into a fetish, into a supersocial spectre, into a religious myth. Mythology serves people as a cover for their own weaknesses or at best as a consolation" *Factory councils and workers control of production*. In same volume p86-87. Both articles first published in 1931

⁵² For a discussion of the dispute surrounding Shliapnikov's version of the St Petersburg insurrection see Longley, D, A - *Iakovlev's Question* - in *Revolution in Russia: reassessments of 1917* - Frankel et al - CUP - 1992

1921⁵³, continued to articulate his critique of bureaucracy and anti democratic tendencies in the Party. Earlier in 1920 he delivered a report quoted by Kollontai in which he declared;

"We believe that the question of reconstruction and development of the productive forces of our country can be solved only if the entire system of control over the people's economy is changed.....by what means during this period of transformation can our communist party carry out its economic policy - shall it be by means of the workers organised into their class union, or - over their heads - by bureaucratic means, through canonised functionaries of the State?"⁵⁴

Echoing Rosa Luxemburg's comments that the dictatorship must be "a dictatorship of the class, not a party or clique", and that by "dictatorship of the class", we mean in the sense of its " broadest public form on the basis of the most active, unlimited participation of the mass of the people, of unlimited democracy"⁵⁵, he published an article in Pravda in 1924, called "Our different opinions" in which he continued to directly accuse the party of authoritarian tendencies, marked by intolerance rather than open debate.⁵⁶ His persistence in calling on the people to support the movement for workers' democracy led him into a final confrontation with the party. Although the Workers' Opposition had considerable support not only in the trade unions but from other leading Bolsheviks, it was not enough to prevent him in a paradoxical twist of fate of being accused as a Trotskyist. He was expelled from the party in 1933 and executed in 1937.⁵⁷

It was in the pamphlet "The Workers' Opposition", that the programme of the Opposition was most clearly articulated. Amongst other suggestions for countering the slide into unrepresentative bureaucracy were proposals for the creation of an 'All Russian Congress of Producers', and for transforming the trade unions into economic units that would eventually take on the responsibility for the administrative running of industry. Such a 'workerist' position made accusations of syndicalism and political utopianism easy, and Kollontai was openly attacked by Lenin and ridiculed by leading Bolsheviks like Bukharin.⁵⁸ It should also be remembered that at this juncture in Soviet history Trotsky was advocating the

⁵³ Lenin, V.I - *Tenth Congress of the RCP (B)* - In *Lenin, Selected works* - Progress - Moscow - 1977 - p625-8

⁵⁴ Shliapnikov, A, G - Quoted in Kollontai, A - *The Workers Opposition* - In *Selected writings of* - p174 - Lawrence Hill - Connecticut - 1977

⁵⁵ Luxemburg, R - *The Russian revolution* - University of Michigan - 1961 - p76-77

⁵⁶ See biographical introduction to Shliapnikov, A, G, - *Kanun cemnatzatovo goda* - Moskva - 1992 - p5-30 ("On the eve of 1917")

⁵⁷ Shliapnikov was rehabilitated in 1963 and was posthumously returned his Party membership in 1988

⁵⁸ For a biographical study and discussion of the Workers Opposition see Porter, Cathy - *Alexandra Kollontai: a biography* - Virago - 1980 - p365-398

'militarisation' of labour and the subordination of Trade Unions in the interests of securing rapid industrial development. Although during the 1920s under Tomsky the Trade Unions reclaimed a certain amount of autonomy in their activities, in the context of the practical and immediate tasks of reconstruction, defending workers' rights against State initiated productivity drives was an economically precarious and politically dangerous path to take. Official Party policy as articulated by Zinoviev still leant towards the transformation of the Trade Unions into organs of the Soviet State. By the beginnings of the first five year plan this had been accomplished and the Trade Unions had become completely subordinate, remaining responsible only for matters such as education, health and safety. Whilst some of the criticisms of the Workers' Opposition against bureaucracy and of the influx into the Party of clandestine anti-Bolshevik careerists were taken on board by Lenin, some of the more interesting comments on the character of work were ignored in the outpouring of vitriol at the Oppositions' line on Trade Unions.

The Workers' Opposition had sought to broaden the discussion about the character of labour. In a situation in which workers not only controlled but fully managed production, the objective was not just the retention of power but of creating a qualitatively different labour process, of creating "new incentives to the productivity of labour". This was a task that could only be accomplished "by the workers' collectives that are closely bound with the new forms of production". Thus the solution to the question 'what kind of labour?', as proposed by the industrial unions, consisted in "giving complete freedom to the workers as regards experimenting, class training, adjusting and discovering new forms of production, as well as expressing and developing their creative abilities".. ⁵⁹. Kollontai's declaration is full of such enthusiastic propositions, and in other places she talks of workers becoming "worker creators" that would be able to find "new impulses for work", and would be able to develop "a new system to utilise labour power" ⁶⁰. It would be simple to deride such aspirations as a form of revolutionary romanticism. But the real issue is that the question of new social relations, was not restricted to its juridical expression, but was taken to imply the development of new forms of work and labour, founded upon what Kollontai called the "free and creative self activity of the masses". With the defeat of the Opposition, such questions were removed from the political agenda,. It is no coincidence that Kollontai's effort to expand the notion of social relations to include gender was also marginalised. As a champion of women's liberation she had been at the forefront of the women's movement in Russia. She

⁵⁹ Kollontai, A - *The Workers Opposition* - In *Selected writings of* - Lawrence Hill - Connecticut - 1977 - p176

⁶⁰ *ibid* p184

was instrumental not only in establishing conferences like "The international socialist conference of working women" in Moscow in 1918, but in general agitational work that sought to put gender issues firmly at the forefront of the political discussion about socialism. Her many articles embraced all aspects of gender relations taking on board discussions about the family, female and domestic labour, prostitution, marriage, sex, love and morality. Her speech to the Comintern in 1922, not only gave an opportunity for the Party to attack the political platform of the Workers' Opposition, but offered a pretext for her removal from the "Zhenotdel", "Women's Department". The subsequent leadership was nowhere as radical in its aspirations as Kollontai, and along with the question of workers' democracy, gender liberation was arguably given a blow from which it never really recovered. By the late 1920s a moral conservatism and a political authoritarianism had already established itself within the Soviet State. The new ruling class had no more need for gender democracy than it had for workers' democracy. Ironically by 1930 many of the criticisms levelled at the Party by Kollontai and Shliapnikov had been incorporated into what became one of the most influential and articulate attacks on the degeneration of the Russian revolution.

Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet Bureaucracy

Trotsky's celebrated essays in the *The revolution betrayed* represent one of the most thorough and convincing analyses of the Soviet Union's character. Of particular importance in the discussion of alienation and exploitation is chapter nine "Social relations in the Soviet Union". Whilst during the 1920s it was still not clear in which direction the Soviet Union was heading, by the 1930s there was little doubt as the architectural profession and the building industry in general, were, like most other sectors of the national economy, State owned, managed and controlled through centralised ministries in Moscow. In most official Soviet texts, state ownership was considered to be the highest form of 'socialist property'. However as we shall see the mere fact that property lies in State hands is no guarantee of social ownership or the democratic control of production on the basis of workers' self management. Echoing Lenin and Pashukanis, Trotsky makes the comment, that state property becomes socialist property in proportion to the extent it ceases to be state property,⁶¹ adding that the transfer of property to the state changed the situation of the workers only juridically.⁶² That is, state ownership is not in itself sufficient to change the character and form of labour, new forms of fetishised social relations are quite possible.

61 Trotsky, Leon - *The revolution betrayed* - Pathfinder - 1989 - p237

62 *ibid* p241

Trotsky refrains however from describing the bureaucracy as a ruling class. He qualifies this by drawing attention to the latent strength of the proletariat, how the bureaucracy had not developed special forms of property, had no stocks and bonds and could not transfer rights in a hereditary fashion. But his description of the primary functions executed by the Soviet bureaucracy all but make it one. He speaks alternately of a "ruling group", of a "superbureaucracy" of a "privileged upper strata", of the "sole privileged and commanding stratum", "of a ruling Soviet caste" and so on and so on. His main argument boils down to the fact that the bureaucracy are not the *legal* owners of the means of production. He does however acknowledge that the bureaucracy through the state machinery has "appropriated the proletariat politically" ⁶³ and at another point he adds that the "ruling group itself forms the chief reservoir of legal and illegal personal accumulations".⁶⁴ Other defenders of Trotsky's analysis argue that no one has been able to define or in any way differentiate the relations of production (mode of appropriation of surplus labour) into which the "new class" is supposedly inserted, concluding along with Trotsky that the best description of the Soviet Union is as a "bureaucratically degenerated workers' state".⁶⁵ There is however no reason why we should restrict our definition of a ruling class to the concept of formal legal ownership.

state capitalism and statocracy

Trotsky of course also refrains from any characterisation of the Soviet Union as state capitalist, the conclusion reached by Cliff ⁶⁶. He reserves this category for the situation when "state property is substituted for private property" ⁶⁷ and contrasts this to the regimes of state regulation of the capitalist economy in fascist Germany, Italy or in the 'New Deal' U.S.A., which he refers to as "etatism". Despite theoretical disagreements over 'value theory' and whether to refer to the bureaucracy as a class, there is a consensus of opinion amongst the authors mentioned previously as to the actions and functions of the bureaucracy. In a recent work by Kagarlitsky he takes up the reins of the debate. He suggests the notion of the "statocracy", the effective fusion of the bureaucracy with the state, which can control and partly appropriate the surplus product of labour whilst not being the formal legal owner, recalling Trotsky's comment that "The means of production belong to the State. But the State

⁶³ *ibid* p249

⁶⁴ *ibid* p236

⁶⁵ **Bellis, Paul** - *Marxism and the USSR* - Macmillan - 1979 - p223 -236

⁶⁶ See also **Bettelheim, Charles** - *Class struggles in the USSR - Volume I - 1917 - 1923, Volume II 1923-1930* - Harvester -1978

⁶⁷ **Trotsky, Leon** - *The revolution betrayed* - Pathfinder - 1989 -p24

so to speak, "belongs" to the bureaucracy"⁶⁸. Kagarlistky adds that class dominance need not be reduced to the category of legal ownership of the means of production and argues that in the USSR "property ownership cannot be treated as a class category and attempts to define the 'new class' through property ownership are fruitless"⁶⁹ He then proceeds to employ the category of "state -class", and concludes by characterising the statocracy as a "class in itself" but one that can never be a "class for itself" arguing that its interests cannot be directly expressed.⁷⁰ This last point seems rather contradictory in an argument that becomes increasingly circular. At the end of the day if an 'estate' can appropriate the surplus product of labour through the centralised control and administration of the economy, decide and control all aspects of cultural life, sends millions to the labour camps, it seems entirely appropriate to consider it a ruling class 'in itself' and one that is very conscious 'of itself'.

What we end up calling the Soviet Union is of secondary importance. We shall for the time being content ourselves with Trotsky's verdict that it was halfway between capitalism and socialism, which with the survival and transformation into new forms of the fetishism of law and of the commodity, fetishisms that were born in the period of NEP and were to flower in the 1930s, stood every chance of sliding towards the former, a type of society that Kagarlitsky argues was to become superalienated.

We return to our building worker, who having fought on the barricades, seen the building industry nationalised in the period of war communism, is waiting in the wings for the transformation of the labour process. With the re-establishment in the 1920s of the characteristics of the capitalist labour process in both the private and State sectors, the pre-conditions for the development of a new stage in the progress of alienation are laid. It must be remembered that for labour power to become a commodity the worker must be a 'free worker', *free of all property* save of course his capacity to labour. One of the essential preconditions for the commodification of labour power has already been met, whether our worker was to sell it to the state or to a contractor. Our soviet building worker at the beginning of the NEP was in possession of little more than labour power and elementary hand tools. This is further compounded during the 1920s by the expansion of a traditional labour market, *birzshah truda*, the rise in unemployment, and the slow but inevitable introduction of new labour organisation. As objective contradictions emerged in the labour process that suspended and threatened to undermine the transition to new and progressive social relations, the avant-

68 Kagarlistky, Boris - *The thinking Reed* - Verso - p1989 - p76-89

69 ibid p81

70 ibid p82

garde became immersed in the search for ways in which these very social relations could be materialised in form and space.

excising the avant-garde

All architectural acts are political acts. However the connections between politics and architecture appear shrouded in mystery and this is in part due to the disinterest and fear that the subject of politics generates. It appears easy to discuss the connections in the USSR, the Germany and Italy of the 1930s, where the political pre-conditions for the production of architecture are thrown into sharp relief. This is why their investigation is a vital starting point in the analysis of architecture in other social formations where the bonds are equally strong but opaque and elusive. To comment that many of the ideas of the avant garde were fanciful and idealistic is to say nothing new. To comment that the course of the avant garde mirrors the radicalism of political and economic debate in the early 1920s, should hardly need demonstrating.

However the much talked about utopian character of the avant garde only emerges with the defeat of the political opposition. It becomes fully expressed in the objective contradiction between the elaboration of theories of space, building and art which celebrated a new way of life, that of equality, self management and progress and the development of social relations within the labour process and with respect to the State that were opposite in their intentions and consequences. Thus we do not see a break between architectural activity before and after the watershed of 1932 when the organisations of the modern movement were dissolved, so much as the transfer of the arguments on aesthetics and urban design into new conditions. The same issues are investigated but simply under new economic and political guidelines.

grasping the contradiction

Just as there was no blueprint for how to organise a socialist economy, neither was there a clear idea on how future art and architecture should develop. At the most extreme, groups such as Proletkult emerged which considered that it was essential to build a new proletarian culture untainted by the artistic achievements of the bourgeois epoch. Such ideas were criticised by Lenin and Trotsky who argued that it was necessary to harness the progressive achievements of both capitalist technology and culture¹.

In this like other controversies it would be foolish to make pejorative comments, rather the task is to examine how in very concrete ways social relations were or were not transformed. If nothing else than its formal intentions, the quite astonishing profusion of literature about the

¹ Trotsky, Leon - *Proletarian Culture and Proletarian Art - in Literature and Revolution* - Michigan - 1971 - p184 - 215 and a letter by Lenin, V.I., - *On Proletarian Culture* - in *Culture and Cultural revolution* - Progress - Moscow - 1978

Soviet avant garde is evidence of its central importance within the history of modern cultural movements, a general cultural revolution that was unprecedented in its scale and depth of vision. However, most of it tends to be confined to the description of the formal experiments and of the pronouncements and manifestos of individual artists and groups.² Whilst many of the artists and architects had of course been active before the revolution the impetus that the events of 1917 had on their work was profound, not only in strengthening their resolve to experiment further in the exploration of form, colour, and language but to focus it on quite specific social tasks.

All art and architecture in any historical period emerges from the field of social conflict. The art which tries to hide this reality is of course the most adept at reproducing the contradictions that it seeks to evade. That which deals with it face to face can be simply dismissed as propaganda. This is one of the dilemmas of the avant-garde. It is essential more than anything to grasp the contradictory character of this period. Political and economic life was characterised by the clashing and interpenetration of what were often opposing forces. Much of this was a result of the attempt to reconcile the objectives of freedom and democracy, with the immediate tasks of reconstruction. For Lenin the most important slogans were not so much "art into life" as "soviet power and electrification". (See fig 25) Similarly the avant-garde should not be evaluated in terms of right or wrong but should be understood as a unity of conflicting interests and arguments. But just as we should not harbour any romantic illusions about the avant-garde, we should also acknowledge its progressive aspirations and how its own negation is inseparable from that of the defeat of the revolutionary movement as a whole.

painting, acting and filming the new way of life

Predominantly abstract speculations that had been a pillar of the early modern movement, and are to be seen in the paintings of both Lyubov Popova and Kasimir Malevich (See fig 26) were readily incorporated into an exploration of forms and techniques that could more adequately meet the volatile and dynamic character of the tasks thrown up in a revolutionary situation. These can be seen in the use of photomontage in the historical films *Strike* and *Battleship Potemkin* of Eisenstein, in the red and black abstract covers for the journal *New Left*, (See fig 27) in the functional furniture and clothing designs of Rodchenko, and in the collage and text deconstruction of the artist poet Mayakovski. (See fig 28) It is

² See for instance, **Bowlit, J** - *The documents of 20th century art. Russian art of the avant garde. -1902 -1934* - Viking press - 1976, **Conrads, Ulrich** - *Programmes and manifestoes on 20th century architecture* - MIT - 1989, **Harrison, Wood**, editors - *Art in Theory 1900 -1990 . An anthology of changing ideas-* Blackwell - 1992

"Soviets and electrification are the foundations of the new world"
"The soviets and electrification are the foundations of the new world"

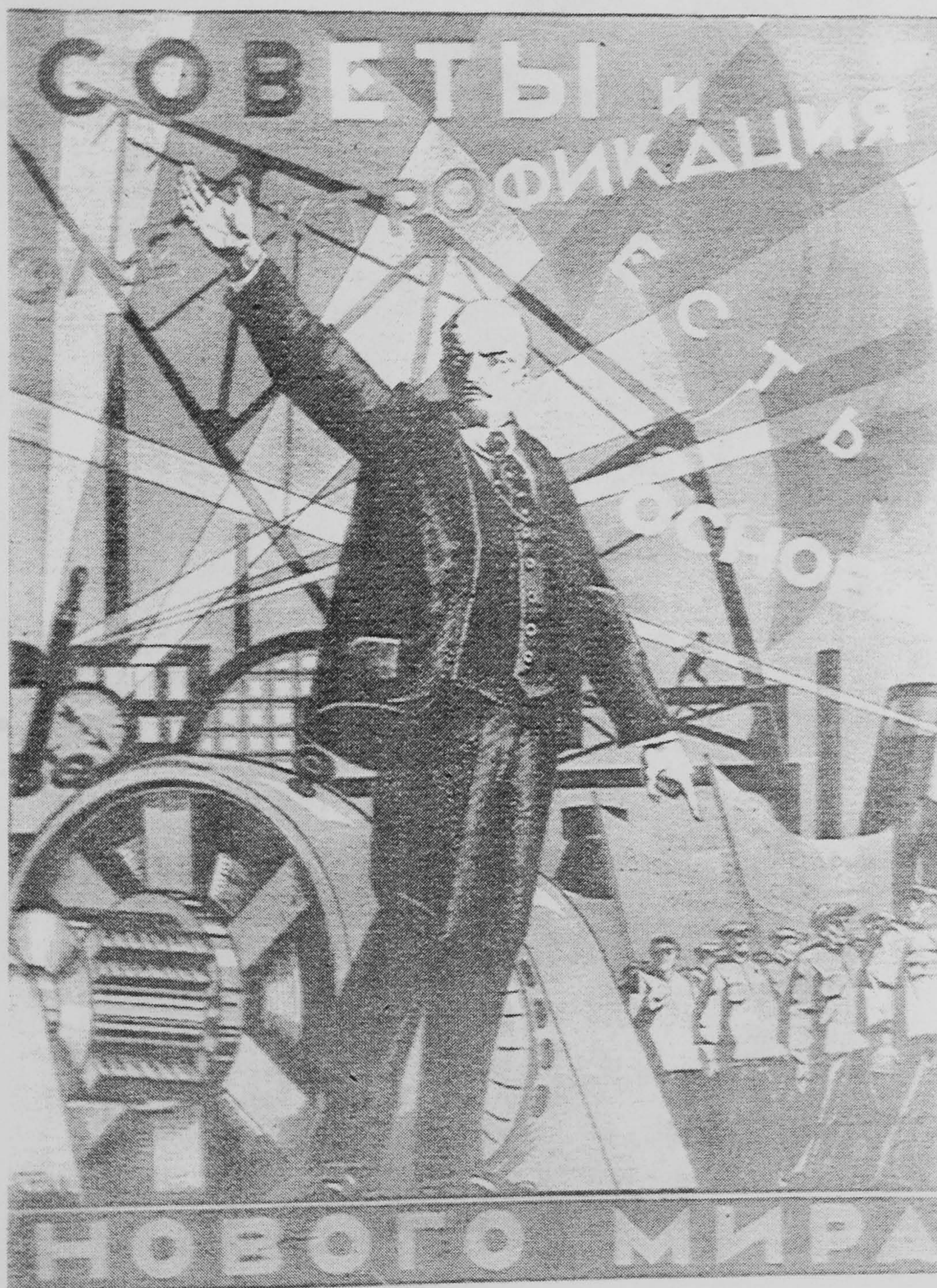
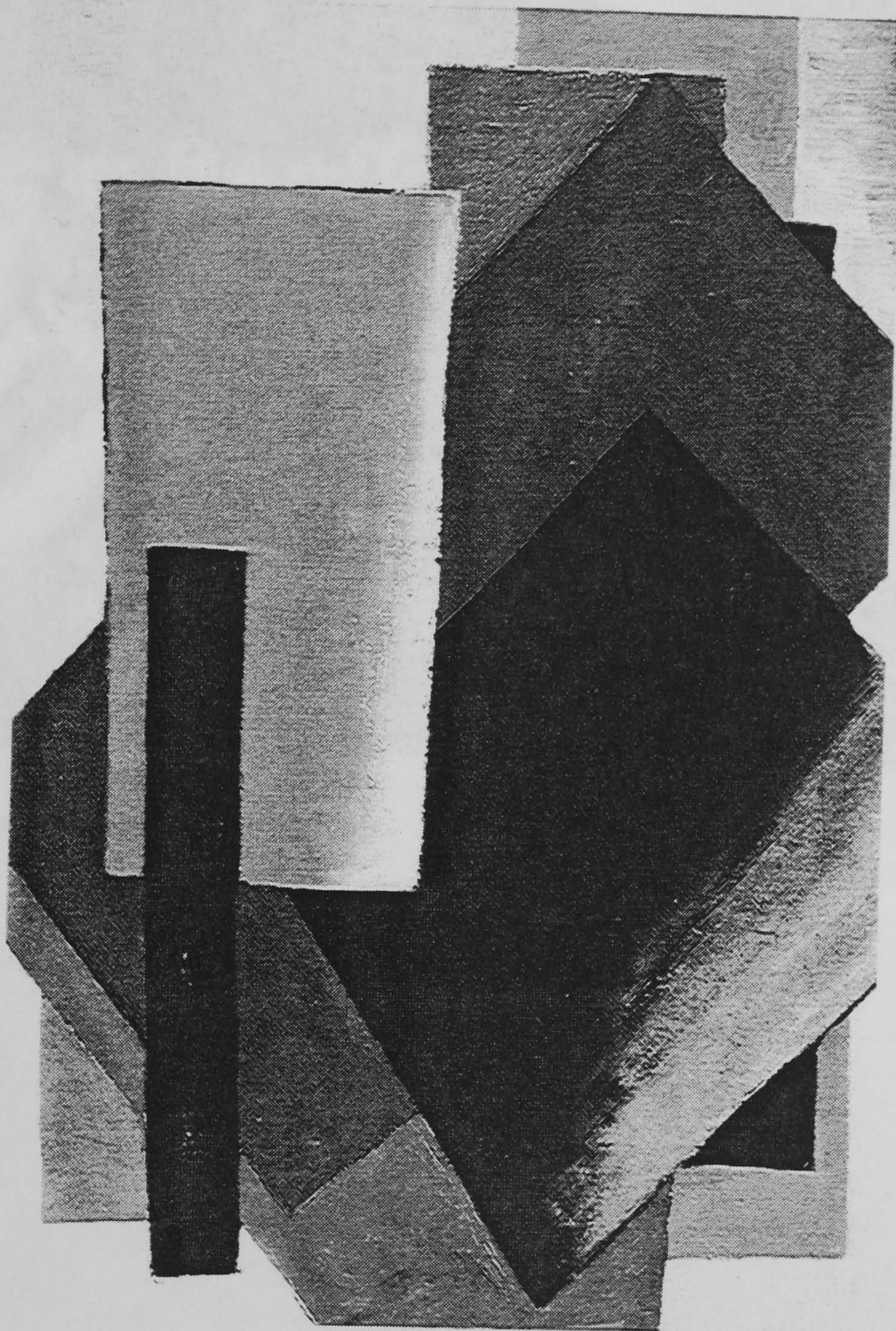


FIG 25

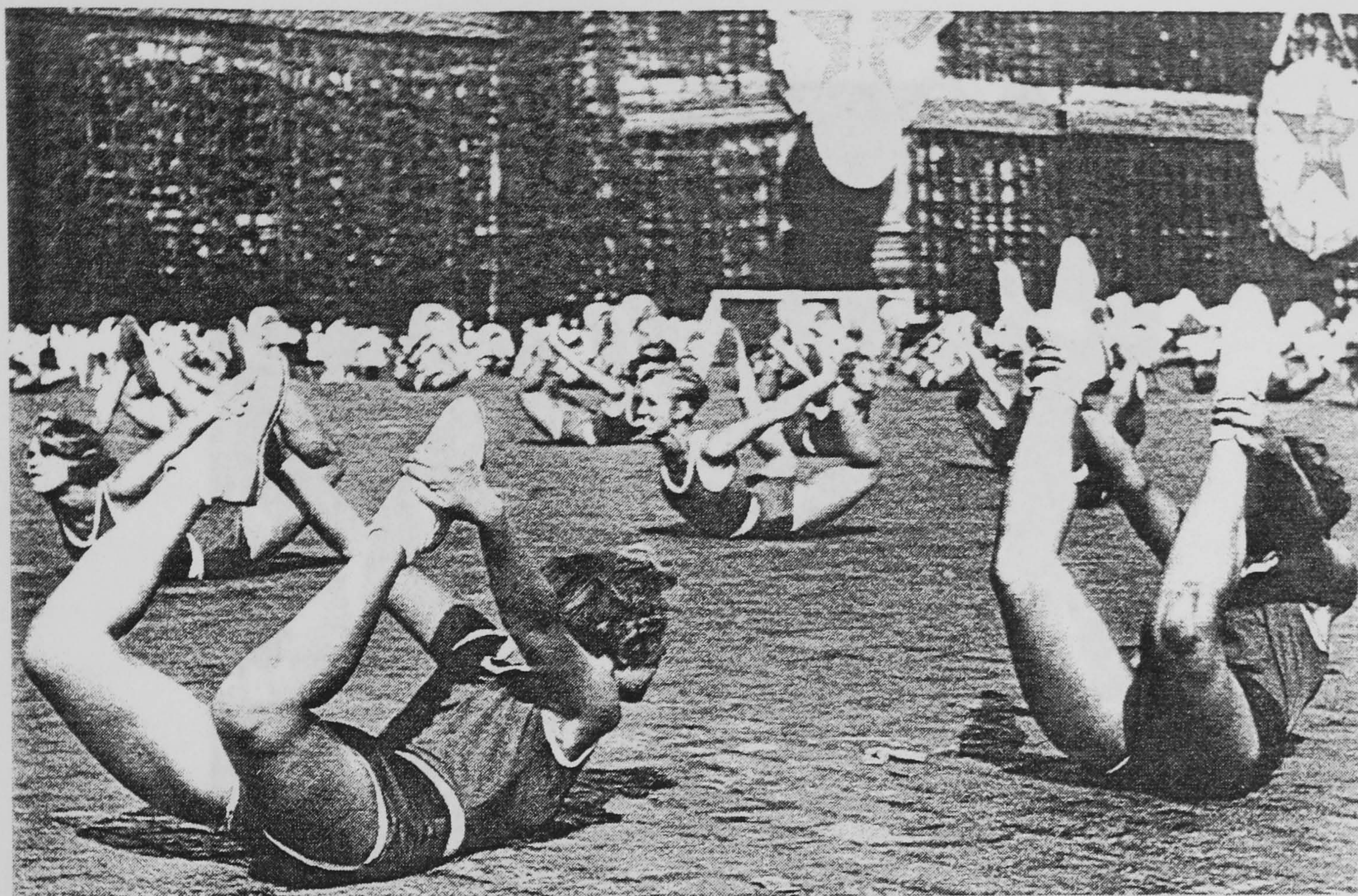
RÓDCHENKO, AI
Artist, designer and ph

Painting the new world



Popova, Lyubov 1889-1924
Pictorial architectonics 1916

RODCHENKO, Alexander
Artist, designer and photographer -1891-1956



Dynamo football club, Moscow, 1930

MAYAKOVSKY, Vladimir
Artist and poet 1893-1930



Collage-"The steel bore breaks the earth"

precisely because these and many other artists were required to fulfil new social functions, to convey slogans, ideas, and knowledge to the new audience, the proletariat and peasantry, that innovative forms of language and communication were invented. This is one reason why the Modern Movement in Russia distinguishes itself from the development of modernism in Western Europe. Perhaps one of the most extraordinary episodes was the character of street art and public spectacles.³

One of the most revolutionary aspects of revolutionary art was its objective of breaking the dominant relations that had characterised both the production and consumption of art before the revolution. This has two aspects, the battle against the separation of art from life, that is the whole process by which art slowly becomes removed from the human subject and objectified ending as an object on a wall in a gallery, a process linked to that of reification, and second, the way in which art becomes a specialist activity, the preserve of great masters. The extraordinary character of some of this early "performance art" such as the re-enactment of the storming of the winter palace comes from the redefinition of the relations between audience, object, and artist. It not only involved the mass participation of thousands of people but experimented with the formal aspects of set design, employing many of the innovations then so popular. (See fig 29) Thus the stage set in front of the Winter Palace is an expressionist construction involving the distortion of primary geometric shapes, the statues in the squares are replaced by objects akin to three dimensional versions of a Malevich painting, and the opera is replaced by the concert of factory sirens, not forgetting of course the propaganda trains and the agit prop barge. (See fig 30) With the help of trained specialists, we witness if only temporarily, masses of 'non-artists' fully embracing the redefinition of ways of seeing and making.

the birth of the culture industry

There is however an uncomfortable paradox within the avant garde. The true test of any movement's avant garde credentials is the strength with which it challenges established systems of thought and practice, and can resist the forces of assimilation.⁴ We have argued that it was precisely the recognition and unification of a political and formal programme within the work of the avant garde in the 1920s that rendered it dangerous and provided the

³ See Cooke, Catherine - *Street art of the revolution* - Academy-1991

⁴ It is not surprising to see how within the west the formal ideas of the Constructivists have been torn from their political aspirations and ruthlessly commodified. As for the movements in the west held up to be at the cutting edge of critical enquiry, the speed with which they became mere fashion accessories is testament to the fragility of any inherent radical critique.

"All aboard the agit-prop train" 1918

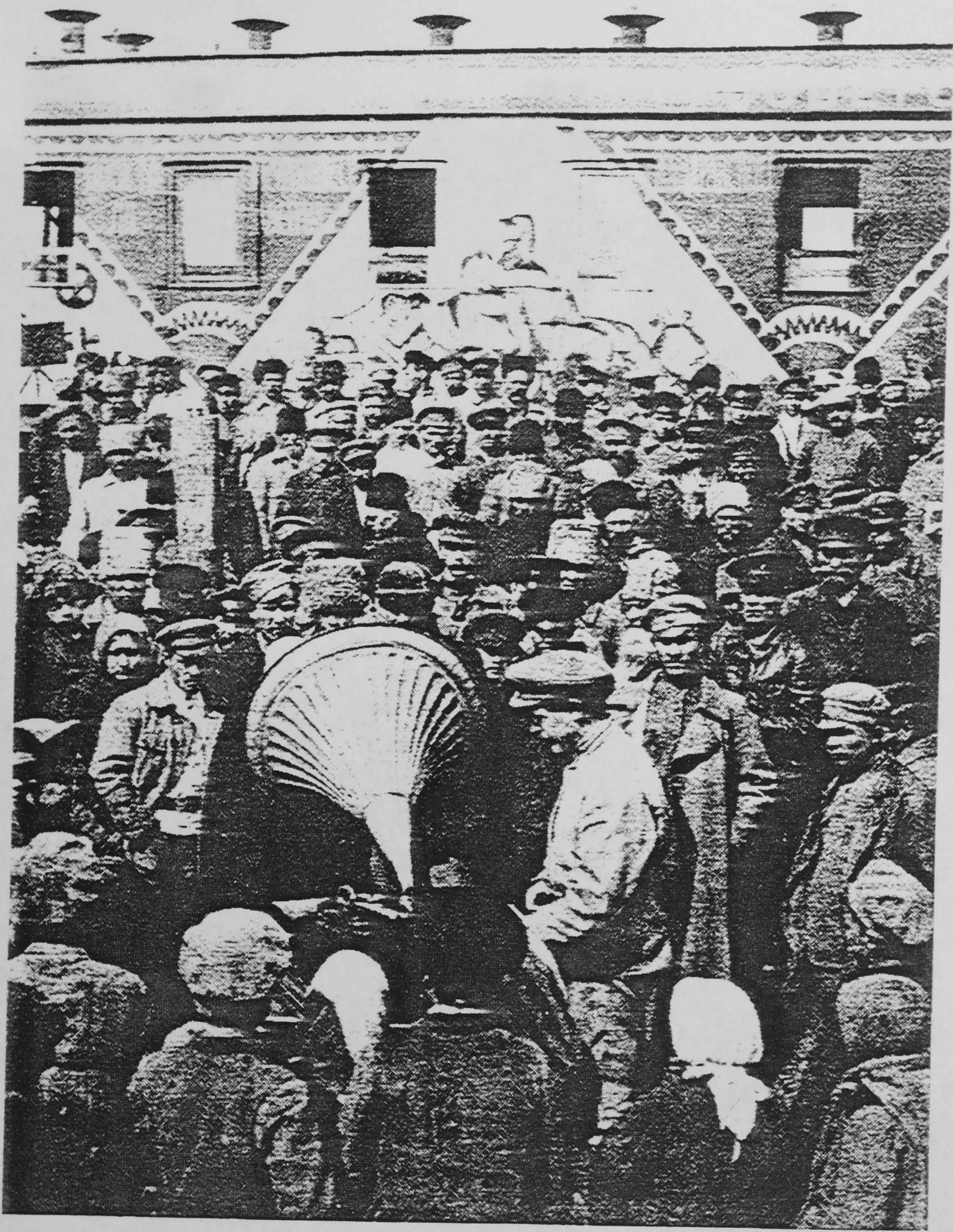


FIG 29

The avant-garde redecoration of the winter palace.1918

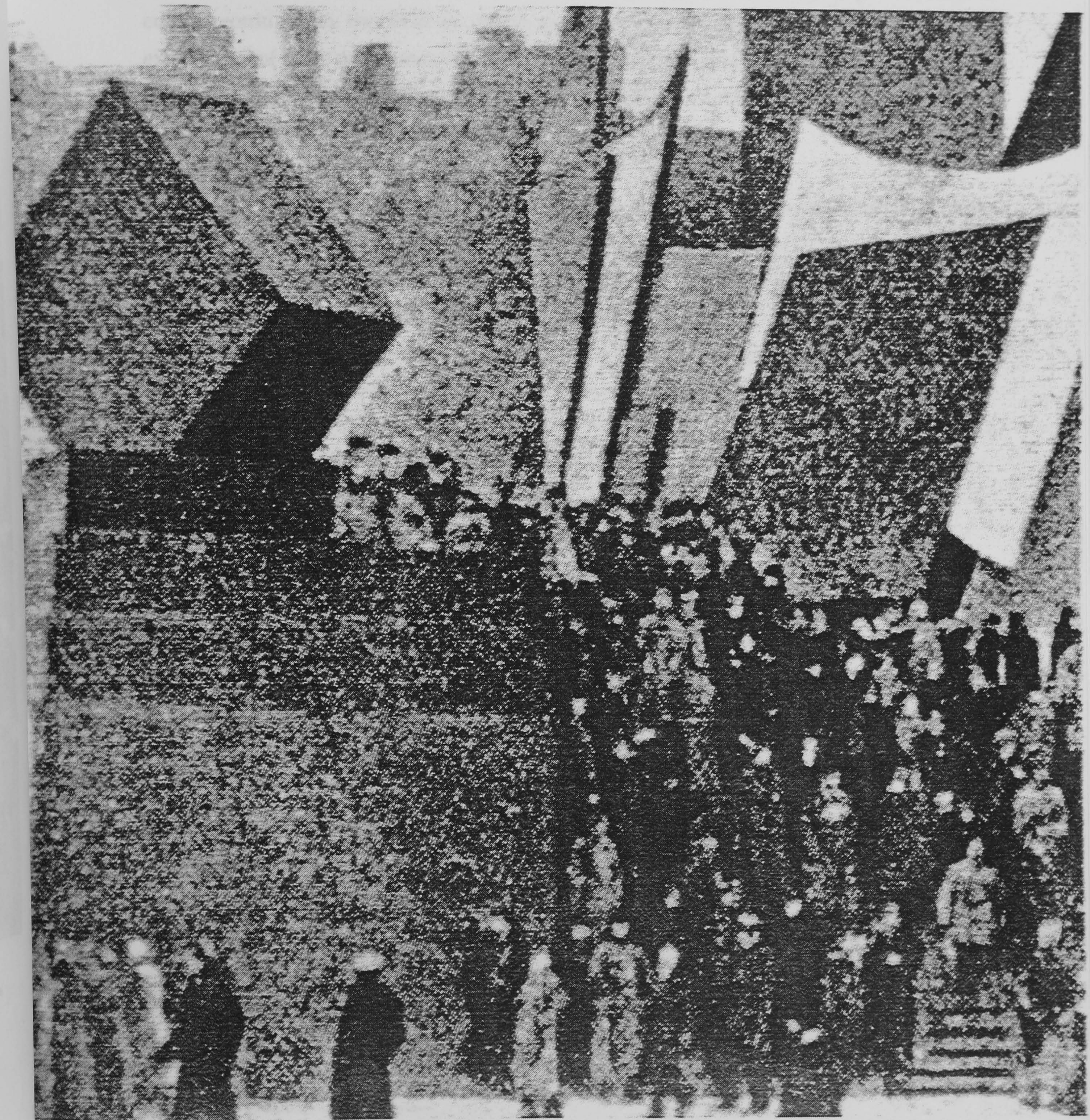


FIG 30

pretext on which it was attacked⁵. The paradox is that it was the avant-garde that indicated to the emerging ruling bureaucracy how powerful the conscious politicisation of culture could be in the field of propaganda. It is from this period that the political exploitation of mass communication systems matures to become an essential pre-condition of class rule, deepening the rupture between the material transformation of everyday life and its representation.

Thus one aspect of the dialectic of the avant garde is that it unwittingly signalled the birth of a new culture industry involving the mass production of mythologies that was to permeate every corner of Soviet life in the 1930s. The greatest contradiction of all was that the reduction of the transformative consequences of human action within history to idealised legends and disputable footnotes, was to happen in a society emerging from a period of intense class struggle. This all forms part of a general ideological project that was instrumental over the next three decades, in the progressive de-politicisation of consciousness and the annihilation of the working class as an independent political force .

Lefebvre and social relations

The Russian Revolution was concerned with a struggle over history and hence time. But it was also about how these historical processes occur in space. The importance of space, and control over it, manifests itself not only in the erection of barricades in streets, of armies claiming territories, but in the context of the antagonistic relationships between town and country, the spatial distribution of production and resources, and in what we might call the physical and spatial arrangement of social relations.

Here we need to elaborate further on the theory of the relationship between space and social relations. We have noted how in the transition from the feudal to the capitalist mode of production the character of the labour process and more specifically the form of labour was transformed. We also noted how the capitalist mode of production brings with it an equally comprehensive revolution in the spatial dimensions of social life. This we have observed at a whole number of levels; the smashing of first local and then national boundaries that comes with the revolution in production, the global annihilation of space through time, the spatial

⁵ It should be pointed out here that some of the ideas of the constructivists were reconsidered in the first phase of the industrialisation of building that occurred after the denunciation of Stalin in 1956. The housing schemes of the late fifties such as Novie Cheremushki in Moscow, became internationally renowned for their attempts to construct coherent neighbourhoods integrated with a high level of collective social and cultural facilities. Since the late 1980's the avant garde has again undergone a re-evaluation as it became possible once again to discuss critically and in public some of the ideas

division and concentration of new forms of labour, the reorganisation of the relationship between 'town' and country', the increasing penetration of new forms of 'rationalised' order and discipline to the spatial structures of towns, the transition to new building types, and to the production of buildings and space for exchange.⁶

Later in the book Lefebvre describes the distinction between what he calls the *problematic of space*, that is the philosophical questions regarding the relations between mental-social space and nature, and "*spatial practice*" which refers to the empirical manifestations of architectural and urban design.⁷ We would expect to find in any profound shift in the structure and practice of social life, (that is the shift from slavery to feudalism, from feudalism to capitalism and from capitalism to socialism), an accompanying transformation in the problematic of space and in its practice. Indeed Lefebvre argues that it is with the emergence of capitalism and of the bourgeoisie as a revolutionary class, that the notion of abstract space emerges to take over from historical and absolute space. Abstract space is of a greater quantitative character which whilst not homogenous tends toward homogeneity.⁸

abstract labour - abstract space

In this Lefebvre is drawing an analogy between the emergence of social abstract labour, that lies at the origins of the fetishism of the commodity, and abstract social space which lies at the origins of what we might refer to as the fetishisation of space. Thus just as under capitalism there is a tendency towards the domination of an homogenised labour, that is the rule of abstract social labour, the bearer of value, so space is increasingly produced as an abstract commodity. This reaches its apogee in the tendency towards the full scale commodification of space in the latter half of the twentieth century. The production of office space, empty space in city centres, and speculative housing and retail construction are all complex examples of this. (See fig 31) Commodities increasingly homogenous in character but marketed as being very exclusive and very different. Capitalism is an historical project, but it is by now clear that it is also a geographical and spatial one as well. In a recent review of urban theory, Soja comments on Lefebvre's work that it is imbued with the proposition that

⁶ The conceptual triad from the work of Lefebvre is a help in disentangling this mass of different processes. He begins by distinguishing spatial practices, from Representations of Space and from Representational space. To summarise very crudely, these categories refer to the making of space, the thinking about it, and its properties with regards to language and ideology.

⁷ Lefebvre, Henri - *The production of space* - Blackwell - London - 1991 -p413

⁸ *ibid* p287

Canary Wharf- The apogee of speculative construction

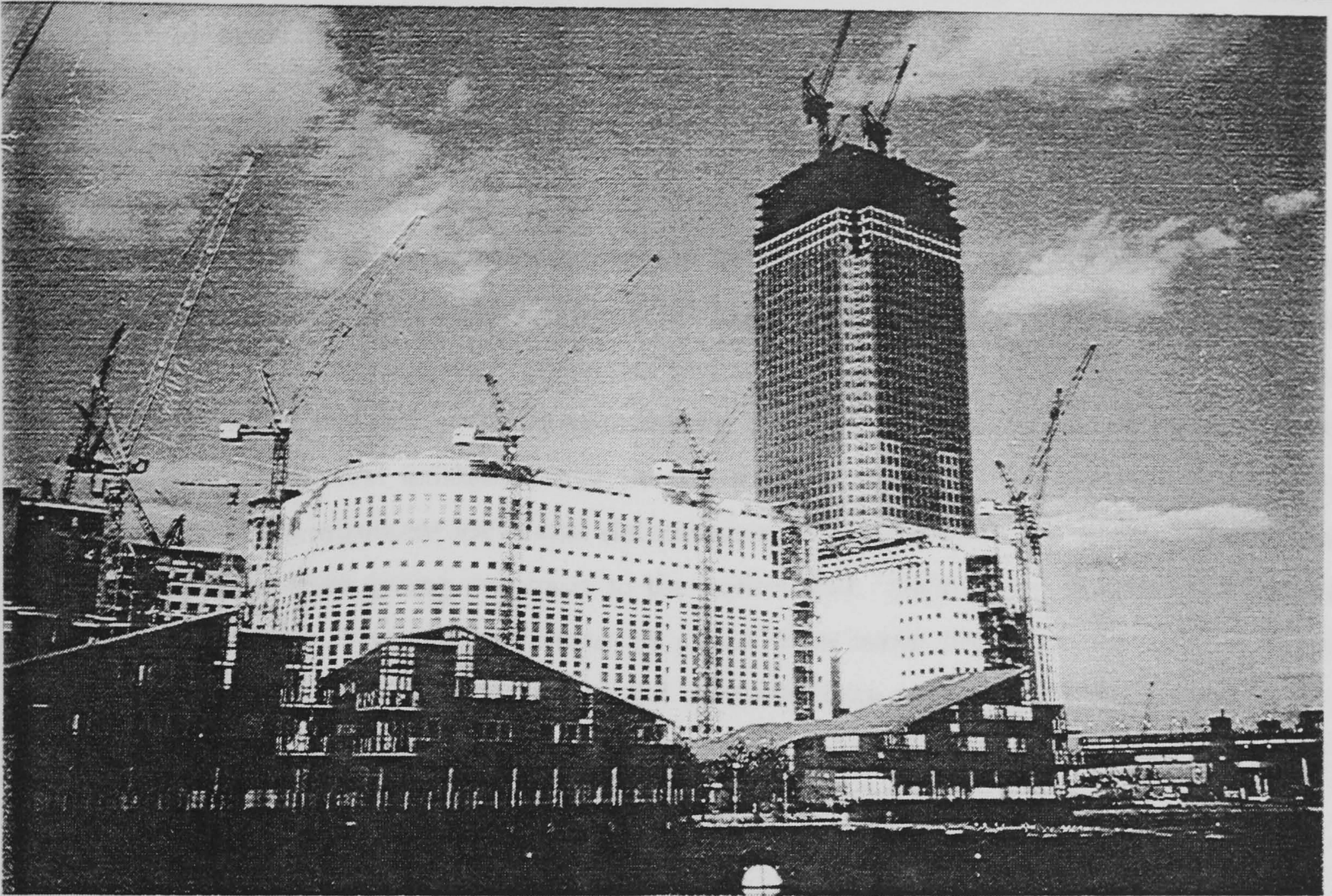


FIG 31

capitalism's very survival is dependent on an "all embracing, instrumental, socially mystified spatiality"⁹.

space as produced

But if it appears obvious that all historical processes are simultaneously spatial it is less obvious why the category of space appears at the margins of theoretical work, apart from in the more obvious histories of "urban form".¹⁰ Lefebvre introduces us to the idea that space is not an ahistorical given, space is produced, that is, every social formation produces both new concepts of space and new practices to transform it. Lefebvre goes as far as to argue that social relations have no real existence save in and through space.¹¹ This could too easily be interpreted as an argument for spatial determinism. Alternatively Lefebvre can be seen to be doing no more than giving emphasis to the notion that, "Socio-political contradictions are realised spatially. The contradictions of space thus make the contradictions of social relations operative. In other words spatial contradictions express conflicts between socio-political interests and forces; it is only in space that such conflicts come effectively into play, and in so doing they become contradictions of space."¹²

space as a productive force

Lefebvre was to summarise social space in the following manner; like Cohen¹³, he argues for the inclusion of space in the list of productive forces, a force of production that is both produced and productively consumed. Furthermore space is politically instrumental, and appears as an element in the means of production that any prospective ruling class must seize control of. He concludes from this that therefore space not only underpins the reproduction of production and property relations but is equivalent to a set of institutional and ideological structures¹⁴. Lefebvre had given the biggest boost to the process which Soja was to christen as the reassertion of space in critical theory. Picking up on aspects of Lefebvre's argument, Soja proposes a theory of a socio-spatial dialectic (the union of spatial and social relations) that leads him to argue for a "spatialised ontology". Here space becomes part of a second nature, both the pre condition and consequence, or pre supposition and outcome of social practices and relations. This is extended into an argument for a theoretical project that seeks

⁹ Soja, Edward - *Postmodern Geographies. The reassertion of space in critical theory* - Verso - London -1990

¹⁰ *ibid* p10-43

¹¹ Lefebvre, Henri - *The production of space* - Blackwell - 1991 -p404

¹² *ibid* p365

¹³ Cohen, G,A, - *Karl marx's theory of history - A defence* - OUP - 1984 -pp47 -55

¹⁴ Lefebvre, Henri - *The production of space* - Blackwell - 1991 - p349

to emphasise the necessity and interdependence of an historical and geographical materialism.¹⁵

Perhaps most importantly Lefebvre has argued that historically the concept of space has been inseparable from that of the class struggle and that a revolutionary spatial project should be at the centre of any new political project. Indeed Lefebvre argued that the revolution of Marx was concerned with a total revolution not just of work, but of social life and the whole space in which it happens.¹⁶

the built environment as a complex commodity

Recent work by Harvey approaches similar themes from a different perspective. Much of *Consciousness and the Urban Experience* looks precisely at the spatial character of the class struggle as it emerged in France in the period of and preceding the Paris commune.¹⁷ This follows earlier work that introduces us to a political economy of the built environment. If on the one hand spatial struggle is wrapped up with class struggle then it must within the context of capitalist development be inseparable from that of capital accumulation. Indeed, following an exposition of value theory, Harvey begins to build a theory of the built environment that emphasises it "as a humanly created resource system, comprising of use values embedded in the physical landscape, which can be used for production, exchange and consumption," adding that within the context of capitalist development it has to be regarded as "a geographically ordered, complex, composite commodity."¹⁸ This sets him the task of indicating how capital circulates within the built environment and how it is supportive of the process of accumulation¹⁹. As the physical manifestation of social relations the built environment is central to the accumulation of surplus, which under capitalism is distinguished by being uneven and contradictory. It should come as no surprise then that the class struggle is accompanied by the struggle for space. If this is distinctive of a particularly capitalist history of the built environment it raises the theoretical question of how the built environment functions in relation to the process of 'socialist' accumulation. The next sections describe in more detail how the production of the Soviet built environment became a platform for generating surplus and as a monument to the development of new class contradictions.

¹⁵ Soja, Edward - *Postmodern Geographies. The reassertion of space in critical theory* - Verso - 1990- p129 This remains of course a deeply controversial project about a deeply contradictory process. However a cursory glance at recent European history strengthens the case for the re-examination of the space of social history.

¹⁶ Lefebvre, Henri - *The production of space* - Blackwell - 1991 -p392

¹⁷ Harvey, David - *Consciousness and the urban experience* - John Hopkins - 1985

¹⁸ Harvey, David - *The limits to capital* - Blackwell - 1984 - p233

¹⁹ *ibid* p234-235

There are however some powerful reminders of the problems we face. To deal with the most obvious, is the realisation as we walk the streets of the 'Third Rome' that there is little physical evidence of the avant garde. This needs some qualification. As has been noted some of the early concepts on urban design, such as elements of the theory of the 'social condenser', were incorporated in the *micro-rayon*, (*micro-region*) programme of the late 1950s and early 1960s. But apart from the inclusion of ideas, buildings that were built and survived are few in number, Melnikov's Club Russakova, Golosov's and the Vesnin's Workers' clubs and Ginzburg's Dom Narkomfina being some of the highlights.²⁰

architecture and urban design - the nature of the avant garde

The conscious synthesis of a revolutionary formal and social programme marks out *particular tendencies within* the Soviet experiment as being unique.²¹ The conventional evaluation of Soviet architectural and urban design from the 1920s is that they were interesting ideas, but ultimately utopian and impractical. Either the masses were not ready for such ideas, the technological and economic pre conditions were not available, or there were more pressing tasks concerning electrification and industrial construction. Ikkonikov is no doubt right when he remarks about the umbilical connection of many projects with the Utopian tradition, and Tafuri is largely correct when he asserts that Soviet Russia found itself entrenched in two positions each of no use "that of the more or less romantic realm of empiricism and that of the artificial universe of the avant garde"²² But there is an alternative argument.

A social revolution inevitably calls into question our spatial and temporal existence. It is entirely consistent with the history of revolutions that the spatialisation of politics should

²⁰ Along with the publication of Khan Magomedov's *Pioneers of Soviet Architecture* and Anatole Kopp's *Constructivist Architecture in the USSR*, there is now a rich and readily available archive that deals with architecture and urban design from the twenties. The journal *Arkitektura i Stroitelstvo Moskvi* first published in the 1920s as *Stroitelstvo Moskvi* is a treasure trove of documents and photographs of Moscow. In the late 1980s a weekly entry "Moskva -shag za shagom" was introduced, (Moscow, step by step), also from the mid-eighties onwards there were a number of articles that revisited the avant garde and the early years of Soviet architectural design. *Rozdolskaya i Striapunina, - Ztenim li mui pamiatniki sovietskoi arkhitektura* - No 5 - 1988 p7-8 including a list of addresses. *Dlugach and Volchok - Moskva 1917 - 1987* - No 10 1987 p3 - 25. For an excellent guide in English to some of Moscow's key buildings see *Cooke, Catherine - Moscow Map Guide - Architectural Design* 53 - 1983. Catherine Cooke's work on the avant garde remains important, not only for popularising the work outside of Russia, but for emphasising the extraordinary depth and breadth of creative activity. See for instance *Cooke, Catherine - Form is a function of X-Architectural Design*- No 53 - 1983 - p34 -59 an analysis of the constructivists design and teaching methods - , and many other collaborations as editor and designer. See for instance *Gozak and Leonidov - Ivan Leonidov. The complete works - Academy - London -1988*

²¹ This is a cautionary note - it remains important to recognise similarities within the various tendencies but equally the differences. It is too easy to make sweeping generalisations about the 'avant garde'. On a contemporary note it is worth adding how the absence of any clear political vision in the naive formalism of the projects of Archigram, post-modernism, deconstructivism, and other 'radical-isms' render them ultimately conservative by comparison with the likes of Melnikov, Leonidov, Ginzburg, the Vesnins et al.

²² See *Ikkonikov, Andrei - Russian Architecture of the Soviet Period - Raduga - 1988 - p 105*, and *Tafuri, Manfredo - Chapter 5 - Toward the Socialist City, USSR, 1917 - 1928 - pp 149 - 170 in The Sphere and the Labyrinth. Avant gardes and architecture from Piranesi to the 1970's - MIT -1990 -*

seek to redefine itself at all levels of the social totality, from the design of whole cities to the construction of homes. Urban design becomes but one arena in which the class struggle is fought out. In this light it could be argued that there was nothing essentially artificial or intrinsically utopian about many of the early projects of the twenties, even Tatlin's tower. Rather they appeared to be utopian, or more precisely impossible because the radical transformation in the social relations of production and every day life on which they were premised, were step by step being dismantled and reversed. Indeed Kopp argues that the reasons for the attack on the Constructivist movement are not to be found within the field of architecture, but in the rise of new anti-egalitarian social attitudes within the bureaucracy.²³ Objectives such as the liberation of women from discrimination at work and at home, and the establishment of democratic structures to guarantee workers' control, were slowly being crushed by the onslaught conducted by the emerging dictatorship against all such 'naive leftist' ideas on egalitarianism. A situation had transpired where forms of consciousness that speculated on the democratic transformation of space and building production were developing in direct contradiction to the reintroduction of capitalist work practices and forms of social organisation. Justified as temporary measures to raise productivity, they were eventually to become permanent features of the Soviet economy.

constructing a programme

During NEP, under the Plan for the Electrification of Russia, known as GOELRO, over half of the State budget available for construction was devoted to the building of factories, power lines and railways, with a quarter reserved for housing.²⁴ Despite the undeniably pressing tasks of repair and reconstruction work, this did not prevent the production of a vibrant and innovative stream of ideas on how settlements, housing, clubs and factories could be built. The journals from this time expose the paradox of the situation that was to fuel the onslaught against the avant garde. In the same issue alongside detailed analyses of timber framing and how to cheapen workers' housing would appear constructivist projects by Leonidov that would have pushed architectural technology to the limits of the state of science.²⁵

Whilst pre-revolutionary classicists such as the neo-renaissance architect Ivan Zholtovski, and the author of the theory of "proletarian classicism" Ivan Fomin were to dominate Soviet Architecture after the fall of the avant garde in the 1930s, during the 1920s the two most influential groups involved in the race to capture within built form the goals and aspirations

²³ Kopp, Anatole op.cit p156

²⁴ *Stroitelstvo Moskvi* - No 5 - 1925 - p413

²⁵ See for instance *Stroitelstvo Moskvi* - No 7 -1927

of the revolution, were the *Constructivists*, centred around the Vesnin brothers and Mosei Ginzburg, and the *Rationalists*, led by Nikolai Ladovski. Alongside the establishment of a State building industry, both groups were involved in teaching at VKhUTEMAS. Founded in 1920 the Higher Artistic Technical Studios was set up to co-ordinate architectural and art education. It emerged more or less simultaneously with the Bauhaus, but was not dominated by any one doctrine.

Despite the acrimonious debates that occurred between the two groups, the former being labelled as *functionalists* the latter *formalists*, in terms of building form, there is arguably a greater similarity than there is a difference. This is especially evident in relation to the combined use of simple geometric shapes, and in the exploration of a machined aesthetic where the structure of the building was often clearly expressed. But what makes Soviet architecture of this period not only modern but truly avant garde was the mutual interdependence of this formal experimentation with a revolutionary social programme. Within the avant-garde, the architects who did most to promote the production of a social architecture that sought to encapsulate a socialist politics were the Constructivists.

Whilst many artists and architects were either ambivalent or pragmatic to the demands of a revolutionary situation, there were others who if not politicised before the revolution had through the political struggle become involved in creative activity that was imbued with and indeed organised by, a *conscious* politics that promoted *collective* and *social* values. In Mosei Ginzburg, Alexander Vesnin and El Lissitsky, the Constructivists possessed articulate defenders of this position. When in 1934 the elder Vesnin continued to affirm that functionalism was in essence "no more than the rebirth of the immemorial primacy of function as opposed to scholastic, decorative academism.", he had in mind a notion of function that embraced both the utilitarian and ideological aspects of architecture²⁶. Such words were accompanied by El Lissitsky's declarations that "it is to the social revolution, rather than to the technological revolution that the basic elements of Russian architecture are tied"²⁷, and that the value of the new architecture along with art would be "determined by its relationship with the community".²⁸ These sentiments were summarised in the polemical writings of Ginzburg, the author of the seminal book *Style and the Epoch*, who considered the functional method as the basis for a materialist approach to both the practice and

²⁶ Vesnin, Alexander - *Arkhitektura SSSR* - No 7 - pp3-4 Quoted in Khan Magomedov, Selim - *Pioneers of Soviet Architecture* - Thames and Hudson- 1983 - p550

²⁷ Lissitsky, El - *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution*- Lund Humphries - London - 1970-p27. Originally published in 1930

²⁸ *ibid* p68

teaching of architecture. Constructivism became a "working method for searching out the most reliable and correct path to a new form which most closely corresponds to the new social context", such that we "approach form through the unfolding of the social aim"²⁹. One of the paradoxes of these pronouncements is that the Soviet ruling class were to use much of the same kind of language in the subsequent attack on the avant-garde.

democratic space

It follows from this that at the heart of the modern movement in the USSR, was an attempt to spatialise democracy, that is to find a theory of settlement development and of individual building design, that was commensurate with socialism. This required a systematic elaboration of not only the "problematic" but the "practice of space".

Amongst the mountain of projects, the majority of which were never built, there are a few which are of special importance for the following reasons. First, they all represented new ways of thinking about materials, technology, and form. In this sense they represent a departure from the dominant pre-revolutionary tendencies in Russian architecture, that of neo-classicism and the movement known as the *Ruski Moderne*.

More generally, they represent a set of dynamic documents of a society in the process of transition where new needs and functions for buildings were being produced. Much of the work was founded on the belief that a fundamental transformation had taken place with regards to the social relations underpinning the practices and labour processes that make up daily life, at home, at work and at school. The intention is not to survey the work of the avant-garde, this has already been done, but simply to elaborate on a few projects that are indicative of the attempt to build post-capitalist social and spatial relations. Within the built environment it is possible to conceptualise these social relations as existing at a number of levels within the social totality, thus corresponding to different social practices and thus engendering different organisations of space. These new social relations would inevitably require a new built environment at the level of the *world*, Tatlin's monument to the Third International, the *territory and region*, the planning ideas of Sabsovich and Okhitovich, the *settlement*, the Dom Narkomfin by Ginzburg, the *club*, the Russakova by Melnikov and the *educational establishment*, the Institute of Librarianship by Leonidov.

²⁹ Ginzburg, Mosei - *Sovremennaya arkhitektura* - 1928 - Quoted in Khan Magomedov, Selim - *Pioneers of Soviet Architecture* - Thames and Hudson- 1983 - p584

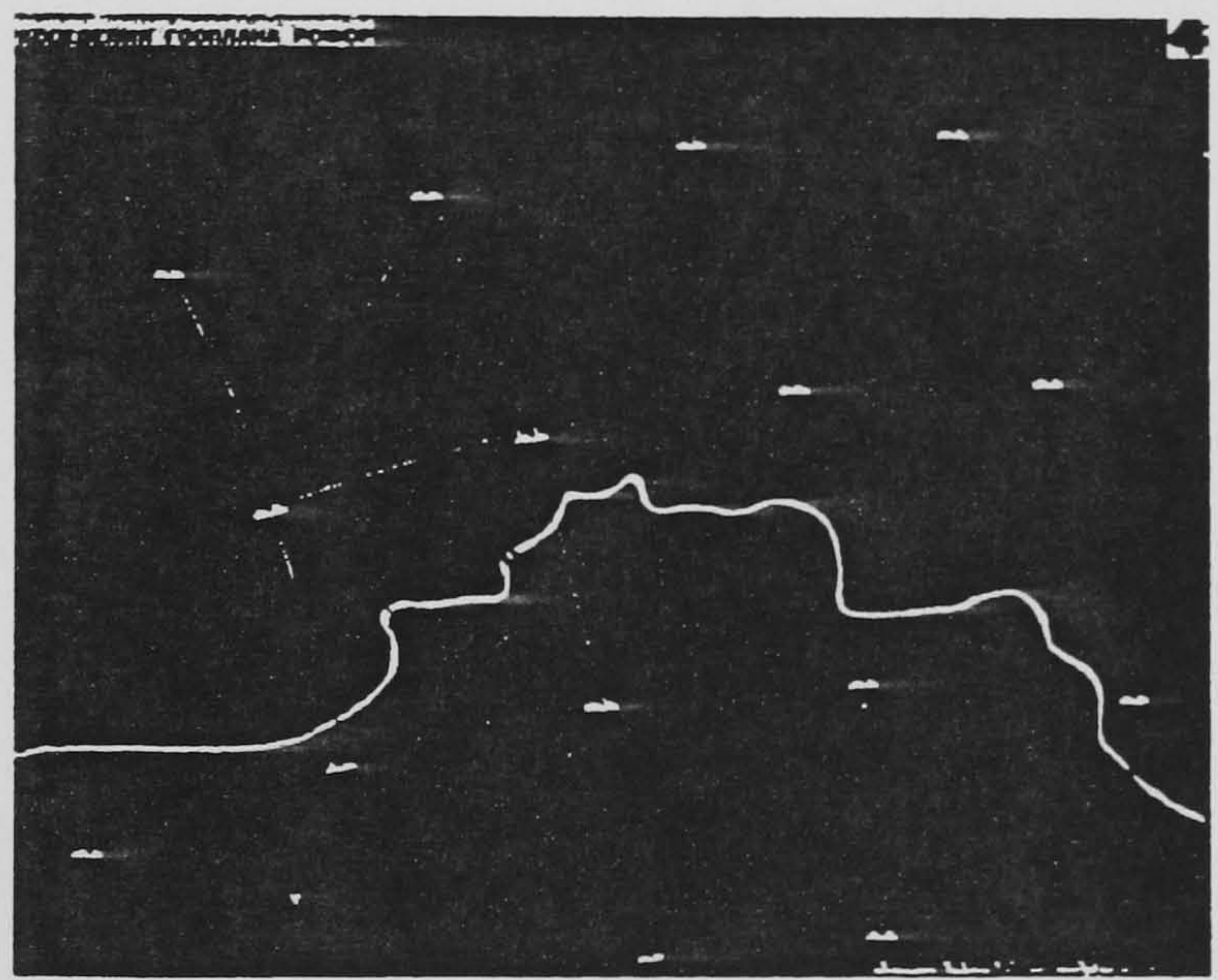
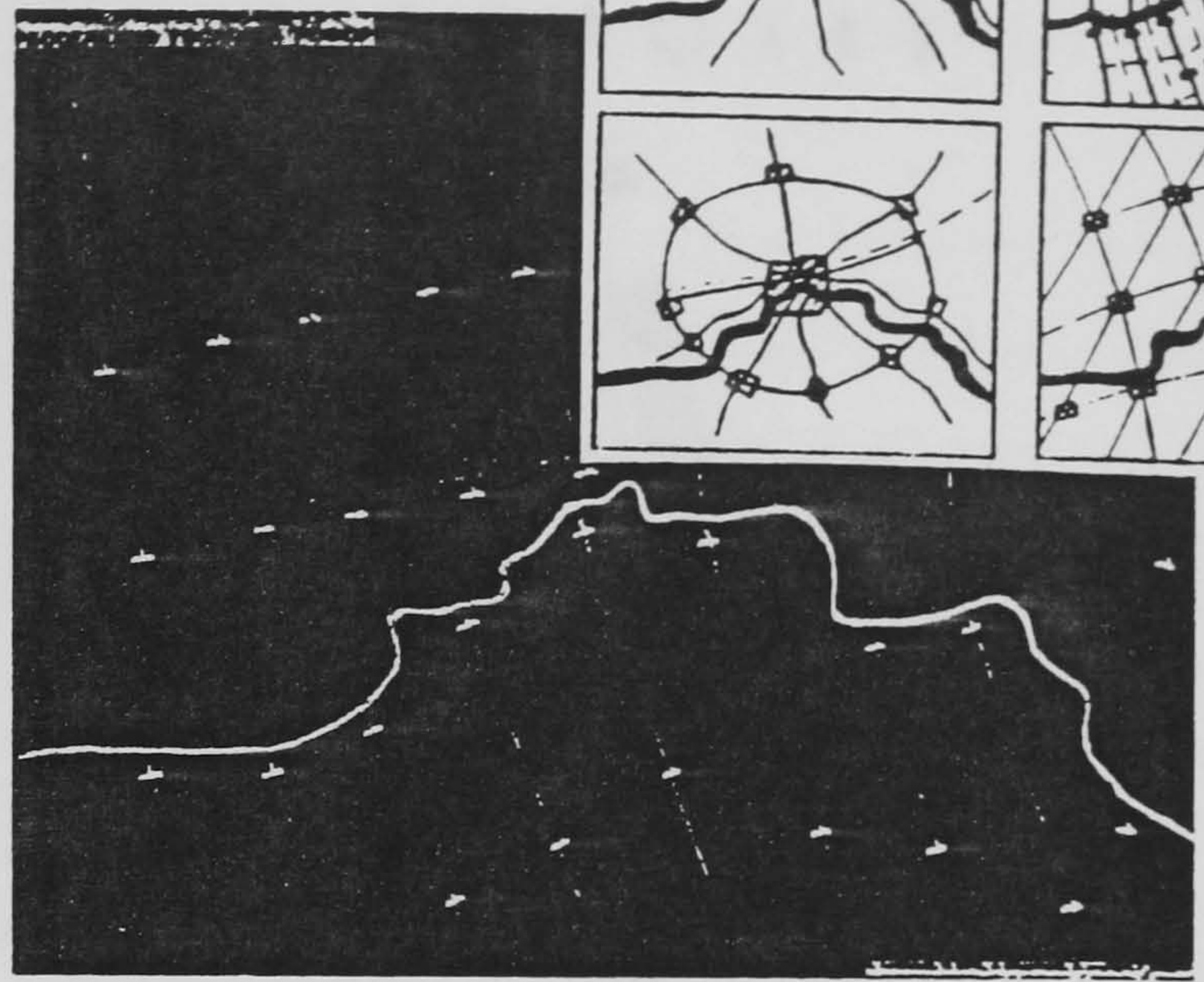
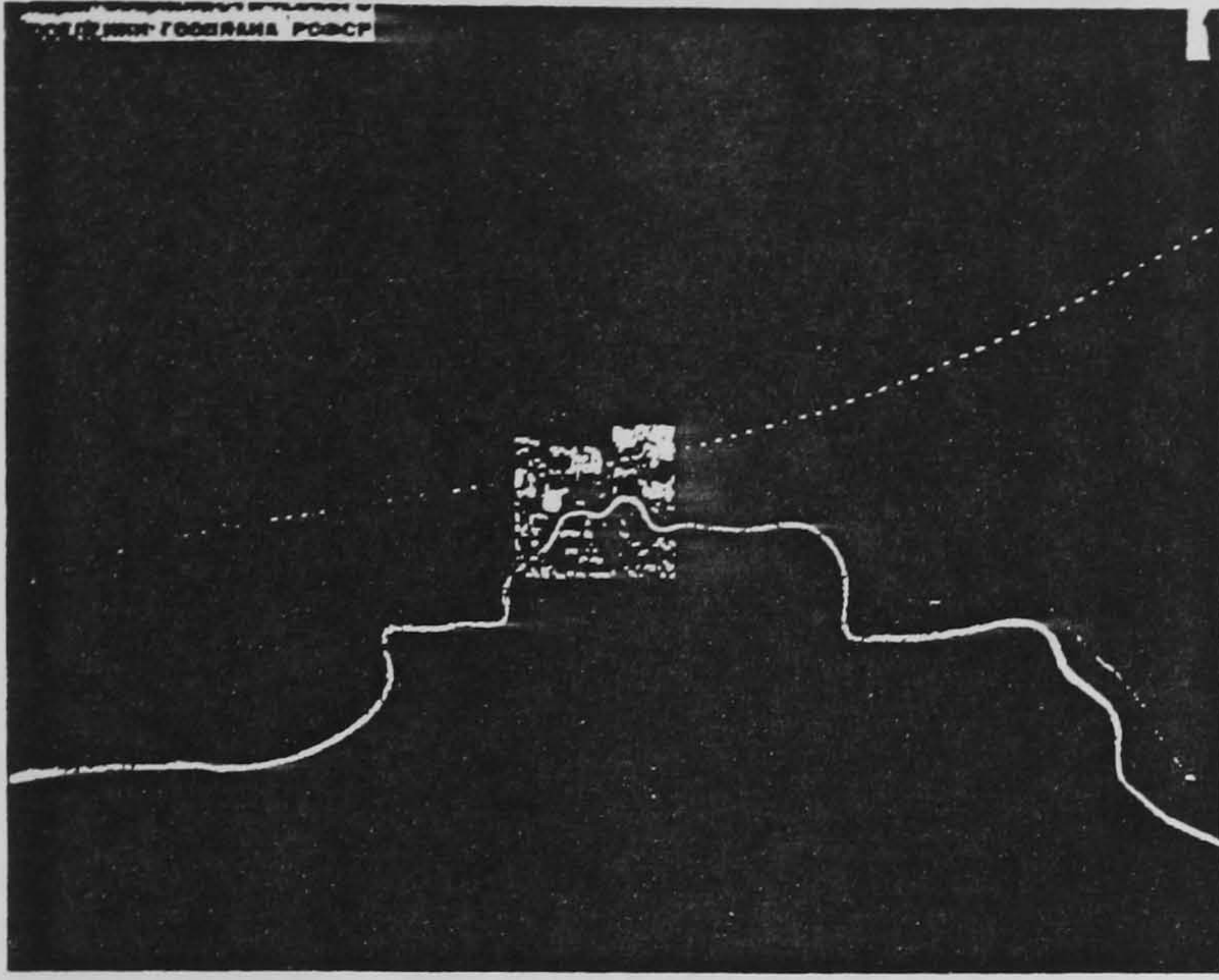
Territorial organisation
Diagrammatic atmosphere

TATLIN, Vladimir
Artist and designer 1885-1953

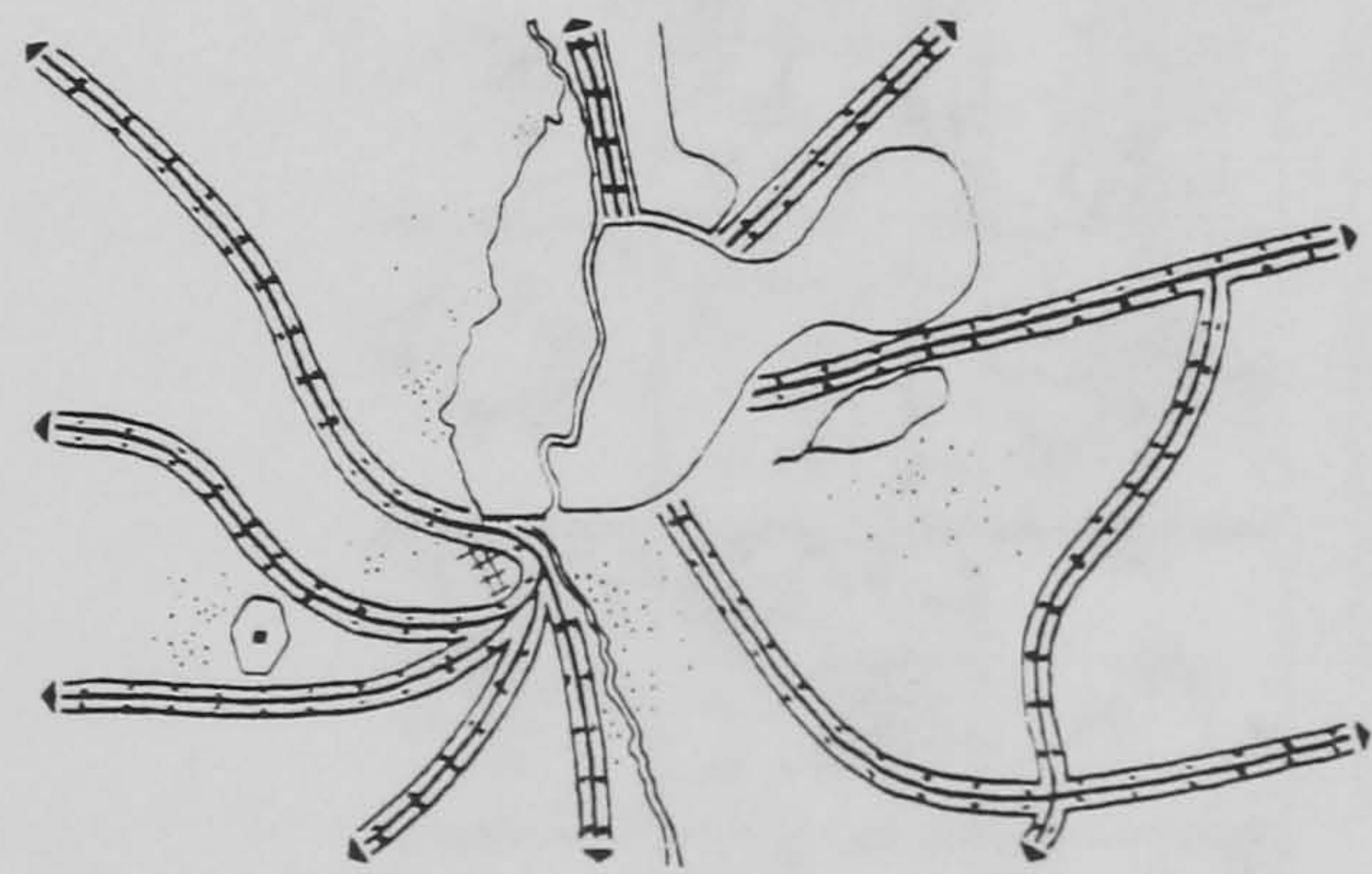
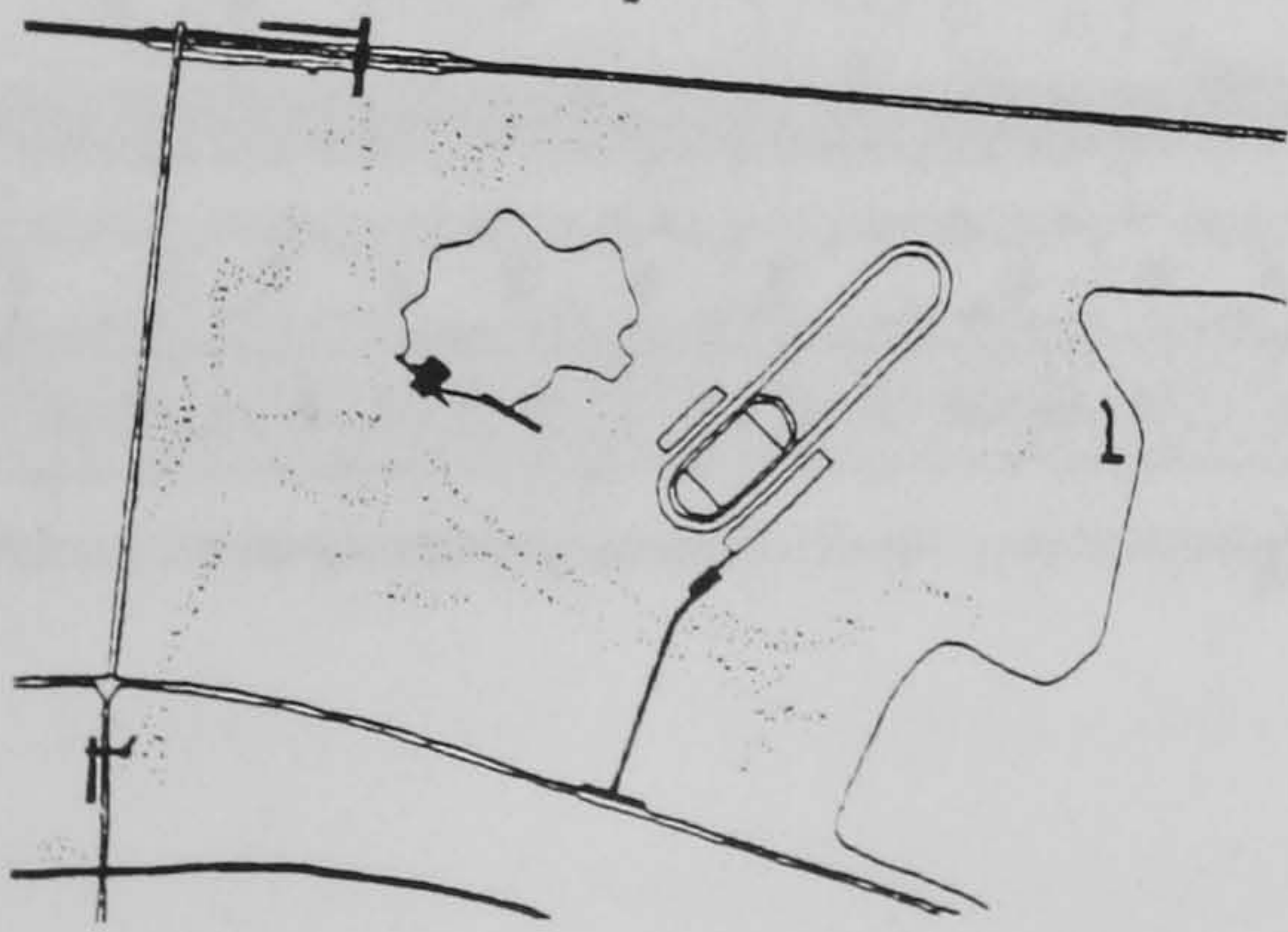


Tatlin's tower - Monument to the third international

Territorial organisation under socialism
 Diagrammatic attempts to spatialise democracy



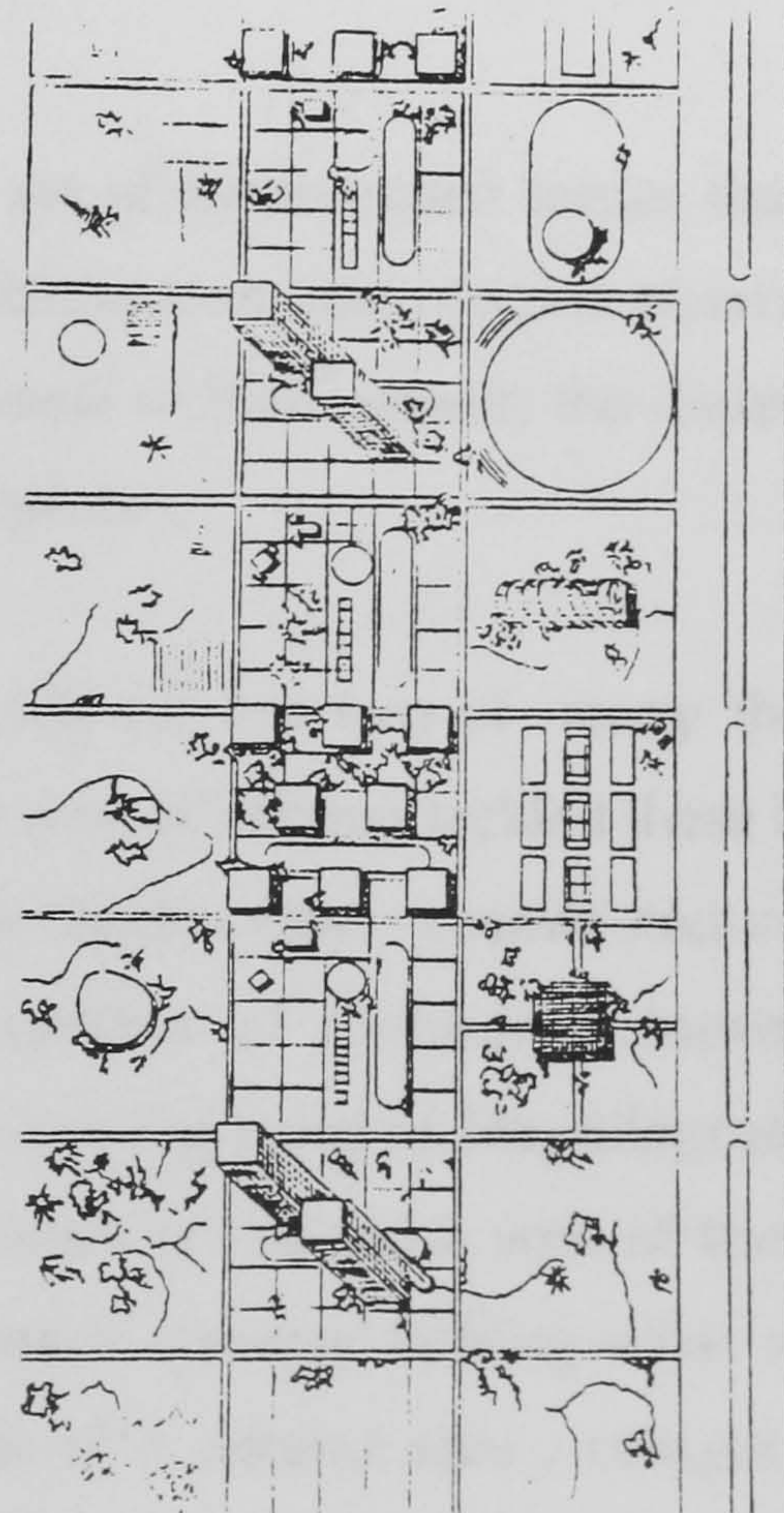
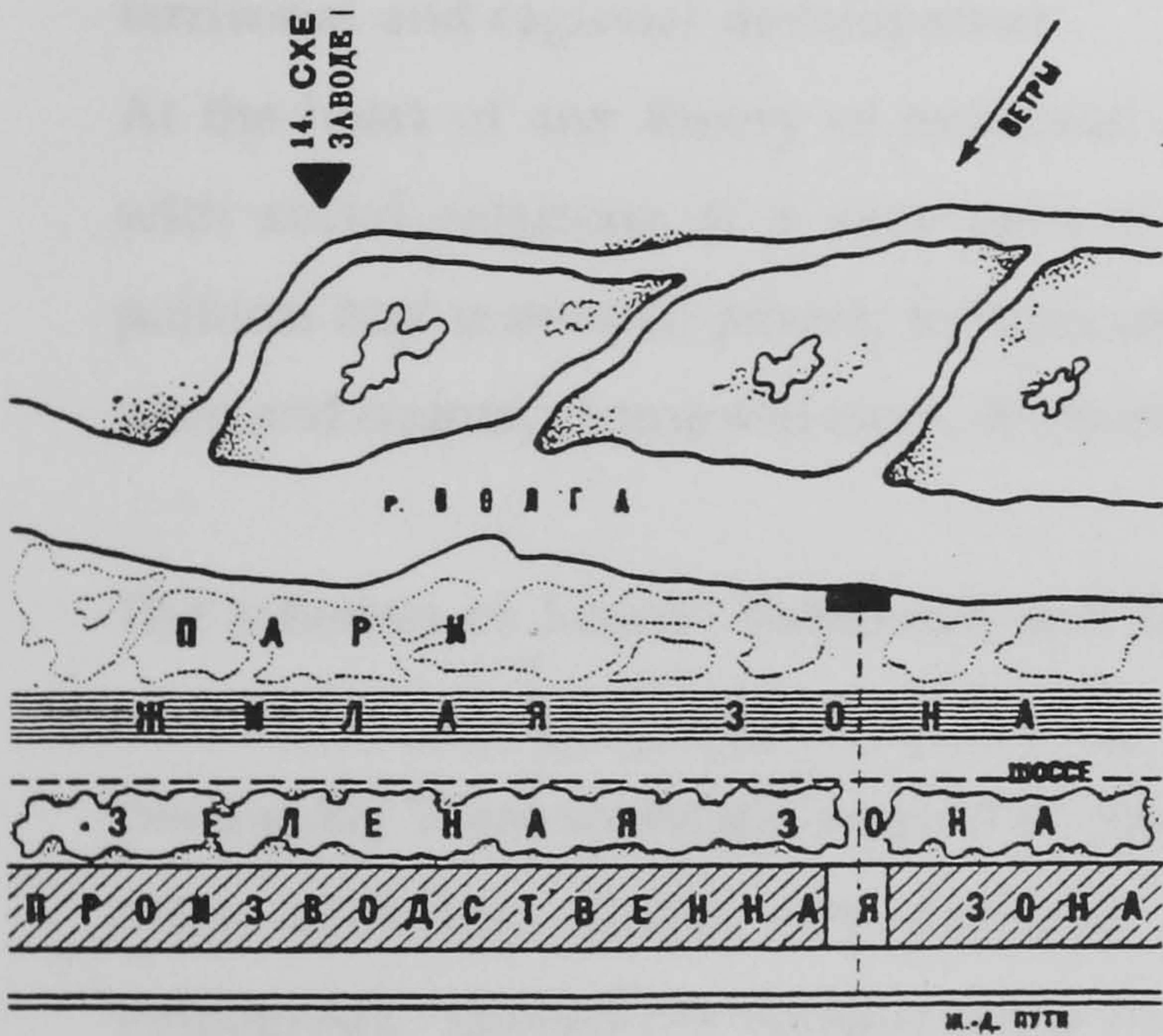
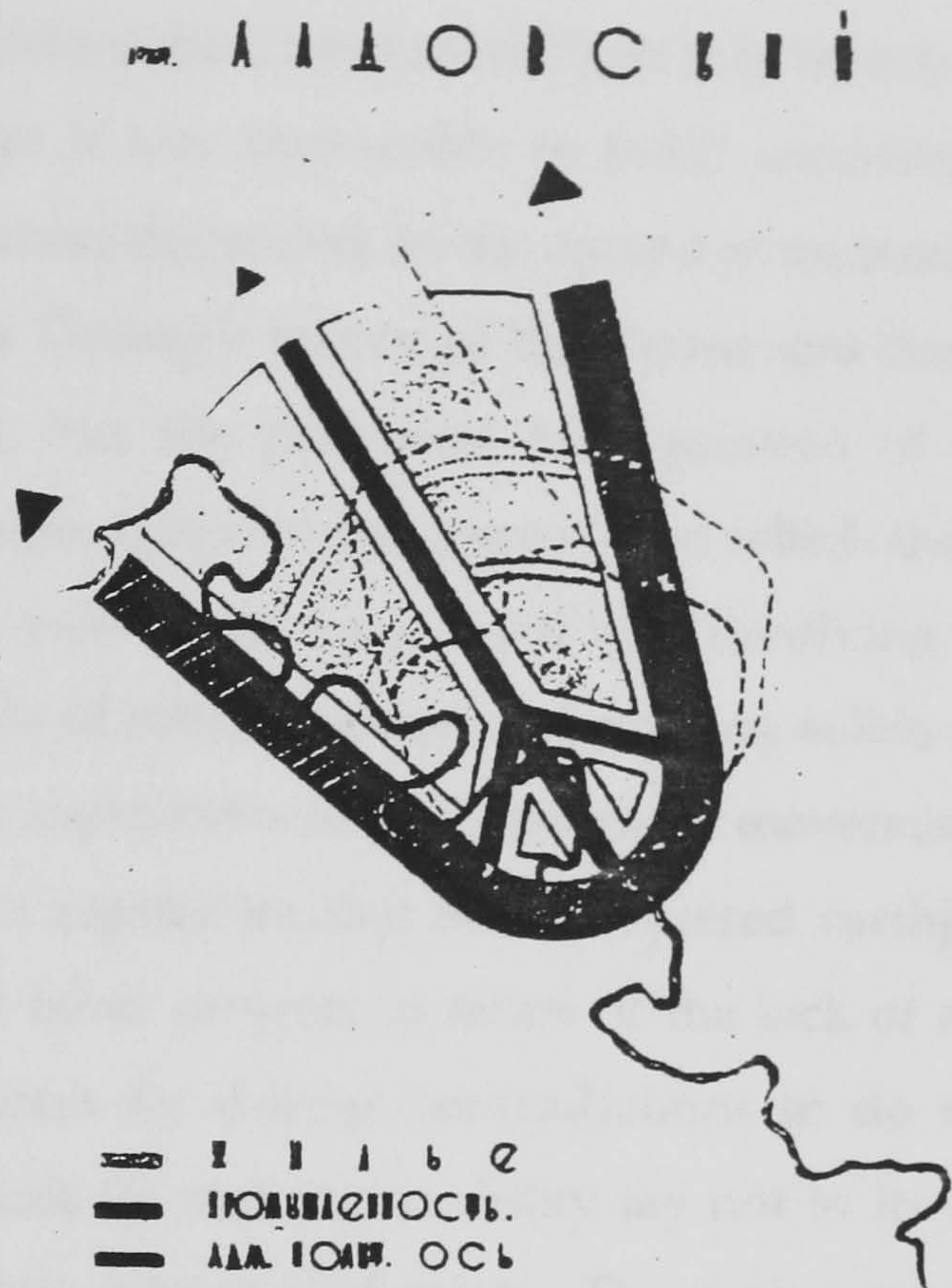
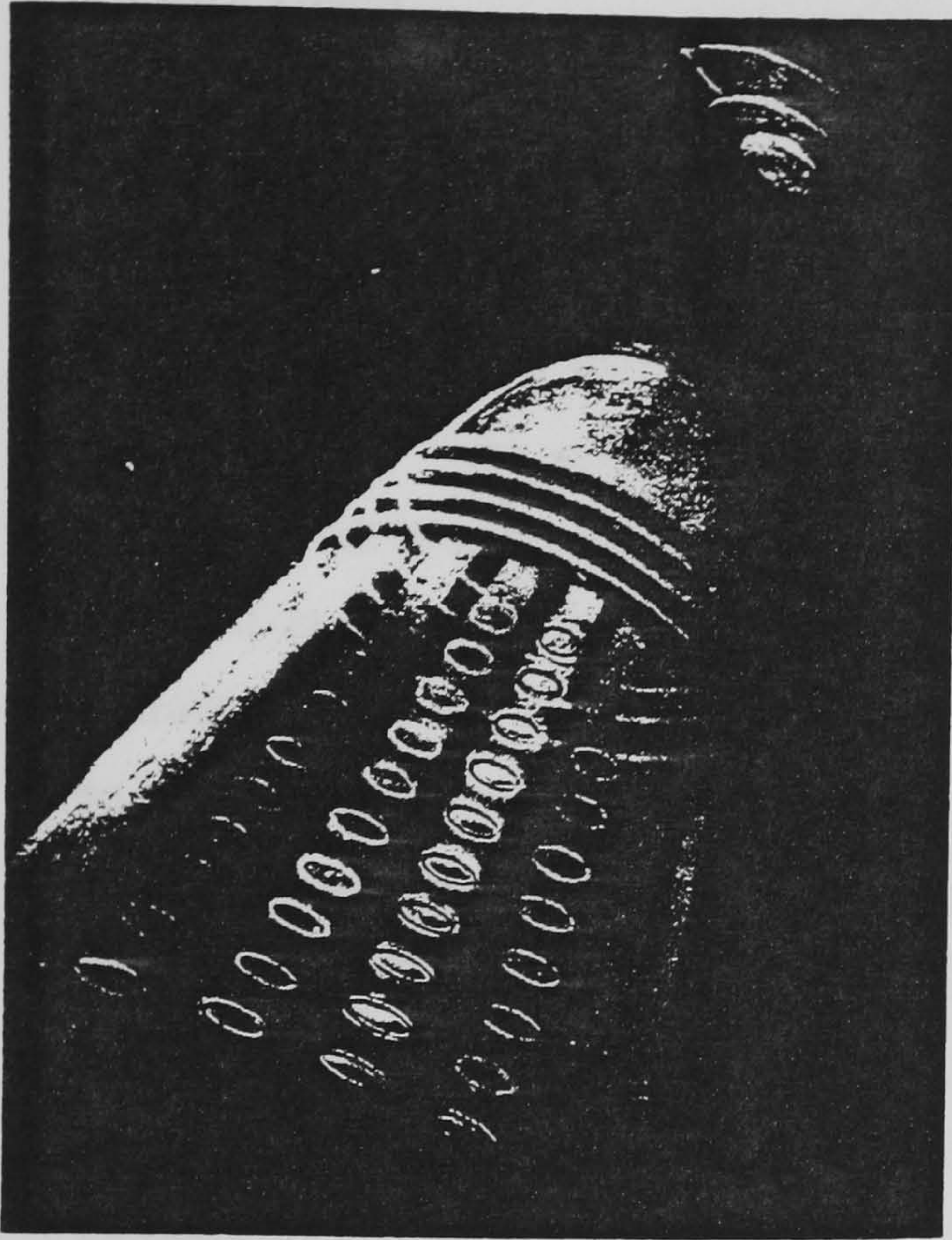
Clockwise- disurbanised, decentralised, a-centralised, dispersed



Constructivist 'disurban' movement - Left Ginzburg and Barsch plan for a green city,
 right, the linear development plan for Magnitogorsk - 1930

FIG 33

Theorising the development of the built environment



Clockwise-Krutikov's flying city, Ladovski's radial city, Miliutin's linear city and Leonidov's linear city - All late 1920's early 1930's

Tatlin's Tower

In the first years of the new 'Workers' State' before the Communist Party was transformed by Stalin, many Bolsheviks firmly believed that it was impossible to build socialism in one country, and that the Russian Revolution's success depended on the spread of an International Revolution. This is a theme that is central to Trotsky's theory of the Permanent Revolution. Tatlin's tower was not only a monument, but the proposed headquarters of such an International. (See fig 32) Three volumes, a cube, cylinder and pyramid, in which the world's socialist and left wing groups would meet, were to be suspended and revolving inside a spiralling steel and glass structure. A synthesis of orbital motion and primary solids combine to produce a powerful metaphor of the global aspirations of the communist movement and of the permanent necessity of struggle against a capitalism that had conquered earthly space. But as we shall see the criticisms of this and other projects in terms of the lack of available resources and technology masks and disguises far deeper contradictions to do with the direction the revolution was taking. In this case its real impossibility lay not in its complex technological vision but in the negation of two interrelated issues. The replacement of the theory of the necessity of an international revolution by the theory of socialism in one country, and of the wholesale negation of the theory of the withering away of the state and law that accompanies the rise of the new statocracy.

territorial and regional development

At the heart of any theory of territorial planning are a set of inter-related issues that deal with social relations at a very general level; the centralisation and decentralisation of political and economic power; the concentration or dispersal of State power; the dialectic of town and country, home and work, the human subject and nature .

The schemes of Leonid Sabsovich and Mikhail Okhitovich are but two of many theories which emerged concerning urban development that in one way or another tackled these issues. (See fig 33) These include a version of Ebenezer Howard's Garden City, 'cosmic' and vertical cities, Miliutin's linear city proposal for the development of Stalingrad (nowadays Volgograd), Leonidov's version of the *linear city* for the development of Magnitogorsk and Ladovski's *radial city* plan for Moscow. (See fig 34) Sabsovich envisaged a web of transport and communication routes evenly spread across the entire country linking what would effectively be production units. These were settlements of a similar size , compact and possessing a central core of collective social and cultural facilities. Okhitovich proposed a similar network of communication and transport routes but whereas in the former the human

settlement was essentially stationary, in the latter it acquires mobility. People would live in houses within a communication network that combined motorways, telephones and radio.

Although the former was labelled "urbanist" and the latter "disurbanist", this in some ways obscures their similarity. They both reflect a belief in the possibility of rational planning and how to express in physical and spatial terms the egalitarian principle of the even and uniform distribution of resources. In themselves they do not offer a blueprint which could immediately have become part of a construction programme. They should be understood as "programmatically" statements that indicated the directions spatial practice could take given the political imagination and the economic will.³⁰ However, it is not the absence of such a ready made consciousness for such visions or indeed the paucity of motor cars that render these ideas utopian, but rather the contradiction between a consciousness rooted in the belief of the inevitable transformation of the conditions of exploitation, and the alternative reality of the emergence of a new group of exploiters, a party bureaucracy which was slowly usurping the democratic goals of the revolution.

social condensers and settlements

Perhaps the single most influential idea of the avant-garde in the field of architecture was the Constructivists theory of the *social condenser*. It was premised on the belief in the inevitable and necessary transformation of the social relations at the heart of daily life, and its objectives are summarised in the following words of Mosei Ginzburg: "Our work should essentially be based on a scrupulous and detailed study of the brief in the light of our political and social circumstances. Its essential aim should be the creation of social condensers for our times. This is the essential objective of constructivism in architecture"³¹ It is in the social condenser that we find the most concerted attempt to redefine relations between human subjects.

The social condenser was conceived as being a part of, or all of, a building or complex, in which the development of a new way of life and of collective and co-operative organisation would be encouraged, an environment in which women in particular would be liberated from the burdens of domestic labour. As such a collective laundry, a child care establishment, as well as the more general categories of the housing commune or workers' club, could be considered as social condensers. Such a theory stressed the transformative and educational

³⁰ Although it should be added that with Barsch, Vladimirov and Sokolov, Okhitovich produced a detailed application of some of the ideas in a proposal for Magnitogorsk.

³¹ Kopp, Anatole op.cit p70

possibilities of architecture, and can be seen as part of the historic struggle against alienation and reification. At the level of the neighbourhood the concept of the "sotsgorod" emerged. These were intended as dwelling complexes with anything up to thirty thousand people, effectively 'neighbourhoods that had fully integrated social and cultural facilities. It was an eminently practical idea as indicated in the drawings of the Vesnin brothers and Ilya Golosov for the proposals for Stalingrad, and in the incorporation of aspects of the 'sotsgorod' in the first schemes that followed the industrialisation of the building industry in the late 1950s, notably the micro region "novie chremushki" in Moscow. (See fig 35)

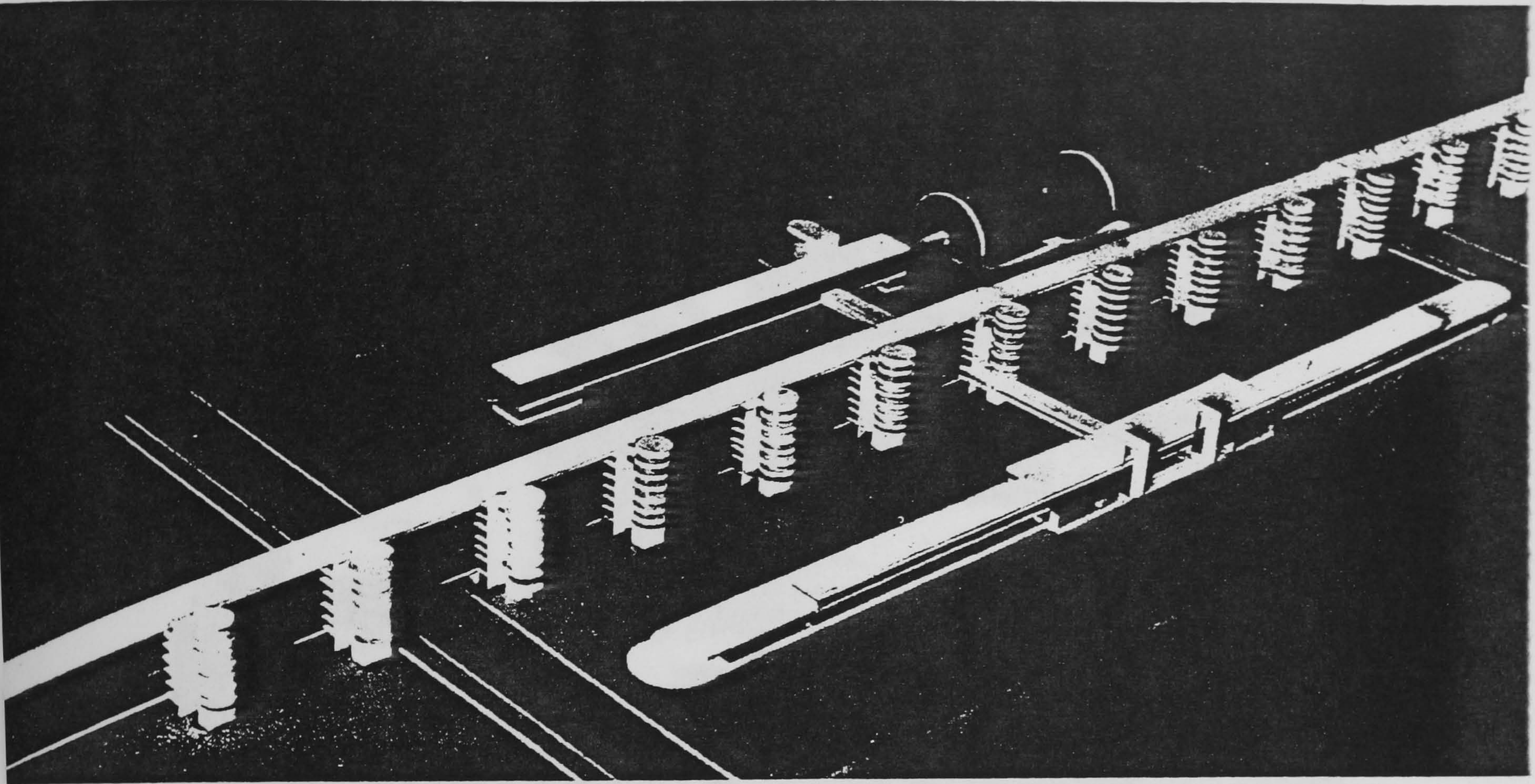
A smaller and arguably more sophisticated attempt to put such ideas into practice can be seen in the Dom Narkomfin in Moscow (1928-30) designed by I. Milinis and Mosei Ginzburg. (See fig 36) Ginzburg was not only committed to the formal and social possibilities of the new architecture, but to the vast potential offered by the industrialisation of the building process. Discussion of the commune was widespread and reached its most extreme variant in the scheme by Nikolaev which proposed the almost total collectivisation of the way of life. The journals at this time regularly featured debates on the relative merits of the housing commune as an essential feature in the socialist construction of the *novie beat*, 'new way of life'. As late as 1929, *Arkhitektura i Stroitelstvo Moskvi* was publishing programmatic statements declaring that "the liberation of women from the kitchen must be realised not in words but in actions", suggesting that one of the ways this could be achieved was to provide every adult with their own room, to rear children collectively in an adjoining building, and to socialise the budget and running of the commune.³²

In Ginzburg's *Dom Perekhodnaya tipa* we see a scheme that is still a benchmark in the development of modern urban living and housing design, one that is linked historically with the work of Ernst May in the Weimar republic and of Corbusier in the Unite D'Habitation.³³ (See fig 37) The Dom Narkomfina lay within the modernist paradigm displaying the full catalogue of its formal icons: ribbon windows, internal street, pilotis, roof garden, rendered infill brickwork to give it the "machined" elevation, and the emphasis throughout on air, sun, and greenery. This was a housing commune of the transitional type and possessed both individual and collective facilities so that a person could be eased into the new social relationships. It possessed what were called F-type units for small families and K-type units on two floors for larger families. These living units had separate cooking facilities for those

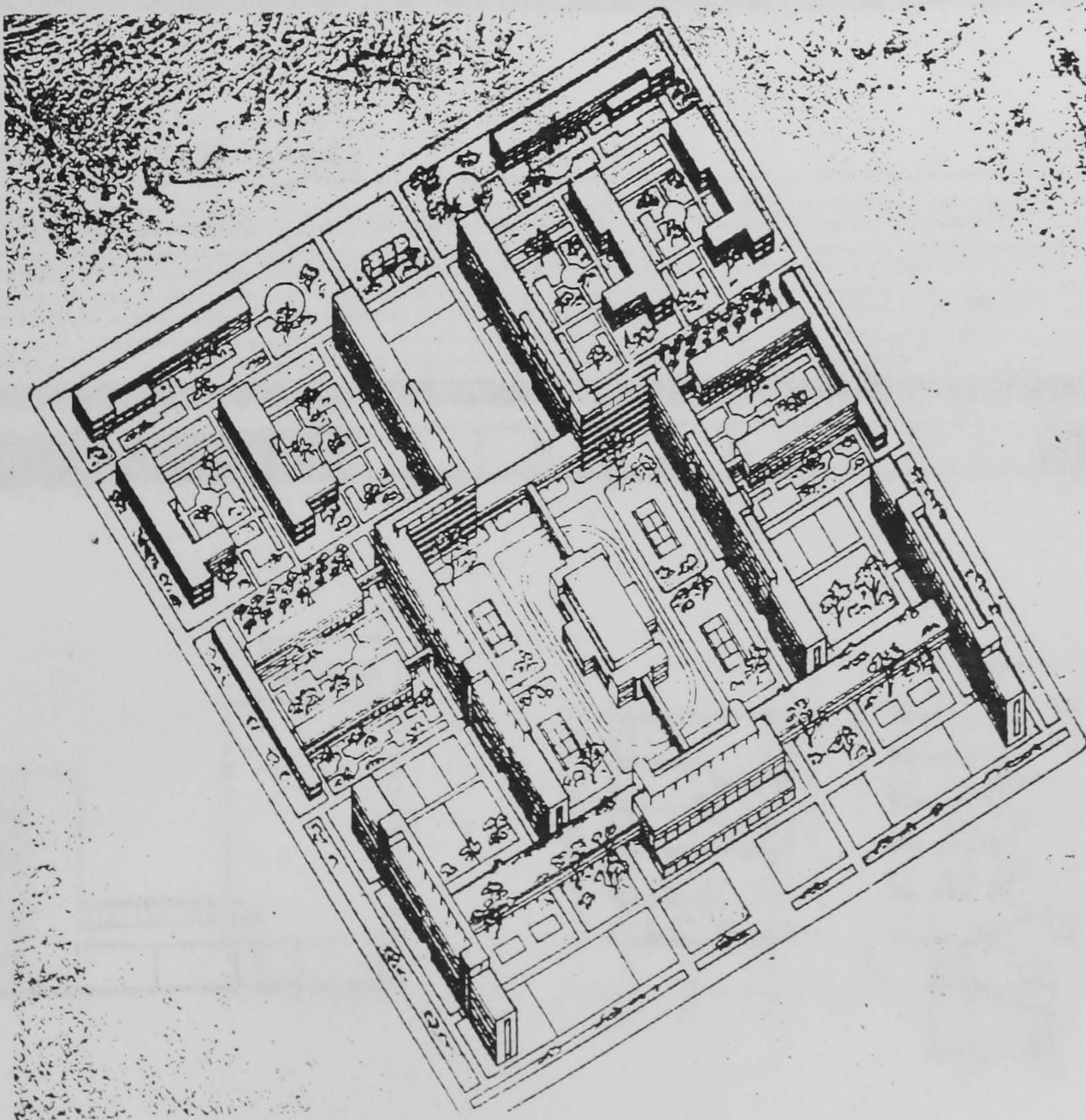
³² *Stroitelestvo Moskvi* - No 12 - 1929 p1-21

³³ For a good essay on Ginzburg and Corbusier see Henry, Rex -- *Modern Urban Living* - A3 Times - London-1989

GINZBURG
The "SOTSGOROD" - The "SOCIALIST TOWN"



The Vesnin's Sotsgorod dwelling complex 1929



Ilya Golosov's dwelling combine 1930

GINZBURG, Mosei - Architect 1892-1946 -Leader of the Constructivist movement
Below- the 'tragic' remains of the Dom Narkomfina, the housing commune of the transitional type Built 1928-1930

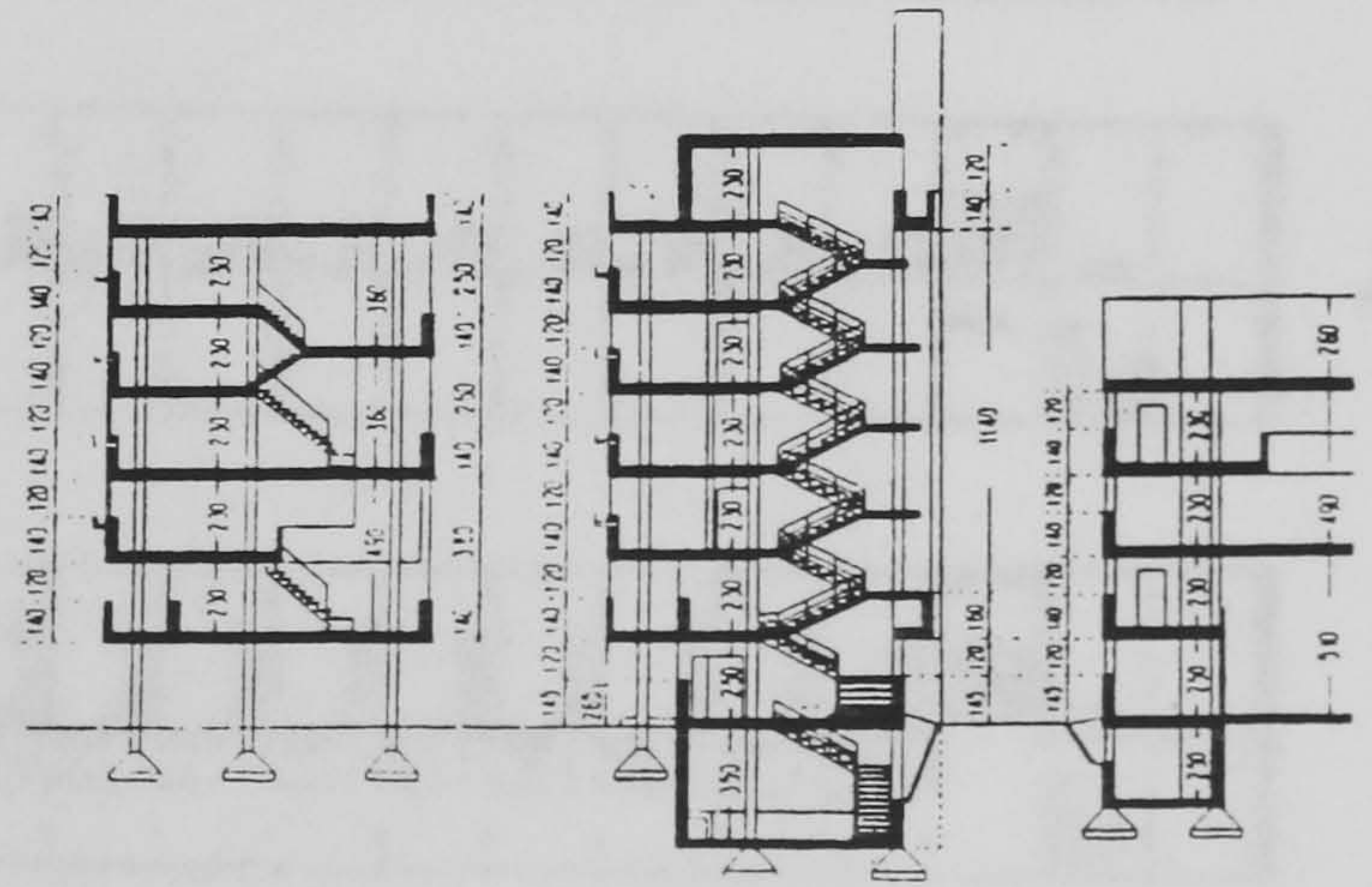
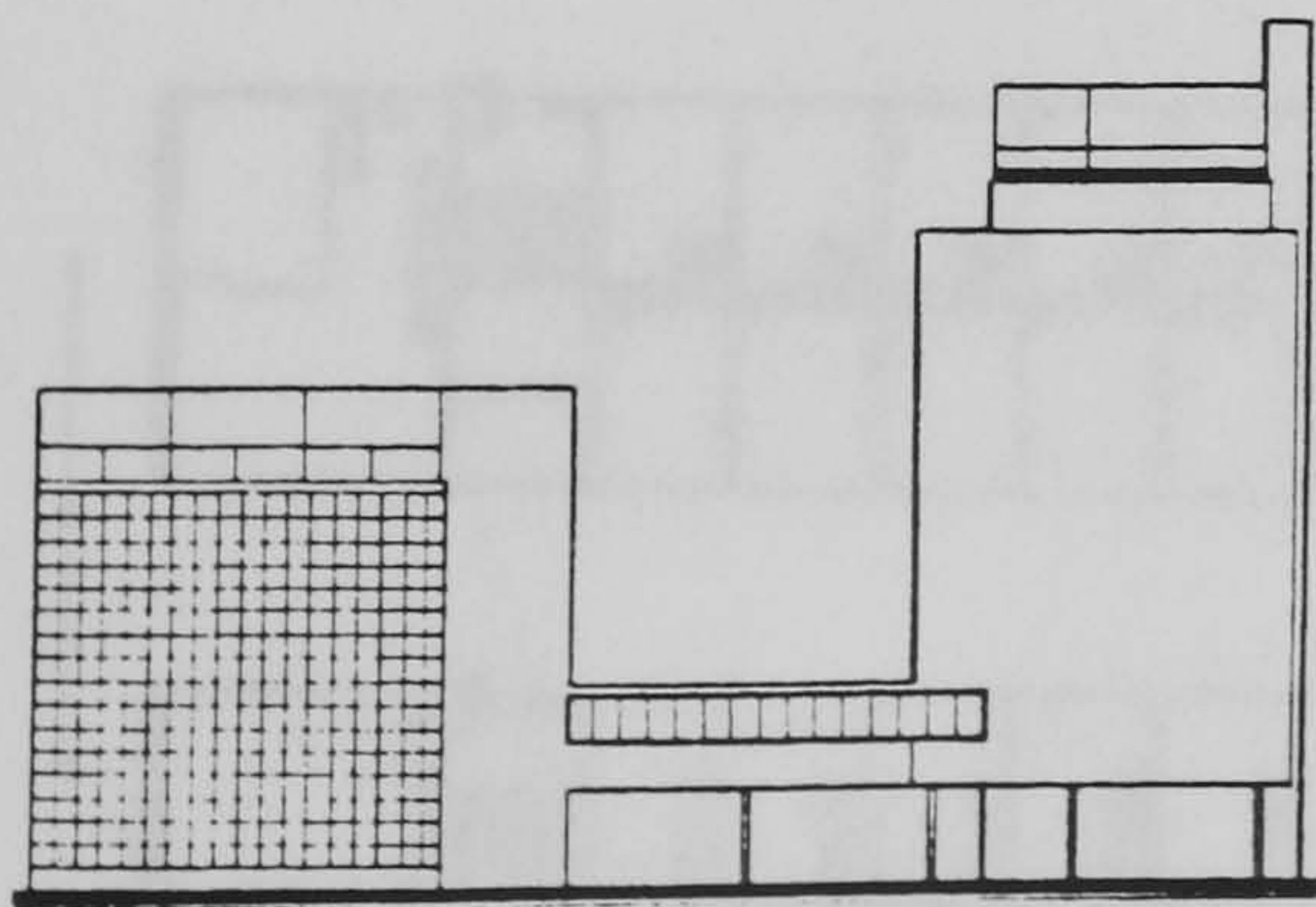
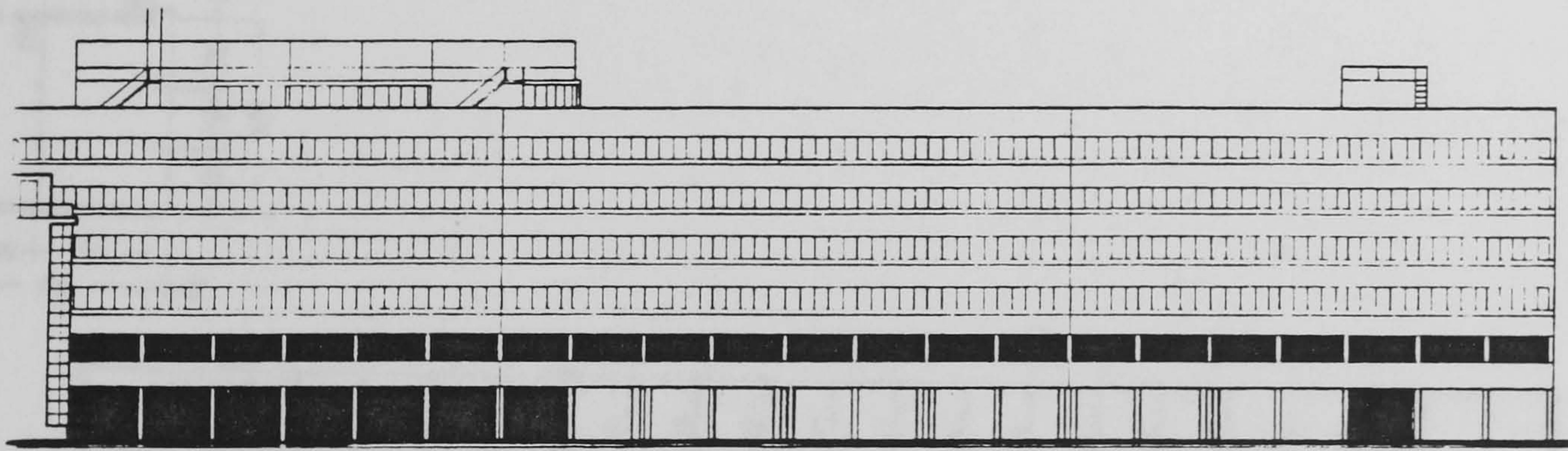
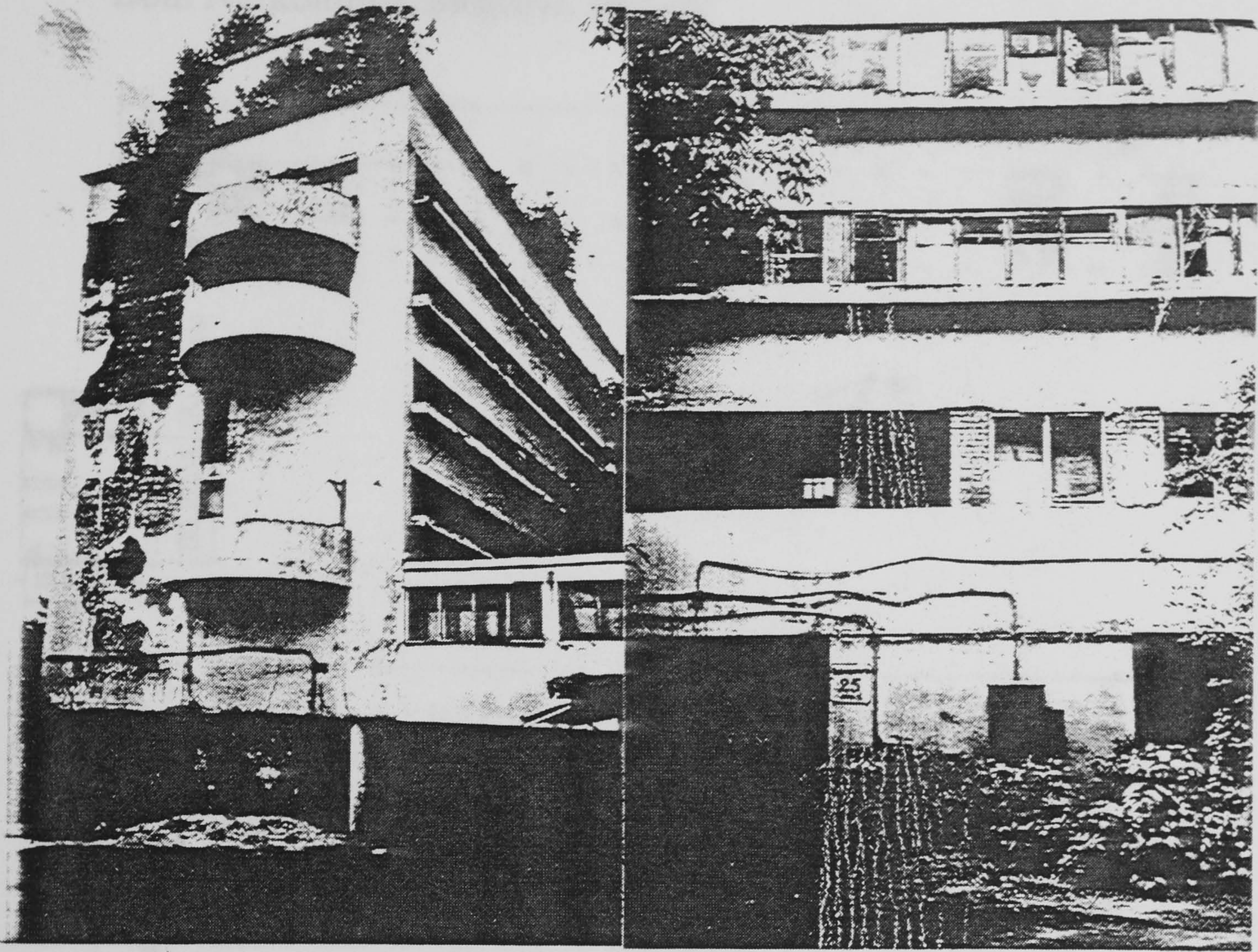
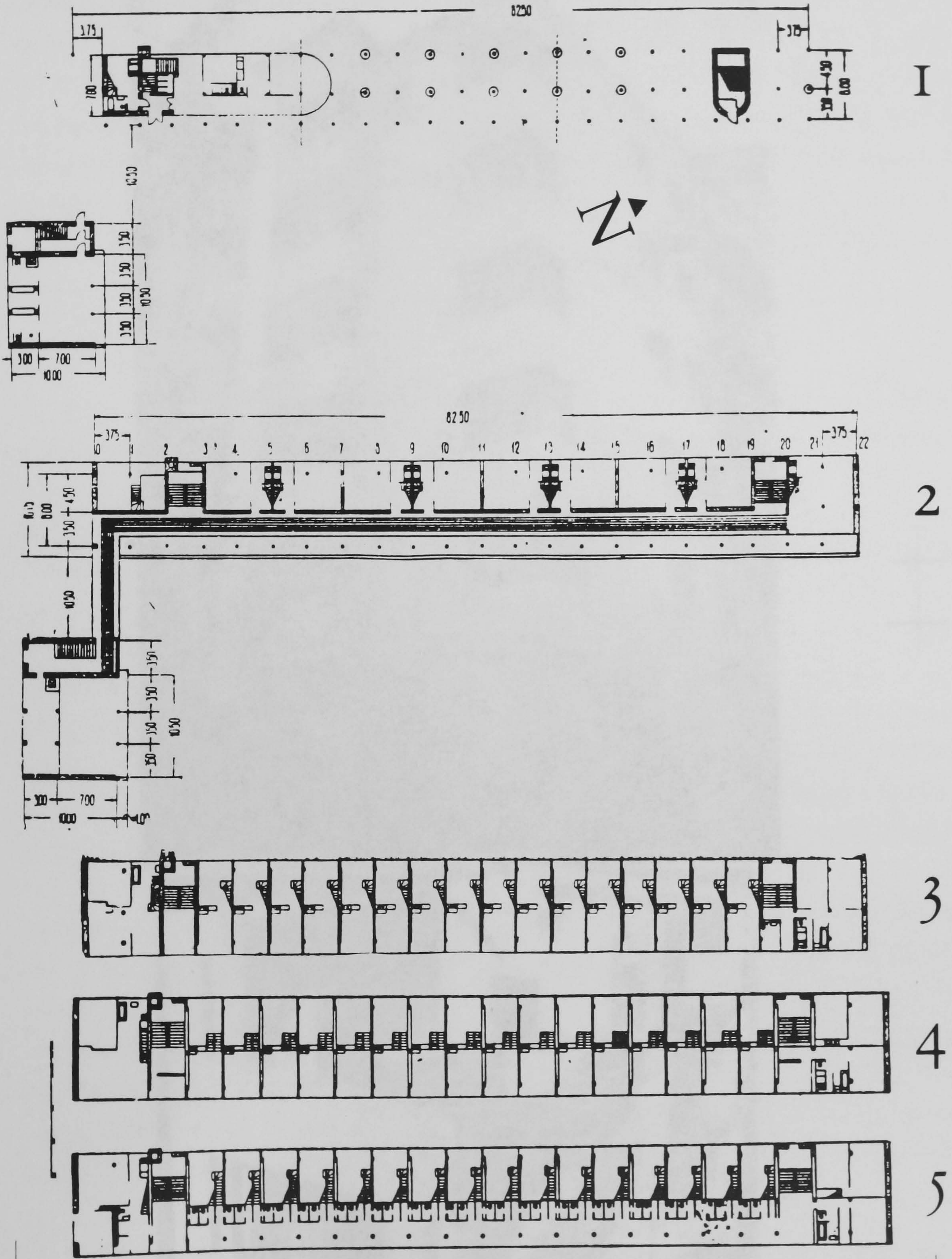


FIG 36

GINZBURG and MILINIS

Ground, first, second, third, fourth and fifth floor plans of the
Dom Narkomfina, Moscow, 1928-30



GINZBURG, Mosei - Architect 1892-1946 - Leader of the Constructivist movement
Above-Housing commune, Moscow, 1926 Below-Constructivist split level flat, F-type

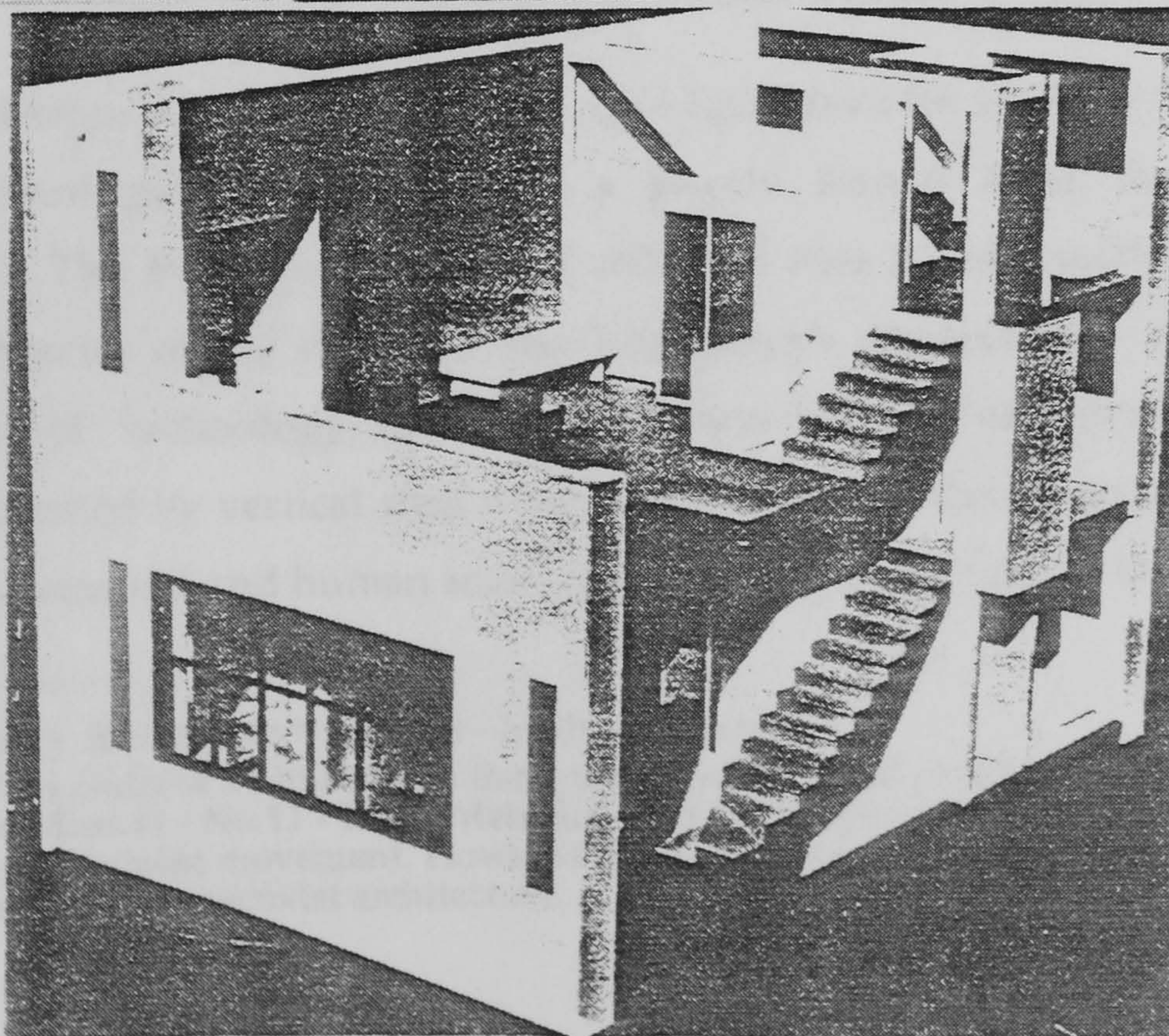


FIG 37

not wishing to use the communal kitchens. Buildings like the Narkomfin, of which there were six built in the late twenties, aspired to offering in addition to basic living accommodation a dining room, laundries, kindergartens, libraries and spaces for intellectual work.³⁴ Unlike the Vesnins 'sotsgorod' which distributed collective facilities over an area, the Dom Narkomfina placed them within one building complex. The radical character of this building ensures its place in architectural history. With varying degrees of success it addresses the inherited forms of human alienation that exist between man from woman and the human subject and nature, and in its collective aspirations confronts the process of reification which undermines social relations and obliterates human individuality and particularity.

leisure clubs and the libraries

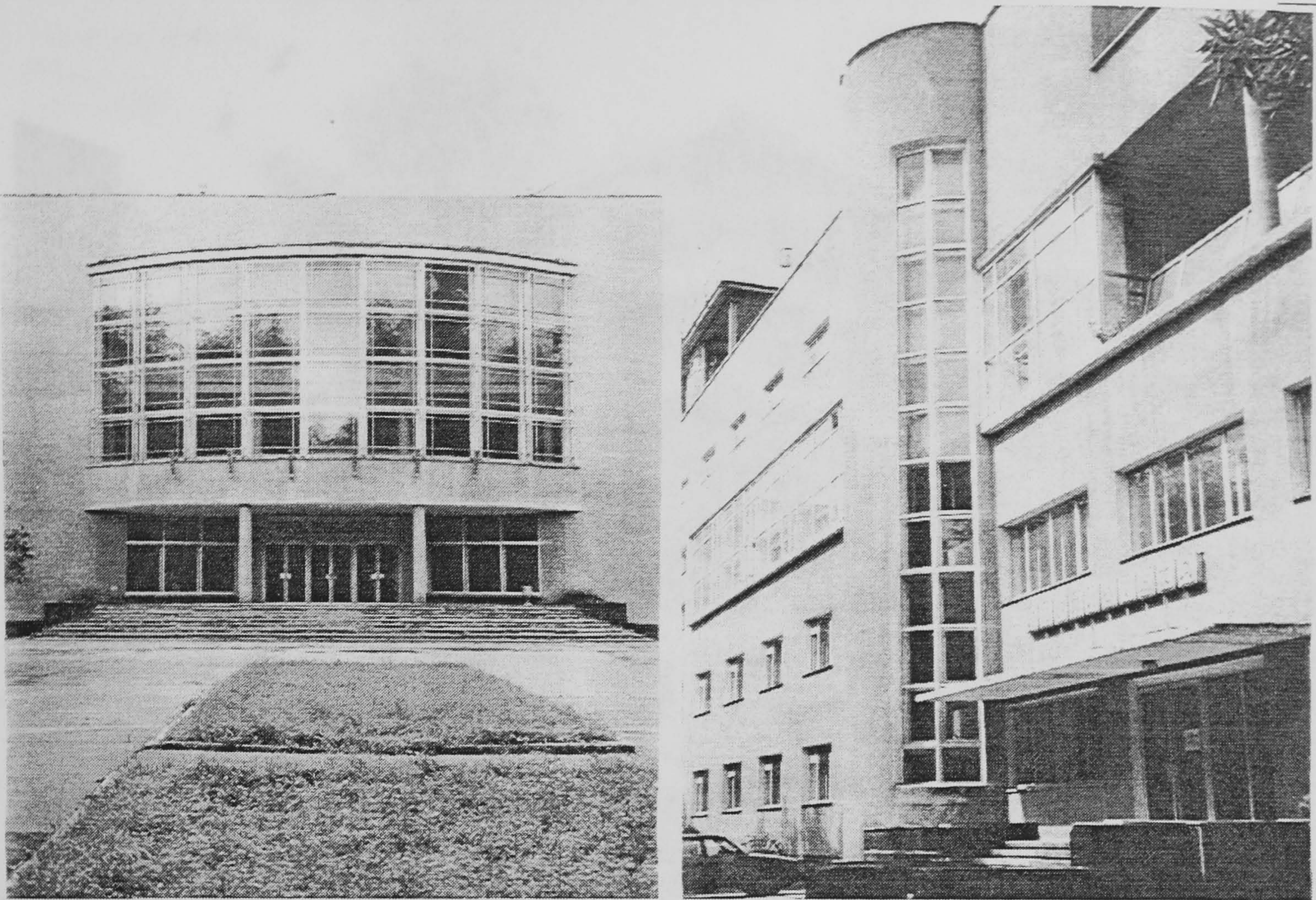
The seven workers' clubs, by Melnikov,³⁵ deserve a special place in this discussion, along with those of the Vesnin's, Kornfeld and Golosov. (See figs 38 and 39) It would be too easy to approach the category of leisure as a peripheral issue. However the leisure industry has become one of the principal areas of expansion of the commodity form in late -capitalism. This refers not only to the production of commodities for immediate use and consumption but to the production of a whole complex of new building types that have arisen not only to sell such commodities but as consumption centres in which the whole of social life can take place. The comparison then with the early workers' club is another poignant reminder of the possibility of different social practices. If the leisure centres of the late twentieth century are primarily orientated towards the spectator and the consumer, a leisure dominated by 'exchange value', one of the distinguishing features of the workers' clubs was the priority given to creative activity, the concept of the worker as a participant and producer of culture.

Melnikov's designs for the *Paris Pavilion* (see fig 40) and for the *Club Russakova* (see fig 41) are truly avant garde buildings. At a purely formal level they were completely experimental. The Paris pavilion plays with the idea of intersecting planes and of the dynamic character of the diagonal, the Russakova's dynamism is achieved through the explosive use of technology, the building's form being dominated by three cantilevered auditoria separated by vertical steel windows. In terms of their mass and presence, they are on a non-monumental and human scale, quite literally in the case of the Paris pavilion where

³⁴ Published in *Stroitelestvo Moskvi* - No 10 - 1930 - p8-12

³⁵ The workers clubs of Melnikov and the famous Golosov club plagiarised by Terragni were published in *Stroitelstvo Moskvi* - No 11 - 1929. Melnikov was an independent thinker who associated himself for a time with the rationalist movement. However his designs for the workers clubs are arguably some of the finest examples of a constructivist architecture.

PALACES OF CULTURE AND WORKERS CLUBS IN MOSCOW



Proletarsky district Palace of Culture- The Vesnin brothers-1931-37



Gorbunov Palace of culture-Kornfeld, Yakov,-1930

GOLOSOV, Ilya - Architect-1883-1945-Club Zueva -

One of the most striking modern buildings from the 1920's that attempts to unify a revolutionary aesthetic and social programme. Its original purpose was for mass agitational and educational programmes



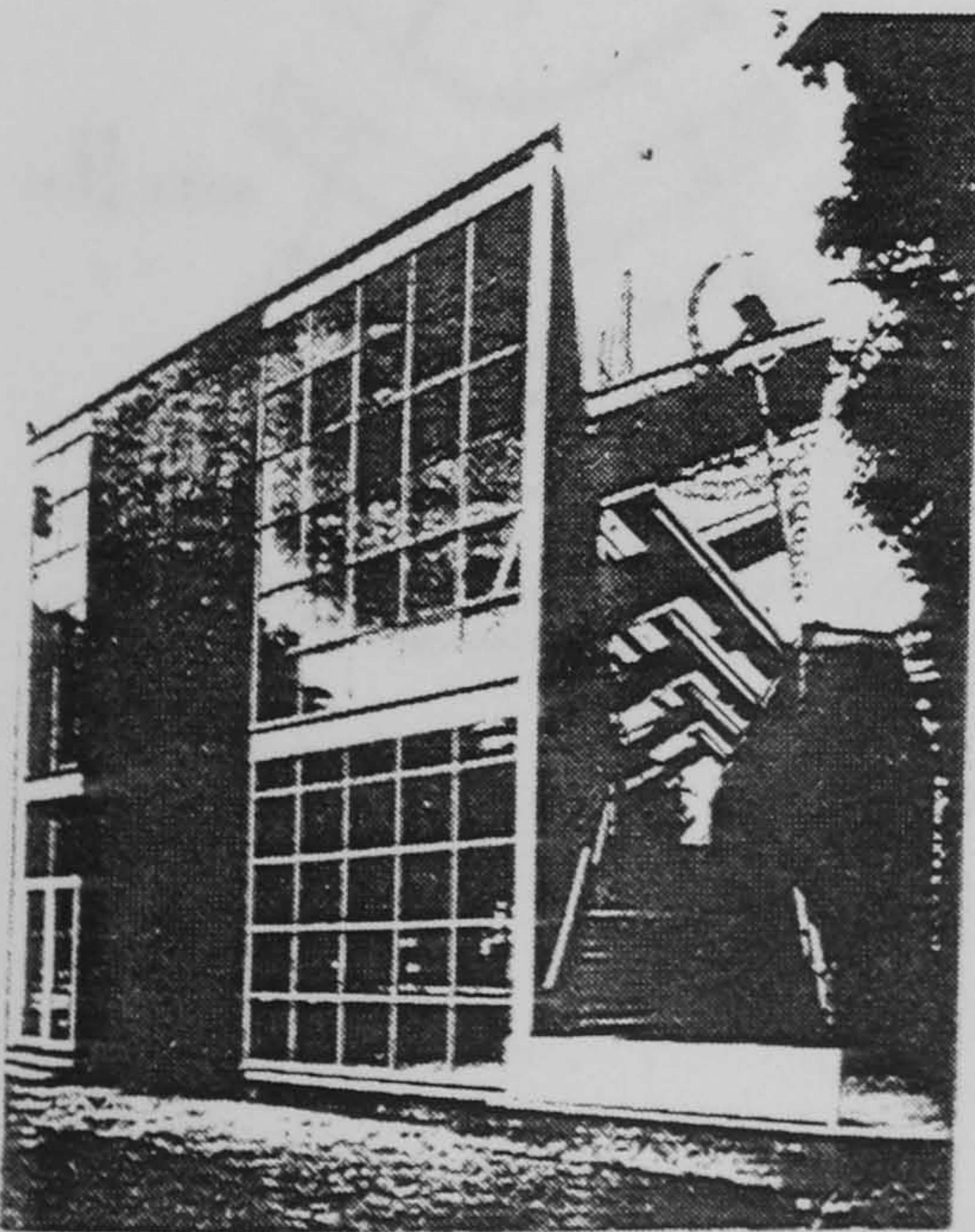
The Club Zueva, is dominated by auditorii, here there are two, seating 950 and 285. Its impact on the street is equally as memorable with the glazed cylindrical stairwell defining the corner. Giuseppe Terragni, the Italian Rationalist is reputed to have borrowed elements of Golosov's scheme in his design for the Novocomum apartments in Como, 1928.



Golosov was one of the architects whose work profile followed the shifts in the State regulation of cultural production. He produced a number of notable schemes in the 1930's, that saw a shift from a modernist aesthetic to one that worked within the traditions of a heroic monumentality, or what was sometimes referred to as "revolutionary romanticism"

MELNIKOV, Konstantin - Architect - 1890-1974 - Workers Clubs

Burevestnik club,
Moscow,
1928-1930

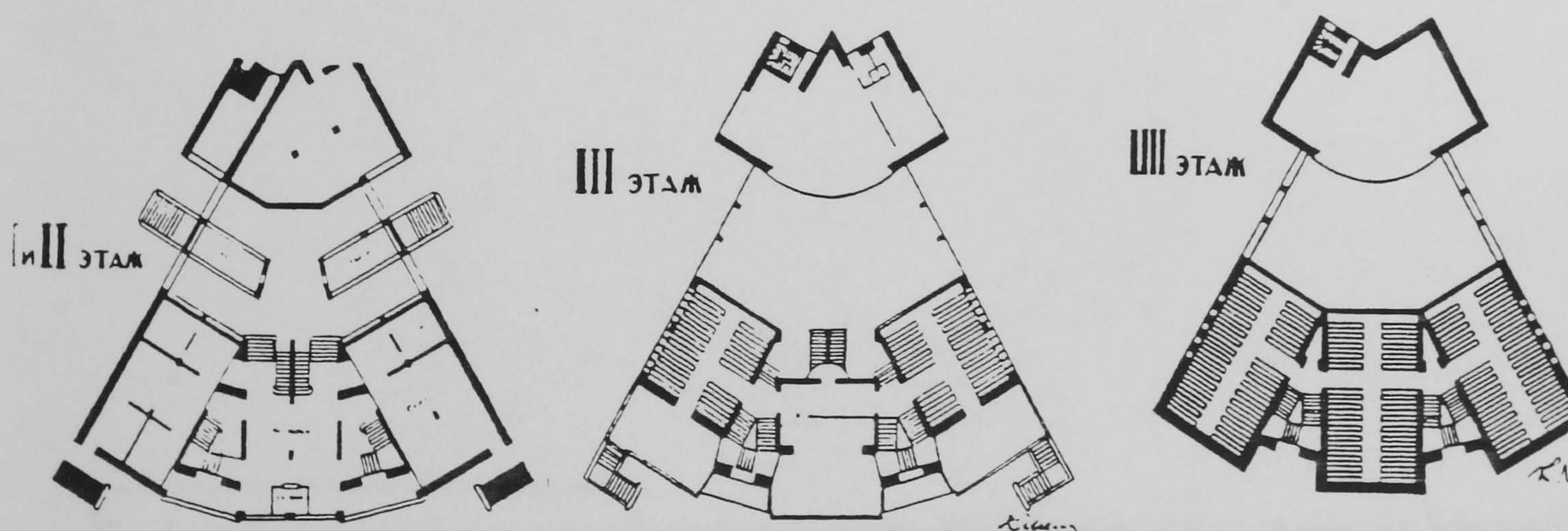


Paris Pavilion, 1925, interior of pavilion designed by Rodchenko

MELNIKOV, Konstantin - Architect - 1890-1974 - Club Russakova



This is arguably one of the finest modern buildings from the early years of the Soviet Union. Although Melnikov did not consider himself to be a Constructivist, the unity of a radical social programme and the experimental use of form and construction technology, the Club Russakova encapsulates the progressive aspirations of a radical and potentially revolutionary architecture.



It still functions as a club for local residents, and has been repaired over the recent years. As well as the main auditorium, it offers a canteen and a variety of spaces where bands and other groups can hold workshops.

FIG 41

the inside spaces and furniture of the reading room were anthropometrically designed by Rodchenko. The Russakova which is still standing was more impressive in the range of facilities offered. As well as lecture halls, as late as the mid 1980s you could still get something to eat, go to a dance lesson or play in a band.³⁶

Comparable in its technological and social vision is the Lenin Institute of Librarianship by Ivan Leonidov. (See fig 42) A diploma design project from 1927, it was intended as a vast depository of books and information connected to the rest of Moscow by an aerial tram and to the world by a radio station. To be built from glass , steel and reinforced concrete the institute was to house a library, reading rooms, research facilities and auditoria. As with the other projects its dynamic form and geometry is inseparable from its primary social function which was to assist in the redefinition of social relations in one of the most critical areas of all, that is between the human subject and knowledge. Possession of the means to disseminate or obstruct the passage to knowledge remains one of the principle ways in which any class reproduces its power and leading role in society, something of which the bureaucracy was more than aware .

What distinguishes these projects is that they all in their different ways proclaim the arrival of the epoch of workers' democracy, freedom, collective organisation and internationalism. These are the real reasons why they are so contradictory, conceived as they were in the midst of an era which the revolutionary process began to take a very different course.³⁷

³⁶ Less interesting formally but important in terms of its social programme was the Burevestnik club, which was built to service the workers in an adjoining shoe factory. As well as lecture rooms, reading rooms, and a cafe, it also possessed a library and a small museum devoted to the history of shoe production!

³⁷ If Leonidov (1902 -1959) was to end up at the margins for a while a model maker in the provinces, Melnikov (1890-1974) arguably embraced Socialist Realism never again achieving the heights of his designs for workers' clubs, and Ginzburg (1892-1946) became a member of the Soviet Academy of Architecture editing a book on the architecture of the ancient world and researching into industrialisation, the fate of other avant garde thinkers was not so fortuitous. For introductory essays on each of these architects see - *Zodchie Moskvi* - Moskovskii Rabochii - 1988. In addition there are several volumes devoted to the individual architects *Melnikov, Konstantin* - *Solo Architect in a mass society* - *Khan Magomedov* - *Konstantin Melnikov* - Stroizdat - Moscow -1990, *Strigalev i Ikkonikov* - *Konstantin Stepanovich Melnikov* - Ikkustvo - Moskva - 1985. For further titles see bibliography.

LEONIDOV, Ivan- Architect-1902-1959
The Lenin Institute of librarianship - Diploma project from 1927

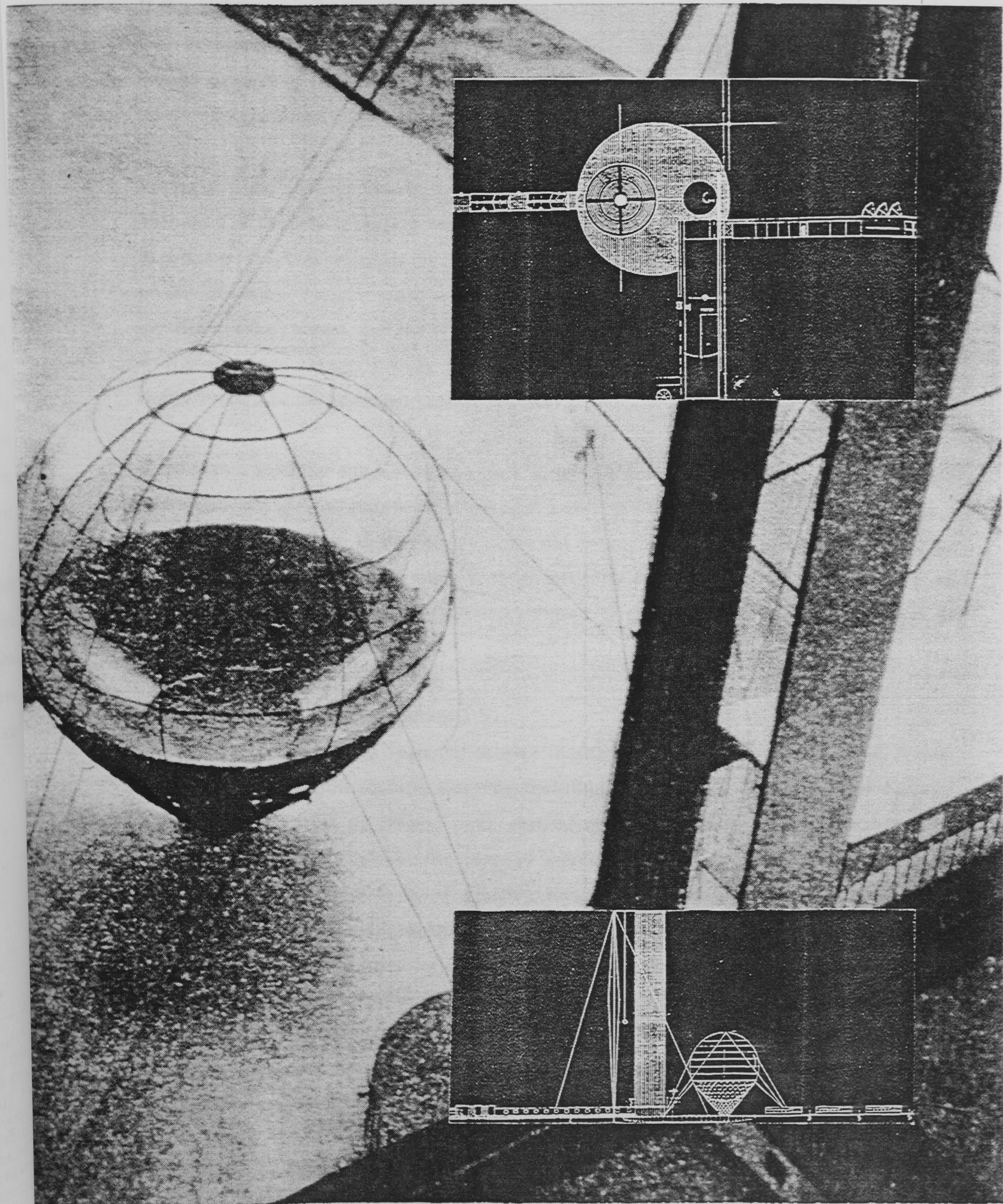


FIG 42

A REVOLUTION IN THE LABOUR PROCESS

the capitalist labour process

If the architects and planners had enjoyed a relatively independent existence in the 1920s with considerable freedom to debate and experiment albeit mostly at a theoretical level, the labour process in the building industry was subject to far greater state regulation in an economic regime that defies conventional terminology.

We have noted how the development of capitalism can be characterised by the progressive alienation of the human subject and by the reification of social relations. We now need to see in what way social relations in the labour process become transformed at the point of production itself. We have dealt with abstract notions of labour, we now need to confront its mystical form as wages, and the activity of labour itself once labour power has been sold. As with every other category so far we start by recapping here on some of the fundamental characteristics of the capitalist industrialisation of building production

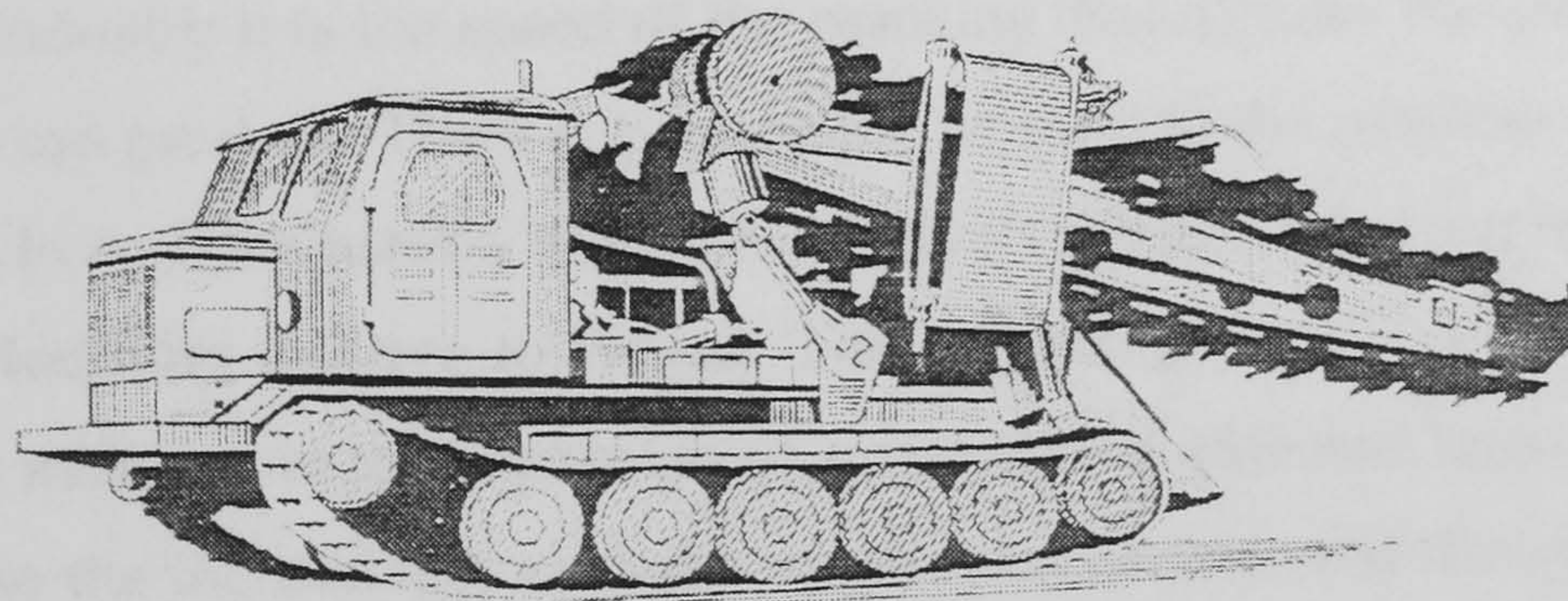
More than a machine, more than an object, industrialisation is the violent force that propels us from the mystic uncertainties of the feudal world into the rationalist bliss of the modern. It drags us from the field to the factory, from the cottage to the housing estate and from the rural market to the shopping mall. It starts with the transformation of the *labour process*, and brings in its wake the wholesale revolution of *everyday social life* and the *spaces* in which it takes place.

from manufacture to machinofacture

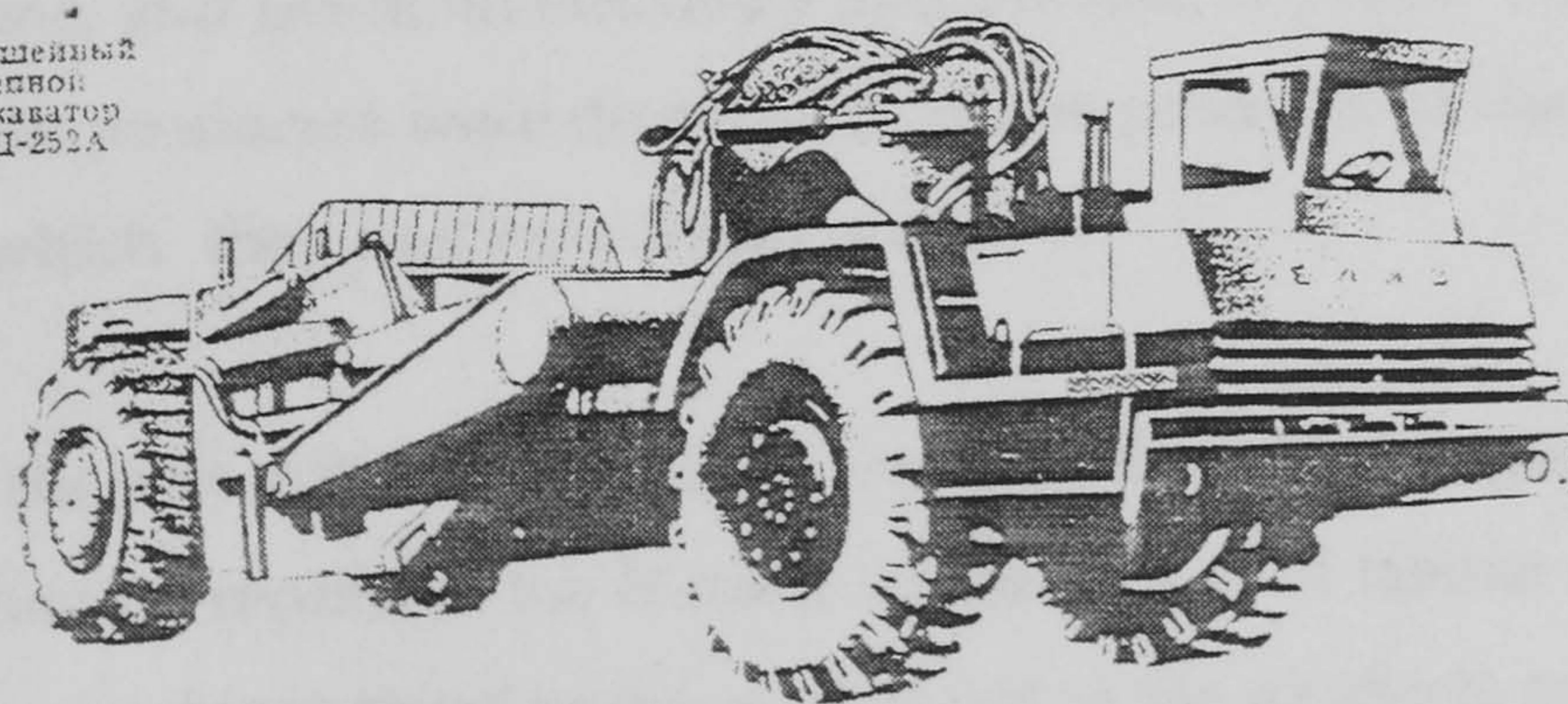
Nowhere is the dialectic of hope and despair more clearly articulated than in the shift from manufacture to machinofacture, whereby buildings and their components could be mass produced by machine processes¹. This opened up the possibilities of the liberation from environmental poverty, but also the threat of subordination to a new set of dictated needs. If we have any one person to thank for this, then it was Ford, who applied Taylor's and Gilbreth's ideas on time, motion, and work organisation, to the automated vehicle production line. Whilst within early manufacture the revolution in productivity had commenced with human labour power, within modern industry it had begun with the instruments of labour. (See fig 43). With the combined application of new technologies and Fordist principles concerning the social organisation of the labour process, new methods of labour control were thus incorporated into large scale machinery. This resulted in enormous increases in the

¹ These distinctions between different phases in the development of the capitalist labour process were made by Marx in *Capital* and are explored in greater depth in chapters three and four.

"..machinofacture...the transformation of the instruments of production"



Трашечный
цепной
экскаватор
ЭТН-252А



Скрепер ДЗ-115
с ковшем
емкостью
15 м³

Soviet building machinery

productivity of labour, such that workers were able to produce not only greater quantities of product, but at ever increasing speed.²

industrialising building

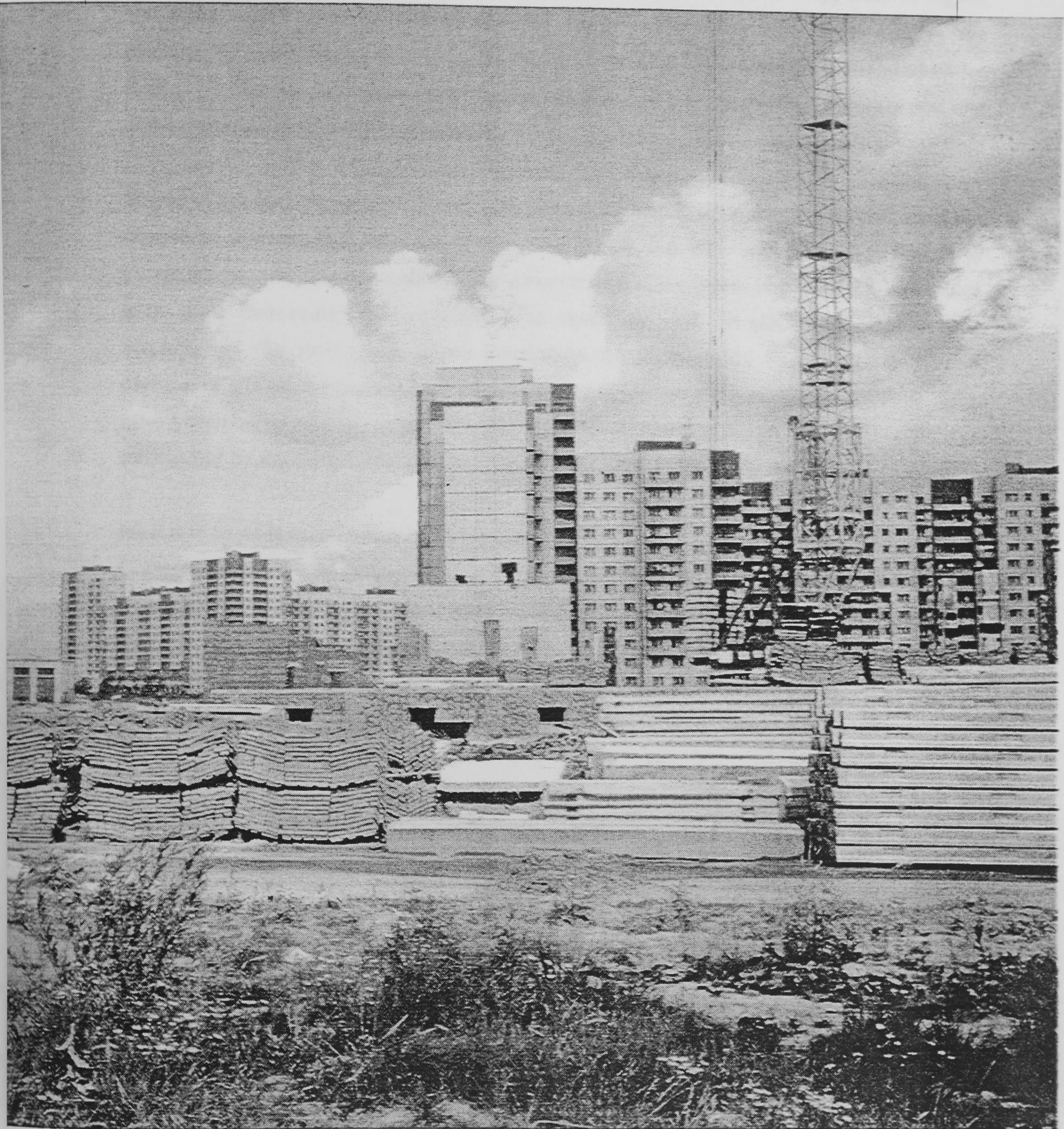
Within the context of building production, work that had previously been conducted by skilled craftsmen with handtools, by the advent of the late twentieth century had increasingly become mechanised and in some cases automated. If in the late feudal era a single carpenter could make all the doors, windows and trusses a building might require, the modern world saw each aspect of this labour process fragmented into many parts, each presided over by a different worker, in a process that had largely shifted from the site and small workshop with handsaws and chisels, to the factory, and to the machinery of lathes, routers, and bench drills. Within the space of three hundred years, tasks that had previously needed a thousand labourers could now be accomplished by two machines and two operators. (See fig 44) At last the unshackling of the human subject from heavy manual labour seemed a real possibility. Yet within capitalist conditions the *private ownership* of what is social property was to temper and contradict this dream of deliverance.

Within manufacture the production of surplus and profit was *absolute* in that it depended on lowering wages or extending the working day, and there are limits to both of these processes. But in modern industry it is the speed of the machine that dictates the amount of surplus that any one worker can produce. There is in principle no limit to the possible consequent increases in productivity. In such a situation the production of surplus value then becomes a question of increasing productivity relative to wages. The implicit growth in the scale and speed of production was mirrored in the expansion of a managerial elite and bureaucracy whose task it was to supervise the increasingly complex vertical and horizontal division of labour, ensure labour discipline, and maintain efficiency and the rate of profit. The outcome was a situation where the direct producers were divorced from the products of their own labour, created in a process over which they had very little control.

Thus, despite the fact that the automated and machine technologies which dominate modern building production represent the historic accumulation of labour power, of human skill and knowledge, the machines stand to the worker not as the products and objectification of human labour and thought, but as objects that are remote and alien, and which appear as an

² For an introduction to debates on the labour process see Braverman, Harry - *Labour and monopoly capital. The degradation of work in the twentieth century* - Monthly Review Press - New York- 1974, and Littler, Craig - *The development of the Labour Process in capitalist societies* - Gower-Aldershot -1982

"...the replacement of living labour by the machine...working up a speed.."



The construction of a satellite 'micro-region' on the edge of St Petersburg in 1987

attribute of capital. From the producers of such innovations, workers now appeared as organs scattered within their mechanical systems. Instead of the means of emancipation, the machine "confronts labour as a ruling power and as an active subsumption of the latter under itself....."³ Here lie the origins of the technological tyranny of the twentieth century and one of the cornerstones of modern alienation.

This is of course a huge sweep over several centuries and describes at a general level the experience of industrialisation in a country like Britain. But the crucial features of this story, (wage labour, scientific management, the concentration of the means of production that occurs with their increasing mechanisation, the reskilling and de skilling of labour that accompanies the shift towards pre fabrication, an increasingly fragmented horizontal division of labour, the institutional separation of conception and execution, the use of piece rates), were all to emerge for the first time in the soviet building industry in the twenties and thirties and by the early 1970s were the dominant means of organising the labour process.

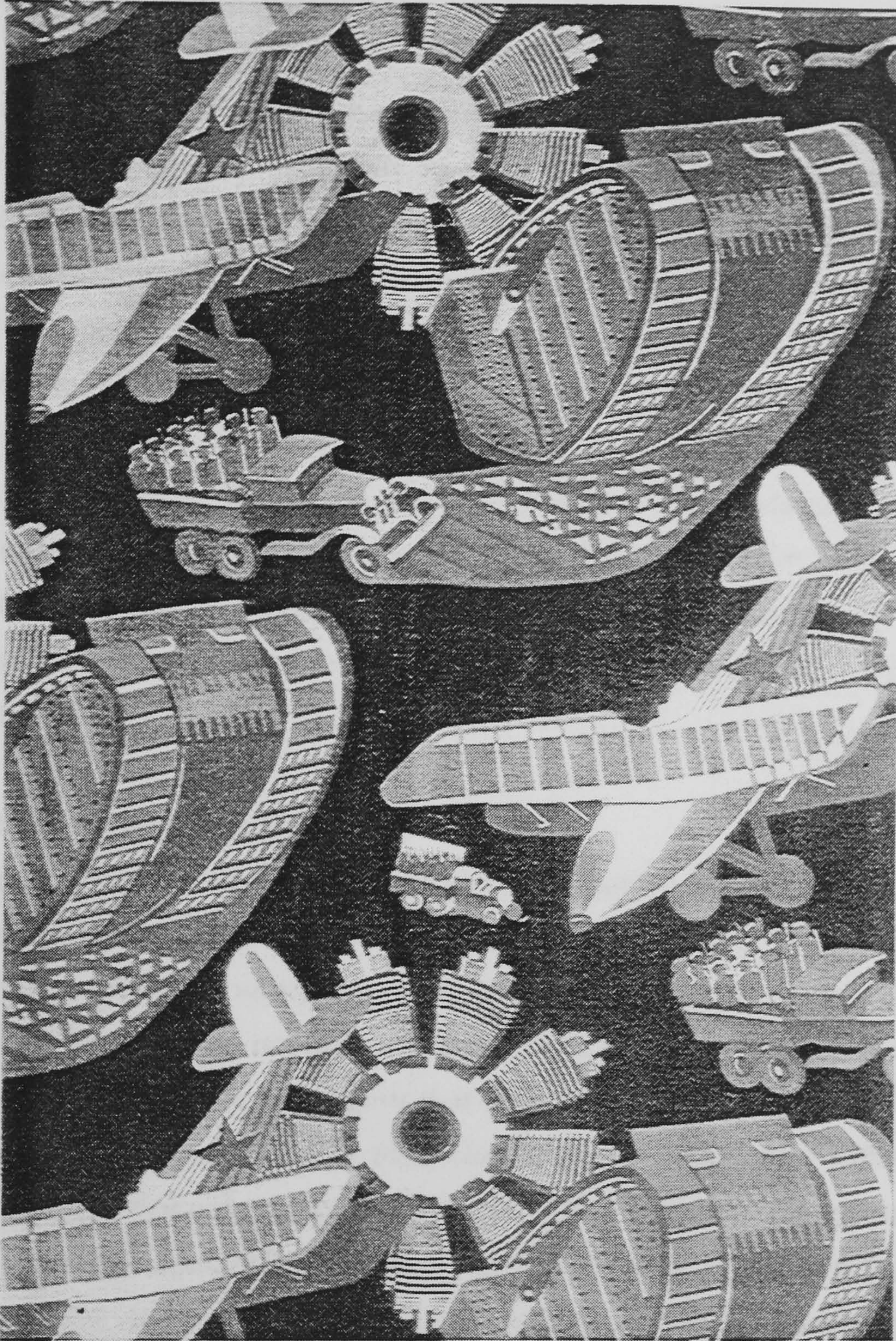
what is to be done in the construction industry ?

Given that one of the central arguments of this work is that we cannot escape but only transform the historical conditions and relations that are bequeathed to us, we might argue that the development of many of these aspects of a capitalist labour process are to be expected. In addition we might argue that technology and what some refer to as the 'technical division of labour' are effectively politically neutral.

The latter two themes form part of a thesis called 'technological determinism' that was to dominate the Soviet version of historical materialism from the 1930s onwards. It is a theme to which we will subsequently return. Suffice to comment here that such a thesis proposes that the motor of historical change is to be found in the development of technology, and that after the final resolution of class contradictions (that according to Stalin happened in 1936) the development of socialism was primarily concerned with scientific and technological development. (See fig 45) There is a sense in which science at an abstract level can be viewed as neutral. (See chapter IV) But as soon as it is mediated by human subjects and applied to the actual transformation of the material world it becomes a political issue. There can be no greater fetishisation of history than that which places technology in an independent relation to the social world. Secondly, it is theoretically unjustified to somehow split the

³ Marx, Karl - *The Grundrisse* - Penguin - 1981-p693-695

TECHNOLOGICAL FETISHISM



Soviet textile design from the 1930's

'technical' division of labour from its 'social' division. They, like other categories, are mutually interdependent.

With regard to the former proposition we might be inclined to accept Lenin's bitter attack on the Mensheviks and Left Communists who viewed the reintroduction of capitalist management techniques such as one man management, elements of Taylorism, and piece rates, as extremely contradictory. Lenin was quite clear in his attitudes towards the overriding imperative of maintaining labour discipline, of taking out of Taylorism and other management techniques what was progressive⁴, arguing that in relation to the organisation of industry there was no alternative but to use capitalist managers since workers had few if any management skills. This could be justified because workers always had recourse to political bodies if any of the old specialists contravened new labour laws.⁵ However it is in the reproduction of these objective contradictions that the problem is to be found. For rather than being temporary expedients in the process of reconstruction, they were to become permanent features.

class, state and private contractors

After the compulsory nationalisations of war communism, the building industry like other sectors of the economy was restructured to allow different forms of property to emerge. (See fig 46) The precise extent to which a private industry developed during NEP is difficult to ascertain since statistics are not only variable but for on-site construction activity they often simply do not exist. One source suggests that between 1918 - 1927 only 10% of the total volume of building work was completed by State contracting organisations.⁶ Others suggest that in 1924-25, the State Sector only completed between 30 and 40% of building work, 50% completed by 'khozaistvennie spocobi" (economic methods), and 10% by private firms.⁷ One explanation of the difference it would seem is to be found in the scale and type of building project.

For the whole period of the NEP large scale industry remained overwhelmingly in State hands. Within the building industry this included large scale infrastructural projects like that of the famous Dnepr hydro-electric dam, and of course the building materials sector,

⁴ Lenin, V.I., - *The immediate tasks of the Soviet Government* - In *Selected works* - Progress - 1977 - p 412-413

⁵ Lenin, V, I, - *Left wing childishness and the petty bourgeois mentality* - in *Selected works* - Progress - 1977 - p440

⁶ Zvorikin - *Razvitia stroitel'nogo proizvodstva* - op.citp106

⁷ *Rabota soyuz stroiteli za 1924-1925*- Moskva- 1926-p71 (The work of the construction unions)

The co-existence of different forms of property and the rebirth of the market
 Below - Melnikov's design for the Novo-Sukharevsky Market, Moscow, 1924



Below - Avertisements form the 1920's for Artel and Co-operative building firms

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ПРОИЗВОДСТВО

where in the years between 1923 and 1926 ninety per cent of concerns were in State hands, with only five per cent in the private sector.⁸ It has been pointed out that the most significant area of private industry was to be found in small scale concerns, handicraft and workshop production. This is particularly important for the house building sector where it is clear that many small builders re-appeared in the construction of individual housing in the private sector. In the same years in the whole Moscow area only 27% of the total number of new houses were built by the state and co-operative sectors, although they accounted for 61% of the total quantity in square metres. Another source suggests that in the 1925 building season in 167 Russian towns, 87.5% of all new housing was being built by 'chastnie zastroishiki', that is private individuals either building homes for themselves or having them built.⁹ There were of course great regional differentiations, with the private sector completing more housing in remote areas. However for Moscow, whilst at its high point in 1923-24 the private sector accounted for around a fifth of all capital investment in the housing stock, by 1925/26 this had shrunk to less than one per cent and by 1927/28 was insignificant, virtually all house building being conducted by the 'socialised sector' the majority under the direction the Moscow Soviet but a good proportion by co-operatives.¹⁰

khozaschot

One of the most important innovations in the management of the economy during the period of the NEP was the introduction of "khozaschot". Khozaschot, or cost accounting, was an economic reform that gave the newly formed State owned *trusts* (agglomerations of enterprises) considerable financial autonomy and rights of self management. As a policy in amended form it was central to the economic restructuring of the perestroika period, two of the biggest slogans in the late 1980s being *samofinancirovania*, self financing, and *samoupravlenie*, self management.

Within the Moscow building sector, Mosstroi was a typical trust and an ancestor of the giant DSK, *domo stroitelnie kombinati*, house building combines of the post war period. Whilst it had started life in 1922 with little fixed capital and was involved principally in repair work, by the end of the twenties it was one of the Moscow Soviets' biggest contracting organisations, employing nearly twenty thousand workers, not only in on-site housing construction, but in subsidiary enterprises producing amongst other things reinforced concrete

⁸ **Ten Years of Soviet Power in figures.** 1917 - 1927 - Central Statistical Board of the USSR - Moscow - 1927 - p248-9

⁹ **Stroitel'naya promishlennost** - No.9-1926 - p619

¹⁰ **Stroitelstvo Moskvi** - No 10 - 1927 -p 6-7, and No.10-1928 - p2

and sanitary ware. It was Mosstroi who built one of the highlights of early Muscovite modern architecture, the Dukstroi housing co-operative that was highly regarded at the time not only for its modern aesthetic but for its provision of collective social facilities.¹¹ (See fig 47)

Such trusts however were run not by elected officials but Party appointed directors and managers. They received a capital loan from the State, and were relatively free to regulate their own production plans, buy raw materials and sell the products of their enterprises for profit, some of which went to the treasury, some of which was reinvested back in the trust, and some of which was paid out in the form of bonuses to workers and percentages to managers. The objective consequences of such a reform, were to further separate the workforce from management and control over the means of production, and to integrate the enterprises within the new structure of commodity and money relations.¹² Of course this is not a new observation, and was acknowledged at the time, the categories of capital, profit, wages being used openly to describe a system considered by Lenin to be a transitory phenomena not unlike state capitalism.

technology and labour

The construction sector like other sectors of the economy had two immediate problems. One was the underdevelopment of technology, the other was a lack of a ready and able workforce. In purely quantitative terms, the recovery of the building industry and its subsequent expansion was remarkable, given that it was almost completely dependent on manual labour, that is skilled labour without the widespread benefit of machinery. (See fig 48) Nevertheless by the end of the twenties, 2,200 factories had been built, brick and cement production had recovered its pre war levels, and between 1921 and 1926-7, the number of workers in the building industry had increased four fold, gross production nearly ten fold, and productivity of labour by a factor of more than two.¹³ This needs to be tempered by reports of the industry still being in a state of crisis, due to serious deficits in good quality materials and qualified workers, and due to the persistence of "individualism" in design and the 'kustarnie' (handicraft) character of the building labour that had entered the industry¹⁴.

11 **Chto i kak stroit Mosstroi ?**- Moskva - 1929 (What and how do Mosstroi build ?)

12 **Bettleheim, Charles** - *Class struggles in the USSR* - Volumes I and II -Harvester - 1978 - p266 - 285

13 **Ten Years of Soviet Power in figures.** 1917 - 1927 - Central Statistical Board of the USSR - Moscow - 1927 - p236 -237

14 **Stroitelstvo Moskvi** - No 8 - 1928 - p15

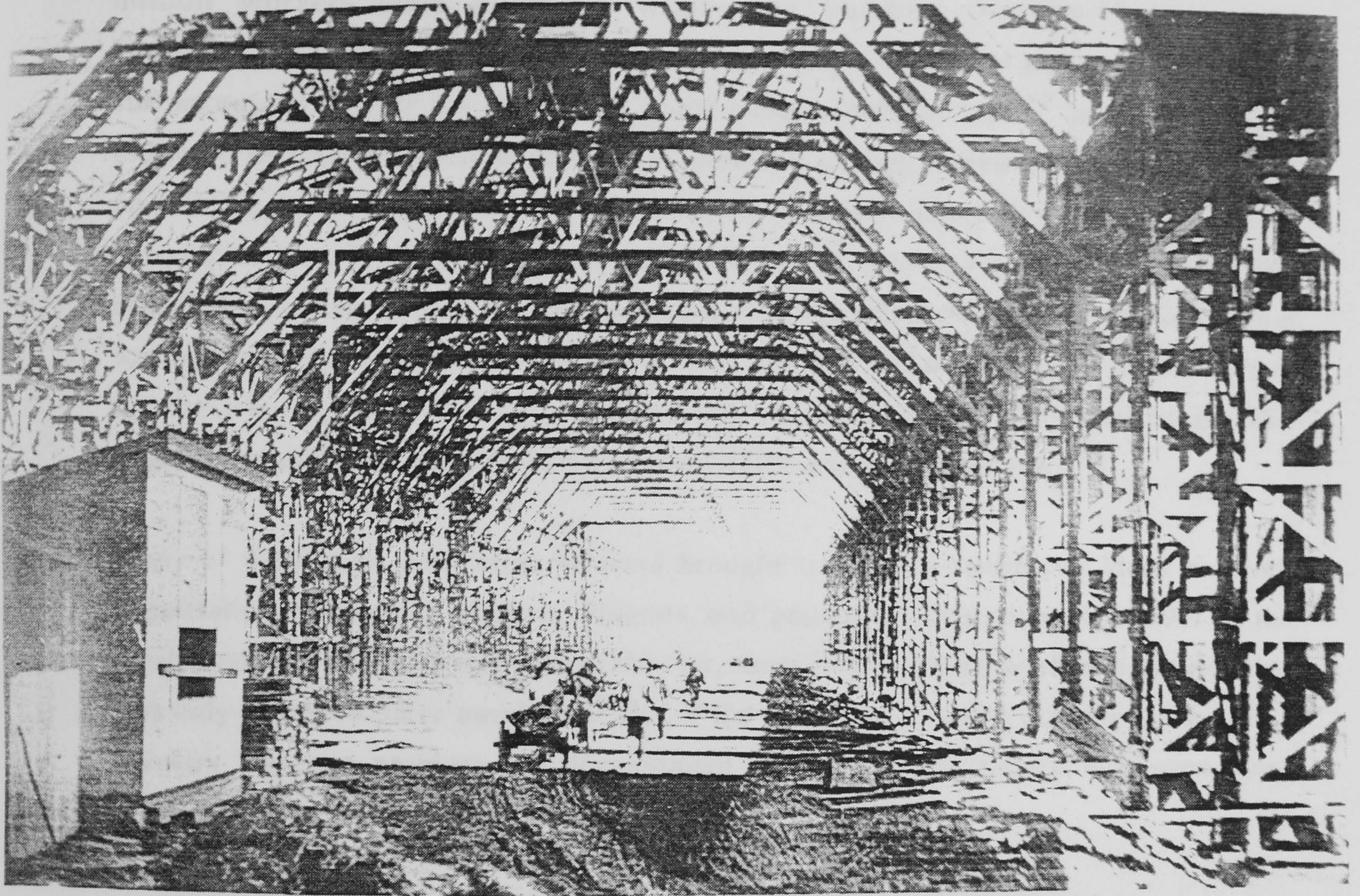
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BUILDING LABOUR WITHOUT MACHINES



Building the factories by horse and cart

If in 1919 the total Union membership stood at 120,000, by 1927 the Moscow branch alone had 150,000 workers.¹⁵ Nationally by 1929 it had reached a million and by 1932 over three million workers were registered within the building industry.¹⁶ This rapid 'proletarianisation' was accomplished not surprisingly by the influx of seasonal workers who still accounted in 1927 for 46% of the Trade Union's membership.¹⁷ In 1926 -27 it was estimated that 500,000 seasonal 'otkhodniki' were still arriving from the countryside to work on building sites in major towns.¹⁸ Out of the 350 workers building the new Moscow Central Telegraph station in 1927, 310 were seasonal workers.¹⁹ (See fig 49) Taken as a whole, 66% of building workers in Moscow were seasonals.²⁰ Across the territory of the Soviet Union it was estimated that in 1926 out of 743,000 workers less than half were occupied in construction for the whole year.²¹ Seasonal workers predominated in the traditional trades like bricklaying and plastering where they numbered 80% and 66% respectively.²²

Many of these semi proletarian workers brought with them traditional ideas on work organisation, were often religious, illiterate, and politically inexperienced. In 1927 in the construction of the Baumanski region of Moscow, out of 15,910 building workers it was recorded that only 114 were party members.²³ But, if the formation of stable cadre in the building industry was one problem, the development of production relations was even more contradictory.

Whilst in relation to special clothing, insurance, and rest homes, working conditions for many builders had begun to improve, for workers full of the heady egalitarianism of war communism the introduction of capitalist work practices hardly seemed what to expect from a new socialist building industry. These workers were joining an industry where labour productivity was being raised by a combination of piece rates, time and motion studies, and profit and loss accounting, all measures that effectively attempted to push individual workers to the limits of their physical capabilities. All of this was occurring within enterprises where a system of one man management was operative. Such ideas on labour

15 **Sindeyev, S** -Professionalnie Dvishenie Rabochik Stroiteli v 1917 - Moskva 1927 p39

16 **The USSR in figures** - Central Administration of economic and social statistics - Moscow-1934

17 **Weiner, Douglas** - *Razmychka* - In **Fitzpatrick** et al -*Russia in the era of NEP* - Indiana - 1991 p150

18 **Tavarukina** - *Rabota credi stroiteli* -Moskva- 1928 -p11 (Work amongst builders)

19 *ibid* p12

20 **Goltzman** - *Sostav stroitelnie rabochik CCCP V godi pervoi piatiletki* - Moskva-p143 (The composition of construction workers in the first five year plan)

21 **Tavarukina** - *Rabota credi stroiteli* - 1928.-Moskva-p12

22 **Goltzman** - *op.cit*-p144

23 **Tavarukina** - *Rabota credi stroiteli* - 1928.-Moskva-p16

Main entrance to the Central Telegraph Office on Tverskaya Street
(In the Soviet era known as Gorky Street)



FIG 49

organisation were sanctioned by the Party, and can be recognised as forming a coherent ideology²⁴, that was to dominate the historical development of the labour process.

Seeds of unrest

As early as 1919 building workers were heavily criticising the way in which private contractors were being given rights that ran counter to the workers movement.²⁵ At the fifth All Union Conference of Building Workers, the question was asked "Are all the contractors in Prison? No! Some are working in the State Offices of Construction"²⁶ Within KOMSOGOR, the State Building department set up during the period of war communism, there was a strong feeling that only private industry could promote efficiency and productivity. At the beginning of 1922, it was effectively shut down, and in its place a supervisory body was set up within VSNKh (Supreme Council of National Economy, operative between 1917 - 1932). State building organisations that were functioning perfectly well were 'liquidated' as in the case of GUGS, the State Management of State Construction responsible for railways and water. It was argued that it was because of this undermining of the nascent State sector that a coherent State policy towards construction was temporarily lost. Fledgling State building organisations found themselves struggling in a situation of competitive tendering with private firms, many of which were given 25% advances and were little more than unscrupulous speculators.²⁷

The whole situation was exacerbated, first, by the contradictory state of labour relations in the thirteen foreign firms granted concessions in the construction industry²⁸ and second, by the operations of private contractors exploiting seasonal workers in the context of rapidly rising unemployment. They would send agents out into the countryside to recruit workers or meet them at train stations offering employment with conditions that conflicted with the Trade Unions' attempts to regulate employment.²⁹ Such seasonal workers also fell into the hands of artels and co-operatives. There is an argument that suggests that the artels which remerged in the 1920s tended to represent a type of pre-industrial egalitarian and collective organisation.³⁰ However the journals *Stroitel*, ('the builder'), and *Postroika*, ('on the

²⁴ Ideology in the positive sense, as a body of ideas belonging to a group

²⁵ *Stroitel*-No 10/11 -1919-p7

²⁶ *Postroika*-No 4 - 1924

²⁷ Bogdanov, N, P.- *Puti voroshdenia stroitelestvo i nashi zadachi* - Moskva 1925 - p33-38 (The reconstruction of the building industry)

²⁸ Bogdanov, N, P - *Profsoyuzi i Konsessionie Predpriatia* - Leningrad - 1928 - (Trade unions and foreign joint ventures)

²⁹ *Stroitel*-No7-1925-p20

³⁰ Kuromiya, Hiroaki - *Workers Artels and Soviet Production Relations* - In Fitzpatrick et al -*Russia in the period of NEP* - Indiana UP - 1991 p 72 - 89

building site'), contain many articles in opposition to the artels. Some were clearly little more than labour-only organisations headed by contractors posing as the artel 'elders' who would hire vulnerable workers, pay them low wages, require them to work long hours and would not participate in the new social insurance schemes.³¹ Consequently calls were made to 'eradicate completely' the blacklegging activities of the construction artels.³²

Despite the historic battle for the eight hour day that had become enshrined in Union legislation, reports tell of workers in artels struggling on twelve and even eighteen hour days³³. Other reports emerged of contractors receiving orders for work forming artels and then refusing to pay wages all together.³⁴ One tale in Kostrom reports a group of contractors who organised a co-operative named Promstroi to build factories. Seasonal workers from the countryside and not from the regulated labour market were recruited. The five contractors carried 100 votes each whilst the workers were given one only, such that the contractors had the same rights as 500 workers.³⁵ But such conflicts were not confined to the activities of artels and private contractors. Increasingly as the NEP wore on conflicts emerged in the state sector concerning questions to do with wages and labour organisation.

As early as 1922, there were critical reports emerging that the programmes of the Construction Trade Unions were not being supported by State organs, and that however historically expedient, workers, no doubt ones who in Lenin's words were not class conscious, considered the NEP to be a retreat³⁶. It is perhaps of more than just passing interest that at the tenth anniversary celebrations of the Moscow Building Workers trade union, the guest of honour and guest speaker was one Lev Davidovich Trotsky.

N.O.T.

One aspect of the 'retreat' was the introduction of the scientific management of labour, *nauchnaya organizatsia truda*, (N.O.T.). This was little more than Taylorism wrapped up in a self justifying rhetoric. It was argued that under the conditions of the private ownership of the means of production, Taylorism helped increase the profits of individual capitalists, however when the means of production are owned collectively by the "workers' state", this exploitative relationship no longer exists. The profoundly ideological character of Taylorism

31 **Stroitel**-No 5-1924-p23-24

32 **Stroitel**-No 11-1925- p22

33 **Postroika** -21st July -1926-p12

34 **Postroika** -27th Sept-1924-p7

35 **Postroika**- 9th Aug-1924-p9

36 **Bogdanov, N, P-** *Puti voroshdenia stroitelestvo i nashi zadachi* - Moskva-1925 - p14 -15

was not acknowledged, it was treated as an objective science and introduced widely throughout industry. Bogdanov commented that in the construction industry "we are not so rich that we can throw away the experience and achievement of bourgeois culture and capitalist techniques"³⁷. However the same article also records arguments from others as to the appropriateness in a socialist industry of the introduction of such practices. Others argued that NOT was more sophisticated than Taylorism, citing the attention given to the study of the physiology of labour, the nervous system, and relaxation techniques as examples.³⁸ However underneath the objective of rationalising the work process, lay the deeply authoritarian nature of any attempt to treat human beings like machines. An example of this is to be found in Gastev's instructions on labour discipline. Defining NOT as the 'calculated organisation of work', workers were instructed to arrive at work in an orderly fashion, avoid sharp movements, avoid fraternising when working, there was to be no eating or drinking except in authorised breaks, no leaving the work station unless for purposes connected with the task in hand, and so on.³⁹ Bettelheim questions the extent to which Taylorism was effective in increasing productivity.⁴⁰ What we do know is that NOT was to become a central feature of labour discipline and the drive to the production of 'absolute surplus' in the 1930s. What ever the demands for raising productivity, under the conditions where workers have little control over the production process, the treatment of labour in such an abstracted way intensifies the process of alienation.

Wages

This all took place in the context of rapidly rising unemployment, which in 1926 stood at 21%. At the beginning of April 1927 within the Union membership of 923,000 the unemployed numbered 333,000, a sixth of whom were women.⁴¹ It reached a high point in the summer of 1928 before declining such that with the beginning of the first five year plan, the industry was faced by a shortage of building labour. Wages increased over the latter part of NEP, the highest paid being bricklayers and roofers, and the lowest paid being unskilled manual workers who received about half as much. The period was equally characterised by conflicts over wages and contracts. It is perhaps worth reminding ourselves here on the significance of the wage form.

³⁷ *Stroitel'naya Promishlennost* -No 9-1924 - p233-234

³⁸ *Zhdanko - Rostki nauchnie organizatsia stroitel'novo proizvodstva* - -Izdatelstvo lit. po stroitelstvu - 1968 -p146-148 (Growth of the scientific organisation in building production)

³⁹ *Gastev - Kak nado rabotat* - Moskva-1927 -p33 (How it is necessary to work)

⁴⁰ See *Bettelheim, Charles - Class struggles in the USSR: 1923-1930 - Volume II - Monthly Review Press - 1978 - p237-257*

⁴¹ *Stroitel'naya Promishlennost* - No 10 - 1926 p 716

Wages represented what Marx called the transformation of the value of labour power. He is at great pains to distinguish between the value of labour and the value of labour power. It is of course the latter that the Soviet State wanted to buy. One of the most significant things about the wage-form was that "it extinguishes every trace of the division of the working day into necessary labour and surplus labour, into paid and unpaid labour. All labour appears as paid labour".⁴² Thus the wage form conceals the process of exploitation in capitalist society, it equally conceals from the Soviet worker that part of labour which is not being paid for and is for instance going to the manager of a trust as a "per centage". 'Bonus' schemes are no different. They appear as extra payment but conceal and mystify the two aspects of labour in the same way as the ordinary wage. Marx goes on to argue that the wage form as a phenomenal form, "forms the basis of all the juridical notions of both labourer and capitalist, of all the mystifications of the capitalistic mode of production, of all its illusions to liberty...." ⁴³.

In his early work Marx contemplates an absolute decline in wages that occurs as dead labour in the form of machines is substituted for living labour. By *Capital* as Mandel observes, Marx had arrived at a *relative* concept of wages. Wages then have two aspects, a physical aspect necessary for biological reproduction and an historico-social aspect that refers to the production of new needs as the worker becomes a consumer as well as the producer of commodities. Thus it is relative not only historically but always to the total social wealth.⁴⁴

the form of wages

Marx continues to analyse the specific form that wages take - that is time based wages, and piece rates - *sdelnaya* - which he argues are a transformation of time based wages. His comments on the piece rate are however particularly revealing. It is the piece rate that is most in harmony with the capitalist system. Piece wages become an exact measure of the intensity of labour, such that work intensity becomes controlled by the wage form. This greatly facilitates what he refers to as 'subletting', (what we might call labour-only subcontracting), and more importantly the exploitation of labour by capital. This occurs primarily because it sets labourer against labourer thus fragmenting collective identity, and making it easier to raise, through adjusting norms, the intensity and therefore the

⁴² Marx, *Capital*-op.cit.-p505

⁴³ *ibid* 551

⁴⁴ Mandel, Ernest - *The formation of the economic thought of Karl Marx*- New Left Books 1977- p140-153

exploitation of labour. These comments by Marx were well known by Lenin and Rubin as well as others.

It was in this same period that letters appeared in the journals from workers opposed to the introduction of piece rates on the grounds that they created divisions, factions and competition within the working class, exactly the grounds of Marx's criticisms. However, despite disputes within the Party they received widespread use during NEP and were to remain the principal wage form with modifications for the next seventy years.

A sophisticated system of norms and rates developed that was intended to correspond to differences in skill and experience. Piece rates were considered to be one of the best ways of motivating workers because it was argued it connected the wage directly with work output. Similarly in 1928 bonus schemes were widely introduced, considered as one of the most effective ways of raising productivity.⁴⁵ Collective contracts where groups of workers took on a package of work became common although conflicts were frequent between workers and management, in relation to the calculation of contract sums, in the methods of hiring and paying off of labour, and with regards to payment for housing⁴⁶

conflicts or class struggles ?

The greatest evidence of widespread dissatisfaction was to be found in the increased incidences of strikes and what were called "conflicts". In 1923 workers everywhere including builders were to enter into struggle. A detailed report from this year tells that out of one hundred and thirty "general conflicts" throughout the new territory of the new state, seventy nine were in the industrial sector of which fifteen ones major occurred in the building industry concerning disputes over contract agreements and in which seventy five thousand building workers participated. The regional arbitration courts reported that in Moscow alone there had been eight hundred incidents involving nearly two hundred thousand industrial workers, with a further 225 incidents in the building industry nationally that had involved sixty four thousand building workers, all in disputes over wages. The same report indicates a further 219 conflicts over dismissals.⁴⁷ Considering the construction workforce was in the region of a quarter of a million this suggests that anything up to half of all building workers were involved in disputes.

45 *Stroitel'naya Promishlennost*- No.9 - 1928 - p138

46 *ibid* p 140

47 *Rashina ed - Trud v SSSR - Statistiko - Ekonomicheski obzop 1922 -1924 - Moskva 1924 - p214 - 240 (Labour in the USSR)*

This intense period of worker unrest was to continue into 1924 and 1925, when the piece wage had become operative on the majority of building sites, and increasingly in the state sector. In 1924, twenty two strikes took place over norms and wages. In the same year 3,058 conflicts were reported involving nearly 40,000 workers, 1869 in state enterprises and 1061 in private firms, 90% of these over wages. Mosstroi itself reports 2632 disputes. A year later in the first half of 1925, 25,000 workers were involved in labour disputes in the building industry and almost all of these had occurred in the State sector.⁴⁸ Just to add to the picture of turmoil, of the 322 arrests made by the Moscow militia for drunkenness in the three summer months of 1927, 201 were builders.

Institutionalising the fetish

Nevertheless, these birth pangs could be justified. By the 1930s productivity in industry had passed its pre-war levels, the artels and the contractors had vanished, and some of the more painful reminders of the old world seemed to have been resolved. Important though these changes were, they did not in themselves destroy the basis on which the reification of social relations arises. Rather this period transforms the appearance of social relations. This was to be accompanied by their legal fetishisation that resulted from the consolidation of state power in the late twenties and throughout the thirties. Instead of the establishment of a political structure that guaranteed the authority of the working class and of workers' control of production, a Party bureaucracy had begun to emerge that whilst not formally owning enterprises and factories nevertheless directed them and reaped the surplus produced by workers, this being accomplished within the labour process on building sites and in factories, with essentially capitalist forms of work practice, such as one man management, piece rates and Taylorism.

Within law labour power was no longer a commodity. In reality the Soviet worker had become alienated in a quite new way. Not only was he or she 'property less', free of all property save his or her labour power, the soviet worker was no longer able like a worker under capitalism to sell labour freely. There was effectively only one buyer, who was to prove to be a particularly greedy one, and that was the state.

The dialectic of the form of labour thus takes a new turn. In the language of Soviet philosophy we have the complete unity of opposites, yet a thoroughly antagonistic unity: the creation of social relations in the labour process that are the effective opposite of the

⁴⁸ Rabota Soyuz Stroiteli- op.cit p112

spatialisation of social relations in the projects of the avant garde. As we shall see however this dialectic is propelled to altogether new heights in the early 1930's.

leading the assault

Within the field of culture one of the ways in which the new dictatorship manifested itself was through an attack on the Modern Movement. The Association of Proletarian Architects VOPRA, founded in 1929, immediately engaged in a polemic against formalism and constructivism. Both were considered inappropriate, the former was targetted as being symbolic of the petty- bourgeoisie, and both were too closely associated with the art of the capitalist west. Constructivism in particular was targetted, for its 'vulgar' materialism, for ignoring artistic content, for being too abstract, and for paying too little attention to the 'real' local conditions.⁴⁹ The criticisms were to be repeated in the following months. Whilst VOPRA along with OSA and ASNOVA were dissolved in 1932, their critique was not unlike that which was to come from the Party bureaucracy. The attack was to be conducted not only in relation to aesthetic issues but against many of the functional objectives contained within the egalitarian visions of early urban and housing design. It is important in relation to our dialectical model to see how this assault on the avant garde is appropriate to the increasing dominance of bourgeois political economy. Categories like 'wages' became empty categories, empty that is of any notion that they were real expressions of social relations⁵⁰. Thus architecture like political economy was to largely return to its bourgeois origins, a retreat that was announced as a great leap forward into socialism.

The modernist aesthetic in particular was considered to belong to the bourgeois world, and ideas concerning disurbanism and the commune were considered naive, utopian and even dangerous. Architects and artists were faced with either accepting the line of the new ruling elite on acceptable forms of cultural activity, or of being marginalised, sometimes disappearing altogether. For painters this meant a return to idealised figurative works, for architects an heroic decorative monumentality often deeply influenced by classicism.

In the history of the work of any artist it is inevitable that we should see changes in the subject matter addressed and in the techniques of representation. However it is the depth and rapidity of the transformation in the work of particular individuals that provides us with a clear symbol of the emergent regime's true character. In the early 1920s Kasimir Malevich,

49 *Stroitelstvo Moskv*-No 8-1929-pp25-26.

50 *Bettleheim, Charles - Class struggles in the USSR - Volume II -Harvester - 1978 - p505*

the leader of the painting movement known as Suprematism was renowned for his geometric abstractions, such as the black square. By 1933 at the height of the famine he is painting in an orthodox manner rosy cheeked peasants. Melnikov travels from the humanism of the club Russakova, to the triumphalist despotism of his scheme for the ministry of Heavy Industry. (See fig 50)

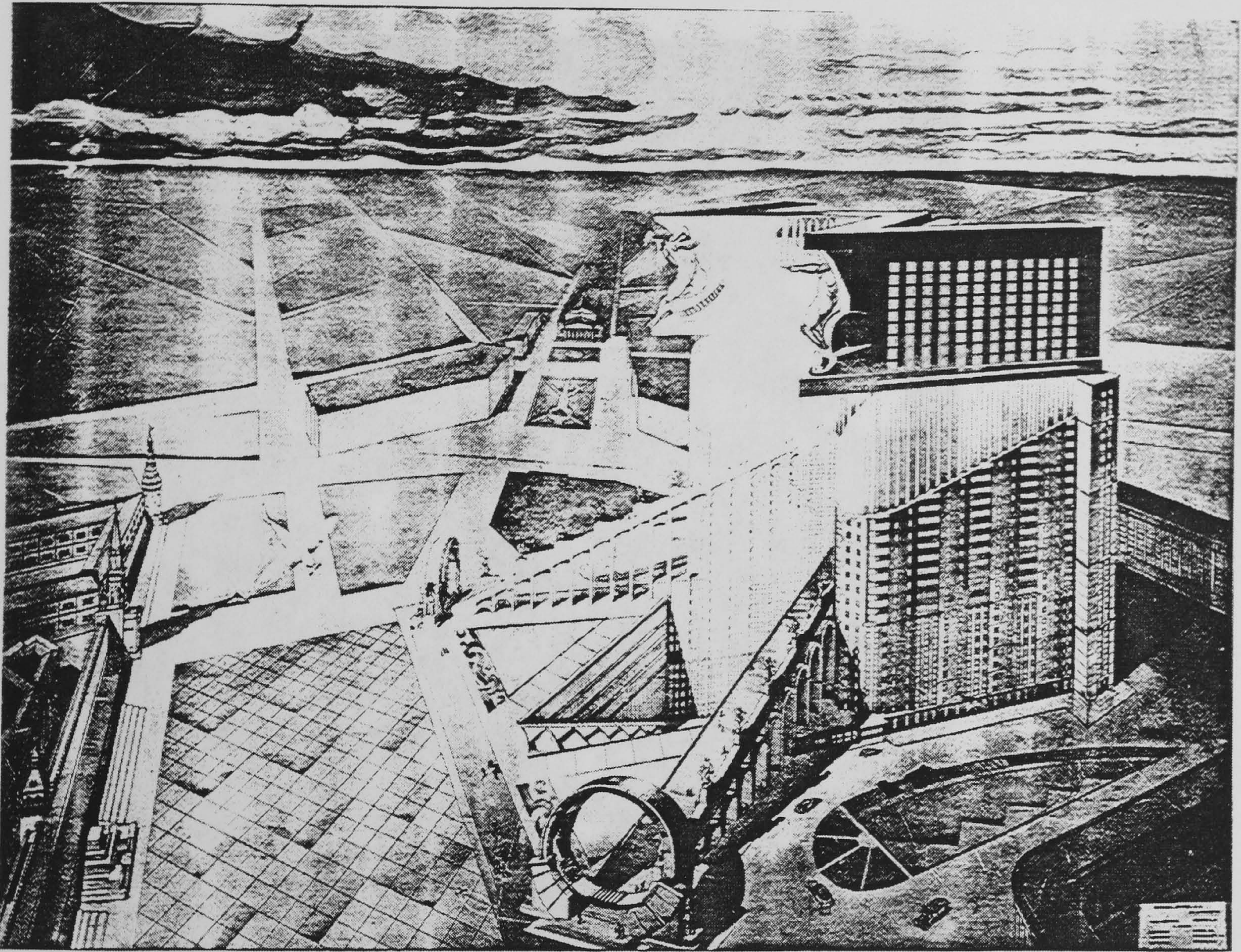
It is from the negation of social relations, and from the negation of critical ideas and theory, that ideology arises as a form of distorted consciousness which increasingly masks the betrayal of the revolution. Consequently the search for an architecture aspiring to a socialist democracy became utopian only in the context of the negation and atomisation of democracy itself.

Melnikov's journey from the avant-garde to the heroic and monumental

CHAPTER

THE COMMISSARIAT OF HEAVY INDUSTRY
AND THE CITY OF THE FUTURE

5



Melnikov's design for the Commissariat of Heavy Industry, 1934

CHAPTER

THE CONSOLIDATION OF DICTATORSHIP AND THE NEGATION OF THE NEGATION

3



CC

Fragments of true stories

March the twelfth 1953

There was an eerie silence in Moscow that day. It was only a week since Stalin had died and people were still coming to terms with what this might mean. Holding on to an empty bottle of samagon, Konstantin stared down through the firmly shut windows onto Chakalova Street. Extremely confused, he was sick. Too many years spent heaving earth in grandiose projects that were built as a boast to the rest of the world had left him with a twisted back that pricked with pain when the weather was damp and defiantly cold. He lived in one of the more prestigious neo renaissance apartment blocks in Moscow designed by the architect Vaynstein in the thirties. This was a right that he enjoyed by virtue of being a decorated shock worker, one of the enthusiastic masses that had helped rebuild Moscow as a 'third Rome'. He had been off work for six months and had time to do a lot of morbid thinking, if the selective censorship of memory can be called thought. He was in the grip of nostalgia for those moments twenty years earlier when still surrounded by friends the world had seemed a lot less ambiguous and the tasks that he faced with his close friend Mosei had seemed perfectly straight forward. There was no question then that productivity must be raised by any means necessary and if that meant sacrificing ones labour and perhaps ones life then so be it. But at this moment nagging doubts plagued his overweight mind and body. However hard he tried there was this burning idea etching its way towards his mouth that for all the apparent triumphs, there was no document of civilisation which was not at the same time a document of barbarism.¹ As he turned his gaze towards his fat flaky hands, he remembered his medal. Slowly easing himself out of the chair he went to the glass cabinet and pulled out the five pointed star awarded to him by Kaganovich himself. In tears he threw it onto the floor in a hopeless rage. Many had talked in hushed whispers about the dark side of Kaganovich. He knew first hand. A brother and three old school friends had been arrested in 1937 when Kaganovich as Commissar of communications had countless transport workers removed.² It was too difficult for Konstantin to reconcile this knowledge with the hero that had spoken to them with such revolutionary bravado on the official opening of the Moscow Metro. However hard he tried to block that day the enthusiastic "urrahs", "Zdrastvitia Stalina" bounced with such ferocity that he became rooted to the spot locked into the 14th of May 1935.

Kaganovich was in full swing "Us- Bolsheviks, Proletarians - the bourgeoisie try and represent as barbarians, destroyers of culture. But it is the opposite, we fight against predators, against the barbarism of imperialism, we fight for a new culture, for new labour, for the new person, for an immediate, bright and splendid life for all human kind".³

It was stirring stuff and amidst the roars of approval Konstantin, Mosei and everyone else looked cautiously around to spot the 'individualists' and 'opportunists' that Kaganovich had warned them were in their midst. But nothing could dull the pride of these young shock workers revelling in the completion of an engineering and artistic masterpiece that would have peasants, workers and enemies shivering in awe.

"In every piece of marble, in every piece of metal and concrete, in every step of the escalator is manifest the new human soul, our socialist labour, our blood, our love, our struggle for the new person for a socialist society.....The worker sees in the metro his strength and power, If

1 Benjamin, Walter - *Theses on the Philosophy of History* - p256 In *Illuminations* - Schocken - 1969

2 Medvedev, Roy - *Let History Judge* - Spokesman Books - 1976-p 334 - 7

3 Kaganovich.L.M - *Pobeda Metropolitena - pobeda sozshialisma* - p28 in Kosarev et al - *Kak Myi Stroili Metro* - Izd "Istoria fabrik i zavodov" - Moskva - 1935 (How we built the metro)-

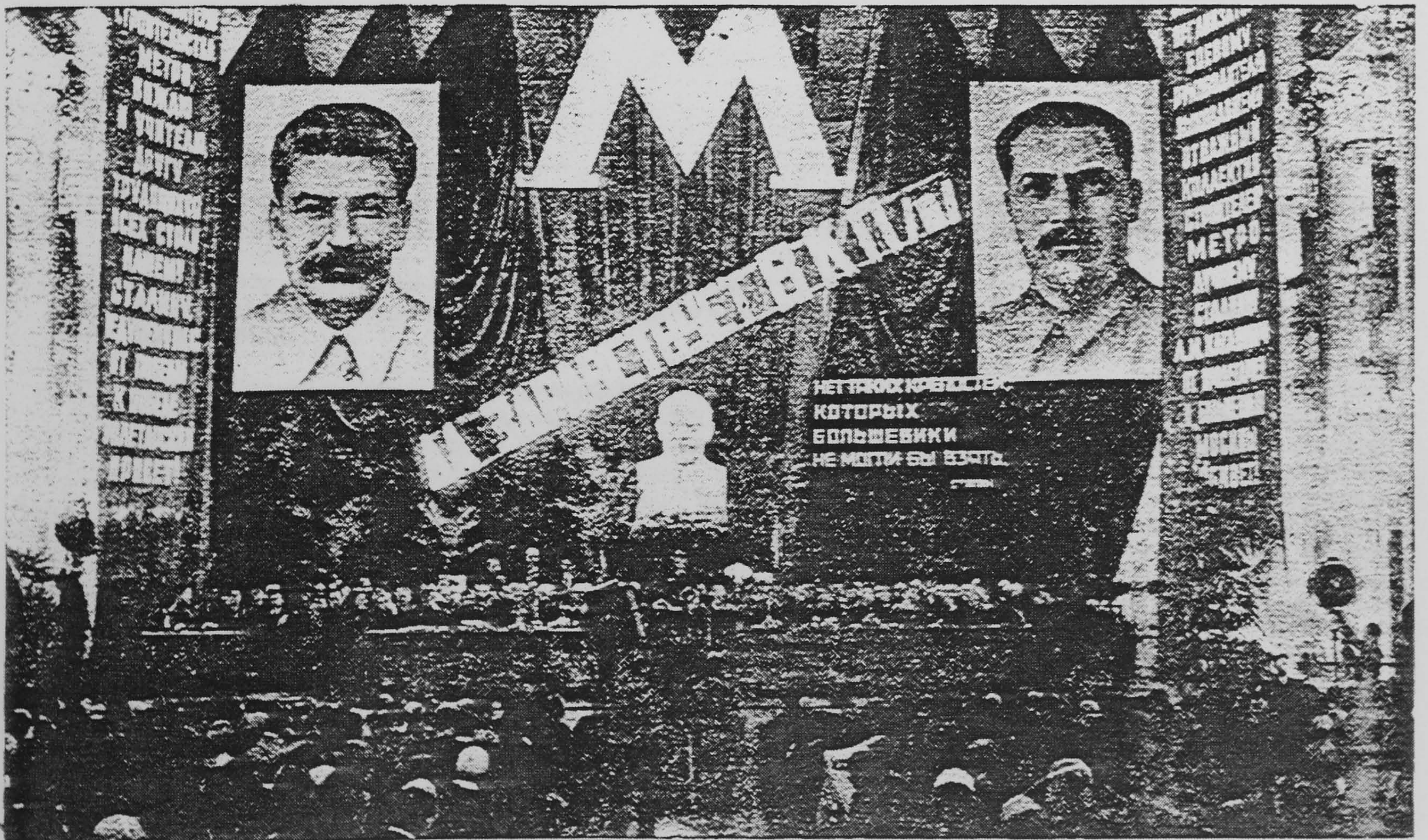
before only the rich used marble, now under our power, this construction - is for us - the workers and peasants - the marble columns, are the peoples, Soviet and Socialist.....in every one of these palaces burns a flame, moving forwards to the victory of socialism.....Greetings workers, engineers, technicians, party and union organisers, non party individuals, everyone who built the metro with love, with belief, they built not only for themselves but for socialism....Greetings to the victorious Party of Lenin and the great builder of communism, our comrade Stalin"⁴ (See fig 51)

Everyone was on their feet, the cheering rang through hall and city, and the hero workers paraded in the streets. It was a day Konstantin would never forget but one that had assumed the character of a fairy tale, so removed from what was to follow as to tear the foundations from all belief.

In that he suffers the mental chaos that comes from the grotesque distortion of truth and reality Konstantin is to all intents a real character. New labour had been created. New culture had emerged. But the former was to become defined by violence and the latter by mythology.

⁴ ibid excerpts p32 - 35

Stalin and Kaganovich watch over the grand opening of the Moscow metro



Торжественное заседание в Колонном зале Дома союзов накануне пуска метрополитена 14 мая 1935 года

ideology is laid bare

This chapter focuses on the transformation of space and the labour process in the 1930s, it is also concerned with the representation of such changes and the meanings which are attached to them. It is in this period that the materiality of ideology⁵ is laid bare in the all embracing production of fantasy, where one of the principal functions of art and architecture was to bury the reality of the defeat of the working class as a conscious political subject. Again this is not to be perceived as a conspiratorial act on behalf of the bureaucracy, but as something that was born in the material contradictions of social life, a relationship that both rulers and ruled entered into regardless of their own will. For virtually every slogan offered in the world of propaganda, there occurred practices in homes, farms, and factories that were in direct contradiction. Socialist Realist culture begins to invent a social world that is increasingly unrecognisable, as labour, history, and space become idealised. We should remind ourselves of the paradox that this rupture between daily life and its representation, is one of the threads of continuity that binds the cultural counter revolution in the 1930's with the history of the avant garde. The more the democratic foundations of the revolution were being undermined, the greater the recourse to the construction of utopian dreams, and ultimately violence.

⁵ Three books in particular have been of great use in summarising the historical debate over the concept of ideology are - Eagleton Terry - *Ideology an Introduction* - Verso- London-1992, Larrain, Jorge - *Marxism and Ideology* - Macmillan- London-1983, and Larrain, Jorge - *A reconstruction of historical materialism* - Allen and Unwin - 1986 In opposition to 'positive' and neutral' theories of ideology, both authors tend to favour and emphasise a negative and critical theory, that has a lineage which can be traced back to Marx .

Here, Ideology becomes much more narrowly defined as an elaboration on the categories of contradiction and negation. Accordingly it can be argued that whilst it is possible in any epoch to recognise ruling ideas, these ideas are not necessarily ideological. Ideology becomes reserved for a particular form of distorted consciousness which conceals contradiction. (Larrain 1986 p123) By concealing social contradictions, ideology objectively helps to reproduce them. Thus not only are the notions of 'wages' and 'profit' aspects of ideology in that they conceal non equal social relations, but painting, literature, indeed any social practice can be understood as forms of deception. This could easily be read as an argument in favour of a 'realism' that seeks to explore the true nature of social relations. But as we shall see the pursuit of realism in art and literature is open to accusations of misrepresentation and historical fraud perhaps more than any other genre.

Ideology then can refer to any class, not just a ruling class. (Larrain 1986 p49) Groups in opposition are just as able to be self contradictory as those in power. That individuals can be deceived by others and by themselves is hardly a new insight. But the linkage between this aspect of consciousness and the reproduction of a class system is a considerable advance in our understanding of social development. We have then a concept of ideology that is both negative and critical which refers in the first place to "ideas and beliefs that which help legitimate the interests of a ruling group or class specifically by distortion and dissimulation," and in the second place to the origins of such distorted and deceptive consciousness not so much " from the interests of a dominant class but from the material structure of society as a whole. " (Eagleton 1992 p30) This returns us to the *Fetishism of the Commodity and the Secret Thereof*. Ideology in this latter sense occurs wherever human social relations become reified either in the form of things, objects, paintings, words and of course law. It is negative because it refers to the negation of social reality. It is critical because it draws our attention to the exploitative character of the relations that are concealed.

the third Rome

Within the production of the built environment this reaches its apogee in the reconstruction of Moscow as a showpiece Imperial city, finally negating the avant garde, and replacing the Constructivist 'social condenser', with a new type of collective space devoted to organised social ritual, and the creation of zones of exclusion. As the population was told of the triumphant transformation of social relations, within the building industry a regime of accumulation was introduced dependent on the extraction of surplus by 'absolute' means, that was comparable to the most draconian of the satanic mills of nineteenth century Britain. With the defeat of the Workers' Opposition, and with the subordination of the Trade Unions, the State was able to establish the system of one man management and a strictly controlled vertical division of labour. Along with the attack on collective forms of work organisation and wage payments, the bureaucracy had in effect mounted an assault on the very foundations of a workers' democracy. Such a betrayal could only be disguised from the most illiterate of peasants entering the proletarian world for the first time.

the aestheticisation of politics

The recourse to repression and wild architectural ostentation was inevitable. But the argument does not stop here, for many of the aspects of the centralised bureaucratic management of political and social life that emerges during this period have parallels not only in the history of other class societies and fascist dictatorships, but in contemporary life in western countries. Although we should be careful in drawing too many parallels between the Germany and the Russia of the 1930s, Benjamin's comments on the fate of aesthetics under the Third Reich could well have been written about the relations between aesthetics and politics under Stalin.

"The masses have a right to change property relations; Fascism seeks to give them an expression while preserving property. The logical result of fascism is the introduction of aesthetics into political life. The violation of the masses, whom Fascism, with its Fuhrer cult, forces to their knees, has its counterpart in the violence of an apparatus which is pressed into the production of ritual values. All efforts to render politics aesthetic culminate in one thing: war"⁶

The merging of politics and aesthetics became one of the distinguishing features of social life in the Soviet Union. The organisation of mass culture assumes a central position in the reproduction of new social relations that establish the bureaucracy as a ruling class. One of its primary functions was precisely to preserve the illusion that property relations had been

⁶ Benjamin, Walter, *Illuminations* - Schocken- 1969 - page 241

fundamentally transformed in the interests of the masses. The contemporary significance of this should be immediately apparent and exposes the dangers and unhappy conclusions that we inevitably draw from the realisation that the merging of politics and art has reached untold new heights in late twentieth century capitalist societies. We come to accept as natural the degeneration of aesthetics into advertising, and contemplate with no feelings of loss or fear the ultimate victory of exchange value in the production of art.⁷

organising for the production of a mass culture

It is immediately apparent that the monumental changes in the character of the labour process that lay at the forefront of the history of Soviet industrialisation were matched in scale and profundity by a transformation in the production of a specifically Soviet 'culture'. In its narrow sense culture refers to the production and dissemination of ideas within art and literature, a specific notion of artistic and intellectual activity, such as the Soviet policy for the arts in the 1930s that became known as Socialist Realism.⁸ But there is a broader anthropological and sociological concept of culture. Not unrelated to the Russian concept of the *Noviye Beat*, 'new way of life', 'culture' here refers to the dominant characteristics of the social life of a people, and to the role that cultural production takes in the reproduction of an established social order.⁹ Such a concept embraces aesthetic practice, but seeks to explore its relations with other dominant customs and practices. To try and describe such a culture, is to attempt to describe the totality of social life at a given historical moment in the development of a society, the point at which what has been traditionally called 'material' production, and the production of ideas, form a clearly distinguished historical unity. If the latter Marcusean general concept of culture appears as too universal and Hegelian in its emphasis on a unified social totality, it nevertheless comes closest to capturing the aspirations of the Soviet bureaucracy for the mass organisation of social life, in which work, leisure, thinking and dreaming would be united in a common platform and with a common goal.

⁷ The production of information and the control of communication emerges and assumes a significance that is unique and historically specific to the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Modern political struggles within the labour process are inseparable from struggles concerning the production of knowledge and communication systems. It is not that the banks and the factories have ceased being the locus of struggle, it is just that the spatial map of class struggle has become more extensive and complicated. It is an index of modern times that in the Romanian and Russian uprisings of the late eighties and early nineties, some of the most intense fighting took place around the television stations. If the slogan of 1968 had been that the 'revolution will not be televised', its protagonists must have felt more than a twinge of historical farce that in 1988 we could watch it all, complete with commercial breaks.

⁸ For a more detailed critique of the ideological character of Socialist realism see Part III of this chapter

⁹ See Williams, Raymond - *Culture* - Fontana - 1986 - p11-13. Williams is generally acknowledged as one of the pioneers in the development of a materialist theory of culture. For introductory discussions on ideology and the social production of art see Hadjinicolau, Nicos - *Art History and Class Struggle* - Pluto - 1978 and also Wolff, Janet - *The Social production of art* - Macmillan - 1981

This grandiose cultural counter revolution was one of the pre-conditions for the reproduction of the Soviet ruling class. All ruling classes are obliged to ensure that its ideas, its conception of the world become dominant and ultimately natural in that they appear neutral. The scale on which the naked mass production of a culture embodying particular social values was planned and executed through organised social ritual, was unique in the history of twentieth century Europe, rivalled only by the organisation and production of ideology and information in Nazi Germany. If the way in which the ideas of the ruling class permeate the fabric of late capitalist societies can be said to be insidious, discrete, and ever harder to recognise, the Soviet ruling class was always unequivocal and loud in the message that it proclaimed.

the peculiarities of Soviet 'ideology'

It is argued that it was Lenin who established the concept of ideology as being connected to "class political ideas", such that ideology came to refer to a body of ideas that reflect the historical interests of a class.¹⁰ In this sense Marxism, could be considered to be the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat. Whilst it is important to distinguish the Marxism of Lenin from that of Stalin, Stalin nevertheless inherited the concept and role of ideology as *the world view of a class* from Lenin, and this notion of ideology as the expression of class interests was subsequently retained throughout the Soviet period.

From the earliest years of the Soviet Union, the Communist Party had sought to reproduce and extend its hegemony through the centralised administration and control of education and knowledge. The intolerance of dissent and the authoritarian monopoly of the means of producing information were not invented by the Stalinist regime but were traditions inherited from the years of the civil war when the Soviet government was forced into taking draconian measures to defend its seizure of power. It was after all the Bolsheviks who first introduced the Communist Party's monopoly on printing paper, abolished press freedom, disenfranchised parts of the electorate, curbed rights of assembly, and suspended the activities of the Constituent Assembly. However expedient these measures might have been in a revolutionary situation, the implicit dangers of such tendencies were already clear to those like Rosa Luxemburg, who considered that many of the measures taken by the Bolsheviks were running counter to the long term prospects for the development of democracy. High on the list of such fears was the way in which the dictatorship of the proletariat was fast becoming

¹⁰ Larrain, Jorge - *Marxism and Ideology* - Macmillan 1983 - p63-69

a dictatorship of a Jacobin elite, acting on behalf of the class in whose name the revolutionary dictatorship had been proclaimed.¹¹

As early as 1918, she had warned of the dangers of making a virtue out of necessity, such that we arrive at the historical moment when the temporary suspension of freedoms becomes a permanent feature of social life. Four years later, also on the grounds of necessity, it was Lenin who at the notorious Tenth Party Congress banned factions. Many of the precedents and pre-conditions for the development of a mass culture and agit-prop programme that would eventually lead to a materialist ideological orthodoxy had been laid before the ascension to power of Stalin. The centralisation and concentration of the means of communication within the hands of the Communist Party, established during the Civil War, was never fully relinquished. Rather we see a shift from a climate of relative tolerance during the years of NEP, a period in which the avant garde had admirably displayed the value of harnessing politics to aesthetics, to the political and cultural intolerance that dates from the late 1920s onwards.

Central to official Soviet Marxism was a particular version of historical and dialectical materialism. The claims of such theory to have unlocked the secrets of capitalist development and historical change, to have developed a science of society and history that revealed the truth of the human condition, were central to its universal claim on the hearts and minds of the Soviet population. However, by the 1930s within official state publications, the critical traditions of Marxism had been dispatched and replaced by a series of 'ruling' axioms. Official Marxism, stripped of any critical tradition became no more than a sterile signpost with which to brand any oppositional ideas and programmes, 'anti-Marxist' and therefore 'anti Soviet', and could be used with equal vehemence to condemn either western or internal critics. All art, literature and knowledge was judged according to whether it complied with or deviated from the 'Party-Line'. All debates and arguments such as those between ASNOVA, OSA, and VOPRA on architectural policy and those between Bukharin, Preobrashenski, Trotsky and Stalin, concerning such issues as economic development, industrialisation, the organisation of labour, and the role of the Soviets, could be crudely evaluated in terms of their occupation of Marxist or Non Marxist positions. Under the centralised administration of guilt, anyone and anything could become anti-Soviet. 'Partinost', party - spirit and 'Ideanost', ideological position, became the chief arbiters of quality. This regime of judgement like a highly virulent virus spread through every school,

¹¹ **Luxemburg**, Rosa - *The Russian revolution and Leninism or Marxism* - University of Michigan - 1961 - The former was first published in 1922 the latter in 1904

institution and factory to every home, festival and holiday. ¹² Any word and any act was judged according to whether it correctly reflected the prevailing position of the Party. Thus daily life became politicised in a manner whereby political life is stripped of any politics. Amongst the 'axioms' - "the moral, social and economic superiority of the Soviet system", "the inevitable victory of socialism over capitalism", "the inviolability of state property as the finest expression of socialist property", "the leading role of the productive forces", along with the three canonical laws of the 'dialmat', were all prominent and familiar cornerstones of Soviet orthodoxy, a set of rules that every school child was required to learn off by heart.

But it is clear that in order to successfully disseminate such ideas, the Soviet ruling class was concerned not only with the publication of slogans and textbooks on historical and dialectical materialism, but was required to operate on the totality of time and space. This sought for unification of a conception of the world, of a philosophy with practical activity, is what Gramsci considered to be one of the defining features of ideology. It was when such a unity of a philosophical system with forms of practical activity reveal themselves "at all levels of a society, in art, in law, in economic activity, and indeed in all manifestations of individual and collective life", that not only can we speak of society becoming saturated by particular ruling ideas, but that they have the power to "organise human masses, and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle". ¹³

The more however the aspirations and ideas of the ruling class were being undermined and contradicted by the realities of everyday social life, the wider the fracture became between rhetorical slogans about socialism and the actual experience of life at labour and at home. This was accompanied by the organisation of an unprecedented and comprehensive programme of mass propaganda and education that sought to rescue and build a dominant 'socialist' culture, through the endless repetition and eulogisation of the notions of socialist democracy, the heroism of labour, and of the victory of the proletariat. As the truly ideological character of these ideas became more pronounced the need to universalise and totalise such ideas through propaganda became imperative. State occasions, public holidays, sport, first names, festivals, art exhibitions, all became opportunities for the dissemination of ruling ideas concerning history, class and labour.

¹² For a discussion of the way in which ideology is literally institutionalised within a social formation see, **Althusser**, Louis - *Ideology and ideological State Apparatuses* - in *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays* - MRP - New York -1971

¹³ **Gramsci**, Antonio, - *Selections from Prison Notebooks* - Lawrence and Wishart - 1971 - p328, and 376-377

Here we encounter another paradox. With the weaponry of scientific socialism and rationalist thought, the 'triumphant defeat' of the mediaeval world of mystical uncertainty could be proudly declared. However, Soviet culture steps into the same framework of time and space previously occupied by the Orthodox church. The analogy is not at all spurious. Through prayer, biblical teachings, and its virtual monopoly on the production of text and image, Orthodox Christianity as a previously dominant official State culture endeavoured to control the cultural and social life of the Russian people. This was reinforced by the regulation of space - the predominance of the church in the landscape, the icon in the corner of every home, and by the regulation of time - the mirroring of natural and agricultural cycles by that of the call to prayer and worship. The Soviet regime's monopoly on the production of knowledge and its occupation of the temporal and spatial co-ordinates of twentieth century life is closely analogous. This is amplified in that salvation was to be found not in the resolution of the myths of the ancient world but in the construction of a new simultaneously real and illusory form of ideology. The 'red corner' replaces the icon, the factory the church, the workers' club the seminary, a waxed Lenin in the mausoleum replaces the Christ figure, *State and Revolution* replaces the Bible, May Day replaces Easter, and the "Communist Subbotnik", ("Communist Saturday"), replaces Sunday worship. (See fig 52)

the contradictions of Soviet 'ideology'

However in the historical development of Soviet cultural and ideological production, there arose two principal contradictions that ultimately negated the positive and totalising intentions of the Soviet world view. Whilst Rubin and Pashukanis had explored the concept of reification and fetishism in Marx, and later philosophers like Mamardashvili¹⁴ were to explore Marx's theory of fetishism and ideology as primary constituents in the formation of consciousness, such ideas were approached at a purely theoretical level or in relation to the analysis of capitalist society. Under the regime of a rigid Marxist orthodoxy it is obvious that cultural theorists were not able to use theoretical tools such as alienation and reification to examine the contradictions of Soviet social life. To do so would be to presume the development of new antagonistic class relations.¹⁵ Soviet cultural theory and more general Marxist theory remained predicated on a binary split of the social world between

¹⁴ Mamardashvili, Merab - *Analiz sosnania v rabotax Marxa* - In *Kak Ya ponimayu filosofiu* - Progress - 1992 - (The analysis of consciousness in Marx) First published in 1968. It is interesting that it is contemporary with the western resurgence of interest in Marx. The essay however makes no reference to the work of Rubin and the early work of Pashukanis

¹⁵ It is in the social relations of production that the origins of reification, alienation and ideology, are to be found. The barriers to consciousness, identity and knowledge of the social world that these categories epitomise are inseparable from class relations, and these are manifest as much in the production of art as in the reorganisation of the building labour process and in the class character of the Soviet State..

The icon and the good disciple become buried under white wash



Cosmas, Damian and Jacob- Novgorod eraly 16th century

bourgeois and proletarian, capitalist and communist, good and bad. Under such circumstances Soviet Marxism could never provide a critique of itself as ideological, that is as a body of ideas born in the heart of material life that in the process of enlightenment masks social contradictions. This as we shall see had particularly damaging consequences for the Soviet theory of realism.

But neither could the hegemony of the Soviet ruling class ever be absolute, not least because workers and repressed people find ways even in the face of dictatorship of resisting domination. Moreover its ideas were always compromised and mediated by the class contradictions that it constantly sought to deny.¹⁶ Its success in actually transforming consciousness through such a cultural revolution could never be more than partial. In particular, Soviet ideology was always mediated by two factors; first the biological and intellectual reproduction of the working class, that historically obliged the State to back up at least some of its claims in the redistribution of the social surplus to workers, and secondly, in the context of an assault on the pre-conditions of socialism, the obligation to reproduce at a formal level within law, propaganda, art and architecture the concept of the class struggle, socialism and the revolutionary process within history.

In the subsequent aestheticisation of politics in which the real class origins of thought were hidden, a suffocating conformity began to masquerade as universal liberty. Class relations, exploitation, misery and poverty became touched out of the picture and out of the text. The Soviet insistent claim on universal freedom, and its hand maiden 'socialist realism', became masks behind which the suspension of basic democratic rights remained unseen. The more the ruling bureaucracy established itself as a ruling class the more powerful and all embracing the production of ideology had to become, and as the objective truths of social life became too obvious to bear, the recourse to crude 'hagiographic' mythology became inevitable.

In this mythology, powerlessness and non-identity become represented as freedom and happiness. If the ability of workers to organise production on the basis of their own creative self activity was to be vanquished by an authoritarian regime of bureaucratic management, this could be redeemed. First within law, where workers could still be declared owners of State property, and second in the idealisation of labour within art, literature and architecture. Myth can be painted, written about and even built. Presented as no more than

¹⁶ Indeed, Eagleton argues that ideology is in essence "scarred and disarticulated by its relational character; by the conflicting interest among which it must ceaselessly negotiate" (Eagleton *op.cit* p222 - 1992)

another passage in the ancient history of objectifying beauty and pleasure, and of creating in stone a dreamt of monument to self identification, the making of architectural works also become ideological acts by concealing their social intentions. Within the folds of objective notions of beauty, lie the subjective prejudices of the class that seeks to make the world in its own image. But there is comfort in the knowledge that such ideas can never be reduced to the unmediated conduct of one class, they remain contradictory and dialectical, the unhappy marriage of civilisation and barbarism. This is where mythology can once more enter, to blur the edges, by providing historical intention with a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal. In this way myth becomes de-politicised speech.¹⁷ Language itself became saturated with political mythologies, revealed in both popular metaphors and vocabulary. One of the consequences is that the rhetoric and language of revolutionary politics becomes one of the very means by which the Soviet worker was not only alienated but politically unarmed. To fight for workers management and for the democratic social ownership of the means of production becomes problematic when in every book, slogan, and picture, such historic rights have already been confirmed.

One of the greatest paradoxes was that it was precisely Marxism which was supposed to reveal through theory and practical activity the reality of the human condition. It was Marxism that could rid us of the process of reification, that could strip away the camera obscura in which men and their circumstances appear upside down, to reveal the social relations behind the "fantastic form of a relation between things".¹⁸

One of the more obvious consequences of this was that it enabled a fortuitous division of the world into hostile and irreconcilable 'ideological' camps, the bourgeois versus the proletarian world outlook, a simplistic fracture that was more useful in maintaining the positions of the ruling class in both societies than uncovering the real nature of antagonistic relationships. But the elevation of Soviet Marxism to the status of a science, in which its real ideological character in masking contradictions was implicitly denied contributed to the controversial history of instrumental reason. In the very act of disrupting and distorting consciousness, Soviet Marxism in the 1930s was thus raised aloft as the triumphant means

¹⁷ Barthes, Roland - *Mythologies* - Paladin - 1984 - p142-3

¹⁸ This is of course a reference to two passages, Marx, Karl - *Capital* - Sonneschein - 1908 - p43, Marx Karl - "*German Ideology*" - Lawrence and Wishart - 1985-p47. After the work of Pashukanis and Rubin, the most famous exposition of the concept of reification as a barrier to class consciousness was to be found in the early work of Lukacs. He was to take the notion of reification and to elaborate it to include not only the mystifying categories of political economy but the whole ideological history of the bourgeoisie which he described as "nothing but a desperate resistance to every insight into the true nature of the society it had created and thus to a real understanding of its class situation." See Lukacs, Georg - *Class Consciousness* - In *History and Class Consciousness* - Merlin - 1983 - p66

through which the de-mystification of the social world was to be accomplished. This of course was a paradox. If on the one hand Soviet rationalism offered the chance to rid the Russian people of the ghosts, gods and spectres of the feudal world and to provide them with electricity and tractors, it was to accomplish this by banishing the 'spirit' to the wastelands of time as a defeated opposition and reflex of the material world. Nothing in Soviet life would thereafter escape the logic that comes with the rule of mathematical law.¹⁹

This is the birth of the fetishisation of science and technology, a phenomenon originating in the bourgeois world that was to mature in the Soviet Union in two respects. First the supremacy of the historical thesis known as "technological determinism" (see chapter four), and second the vulgarisation of materialist thought, where everything and all human activity had to surrender to science, often regardless of whether the knowledge it represented had any relationship to formal logic. To justify themselves, all Soviet institutes became prefixed by the word 'nauchnie', scientific, a lasting symbol of the deeply held ideological distrust of idealism.²⁰

"the curse of irresistible progress is irresistible regression"²¹

These are not just abstract propositions. With the publication of Stalin's infamous essay of 1936, declaring the foundation of socialism and the resolution of fundamental class antagonisms, socialist development from then onwards was a matter of the development of the productive forces, where need, or rather the concept of necessity was reduced to a process of quantitative expansion.²² Journals, and propaganda from this period became almost devoted to an obsession with statistics. That progress is connected with an increase in the

¹⁹ But by the end of the 1930s, the world according to reason was slowly drowning in a world according to fact and utility. The Faith of Hegel regarded the ascendancy of this Utility as an abomination. (Hegel, Georg - *The phenomenology of Spirit* - OUP - 1977 - p343). Everything is called upon to justify itself in the court of numbers, and in the court of means and purposes. It was a process described by Lukacs whereby all the elements of historical change "are converted into empirical facts and incorporated in reified form in the web of rational calculation" (Lukacs, Georg - *Reification and the Consciousness of the proletariat* - In *History and Class Consciousness* - Merlin - 1983 - p182).

²⁰ Despite their deep differences with Lukacs, Adorno and Horkheimer were also to develop the critique of the 'quantifiable world' in the classic text "*The dialectic of the enlightenment*". One of the great features of the Enlightenment was the way in which technology and science became the foundation of knowledge and thereby a crucial aspect of power. This rendered anything that could not be computed as suspect and inaugurated the reign of formal logic whereby all qualitative aspects of the world must bow and be quantified. (Adorno and Horkheimer - *The concept of enlightenment* - In *The Dialectic of the Enlightenment* - Verso - 1989 - p6) Mathematical science is erected as the rallying banner for human emancipation and banishes metaphysics, declaring the victory and hegemony of factuality celebrated most immediately in the rigidification of time itself. (ibid. p 25-27) This achieves its purest form in the rationalisation of the labour process and the payment of piece wages that comes with the transition from manufacture to machine based production.

²¹ Adorno and Horkheimer - *The concept of enlightenment* - In *The Dialectic of the Enlightenment* - Verso - 1989 - p36

²² For a discussion of the 'primacy of productive forces thesis' see Larrain, Jorge - *A reconstruction of historical materialism* - Allen and Unwin - 1986 - p44-50

volume of goods and means of production is not questioned here, but to define socialism by the development of the productive forces is an historic betrayal. As Lefebvre commented "economic statistics cannot answer the question: What is socialism? Men do not die for tons of steel or for tanks and atomic bombs. They aspire to be happy, not to produce."²³ However the quantification of quality, that Barthes argued was one characteristic of bourgeois ideology²⁴, was to dominate ideological production in the USSR for all of its seventy years. The plan target became the measure of social progress and a new form of domination. The possibility of profound and qualitative transformations of everyday life, could only be acknowledged if such changes could be subject to rational calculation. Anything that flew in the face of the laws of mathematical science and could not be predicted with scientific precision was of questionable merit. Thus;

"By elevating necessity to the status of the basis for all time to come, and by idealistically degrading the spirit for ever to the very apex, socialism held on all too surely to the legacy of bourgeois philosophy. Hence the relation of necessity to the realm of freedom would remain purely quantitative and mechanical, and nature, posited as wholly alien - just as in the earliest mythology - would become totalitarian and absorb freedom together with socialism. With the abandonment of thought, which in its reified form of mathematics, machine, and organisation avenges itself on the men who have forgotten it, enlightenment has relinquished its own realisation."²⁵

The question of whether workers were actually swayed by the weight and constant barrage of ideological production is in many ways overshadowed by the fact that the counter revolution occurred at every level within the social totality. Where ideology demonstrably failed to motivate workers the regime resorted to violence. Yet for all the workers who opposed the general line, there were equal numbers enthusiastically engaged in 'emulation' schemes and in the drive to become Heroes of labour. The death of Stalin brought many sighs of relief but also genuine tears of grief.

labour, alienation, and ideology

Such a theory of ideology that emphasises deception, myth and distortion is fundamentally concerned with the reification of social relations.²⁶ Historically connected with the notion of abstract social labour and the commodification of labour power, it has its origins in the history of capitalism. However in the situation where social relations become reified in quite

²³ Lefebvre, Henri - *Critique of Everyday life* - Volume 1 - Verso - 1991 - It is worth noting that the publication of this text led to the expulsion of Lefebvre from the French Communist Party.

²⁴ Barthes, Roland - *Mythologies* - Paladin - 1984 - p153

²⁵ Adorno and Horkheimer - *The concept of enlightenment* - In *The Dialectic of the Enlightenment* - Verso - 1989 p41

²⁶ This continues the discussion introduced in chapter two.

new ways, we could fully expect the reproduction of this aspect of ideology if in a different manner. Not only can such categories be applied in the analysis of the Soviet social formation, but if anything the process of alienation and the production of ideology that is born in bourgeois society matures in the Soviet Union.

It has been argued in relation to the process of Stalinist industrialisation that "The absence of commodity production and the resultant absence of exchange value have meant that abstract labour does not exist either.....The employer does not confront the worker in the same way as the capitalist confronts the wage labourer. Labour power in the Soviet Union is not a commodity."²⁷ In the early thirties there was no market for labour power and other commodities in the same way in which we have experienced it in a classical capitalist economy. This however is to be entirely expected. It is far too crude a simplification to think of the Soviet economy in the same way as we would 1930s Britain or U.S.A. However, as we noted earlier, this is not the central issue. We remember following the arguments of Marx, Rubin and Pashukanis, that the starting point for research is labour and production not the processes of exchange. The commodification of labour power, the emergence of the category of abstract social labour, is simply the *social form of labour belonging historically to the development of capitalism*. It should come as no surprise then to find that it is not reproduced in the same way in the conditions of the USSR. But the question remains *what new social forms of labour emerge?, what new forms of alienation develop ?, and how are the new social relations reified ?* Marx never limited the concept of alienation to capitalism and certainly did not envisage its absolute end in the transition to socialism.²⁸ Its disappearance in the Soviet Union, occurred by decree only, a law that needless to say was contradicted by objective social reality. At the centre of this social reality lies the new social form of labour, and it is to the fate of the Soviet worker that we turn next.²⁹

²⁷ Filtzer, Donald- *Soviet Workers and Stalinist Industrialisation* - Pluto - 1986 - p259 - We could attempt to contradict this by pursuing an argument concerning the integration of the Soviet economy with the global development of capitalism, and with the development under the policy of Khozrascot of money commodity relations between enterprises

²⁸ Lefebvre, Henri - *Critique of Everyday life* - Volume 1 - Verso - 1991- p52-63ff

²⁹ This is in actual fact the great strength of Filtzer's book, which demonstrates convincingly and thoroughly the emergence of new objective forms of exploitation and alienation which represent the transfer of the contradictions of capitalism to a new level.

MAKING THE HERO WORKER

restructuring the management of the labour process

By the beginning of the first five year plan co operatives, artels, and private contractors had vanished and in this sense many of the contradictions that had occurred in the period of NEP would appear to have been resolved. In 1929 under the jurisdiction of BCHX, *Glavstroiprom* was founded to reorganise all construction activity on a Union wide basis with specialist ministries created for the different geographical regions. It is from this point that the Ministerial system of management that was to dominate construction activity for the rest of the Soviet period develops. Despite periodic moves to de-centralise control to Republican and local levels such as in the early 1960s, and during the years of Perestroika, the industry retained what was in essence a strictly controlled vertical division of labour. The founding of the state system of construction was of course met with slogans testifying to the 'liquidation' of the vestiges of capitalist industrial development. However, whilst some contradictions were resolved, others became intensified and new ones emerged.

Under the new Ministerial system, the form of management and control within industry far from returning to the principles of the building workers declarations of 1918, became even more centralised and concentrated within the hands of the party bureaucracy in Moscow. This was formalised and entered text books under the banner of democratic centralism. It was certainly centralised. Its claims to democracy were founded solely on the identification of state ownership with socialist property. An investigation of the language of law is particularly revealing of the double act that the Party was required to perform. The decree of the 5th of September 1929 on "The measures for the regulation of the management of production and the installation of one - man management" was perhaps the pivotal piece of legislation legitimising in law the development of the bureaucracy.¹

These new laws made the directors of enterprises responsible for the carrying out of plan targets and granted them virtually complete authority in the appointment of staff, in the general running of the enterprise and in maintaining labour discipline. Whilst the regulations clearly stipulated that directors were required to seek the opinions of trade union and party organisations and to delegate smaller day to day running problems, the extent to which rank and file workers could intervene in the actual management of the enterprise was strictly limited. Trade unions were informed that "they must not hinder directly in the running of the enterprise.." and that ultimately their role was "to assist actively in the carrying out and

¹ *Reshenie Partii* (Party decisions) i pravitelstvo no xozaistvennom voprocam - Tom 2 - 1929 -1940 - Moskva 1967 - p125-131 "O merax po uporiadoenniu upravlenia proizvodstvom i ustanovlenie edino nachalie "

strengthening of one man management".² Like everything else such measures could be justified by reference to comments by Lenin with regards to the immediate necessity of maintaining labour discipline and raising productivity. However the objective contradictions of such laws were clear. Not only did they further separate the workers from control over the enterprise thus reinforcing the division of labour between the functions of 'conception and execution', but it also put managers under enormous pressure. Not only were many led into falsifying output rates, but it also set directors up as vulnerable targets for the bureaucracy to blame when plans were not fulfilled. On the whole it was a counter productive way of improving efficiency.

In what was a fragile working class with a complex social composition and little if any political authority, the potentially devastating consequences of such contradictions for the development of a class consciousness cannot be underestimated, 'Edinonachalie' (one man management), along with N.O.T. and piece rates were restrictive and fundamentally undemocratic theories of work organisation. Such methods were to remain permanent features of industrial life and were central to the Stakhonovite and shock brigade movement, the central ingredients of the Soviet regimes methods for raising productivity in the 1930s. Always, as in the 1920s such methods for raising productivity were justified in terms of the immediate practical tasks of reconstruction and the absence of ready alternatives. Criticisms of party policy towards industrial development could easily be dismissed for being not only opportunistic but 'anti-Soviet'.

To replace historical criticism by notions of an idealised and immediate transformation of the social conditions of work and labour contradicts one of the central premises of historical materialism. But it would be equally wrong to ignore the objective contradictions that arise in any historical moment when the pressures on accumulation gives rise to policies that expose the dialectic of immediate necessity against long term goals.

Marx had indicated that the raising of the productivity of labour was a pre condition for the continued expansion of the process of accumulation. This went as much for socialism as for capitalism where the very survival of the Soviet regime was dependent on increasing the rate of production of means of production and of increasing the availability of consumer goods. We have noted that in the history of capitalism, two primary methods can be distinguished. The first can be characterised as the production of absolute surplus value and the second the

² *ibid* p128

production of relative surplus value. These correspond to manufacture and machinofacture respectively. In the absence of labour saving technologies by which workers could be liberated from heavy manual work, the Soviet regime was to resort to methods of raising productivity that do not differ in any significant way from the classic phase of building 'manufacture' in the history of capitalism.

Absolute surplus or primitive socialist accumulation

Under the capitalist organisation of the production process, the term 'absolute' refers to the method of extracting surplus value through work practices that involve an increase in the rate of exploitation of labour. That is, through the lowering of wages, intensification and extension of the working day, pushing labour to the 'absolute' limits of physical endurance.³

Such an "unrestrainable passion", such a "werewolf hunger for surplus labour", was for Marx a characteristic feature of the early stages of capitalist commodity production. In this "production of absolute surplus value" capital "oversteps not only the moral, but even the merely physical maximum bounds of the working day".⁴ Whilst ultimately dead labour is of no use to anyone, such a process has absolute limits precisely because it potentially leads to the premature exhaustion of and death of this labour power itself. Processing forty tons of steel a day, or laying seven thousand bricks, must surely lead to the shortening of life expectancy.

But Marx also points out that this insatiable thirst is contradictory. For if within the labour process we see the shortening "of the length of life of the individual labourer, and therefore the duration of his labour power, the forces used up have to be replenished at a more rapid rate and the sum of the expenses for the reproduction of labour will be greater"⁵.

This would imply that the pursuit of such practices by the Soviet regime was extremely contradictory. First, it is an unavoidable paradox that a workers' government was to rely so heavily on essentially capitalist methods for the production and extraction of surplus. Second, as we shall see, similar to the history of capitalist industrial development, the employment of methods to raise productivity by stretching to the limits of imagination and reality human physical performance is in actual fact counter productive. Third, and perhaps

³ This is elaborated on by Marx in Part III and IV of *Capital, Volume One - The production of absolute surplus value*, and *The Production of relative surplus value*. *Capital* - Sonnenschein and Co Ltd - London - 1908 .

⁴ *ibid* p250

⁵ *ibid* p251

most importantly, such labour policies approach the nature of work and the character of technology as neutral territory. The transformation of the labour process is not dependent on a revolution in the concept of work or the products of work, but simply in the notion of property. As the surplus accumulated belonged to the state, and the state belonged to the mass of workers, the bureaucracy could conclude that such mechanisms were not contradictory, citing the increased availability of rest homes, holiday schemes and other social benefits as evidence.

Ignoring the fact that increasing proportions of this accumulated surplus were disappearing in the form of privileges for the bureaucracy, or being used for the production of rituals and in particular for the reconstruction of Moscow as the Empire show piece, for the individual worker Stakhanovism was little more than a werewolf in sheep's clothing, a thoroughly draconian form of exploitation dressed up as the victory of socialist labour.

the glory of work

Remarkably for a workers' government, a truly qualitative revolution in the notion of work itself was not on the political agenda. Capitalist technology, management, and labour discipline could be rendered non contradictory simply by virtue of their state control. "In theory it seemed possible for workers to take possession of the means of production and subordinate them to their purposes without calling into question the nature of either what was produced or of what continued to be perceived as their work".⁶

Wage labour, as the defining characteristic of capitalism, was not to be dismantled, but was to be reinforced. The emancipatory project of the end of alienated work was replaced by the cult and worship of work. This cult of labour had been criticised long before in Marx's analysis of the Gotha programme. The transformation of the labour process was undoubtedly central to the transition from capitalism to socialism. But work and labour were not the goals of this transformation. Quite the opposite. When Benjamin comments that the old Protestant ethics of work were resurrected among German workers in secularised form, he was also describing the process by which for the Soviet worker, labour had become synonymous with social progress, a conception of the nature of labour that "bypasses the question of how its products might benefit the workers while not being at their disposal."⁷ Within Soviet labour policy, work is elevated such that it comes to represent the crowning achievement of human

⁶ Gorz, Andre - *Farewell to the working class* - Pluto - 1982 - p48

⁷ Benjamin, Walter - *Theses on the Philosophy of History* - p259 In *Illuminations* - Schocken - 1969

civilisation. The goal of socialism becomes the improvement of the efficiency of wage labour rather than its abolition.

For the efficient management of this labour, what greater example could there be of strictly enforced tasks and roles than the militarised model. Despite the earlier indignant responses to Trotsky's proposition to militarise labour, to all intents and purposes this is exactly what happens. The 'brigade of workers' is little different from the 'platoon of soldiers', the workers 'brigadier' is no different from the 'platoon sergeant', and the enterprise director is no different from the divisional commander. In the hierarchical organisation of Soviet labour we see a set of organisational relations that are entirely borrowed from the military world.⁸

The glorification of the concept of labour and the militarisation of work is central to the process of reification. Under the banner of socialist industrialisation all manner of types of exploitation can be hidden or at least made palatable by the erection of its prime victim, the worker, to the godly. The worker replaces the good disciple. (See fig 53) The worker becomes identified with the state. To offer a critique of the worker was thus to criticise the state, in the same way that to criticise the good disciple is to criticise God. Both are punishable by excommunication or execution. This 'myth of labour' is accompanied later by the 'myth of the machine'. Both are new forms of the fetish, and both are central to the Soviet project, and as we shall see when the first fails, the second assumes a dominant position.

the first five year plan

In this next section we explore how exactly the 'hero' was put to work. By the late thirties many of the disruptive problems associated with seasonal work had been overcome, partly through the development of new techniques that enabled construction to take place throughout the winter months and partly due to government efforts to provide training courses, building schools and continuous work for seasonal workers. However this had been achieved following a major crisis in the construction industry. As capital investment in construction dramatically increased building activity, by the early thirties the problem of unemployment had been replaced by a lack of skilled labour. This was partly linked of course to the persistence of such labour intensive methods of building construction.

Between 1918 -1928, nearly sixteen milliard Roubles had been invested in construction. In the first five year plan, investment was four times this amount, and the number of building

⁸ For a discussion of this and related themes see Gorz, -op.cit p28-31

The good disciples are replaced by the goodly workers



"Forward to communism-Greetings to the Union of workers and peasants - the foundation of Soviet power "

workers, expanded from 426,000 in 1925/1926 to over three million by 1932.⁹ This could only be met by yet another massive migration from the countryside. In 1932, eighty per-cent of the labour force in the industrial and house building sectors were from peasant families.¹⁰ This was a source of considerable conflict. First of all the "otkhodniki" had to be attracted into an industry that had never been a popular choice, not least because of the harsh working conditions. State regulatory bodies were set up to 'procure' labour from the farms. Rumours of labour being force marched from the village to the building site are dismissed as being "bourgeois anti - soviet lies", what is admitted however is the emergence of a new phase in the class struggle against Kulaks who it was claimed were hindering peasants from leaving the farms and entering into the construction industry.¹¹

With three quarters of the workforce from peasant backgrounds, many of whom were illiterate and unskilled, technologically advanced in some sectors but overall backward, the State was faced with a construction industry that was inherently unstable. In addition labour discipline was a major problem. Many workers were used to setting their own pace of work, taking leave to go on 'progulka' walkabout, and going in time honoured fashion on alcoholic binges.

One of the solutions for the regime was to further extend the introduction of new forms of labour organisation and to increase the operation of commodity money relations that had been first introduced during the years of NEP.

money and the bureaucracy

Before expanding on the new regime of financial control, it is worth dwelling on the actual growth of the bureaucracy itself. It was Hegel who had already noticed as distinct from the Roman senator, or medieval courtier, the particular emergence of a 'universal class' of civil servants whose task it was to serve the universal interests of the community and who would therefore need to be relieved from direct labour.¹² It is on the one hand to be expected that as the division of labour becomes more and more complex and the productive basis of society expands, appropriate methods of management need to be created to supervise production. There is nothing in such a proposition that of course suggests that a management system need

⁹ Goltzman - *Sostav stroitelnie rabochik CCCP V godi pervoi niatiletki*-Moskva-1966-p131

¹⁰ *ibid* p144

¹¹ Fedorov, V, D, - *Formirovanie rabochik kadrov na novostroikax pervoi piatiletki* - Dissertatzia - Gorkovski Universiteta - 1966 - Avotreferat - p9-11 - (Formation of cadre on the building sites of the first five year plan)

¹² Hegel, G.W,F - *Philosophy of Right* - Oxford University Press - 1967 - p132

be hierarchically organised. Weber's comments on the bureaucracy are of interest here. Whilst they are extremely ambiguous, (he comments for instance that the bureaucracy can function as social leveller but recognises the simultaneous need to conduct secret sessions), his main insight was to see how the bureaucracy emerges with the growth of a money economy.¹³ Indeed the generalised money economy is a pre-condition of the growth of the bureaucracy, along with the Great State and the mass party. The growth of the bureaucracy is thus synonymous with the concentration of the means of management of money. The rise of the bureaucracy within the USSR is entirely in accordance with such a thesis, and its expansion is wholly linked to the increased operation of the ruble as the regulator of social life. (See fig 54) As early as 1932 it had been noted that the increased operation of "khozraschot" had led to an increase in the emergence of "bureaucratic relations" especially on building sites¹⁴. But Weber had noticed another feature of the bureaucracy, in that "once it is fully established, bureaucracy is among those social structures which are hardest to destroy...".¹⁵ The functions of the Soviet ruling class are thus not dissimilar to that in any other twentieth century society. Control over money through the reproduction of commodity relations, the regulation of the process of accumulation, and the employment of the forces of law and order. Thus for all the particular differences, the Soviet system carries out exactly the functions that Hegel had described as the moments of Civil Society. "The mediation of needs... the *System of Needs*, the protection of property through the *Administration of Justice*, and care for the particular interests as common interests, by means of the *Police and Corporation*."¹⁶ It is to the system of needs, or rather the process of accumulation that we turn next.

accumulation, 'emulation' and wages

The first phase in the drive to increase the rate of accumulation was to transfer as many workers as possible into *Khozraschotnie Brigadi*, cost accounting brigades. This is where groups of workers were organised into teams and received production tasks as part of the overall planned output for a construction trust.¹⁷ The intention of *khozraschot* was quite straightforward. It was to link the monetary wage and other forms of payments directly to the quantity and quality of output, initially on a collective but increasingly on an individual basis. Not surprisingly this was accompanied by the extension of bonus schemes and piece wages. The piece wage *sdelnaya zarplata* we have argued is the most effective way of

13 Weber, Max - *Bureaucracy* - In *Essays in Sociology* - Routledge - 1991 -p 204

14 Barsukov, A i Kristalnie, A - *Khozraschot na stroike* - Gosfinizdat SSSP - 1932 - p7 (Khozraschot on the building site)

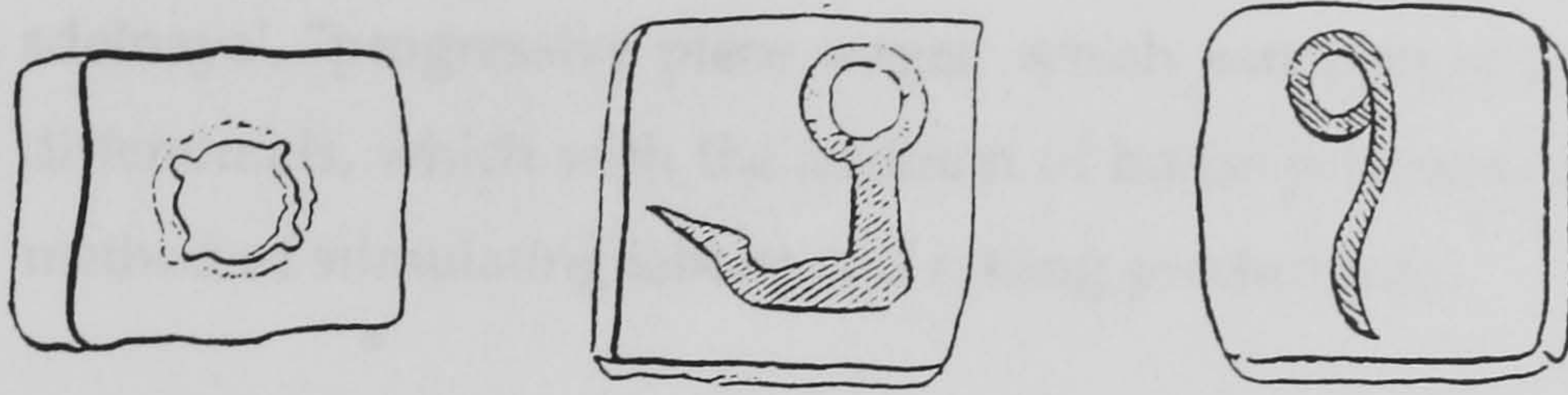
15 Weber op cit p228

16 Hegel, G.W,F - *Philosophy of Right* - Oxford University Press - 1967 -p126

17 It is worth remembering here that an adapted form of this labour organisation was at the centre of economic policy in the perestroika period.

MONEY The rouble as the regulator of Russian life

Leather money used in early Russia



Ten Kopecks from the reign of Nicholas I



Soviet money



The rouble in 1994 - the imperial eagle returns



FIG 54

linking money to output and therefore one of the most effective way of accumulating surplus. The operation of such a system was followed later by the introduction of 'progressivno-sdelnaya', "progressive piece wages' which was part of a general policy for widening wage differentials, which with the addition of bonus schemes, was felt to be the most appropriate method of stimulating labour and raising productivity.

This move was accompanied by the introduction of *sotzialisticheskoe sorevnovaniia*. 'Socialist competition' or rather what the Soviets preferred to call it 'emulation', meant that one group of workers or a brigade issued a productivity challenge to another. (See fig 55) The shock brigades were groups of workers who set themselves targets to exceed output norms that accompanied the contract from a trust. In 1930 it is reported that in the construction industry 51 out of every 100 workers were operating on the basis of 'sotz sorevnovaniia', and 27 out of every 100 were involved in shock brigades.¹⁸ This was to rise to up to seventy per cent.¹⁹ However whilst the brigade organisation of labour on construction sites continued in the sense of groups of workers performing tasks together, from 1931 collective wages which had been advocated by amongst others Gastev and the 8th Trade Union congress of 1928, increasingly came under attack, a move that was resisted by some construction workers.²⁰

This policy of extending the operation of shock working became the platform from which in 1936 the stakhanovite movement was launched. Accordingly the attack was continued against "left opportunists" who continued to criticise the increased role of money and who still advocated even in 1932 the introduction of exchange mechanisms purely on the basis of "produktoobmen", product exchange.²¹ Also singled out for criticism was the popularity amongst young building workers of *Proizvodstvennie Beatovye Kommuni*, 'Production -Way of Life Communes', which were reported as still operating "false principles" like wage sharing.²²

It was clear that *uranilovka*, 'egalitarianism' was not going to be tolerated. The call went out, "To liquidate egalitarianism and the lack of responsibility in the construction industry". Wage equalisation and *uranilovka* were singled out as the principle causes of all the

¹⁸ **Soyuz stroiteli v zifrak i diagrammak** - Moskva-1930 (The union of builders in diagrams and indices)

¹⁹ **Fedorov, V, D, - Formirovanie rabochik kadrov na novostroikax pervoi piatiletki** - Dissertatzia - Gorkovski Universiteta - 1966 - Avotreferat - p15

²⁰ **Kuromiya, Hiroaki - Workers Artels and Soviet Production Relations** - In Fitzpatrick et al - Russia in the peeriod of NEP - Indiana UP - 1991 p79 -80

²¹ **Barsukov, A e Kristalnie, A - Khozraschot na stroike** - Gosfinizdat SSSP - 1932 - p4

²² **Fedorov, V, D, - Formirovanie rabochik kadrov na novostroikax pervoi piatiletki** - Dissertatzia - Gorkovski Universiteta - 1966 - Avotreferat - p13

SHOCK BRIGADES



Brigade of workers on the Moscow metro 1935

industry's problems, its low productivity, the poor stimulation of workers in improving their qualifications, and in the lack of commitment to the job.²³ Right up until 1932, wage rates for construction labour were still expressive of what were termed "the equalising policies of the old directors of the trade union".²⁴ In 1934 new legislation came in that further increased wage differentials and halted the 'dangerous' tendency towards wage levelling.²⁵ The campaign against wage equalisation and egalitarianism conducted by the bureaucracy was quite relentless and intensified throughout the course of 1930s. *Uranilovka*, was described as a weapon of the enemies of the stakhanovite movement, a "distortion of the socialist principle of wages according to the quantity and quality of work", and was singled out as not only a dangerous hindrance to the great stakhanovite movement, but as being "petty bourgeois", the ultimate condemnation of anything deemed to be against the interests of the Soviet state.²⁶

"The stakhanovite movement - the irresistible movement of the present"²⁷

For the construction industry as for every other sector of the national economy, the mid 1930s were a turning point. In time honoured fashion, the historical pre-condition for the wholesale restructuring of social life began with the shattering of all previous and familiar concepts of time and space. The comprehensive 1935 plan for the reconstruction of Moscow was the signal for the re-ordering of space. (see below) The catalyst in the restructuring of time and labour arrived in the 1936 decree concerning the "Improvement of construction matters and reduction in price of construction".²⁸ These documents are important. First because they institutionalised within law Party control over the production of the built environment. Second, the plans for construction were actually carried out in practice, and third, the all embracing and comprehensive character of the declarations set the framework for the development of the labour process and for the physical character of the city of Moscow for the next thirty years.

²³ *Stroitelstvo Moskvi* - No 10 - 1931 - p2-4

²⁴ *Pak, Y - Organizatsia truda i zarabotnaya plati v stroitelstve* - Moskva - Stroizdat - 1974 - p171 - (Organisation of labour and wages in the construction industry)

²⁵ A brief history of wage forms in the construction industry from the October revolution onwards is to be found in *Pak, Y - Organizatsia truda i zarabotnaya plati v stroitelstve* - Moskva - Stroizdat - 1974- p166 ff and by the same author - *Ekonomika truda v stroitelstve* - Moscow - 1978 - p192ff (The economics of labour in construction)

²⁶ *Trud* - May 8th - 1936 - p1

²⁷ *Stroitelstvo Moskvi* - No 22 - Nov - 1936

²⁸ *Reshenie Partii i pravitelstvo no xozaistvennom voprocam* - Tom 2 - 1929 -1940 - Moskva 1967 *Postanovlenie Sovnarkoma CCCP i TsK BKP - Ob uluchsheniye stroitelstvo i ob udeshevlennie stroitelstvo* - (On improving and cheapening construction) Feb 11th - 1936 - Also published in *Trud* - Feb 12th - 1936 - p1 and with a summary in *Pak*-p174

Crucial to the desperate and necessary campaign to improve efficiency in terms of both quality and quantity was the expanded role of money relations. This took many forms. First of all was the decision as a priority matter to complete the transfer of *all* construction operations onto a system of contract work. This meant the creation of 'money' relations between state organs and trusts, trusts and enterprises, and between the directors of enterprises and brigades of building workers. Such contracts were to be conducted under a regime of strict financial control, through the strengthening of the state credit system and through the further extension of the methods of 'cost accounting', the by now familiar *khozraschot*. This was inevitably paralleled by the enlargement of the bureaucracy and the extension of the division of labour both vertically and horizontally, expressed most clearly in the profusion of new territorial and regional trusts and specialist construction organisations devoted to particular technologies. This was all accompanied by familiar Party demands to broaden the basis of mechanisation, to rationalise design work and to expand the process of standardisation. However, the drive for productivity was ultimately dependent on three sets of coercive measures. First, as noted, the reinforcement of piece wages and the widening of differential wage rates, second the development of the principles of the stakhanovite movement, and lastly the decision taken to send Communist Party members into all construction organisations with the remit to maintain discipline, ensure productivity increases and to strengthen the "socialist form of labour".²⁹

the hero worker

It was a concerted drive by the state to convert the construction sector still characterised by being "polukustarnie", that is of a semi handicraft nature into a modern powerful industry. (See fig 56). However, in the construction industry the widespread expansion of fixed capital and the development of factory based building production was not to occur until the late 1950s. Given the absence of machinery to relieve the worst excesses of heavy toil, the construction industry was particularly prone to bureaucratic campaigns of work speed up and was notorious as always for vast concentrations of labour. It is reported that in the second half of 1934 alone, seventy thousand construction workers could be found on site in the building of the Moscow metro.³⁰ (See fig 57) But to manage and control what was in effect a mass army, the state was left with only one way out, and that was to convert the Soviet worker into a superworker, a hero, one that could defy all known limits of physical endurance. As we shall

²⁹ *ibid* p 578 - 584

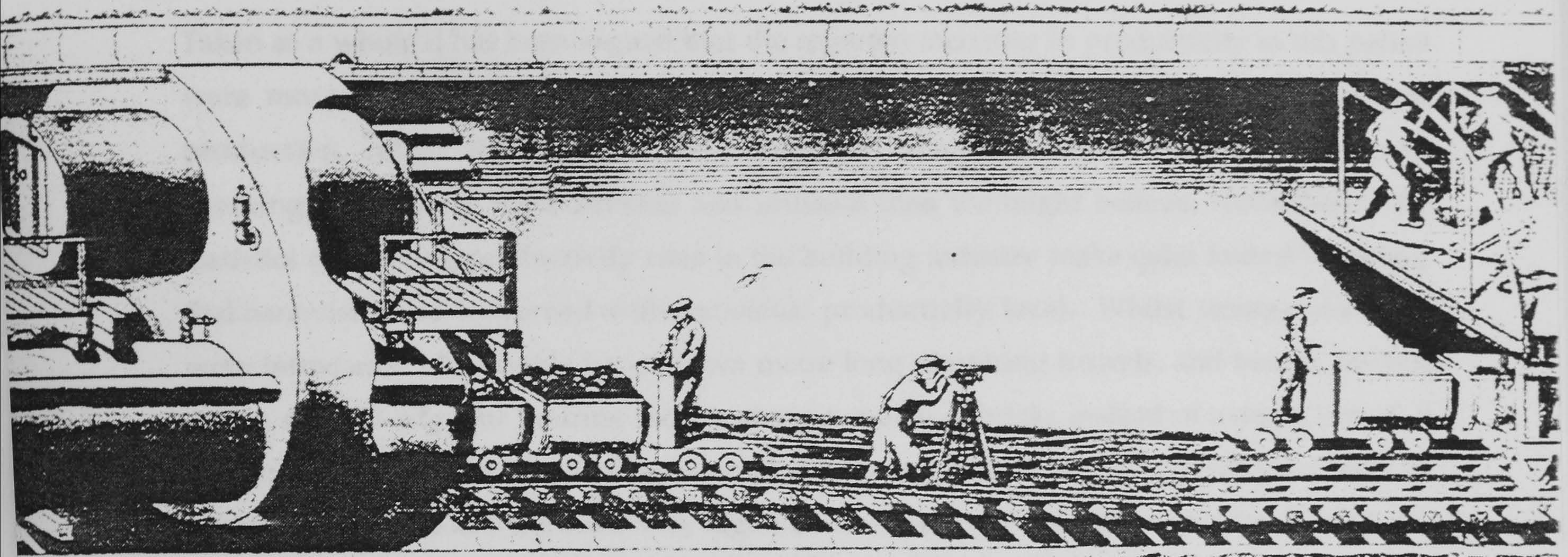
³⁰ *Trud* - Feb 16th - 1936-p1

The smiling Stakhonovites

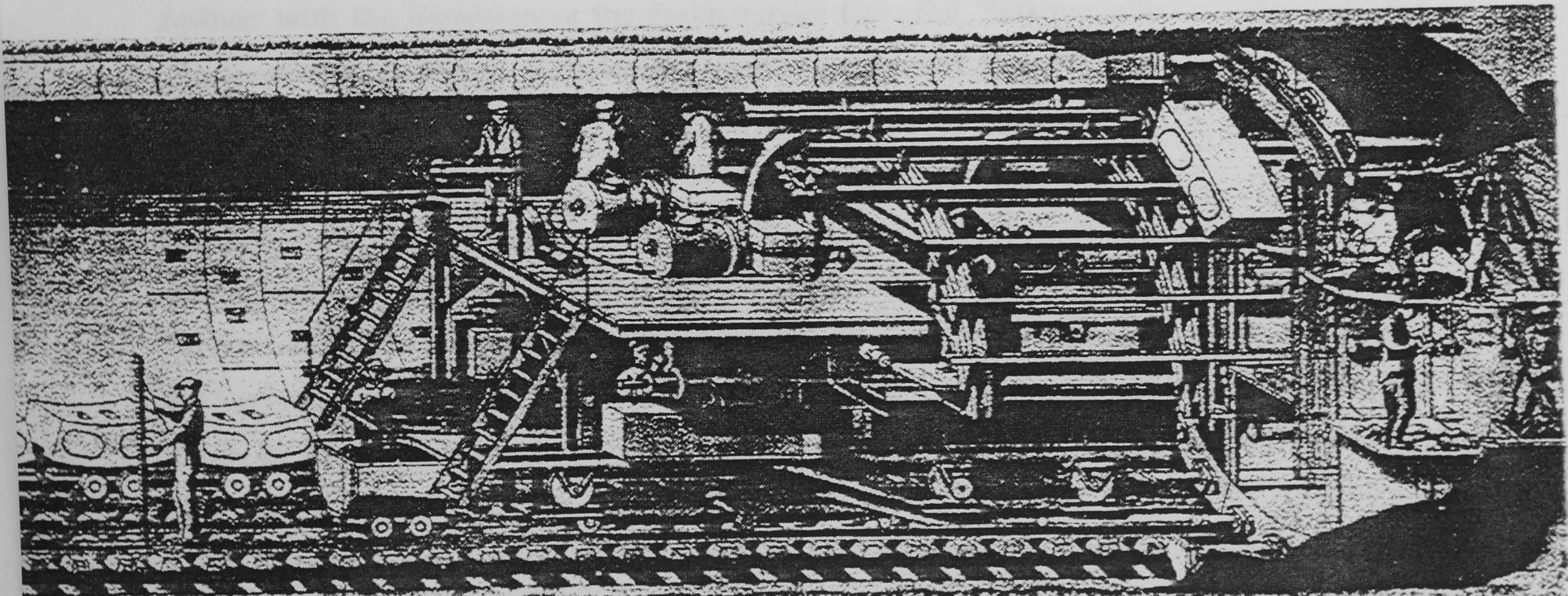


Brigade of workers, 1930's - the mass production of happiness

MAKING THE METRO



ШЛЮЗОВАЯ ПЕРЕГОРОДКА. ШЛЮЗОВАНИЕ ПОРОДЫ ГОТОВАЯ ЧАСТЬ ТОННЕЛЯ. БЕТНИРОВАКА ВНУТРЬ ЖЕЛ. СЕТ. ОБЛОЧКИ.



СТАВКА СЛОЖОВ. НАРУЖНАЯ ОБДЕЛКА ТОННЕЛЯ ТРАНСПОРТИРОВКА ПОРОДЫ НАПЕТАНИЕ РАСТВОРА. ТЕЛЕЖКА ЭРЕКТОРА СООРУЖЕНИЕ ОБДЕЛКИ. ЩИТ РАЗРАБОТКА ПОРОДЫ

see later this was easier to achieve in fiction, film, painting and sculpture than in the labour process.

Taken as a whole it has been argued that the reported increases in productivity in this period were more to do with the growing modernisation of industry, especially in machine production, rather than due to the widespread achievements of Stakhanovite record breaking which were more isolated and unusual than we might believe. Nevertheless the statistics concerning productivity rises in the building industry make quite fantastic reading. Stakhanovism was concerned with *individual* productivity levels. Whilst strange new tools were introduced like double handed two metre long plastering trowels, and bizarre buckets with a straight edge for pouring mortar along a course of bricks instead of using a trowel, it was in essence all about squeezing as much labour as possible out of individual workers by offering what were in some cases very high bonuses. (See fig 58) A plasterer named Golov was reported in *Trud* for having raised his productivity by a factor of twenty five and a 'hero bricklayer'. Orlov organised his own bricklaying school instructing young shock workers how to lay 4-5000 bricks a day.³¹ (See fig 59)

This was paralleled at the beginning of 1936 by the redefinition of the working day which was extended in the building industry as in other industrial sectors in a quite remarkable fashion with the invention of the Stakhanovite Day, the "Stakhanovite Five Day" and the "Stakhanovite fortnight". Individual brigades were noted as having raised productivity by 2-300%. It is reported that the Stakhanovite fortnight, which saw building workers toiling flat out for two weeks resulted in an overall increase in productivity of 174%,³² exceeding the plan targets for January 1936 by 10%. However this is nothing compared to the performance of some of the heroes and heroines whose faces would appear in the trade journals. Workers like the electrician Maria Maslova who raised productivity by 812%³³, of the Steel worker T. Romanov who in one day processed forty tons of reinforcing steel exceeding norms by 1250%. Perhaps the biggest prize though goes to the brick layers. In 1931 the norm for an average bricklayer was 7 -800 bricks a day. 1936 saw several 'hero' bricklayers laying 7,000 bricks in one day, the record going to one worker who with a helper was laying bricks at the rate of 1500 per hour.³⁴ By any contemporary standards these are quite extraordinary

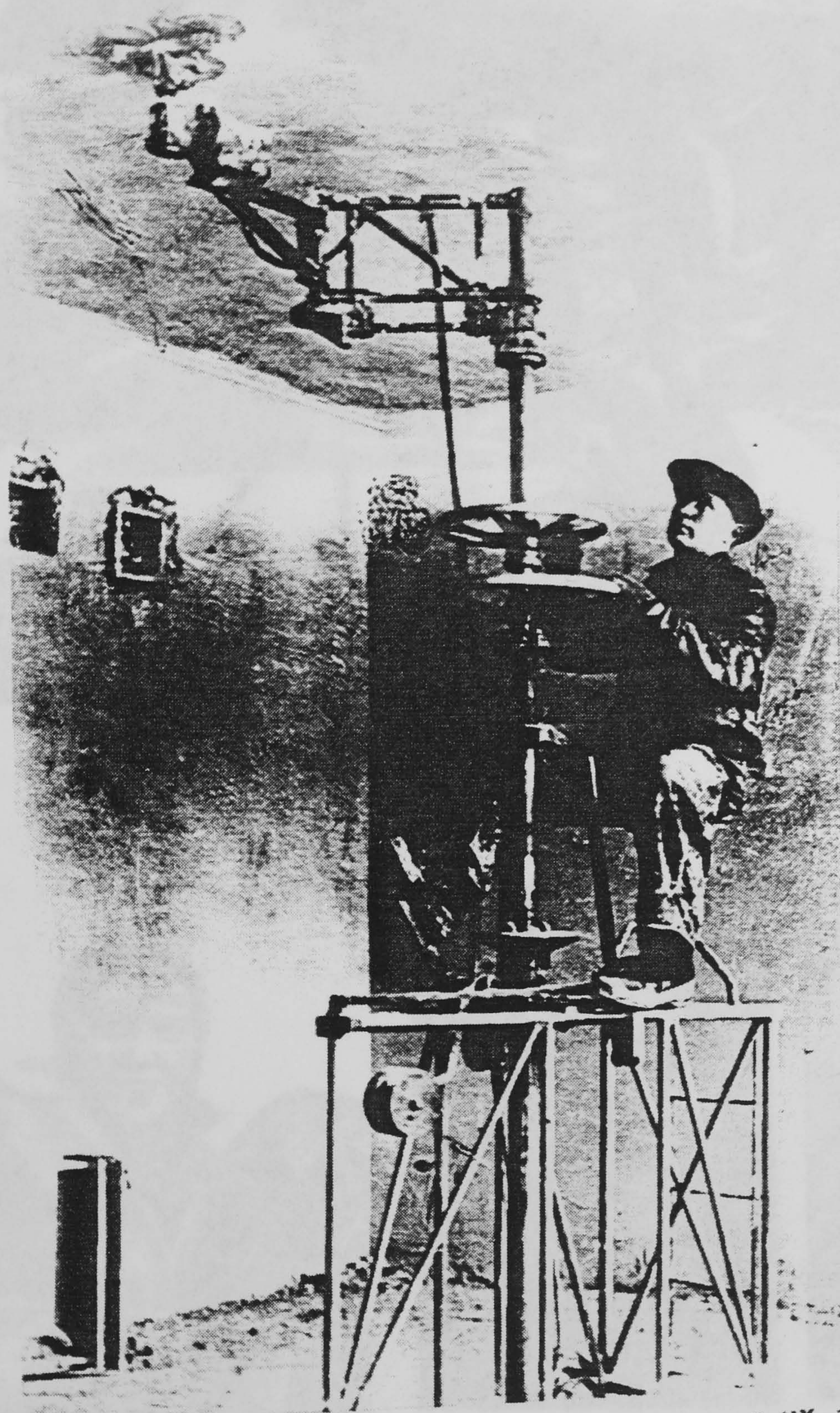
31 *Trud* - Feb 9th - 1936 - p2

32 *Stroitel'naya Promishlennost* - No.7-1936- p9

33 *ibid* p6

34 *Stroitel'naya Promishlennost*- No.6.1936- p5-6

HEROIC BUILDING WORKERS
Inventing machines to raise the productivity of labour

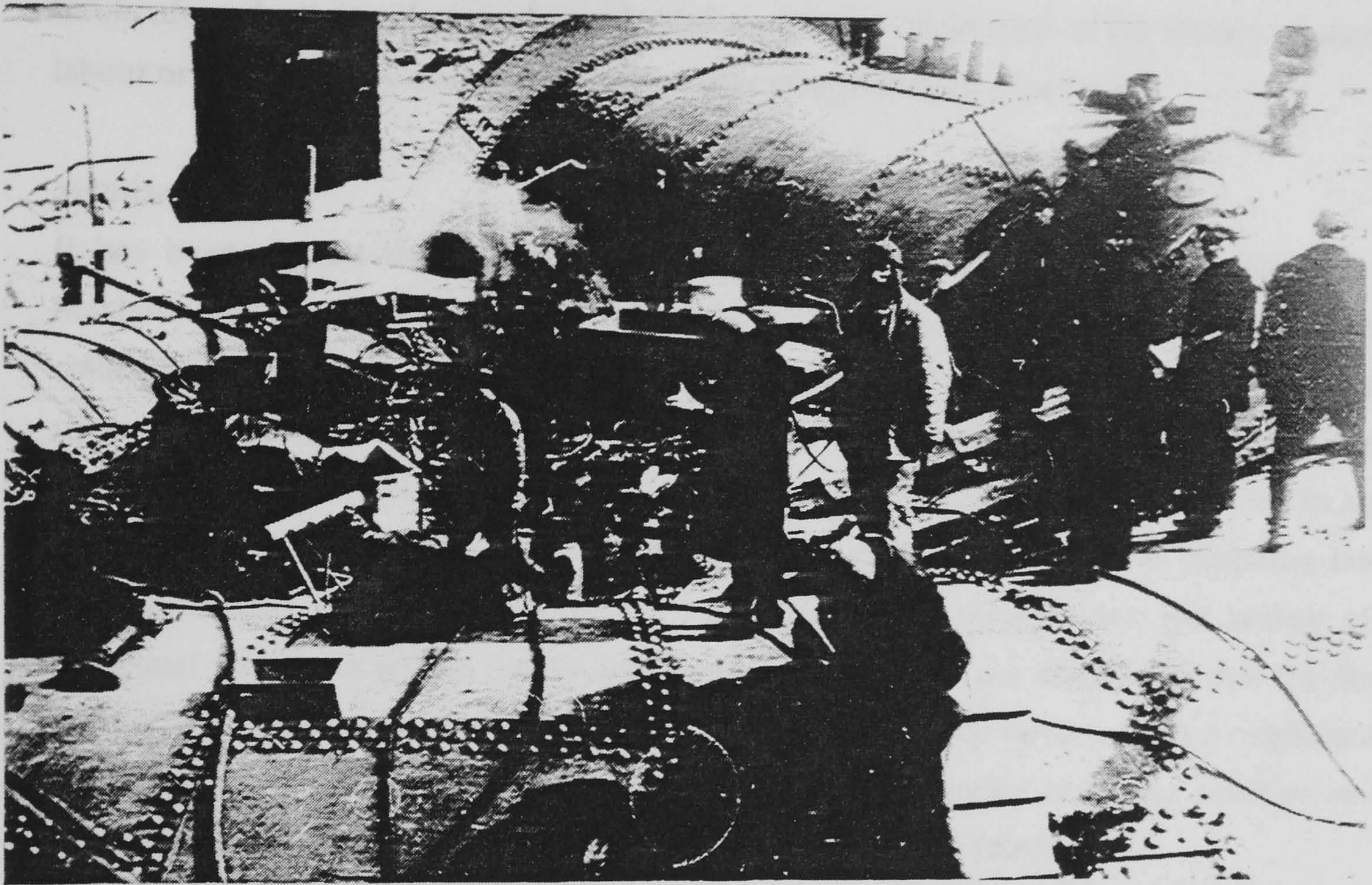


Затирка потолка потолочной затирочной машиной НХ-1

Machine for finishing plaster, 1930's

HEROIC BUILDING WORKERS

Steps in the construction of mythology



Рекордистка-электросварщица Мартенстрога
г. Маслова



Плотник г. Тихомиров



Маляр г. Касьян

The welder, the carpenter, and the painter

levels of productivity, that can be evaluated as either a celebration of the victory of socialist labour or one of history's more grotesque stories of exploitation. (See fig 60)

atomisation

It has been argued that the combination of shock work, 'socialist competition', and Stakhanovism, can be seen as the method by which to individualise incentives, to attack collective methods of work organisation and halt collective forms of payment.³⁵ By holding up individuals as model and heroic workers it further undermined any sense of collective solidarity amongst workers. It was as Filtzer points out extremely divisive, and not in actual fact a particularly efficient way of raising productivity. Just as in the capitalist labour process, labour loses its *social essence* and assumes the appearance and reality of an *individual task*³⁶, so within the Soviet labour process, with the distinction that the Soviet worker is assured that this labour attains its social character by virtue of being conducted on behalf of other workers through the State. The social character of labour remains in this sense purely juridical, as a legal assurance of greater truth and freedom.

One of the other paradoxes of the atomisation of the working class and the increased individualisation of work practices, was that coupled with absenteeism and labour turnover, it became increasingly difficult for the bureaucracy to control either the quantity or quality of output.

opposition

Although the sheer scale of executions and disappearances could provide evidence of widespread resistance to the regime, many of those who were removed from the land of the living were of course innocent victims who actually supported the party programme. It remains difficult to ascertain the precise manner in which opposition to the regime took place in the 1930s, but it is suggested that the Stakhanovite movement met with widespread opposition.³⁷

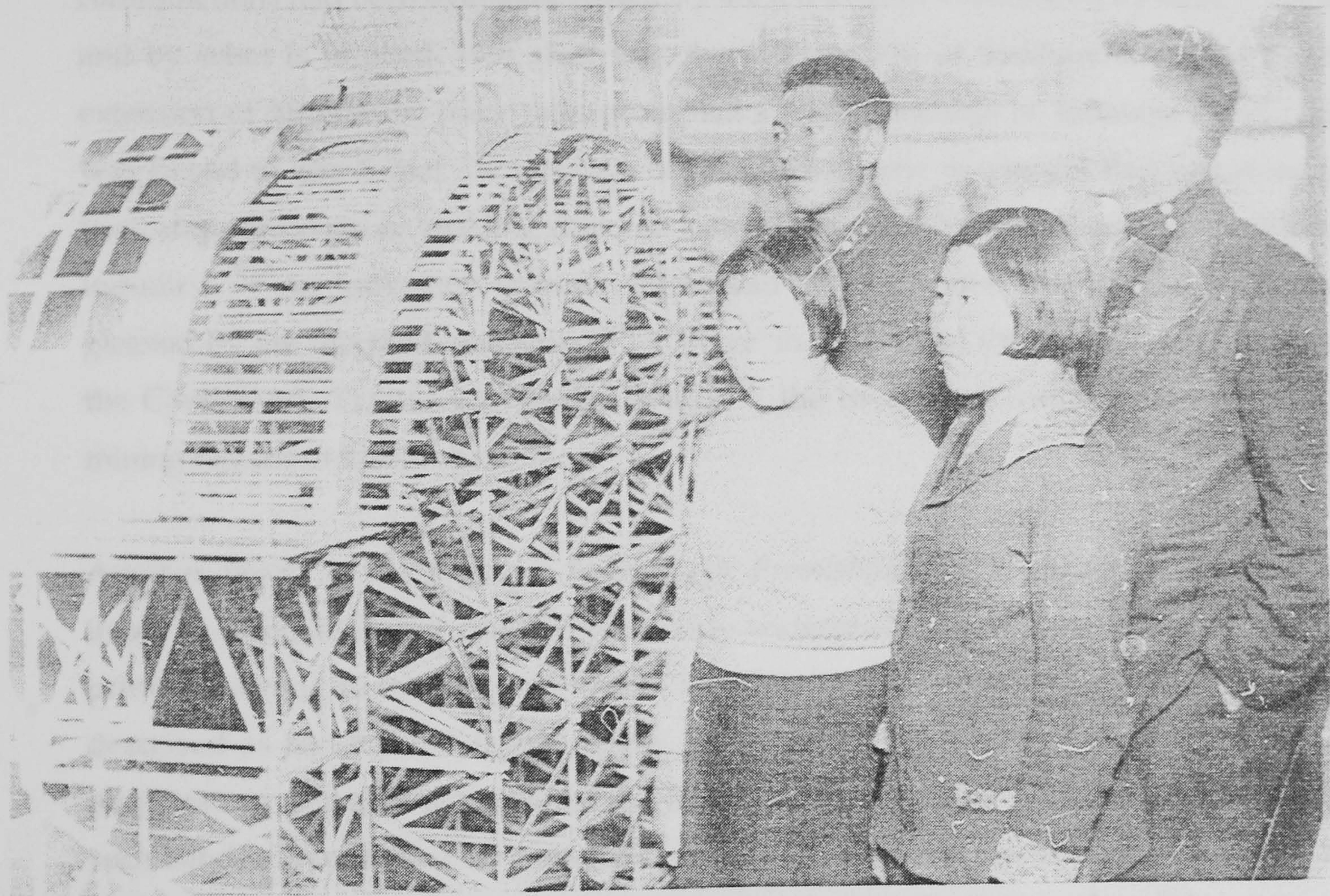
Journals are a good indicator, and those in the construction industry as everywhere else became uncritical texts devoted to technological questions, or those of technique. Of course this was entirely in accordance with the bureaucracy's assertions that fundamental class

³⁵ Filtzer, Donald - *Soviet Workers and Stalinist Industrialisation* - Pluto -1986- p118

³⁶ See Lefebvre, Henri - *Critique of Everyday life* - Volume 1 - Verso - 1991- for an early critique on money, need and work, written in 1948.

³⁷ *ibid* p 200-207

MAKING THE THE VICTORY OF SOCIALIST LABOUR



An exhibition of the feats of Soviet engineering, 1930's



Plastering over the cracks, 1930's

contradictions had been overcome. Often we are left to draw conclusions by what is not written and by what is implied. It is clear that the introduction of Stakhanovism and the further extension of differential piece rates prompted a wide campaign of 'sabotage'. *Trud*, (labour), was forced to admit that the sabotage of the Stakhanovite movement had unfortunately not been stopped on many building sites and as a movement it remained weak in the construction industry.³⁸ An indication of how widespread the opposition was in other sectors can be gleaned by the reported incidence of 'sabotage' in the journal throughout April in places like the Cheliabinsk Tractor and Motor factory³⁹, the Invanovna cotton factories⁴⁰ and in the mining regions of the Donbass.⁴¹

Another report in the pages of *Stroitel'naya Promishlennost*, (construction industry), would imply that incidences of conflict were fairly widespread on building sites.⁴² There was a printed warning to building workers to be vigilant of the Trotsky-Zinoviev blok, who were described as bandits and fascist agents, accused of organising the murder of Kirov and of perpetrating terrorist acts against the leadership of the Party. Furthermore it warned that such bandits were at that very moment "spinning yarns", and "spreading their bloody web on building sites", and that building workers should "not forget Krivom Ross, Magnitogorsk and Zaporashtal where the Trotsky Zinoviev bandits have been carrying out their mean and base work".

The architectural profession was just as much a victim of the terror campaign as any other. Proclamations were published calling for 'vigilance' and demanding that the ranks of architects be cleansed of the enemies of the people. The reported unmasking of two "Trotskyist theoreticians" on the architectural front, namely Lisagor (who had worked with Ginzburg and the Vesnins on schemes for a housing commune and the competition for the ministry of Heavy Industry), and Okhitovich the radical sociologist planner,⁴³ were held up as symbols of the necessity of such 'revolutionary zeal'.

Other clues of course come from personal testimonies. During an interview in 1988, an architect who had worked under Ginzburg and Zholtovski, had commented that housing communes like the Dom Nikolaev had been nothing short of nonsense, and that neo-classicism had been

38 *Trud* - Feb 9th - 1936 -p2

39 *Trud* - April 15th - 1936-p3

40 *Trud* - April 18th - 1936-p1

41 *Trud* - April 31st - 1936-p4

42 *Stroitel'naya Promishlennost*- Oct 15th - 1936

43 *Arkhitektura CCCP* - No 9 - 1936 - p2

undoubtedly the most valid representation of the traditions of Russian architecture. But more interesting was the anecdote that he had been one of the architects supervising the construction of Gorky Park, in the process of which he had been carted off site by construction workers who still supported Trotsky and were opposed to the *General Line of the Party* of which he was a representative!⁴⁴

social reality in the 1930s

The pre-condition for all of the changes that take place in Soviet society in the 1930's is the elevation of the Soviet state to an absolute. It is now the State that is the goal of socialism. It is only through the state that freedom can be attained. The state ownership of the means of production is the solution for abolishing the objective alienation of the worker from other workers, from both the process of labour and from the products of labour. The legacy of Hegel's theory of the state on the development of socialism is generally acknowledged. But in that Hegel was speculating on nineteenth century Europe, the correspondence of his *Idea of the State* with the idea and operations of the Soviet State is clearly contradictory if inevitable. In Hegel's words, "The State is the actuality of the ethical Idea..of the substantial will" in which the individuals duty "is to be a member of the State" for it is only in the State through the operation of Constitutional and International law, that particular and universal interests can be reconciled. "The State is the actuality of concrete freedom."⁴⁵ Hegel's Idea of the State, thus finds an heir in the Soviet Union. It is only through the Soviet State that both workers and collective interests can be met, the State becomes the guarantor of non exploitative relations, of progress and democracy.

That the way in which a worker is forced to sell his or her labour power to State trusts is contradictory, and that the process of distribution of the surplus is a process over which he or she has very little control, are criticisms that can not be allowed as long as the State remains as the 'end' of socialism. This is the objective social reality within which the production of paintings and architectural designs takes place, and the Soviet theory of realism emerges.

⁴⁴ There are many anecdotal stories picked up in conversations and interviews in the ten years I have been visiting Moscow. One of the more tragic is that there has not been one family that I have ever met who did not suffer in one way or another in the years of repression. When the numbers killed enters the millions, the scale of death either through executions or war becomes incomprehensible. It is remarkable that friends who are the only surviving male members in families and others who hid photographs and writings are remain so optimistic about the possibilities of social progress.

⁴⁵ Hegel, G.W,F - *Philosophy of Right* - Oxford University Press - 1967 - p155 -160

After Lunacharsky, it was Lukacs resident in Moscow in the late 1930s who became the most influential and articulate defender of realism. However the Lukacs of 1938 was a very different Lukacs from the one who in 1922 had argued that one of the consequences of the theoretical tendency to separate politics from economics was a State utopianism which would "either await a miracle or else pursue a policy of adventurist illusions"¹. But the late Lukacs under the conformist strangulation of Muscovite rule, was unable to see how the Soviet State was precisely projecting itself as a neutral zone with regards to the working class, and was pursuing particularly in the realm of art and literature, policies that were deeply idealistic and illusory.

back to the avant-garde

Our journey not surprisingly starts back in the nineteenth century. Aesthetic inquiry begins with the production of art in the ancient world. But it has been argued that as a *separate part* of the philosophical system, aesthetics is a child of bourgeois society. It has been suggested that its emergence as a separate enterprise can in part be explained by the need to compensate for the disappearance of beauty in the face of rationality, as an arbiter in a world of chaos, and as a consequence of the detachment of art from everyday life.²

Specialised institutions thus emerge in the bourgeois world to co-ordinate and control the *function* of art, which becomes concerned with the portrayal of bourgeois self understanding, and the *production* and *reception* of art, which takes place on a predominantly individual basis.³ Such a methodology with its emphasis on practice is a useful contribution in the critique of art as an autonomous object, and as the work of genius. The schema suggested for periodising art history, the sacral, the courtly, the bourgeois, whilst for some far too general is valuable for precisely that reason, because it relates the production of art not just to historical periods but potentially to specific modes of production. Thus if bourgeois art belongs to the transformation of capitalism, courtly art to the transition from feudalism, then sacral art is very much linked to the transition from primitive communal and slave societies to feudalism. (See fig 61) This however is a project fraught with problems and belongs to another time.

¹ Lukacs, Georg - *Reification and the Consciousness of the proletariat*- In *History and Class Consciousness* - Merlin - 1983 - p195 -196

² Heller and Feher - *The Necessity and Irreformability of Aesthetics* - In *Reconstructing Aesthetics* - Blackwell - 1991-p 1-4

³ Burger, Peter - *Theory of the Avant garde* - Manchester University Press - 1984 - p48

REALISM AND The self confessed vanity of the bourgeoisie



Kustodiev, Boris - Portrait of Fyodor Chlaiapin, 1921

It is nevertheless in the cauldron of the nineteenth century that the production of modern art begins to develop through what it is suggested are three distinct phases. The first corresponds to the artist seeking to protect work in opposition to an art market and against the indifference of the formal academies. The second phase, modernism proper, occurs when artists begin to seek control over their own means of production and distribution of art works. The third phase corresponds to the avant-garde and takes place when the artist enters into direct confrontation and opposition with the established art world and market.⁴

Within such theories, the avant-garde earns its unique position by virtue of its assault on the institutions of the art world and against the representation of a world free of contradiction. In this we have argued that the Soviet avant-garde holds a special position. Nevertheless, central to the programme of the avant-garde in western Europe, (and here we would include the futurist movement, dada, and surrealism) was an attack on the autonomy of art, that is the notion of the autonomy of art from everyday life. Common to the slogans of all these movements was a call for the reintegration of art into life. This is extremely contradictory, because it is only with the space allowed to it within bourgeois society that it is able to provide a critique. If art were to become fully integrated the possibility of conducting a critique evaporates.

This is exactly what happens with the full scale penetration of the commodity form into the production of art at the end of the twentieth century, where the commodity form grips both the labour of the commercial artist and the art product itself. A situation which is accompanied by the conversion of the shocks and innovations of the avant-garde into normal conventions. (See fig 62) This can be viewed as either a positive tendency in that cultural life becomes enriched by the experimental forms of language developed by the avant garde or as symptomatic of the impossibility of an art that is revolutionary.

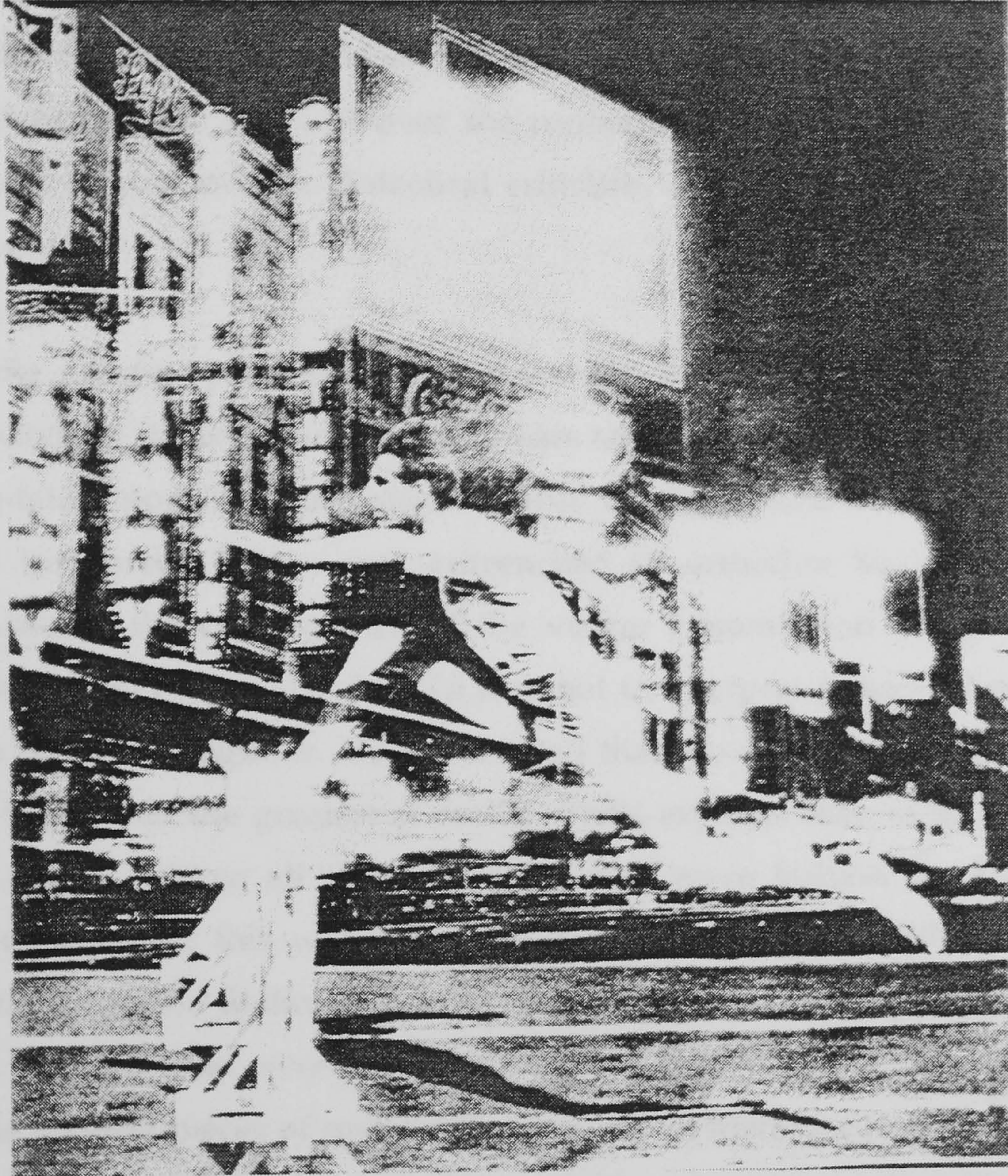
Lukacs and Adorno

At the beginning of the twentieth century however the situation was rather different. It has been argued that both Adorno and Lukacs considered the avant-garde work of art to be an historically necessary expression of alienation in late capitalist society'.⁵ This is in many ways where the argument starts. For whilst this was the motivation for Lukacs as the standard bearer of realism to condemn as decadent much of the avant-garde, in particular

⁴ Williams, Raymond - *The Politics of Modernism* - Verso - London - 1989-p50-51

⁵ Burger, Peter - *Theory of the Avant garde* - Manchester University Press - 1984 - p85

The avant-garde in post cards and on T-shirts



El Lissitsky - Runner in the city, 1926

surrealism and expressionism, for Adorno it was precisely through its status as a form of alienation that it could project itself as a form of resistance. In the following discussion we must bear in mind the distinctions that must be made between the production of architecture and the production of literature and art to which the debate primarily refers. However the implications for the evaluation of architectural production will become clear. It has been argued that unlike Hegel or Lukacs, Adorno did not construct any hierarchy of art. Whereas Hegel celebrated the classical over the romantic and Lukacs the realist over the avant-garde, Adorno preserved a dialectical criticism, refusing to erect any notion of art as an absolute goal.⁶

This is the greatest problem with Lukacs. Having warned against any purely aesthetic condemnation of the bourgeois world, Lukacs takes a narrow selection of novelists and sets up what are false oppositions between a 'realist' like Mann and a 'surrealist' like Joyce. At this point in his career Lukacs was entrenched in orthodox Soviet 'reflection theories of consciousness', the consequence of the vulgar canonisation of the base-superstructure metaphor. However we should take care not to interpret Lukacs' comments at face value. They are in fact ambiguous. He commented that the artist's duty was "to mirror objective reality"⁷, and that the greatest of realist works explores man in all of his relationships to the real world, "above all those which outlast mere fashion".⁸ As a programme for a critical work of art, this would appear to be entirely valid. Where Lukacs exposes his subordination to the Stalinist general line is in the presumption that this could only be achieved through what were quite erroneously called 'realist works', what in painting were in fact the greatest pieces of mythology and what in literature frequently descended to what Adorno called sterile claptrap, and disparagingly referred to as "boy meets tractor stories". A work of 'critical realism' would precisely have dealt with all of the contradictory relations within which our friend Konstantin was to find himself.

If the goal of critical realism is to deal with the complexities of social life in all of its contradictions, in all of its tragic optimism and joyful pessimism, then what we are dealing with is primarily a method which does not in itself demand any particular style or form. An abstract painting can conduct a critique just as much as a figurative one. Thus when Lukacs comments that "only the major realists are capable of forming an avant garde",⁹ we can quite

⁶ Burger *op.cit* p83-85 and Schulte Sasse, Jochen - Foreword -In Theory of the Avant garde - Manchester University Press - 1984 - p LI - LIV

⁷ Lukacs, Georg - *Realism in the balance* - In *Aesthetics and politics* - Verso - 1986 - p43

⁸ *ibid* p48

⁹ *ibid* p48

justifiably turn it on its head and pronounce that it is "only the avant-gardistes that are capable of forming a genuine realism". Better still is to entertain the possibility of both in which Gorky and Bulgakov can be considered 'realists'. (See fig 63)

Again, Lukacs's assertion that the aim of art should be to penetrate beneath the surface of social life is not that controversial, but there is no logic in the conclusion that forms of abstraction can be reduced to the "opaque, fragmentary, chaotic and uncomprehended"¹⁰. Ultimately Lukacs reduces the concept of realism to one of form and style, which is of course exactly what it became in the conditions of the USSR. He concludes by eulogising 'folk art' and declaring that the "broad mass of people have nothing to learn from the avant garde".¹¹ As we know Brecht was to reply to the contrary, that it was exactly his experimental works which broke the conventions of theatre that many of the workers in his audiences warmed to, adding that "realism is not a mere question of form", that it is a method for "discovering the causal complexes of society.. unmasking the prevailing view of things as the view of those in power...."¹².

But we can go further than this. The work of art can never be "real in the same sense as social reality. If this distinction is lost, then all attempts to provide a real foundation for aesthetics must be doomed to failure".¹³ In addition any theory of realism that argues for the leading role of a particular mode of formal expression runs the risk of merely reproducing idealised and distorted images of social life. This is of course exactly what socialist realism ended up doing. Heralded as a method of critically assimilating past culture and traditional forms and merging them with new 'socialist content' to create an art that was truthful and comprehensible to the masses, it created a series of formal canons within which the realities of Soviet life could be mystified. Socialist or rather what should be called Soviet realism¹⁴, conforms entirely to the patterns of a repressive state, a realism that Adorno argues Lukacs ultimately recognised as "an unhealthy version of bourgeois realism, or at least a highly dubious imitation of it",¹⁵ one in which literature runs the danger of ceasing to "reflect the dynamic contradictions of social life; it becomes the illustration of abstract truth"¹⁶.

¹⁰ *ibid* p36-39

¹¹ *ibid* p57

¹² **Brecht, Bertolt** - *Against Georg Lukacs* - In *Aesthetics and politics* - Verso - 1986 - p82

¹³ **Adorno, Theodore** - *Reconciliation under duress* - In *Aesthetics and politics* - Verso - 1986 - p159

¹⁴ **Marcuse, Herbert** - *Soviet marxism - A critical analysis*- RKP - 1965 - 131-135

¹⁵ **Adorno, Theodore** - *Reconciliation under duress* - In *Aesthetics and politics* - Verso - 1986 - p174

¹⁶ *ibid* p175

GORKY vs BULGAKOV - Two types of realism

The mother saw them snatch up the leaflets and stuff them inside their coats and into their pockets. This gave her new strength. She began to speak more calmly and forcibly, conscious of the pride and joy surging within her. As she spoke, she snatched leaflets out of her bag and threw them to right and left, into the hands that eagerly caught them.

"Do you know why they brought my son and his friends to court? I'll tell you, and you can believe the heart of a mother, and her grey hair. They brought them to court for the simple reason that they told people the truth! And yesterday I found out there is no one who can deny this truth—no one!"

The crowd grew and was silent, forming a ring of living bodies about the woman.

"Poverty, hunger and disease—that's what people get for their work! Everything is against us—all of our lives, day after day, we give our last ounce of strength to our work, always dirty, always fooled, while others reap all the joy and benefits, holding us in ignorance like dogs on a chain—we don't know anything; holding us in fear—we're afraid of everything! Our lives are just one long, dark night!"

"That's right," came the dull response.

"Shut her mouth for her!"

At the back of the crowd the mother noticed the spy and two gendarmes, and she hastened to hand out the last leaflets. But when her hand reached into the suitcase, it touched somebody else's hand.

"Take them, take them," she said as she bent over.

"Get away!" shouted the gendarmes, pushing the people aside. The crowd reluctantly gave way, pressing against the gendarmes and holding them back, perhaps without even wanting to. The people were irresistibly drawn to the grey-haired woman with the large candid eyes in a kindly face. Isolated in life, torn away from each other, they now found themselves together here, listening with deep feeling to the flaming words which perhaps

many of these hearts, hurt by life's injustice, had long been searching for. Those who were nearest the mother stood silent, their eyes fixed on hers with eager attention, and she could feel their warm breath on her face.

"Move on, old woman!"

"They'll grab you in a minute!"

"What a nerve she has!"

"Get out of here! Go back to your places!" cried the gendarmes, pushing ahead. The people in front of the mother swayed and held on to one another.

She felt that they were ready to understand and to believe her, and she wanted to hurry and tell them all she knew, all the thoughts whose power she had experienced. They rose from the bottom of her heart and formed a song, but she realised with a pang that she could not sing it—her voice was cracked and broken.

"The words of my son are the honest words of a workingman who has not sold his soul. You can tell honest words by their boldness!"

A pair of youthful eyes were fastened on her in fear and ecstasy.

Someone struck her in the breast and she fell down on the bench. The arms of the gendarmes flashed over the heads of the crowd, clutching at collars and shoulders, pushing people aside, snatching off caps and tossing them to the other end of the room. Everything swam before the mother's eyes, but she conquered her weakness to cry out with what was left of her voice, "Band together, good people, into one strong force!"

A gendarme caught her by the collar with a large, beefy hand and shook her.

"Shut your mouth!"

Her head struck against the wall; for a second the acrid smoke of fear rose in her heart, but courage flared up again, driving away the smoke.

"Get along with you!" said the gendarme.

"Don't let anything frighten you! Nothing could be worse than the lives you live..."

Excerpt from the *Mother*, by Gorky, 1906

The Master and Margarita

'Bravo...'

The last warning bell rang and everybody, excited by the prospect of a good act, tumbled out of the dressing room.

A minute later the house-lights went out, the footlights lit up the fringe of the curtain with a red glow and in the lighted gap between the tabs the audience saw a fat, jolly, clean-shaven man in stained tails and a grubby white dicky. It was Moscow's best known compère, George Bengalsky.

'And now, ladies and gentlemen,' said Bengalsky, smiling his boyish smile, 'you are about to see...'. Here Bengalsky broke off and started again in a completely different tone of voice: 'I see that our audience has increased in numbers since the interval. Half Moscow seems to be here tonight! D'you know, I met a friend of mine the other day and I said to him: "Why didn't you come and see our show? Half the town was there last night." And he said: "I live in the other half!"' Bengalsky paused for the laugh, but none came so he went on: 'Well, as I was saying, you are about to see a very famous artiste from abroad, M'sieur Woland, with a session of black magic. Of course we know, don't we...'. Bengalsky smiled confidentially, 'that there's no such thing really. It's all superstition—or rather Maestro Woland is a past master of the art of conjuring, as you will see from the most interesting part of his act in which he reveals the mysteries of his technique. And now, ladies and gentlemen, since none of us can bear the suspense any longer, I give you... Monsieur Woland!...'

Having said his feeble piece, Bengalsky put his hands palm to palm and raised them in a gesture of welcome towards the gap in the curtain, which then rose with a soft rustle.

The entry of the magician with his tall assistant and his cat, who trotted on stage on his hind legs, pleased the audience greatly.

'Armchair, please,' said Woland quietly and instantly an armchair appeared on stage from nowhere. The magician sat down. 'Tell me, my dear Faggot,' Woland enquired of the check-clad buffoon, who apparently had another name besides 'Koroviev': 'do you find the people of Moscow much changed?'

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Black Magic Revealed

The magician nodded towards the audience, still silent with astonishment at seeing an armchair materialise from nowhere.

'I do, messire,' replied Faggot-Koroviev in a low voice.

'You are right. The Muscovites have changed considerably... outwardly, I mean... as, too, has the city itself... Not just the clothes, but now they have all these... what d'you call 'em... tramways, cars...'

'Buses,' prompted Faggot respectfully.

The audience listened intently to this conversation, assuming it to be the prelude to some magic tricks. The wings were full of actors and stage hands and among their faces could be seen the pale, strained features of Rimsky.

Bengalsky's face, lurking in a corner of the stage, began to show consternation. With an imperceptible raise of one eyebrow he seized the opportunity of a pause in the dialogue to interject:

'Our guest artiste from abroad is obviously delighted with Moscow's technological progress.' This was accompanied by a smile for the stalls and a smile for the gallery.

Woland, Faggot and the cat turned their heads towards the compère.

'Did I say I was delighted?' the magician asked Faggot.

'You said nothing of the kind, messire,' replied the latter.

'Then what *is* the man talking about?'

'He was simply telling lies!' announced the chequered clown in a loud voice for the whole theatre to hear and turning to Bengalsky he added: 'D'you hear—you're a liar!'

There was a burst of laughter from the gallery as Bengalsky spluttered, his eyes popping with indignation.

'But naturally I am not so much interested in the buses and telephones and such like...'

'Apparatus,' prompted Faggot.

'Precisely, thank you,' drawled the magician in a deep bass, 'as in the much more important question: have the Muscovites changed inwardly?'

'A vital question indeed, sir.'

In the wings, glances were exchanged, shoulders shrugged;

143

Excerpt from the *Master and Margerita*, by Bulgakov, 1938

The contemporary significance of this debate is encapsulated in popular prejudices that declare that in relation to housing design, art and culture generally, the people are given what they want, and what they do not want is modern art or architecture. We do not need critical theory to establish that what is being expressed has nothing to do with popular consent, and is no more than aged prejudice masquerading as something that is natural and obvious. The fallacy of such propositions is exposed by its logical extreme, that we are born with particular notions of art, that at birth a child is either a figurative painter or an expressionist, and that workers are unable to respond to ideas of an abstract nature, including we might add many of the abstract ideas of Marx. All arguments for such 'populist' ideas of knowledge tread a path that hide reaction under the name of universal appeal.

Socialist Realism ?

Similarly, socialist realism, as a 'populist' idea confronts us with questions that are relevant not only to the history of the USSR, but to the organisation of popular culture in modern capitalist societies. There are however some methodological contradictions that need to be dispelled once and for all. First, is to distinguish between what was said and what was actually done. Similar to the avant garde our evaluation should not be based so much on what the artist, politician thought and said they were doing, but on the objective transformations in cultural life. Here we find the greatest of discrepancies. Second is to distinguish between its early phase from 1926 - 1937 when a critical debate could still be distinguished and its degeneration and ossification in the period from 1937 to 1960.¹⁷ Third, is to question what amounts to an 'aesthetic' critique of Stalinism. There are two problems here. The concept of 'Stalinism' is itself a mystification of what were material transformations whose explanations extend beyond the role of any one individual. The other problem occurs with the "aesthetic" critique of an historical period. Just as Lukacs warns us against reducing our analysis of the bourgeois world to the aesthetic, so that of Soviet society in the 1930s. It is not enough to comment that the Party passed decrees on Art. The question, is how this occurred, why, and what implications does it have for understanding the concept of a social totality and its historical transformation ? The crucial insight is not that there is a connection between politics and art but that they become completely merged. The fourth point is to reject the whole notion of a 'socialist' realism. With the political degeneration of the revolution, and the 'capitalist' character of the transformation of the labour process, there can be no meaningful sense of the concept of socialist realism. The concept of a Soviet realism however

¹⁷ This is one of the conclusions in a detailed analysis of Socialist Realist literature see **Robin, Regine - *Socialist Realism- An impossible aesthetic* - Stanford UP - 1992**

preserves an historically specific meaning, without falling into the trap of erecting pre-conceptions with regards to the qualitative character of the Soviet version of realism.

Soviet realism

How then should we approach Soviet realism ? Quite simply as a contradictory and dialectical phenomena that can only be understood in its actual relations to the rest of the social world. In this, Soviet realism takes its position in the general history of alienation that has defined the modern condition in the twentieth century. Soviet realism was an historical process completely bound to the processes of estrangement and reification. It is through this that it establishes its links with the general historical project and in particular with the contemporary condition.

It would be helpful of course if we could continue by defining exactly what Soviet realism was conceived to be. Not surprisingly we find that right from the beginning we face not so much a definition as a list of questions that in themselves clearly indicate that the roots of the debate of the 1930s lie firmly in the nineteenth century.¹⁸ The problem of how we might represent reality, history and the human subject, are hardly questions that are peculiar to the Soviet Union of the 1930s. Ever since the dawn of the enlightenment, art's role in the depiction of the world has been transformed, not least of course in the techniques of architectural perspective.

the privileged status of realism

In the elevation of realism to the premieré position within the historical development of art we encounter an immediate problem. Despite the noted ambiguities and discrepancies existing amongst the main protagonists, Soviet realism presents itself as a theory of exclusivity. Realism to the history of Art, is what state ownership is to the history of forms of property. Within the logic of hierarchical and absolute notions of cultural and economic progress, the former is the *real 'end' of art* since it is claimed as the most dynamic and historically progressive achievement in the world of aesthetics. Similarly, in that there can be no greater manifestation of socialist development, than state property, the latter is the *real 'end' of socialism*.

Rather than the liberation of human relations from the fetish they become reified in the new concepts. From the very outset Soviet realism was a hierarchical notion that in the mis-

¹⁸ *ibid* p 37 - 74. Here is summarised some of the central themes and questions of the debate. Part two of this book explores the 19th century realist tradition

conceived idea of the "class struggle in art", labels all works considered non realist as reactionary, and puts all realist works in a strict pecking order. Before Lukacs, this was most clearly articulated by Lunacharsky's comments on the history of literature where he distinguishes between the progressive realism of the early bourgeois period and its descent into a pessimistic and reactionary naturalism.¹⁹ Nevertheless Soviet realism was considered to be the progressive heir to this tradition. If this was an example of the attempt to link Soviet literature dialectically and historically with previous genres then it was in some ways successful. But then to erect the new realism as the apogee of literary achievement despite the rhetoric to the contrary was non dialectical and deeply utopian. It begs the questions as to why realism should enjoy such a privileged status and whether this is in any way desirable? This turns us to the notion of realism as the seeker of truth.

realism as the removal of the mask

In most Soviet literature that deals with the theory of realism, we find a common notion not unlinked to the ideas of Brecht, Lukacs and Adorno, that realism is a method of acquiring knowledge of the world. Realist literature and painting attempts to deal with the world in all of its complexity, seeking to capture the central dynamic of historical change and revealing the human subject and indeed classes in their true predicaments. Realism, then is not unlinked to a process of revelation whereby the true essence behind deceptive auras can be deduced. Predicting Adorno's critique however, this was not to be confused with the taking of a photographic snapshot which was more akin to the notion of naturalism.

It comes as no surprise to find that many of these ideas on truth, form and content were rehearsed by Hegel in his lectures on aesthetics. It is worth recalling here some of Hegel's more well known theses on the aim and role of art. Hegel periodised art into the *symbolic*, the *classical*, and the *romantic*. For all of these periods, art has an important role in the development of the individuals self knowledge of the spirit. At each phase in human history one of the primary functions of art has "been to find for the spirit of a people, the artistic expression corresponding to it"²⁰. One of the ways in which this can be achieved is not through the dissociation, "but in the identification of meaning and shape",²¹ that is in the reconciliation of form and content. The aim of art then is not simply one of utility, in the sense of "purification, financial gain, fame..", it has a very special function, "we must

¹⁹ Lunacharski, A, V, - *O sotzialisticheskom realisme* - In Izbrannie statii no estetike - Moskva-Isskustvo - 1975 -p318 - 345 and p356 - 360 (On socialist realism)

²⁰ Hegel, G,W,F - *Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*- Voule One - Oxford - Clarendon Press - 1975 - p603

²¹ *ibid* p422

maintain that art's vocation is to unveil the truth in the form of sensuous artistic configuration."²² Whilst the truth that Hegel refers to is the method by which the interpenetration of meaning and expression can help reveal the true essence of history, the development of the human spirit, his emphasis on truth, clarity, and honesty make him the philosophical precursor of not only Soviet realism, but the modern movement in architecture, which had as an organising obsession precisely the same reconciliation of form and content.

But Soviet realism seeks to go further than simply establishing the truth about the world. It "does not just get acquainted with the world but strives to alter it....it knows that nature and society are dialectical, that they constantly change through contradictions, and it more than anything tests the pulse of this race in time", it is a realism that is "wholly aspirational, active and dialectical".²³ This conception of realism is closely linked with the critical and negative concept of ideology referred to earlier. But it can also become a victim. There is no guarantee that in the pulling away of the blinds of history, new ones will not be hung and despite the insistence that the new realism was primarily a method in which content assumed greater importance than form it very rapidly descended into a manifesto of style in which the formal characteristics of work assumed a pre-eminent position. Figurative painting, traditional 'narrative description' in literature, classical sculpture and heroic monumental architecture. However, there was far more going on here than a formal transformation. We see a revision of the materialist project and its replacement by a quest to reveal an absolute notion of labour, nature and history.

critical assimilation or uncritical adulation

By the mid thirties after the declarations of 1932 uniting artistic organisations, and the Congress of 1934 at which the concept of realism was elaborated upon, a series of themes central to the method began to emerge. Realism was still all about the objective depiction and analysis of social reality in which the critical assimilation of all that was progressive in previous societies was central. This was of course in accordance with the comments by Marx, Lenin and Trotsky on the necessity of harnessing the up to date achievements of the bourgeois epoch. Thus the assimilation and transformation of bourgeois realism could be justified in the same way as the assimilation and transformation of American Taylorism. However, it left the basis on which such decisions could be made largely unanswered and subjective. Despite the refutation of bourgeois eclecticism, there could be a very fine line between what

22 *ibid* p55

23 Lunacharski *op cit* p358

constituted critical assimilation and wanton historical plagiarism. The situation was to be compounded by the addition of new categories such as *partinost*, 'party spirit', *narodnost*, 'national character', and of course *ideanost*, 'ideological content'.²⁴ Thus the realist project was to be fully imbued with a new enthusiasm for the new society in the midst of construction. Creeping into the notion of realism was the concept of a 'revolutionary romanticism'. This like everything else was contrasted with the bourgeois world. Romanticism in the context of Soviet realism was entirely appropriate in anticipating the socialist transformation that was of course at that very moment being confirmed by the bureaucracy. In contrast "Bourgeois romanticism carries with it unrealisable dreams....either mystical religious soarings or the character of profound sorrowful nightmares".²⁵ The irony of this comment in relation to a cultural project that for good reasons has been depicted as amongst other things 'hagiographic' are clear.²⁶ Rather than celebrating the harmonious union of labour and the masses with nature and history, such romanticism as we shall see is instrumental in confirming the alienation of labour.

realism as the negation and continuation of the avant garde project

Much of the work so far has emphasised the development of the ruling bureaucracy as a negation of the revolutionary movement. Accordingly the cultural counter revolution has been viewed as a negation of the avant garde, described elsewhere as a confrontation between 'Culture One' and 'Culture Two'.²⁷ However the transformation of the labour process not only negates the tendencies of the early 1920s but of course continues other tendencies that were inherited from the capitalist world and survived right through the early years of the Soviet Union. Here we pick up on the threads of an argument alluded to previously concerning the dialectic of the avant garde. Viewed primarily as an aesthetic transformation, it has been argued that there is less a rupture between the period of Soviet realism and the avant-garde than a dialectical continuity, and that the questions at the centre of the Realist project are not that different from the ones faced by the avant-garde.

This leads to the conclusion that the realist project of the 1930s in actual fact radicalises the avant garde, it not so much negates it as lays it bare.²⁸ There are problems with this thesis not only with regards to the problems of an aesthetic critique but in its tendency to view the

²⁴ For a summary of the declarations see Robin op.cit p63-64

²⁵ Lunacharsky op cit p359

²⁶ Robin op cit p70-72

²⁷ Paperny, Vladimir - *Men, women, and living space* - In Brumfield et al - *Russian Housing in the Modern age* - CUP - 1993 - p149 -171

²⁸ Groys, Boris - *Total Art of Stalinism* - Princeton - 1992 - p44

avant-garde as homogenous. It is true however, that both the avant-garde project and the realist project share the preoccupation with history and consciously deal with the problem of the role art and architecture should play in the construction of social life. In addition they both share a commitment to the necessary and total transformation of the social world in which the human subject is recreated as the new individual. Historically the *Novie Beat*, 'new way of life' of the Constructivist movement is the parent of the realist notion of the 'Soviet hero'. In the logic of the final and triumphant transformation of class contradictions and of the birth of the virgin worker, both tendencies share a vision of the end of historical time as we have come to know it. Perhaps most importantly as we have noted, the realist project completes the avant-garde's political project, and in the process turns it upside down. For if central to the avant garde was the union of political and aesthetic programmes, that is the politicisation of the aesthetic, it is of course the bureaucracy in the USSR and the National Socialists in Germany who complete the journey and aestheticise politics. This refers not only to the Nuremberg rallies and the Munich spectacles but the wholesale spectacular organisation of ritual in the USSR. Here we see that along with everything else the state appropriates the mystical experience. ²⁹

How then do these contradictions reveal themselves in the production of art, architecture and the built environment? First of all through the concepts of labour, class, nature, nationhood and history. Just as these are central to the literary project, so to painting and so to architecture. In this, the architecture of the period is distinguished in exactly the same way as literature, painting, and the whole process of industrial development. A momentous achievement of human ingenuity and productivity, of civilisation and of barbarism. The union of the highest technical proficiency and skill with what had become a violent utopian project. Second, Soviet realism becomes a specific aspect of ideology. In this it would be wrong to consider it as a conscious project carried out by the bureaucracy but as an aspect of consciousness whose structure and intention is derived from the development of new antagonistic social relations between a new ruling class, that is the bureaucracy and the working class and intelligentsia.

the social relations of cultural production, reception and function

At the most general level, the development of social relations in the construction labour process, were to be replicated within architectural production. This refers not only to the obvious central administration and control of the arts, the state ownership of institutions

²⁹ *ibid* p65

(and it should be remembered the state regulated production of art materials), but in the resurrection of the academic 'master- apprentice' relation that had characterised architectural activity in the 19th century. The hero of architectural labour is thus invoked as a sister to the 'shock hero and heroine' building worker. It is important to note here that although female labour was increasingly used in the building industry, all of the prominent academics within architecture from this period were male, a significant index of the limited emancipation of women.

The reception of art and architecture accordingly reverts to the traditions of the bourgeois art world. The whole structure of institutions, of academies, museums, and galleries is reinvented. Art regains the autonomous status that the avant-garde tried to undermine, that is as a practice it became institutionally separated from the masses, a specialist activity presided over by great masters. Its autonomous status is given another boost philosophically with regards to its function which was to grasp in pictures and words the dialectic of history and social life. In its inadvertent negation of this realist objective it exposes in no clearer fashion its complete lack of autonomy in terms of its objective depiction of some other reality. Whether we think of them as good or bad works of art is besides the point. Our interest here is how such works contradict their own objectives and the social world they pertain to represent. If however, both in subject matter and relations we find many of the features of 19th century art actively reproduced, there is of course a marked distinction, which is that the reproduction of such traditional orthodoxies takes place within the context of the invention of a mass produced culture.

the ideological saturation of every day life

The whole theory and practice of the Stakhanovite movement, shock working and the transformation of the labour process was as we have seen deeply ideological. It is important to understand how such controversial work practices by being justified and dressed up in the language of socialism fulfil the function of ideology. In pitting workers against each other, questions of workers' control and collective action were replaced by images of heroic individual proletarians. (See fig 64) Indeed the whole process of idealising workers and Soviet institutions was part of the general process of ideological production that we have termed Soviet Realism. One of the principle ways in which this was done was of course within law. The rhetoric of Soviet legislation was always heavily imbued with the language of equality and liberty. The statute books were full of laws proclaiming the inviolability of the rights of workers and local Soviets. As such Soviet law assumes the

REALISM AND MYTH THE HEROIC PROLETARIAN



Riashski, G - The delegate - 1927

status of a utopian polemic, like William Morris's *News From Nowhere* or Thomas More's *Utopia*. But this ideological saturation was not invented by the bureaucracy, it has its roots as we have noted in the 1920s, when we see the penetration of political propaganda and ideology into all sectors of social life, into theatre, film, graphics, music, textiles as well as architecture.

It could be seen on the banners in libraries exhorting intellectuals "to raise their productivity in the interests of building socialism", to the pioneer movement which as early as the twenties were singing wonderful songs such as "the smoke of the factory is better Than the Smoke of Incense". Dinner plates were manufactured with revolutionary slogans, and agit prop work was conducted in all areas of industry. In 1929 alone the construction workers' Trade Union organised 494 anti religious lectures organised over 1000 clubs, and 3760 'krasnie ugolki', the little red corners where pictures of Lenin would replace the icons of old. Old religious days like *Elijah Day* and the *Feast of Inauguration* were replaced by *Electric Day* and *Day of Industry* respectively. Children were named after Revolutionary heroes, heroines and even concepts, such as *Dotnara* - daughter of the toiling people, *Smychka* - alliance of workers and peasants !³⁰

Gorky's novel the *Mother* effectively became a Soviet institution. As the crises of Soviet society became more profound, we could read and disappear into the optimistic and victorious tales of the working class struggle. These stories offered the promise and hope that was being simultaneously crushed within the labour process. New novelists appeared such as Platanov and Ivanov, who despite touches of irony were to write on themes in sharp contrast to the macabre and satirical work of writers such as Bulgakov the author of masterpieces like the *Heart of a Dog*, the *Master and Margerita*. Such new writers concentrated their attention on the lives of workers and peasants of the heroism of struggling people, as opposed to Bulgakov's obsessions with cats in bowler hats and mongrel dogs with human testicles.

Eisenstein's films can be seen in a similar vein. The film *Strike*, immortalises the brutal suppression of the 1905 revolution. Using new tricks like photomontage, Eisenstein juxtaposed vicious caricatures of 'nasty capitalists' victimising guiltless workers, workers who are at times portrayed with an almost religious aura. As propaganda, such films as *Strike*, *Battleship Potemkin*, *October*, along with novels by Sholokov and Gorky, had a vital role in

³⁰ Stites Richard, - *Bolshevik Ritual building* - p295-310- In Fitzpatrick et al -*Russia in the period of NEP* - Indiana UP - 1991

convincing wayward peasants and workers not only of the legitimacy of the revolution, but that its fate was lying in safe hands.

From a celebration of the revolutionary process they became used as methods for deflecting consciousness away from contemporary criticism. Questions to do with class struggle are removed from the present and located in the past as historical artefacts, the reification of history itself. The paradox of the manipulation of these works is that they end up externalising the very subject matter which they attempt to draw our attention to.³¹

labour, art, and legends

One of the principle ways then in which ideology began to work was through the idealisation not only of individual workers and the struggle of "the toiling masses", but of history itself and in particular the history of the revolution. Myths were created about the historical contributions of social groups and individuals. Whole events were exaggerated and distorted so as to refute objective contradictions manifest in daily life. If it is bourgeois ideology that, "cannot rest until it has obscured the making of the world, fixated this world into an object which can be forever possessed,....which will stop its transformation, its flight towards other forms of existence"³², then Soviet ideology continues this project with renewed vigour.

If we were to take a broad sweep across all of the works of art from this period, there are particular themes which are constantly replicated. First, the notion of realism is wholly replaced by one of romantic illusion. This reveals itself not only in the idealisation of the worker and of course work itself, but in the reification of social relations that comes with the mis-representation of social life. Images depicting events in Russian and revolutionary history, that deal with the respective roles played by individuals and the masses, paintings of contemporary life on the sports field, on the collective farm, and in the factory committee, mythologise everyday life yet nevertheless aspire to its revolution, a revolution that tragically can only be accomplished on canvas, celluloid and paper. It is no coincidence here that the subject matter of this romantic painting shares something else in common with 19th century romantic art, which is the absence of the urban, and indeed of the urban worker apart from in a classical pose of heroic isolation.

31 Eisenstein fled to America and Gorky committed suicide.

32 Barthes, Roland - *Mythologies* - Paladin - 1984 - p155

The world of art was to see a return to the traditions of epic figurative painting and classical sculpture. Just as the work of Constable shows a rural Britain as a non antagonistic idyll, accordingly much of the painting in the era of socialist realism portrays a world free from conflict. (See fig 65) But by denying social discord it simultaneously created new contradictions. In order to contradict the reality of oppression it too has to offer a vision of utopia. Painters were required to provide soporific scenes of a world free from antagonism, or of heroic workers in the field and in the factory, of the *absolute* grandeur of *absolute* labour .

The transformation in the work of Kasimir Malevich is a poignant demonstration of the imperatives on cultural workers to conform to Party dictates on acceptable modes of aesthetic representation and subject matter. Renowned for pioneering Russian Suprematism in painting, Malevich is chiefly remembered for abstract paintings such as the Black Square - 1914-15 and a series of pieces simply called 'Suprematism', where rectangles and lines collide in a dynamic and explosive orgy. These are important for the radical departure they represent from the traditions of 19th century painting. But in 1933, Malevich completed a painting simply called 'Worker'. It is a figurative painting of a happy, healthy, rosy cheeked woman resplendent in a coloured folkloric outfit.³³ This was painted at the same time as the 1932-33 famine in which it is estimated four million people perished.³⁴ (See fig 66) Completed at the height of the purges in 1937, Arkadi Plastov's 'Collective Farm Holiday' depicts a mass of energetic farmworkers amidst tables overflowing with food and delicacies. (See fig 67) Clutching children, laughing and playing music, they enjoy themselves under a picture of Stalin and a slogan that reads "zhisn stalo veselye", "life became happier".³⁵ Similarly the 1940 work "Election to a poor peasants committee" a scene of radiant sunshine and democratic debate, makes a mockery of any notion of realism not only in the context of war but of the realities of peasant life.

The greatest painter from this period was probably Aleksandr Gerasimov, a Party favourite. Like Plastov, and other masters of painterly mythology Yakovlev, Lokitiniy, Gerasimov was technically accomplished, one might say brilliant.³⁶ His paintings are meticulously executed. The "Collective Farm Guard", 1933, "The collective farm holiday 1936-37", are of

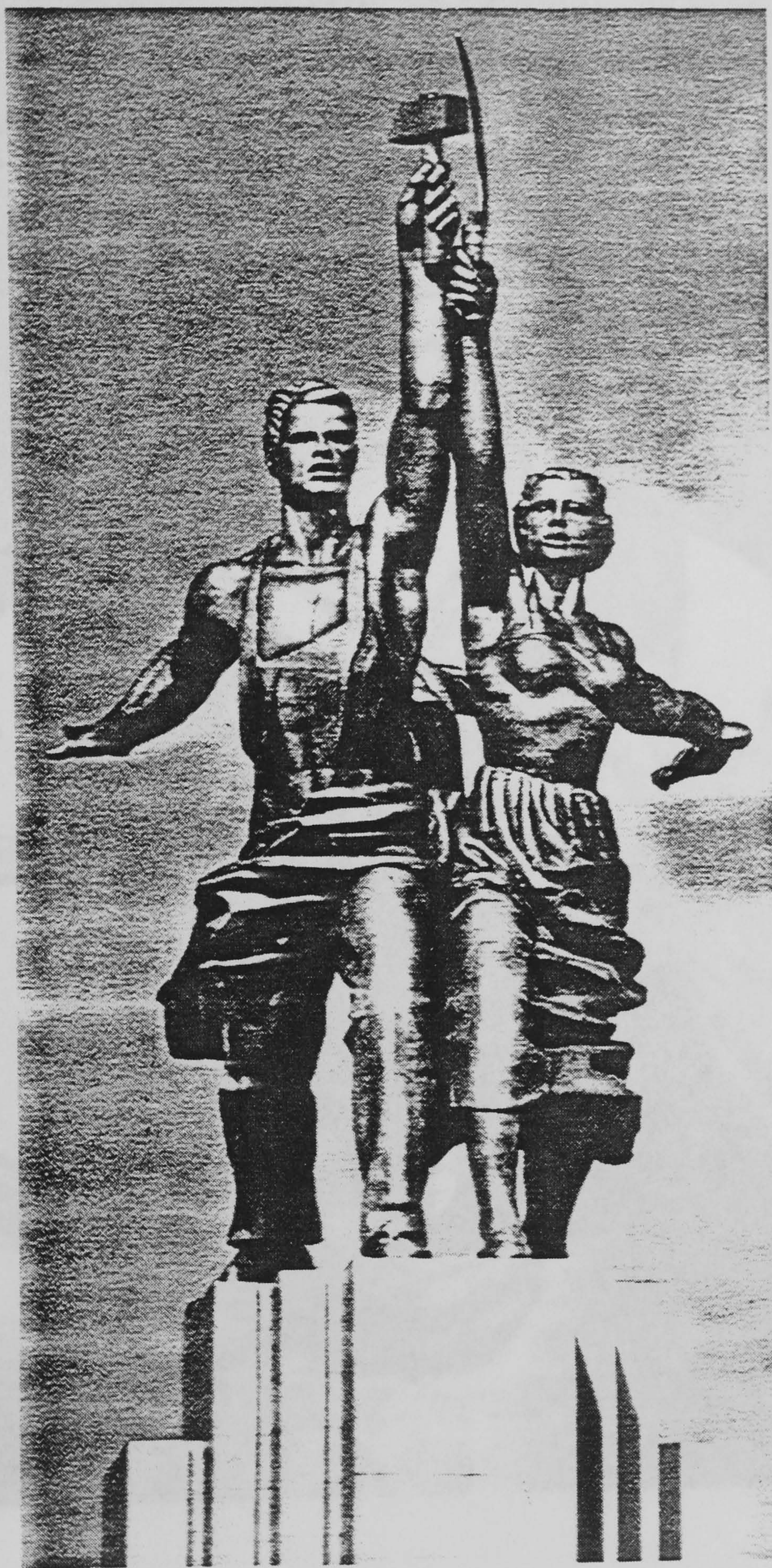
³³ Petrova, E et al - *Malevic-Kudoshnik i teoretik* - Sovietski Kudoshnik - Moscow - 1990

³⁴ Filtzer, Donald - op.cit p 94

³⁵ Germana, M et al - *Shivopees - 1920 -1930* - Gosudravrsvtvennie Russkie Muzei - Katalog -1988

³⁶ These and other paintings can be seen in *Sovietskoe Izobratelnoe Iskusstvo - 1917 -1941* - Moskva - 1977. For a survey in English see Cullerne Brown - *Art under Stalin* - Holmes and Meier - New York - 1991, and for a whole series of essays including an introductory essay on architecture by Catherine Cooke, see Cullerne Brown, Brandon Taylor et al - *Art of the Soviets. painting sculpture and architecture in a one party state. 1917 - 1992* - Manchester University Press - 1993

The union of man and woman, worker and peasant



Mukhina, V - Steel sculpture, Moscow 1937

From the black square, white circle and red triangle to the joyous peasant



Malevic, Kasimir - The worker, 1933

Painterly mythologies



Plastov, A - Election to a poor peasants committee, 1940

course contradictory in the same sense as the work of Plastov. But it is his painting "Lenin on the Tribune" 1929-1930, that provides the clearest reference point and benchmark in the new aesthetic. (See fig 68)

Lenin, is elevated above the historical process into the heavens themselves. Thus despite the orthodox thesis of history as the history of class struggles, here we have history as the deeds of great leaders. Secondly, the masses, the real makers of history are relegated not just to earth but to a fragment of the picture. In most of the paintings from this period, the workers appear as either idealised heroes and heroines plucked out of context, or as subordinate to some higher authority. In a complete paradox, Soviet painting achieves not so much a critical realism as a completely unintended photographic snapshot of the real and actual subordination of the masses to the 'Party', to the 'State', and ultimately to the cult of personality. This painting in many ways inaugurates the eulogisation of 'great' leaders that was to dominate much of Soviet Art over the next thirty years. Not just Lenin, but Stalin, Marshall Zhukov and even Aleksandr Nevski could become subjects. (See fig 69) Thus when Barthes comments on the distortion of reality in myth, and the bourgeois project of keeping reality whilst dispensing with its appearances³⁷, we find an unexpected relative in Soviet painting, which in attempting to represent the dawn of an era of emancipation, is contradicted by the material reality of every day life which can never be painted. It first negates the truth and in so doing reveals it. The same can be said for the fate of painting in the Third Reich.

the figurative work and fascism

"Within a period of ten years, German fascism succeeded in reviving for its own purposes both the obsolete art of bourgeois genre painting and the opposing mode of feudal ideational painting. Both modes were so meaningless that the contradiction between them did not become apparent. In the painting of the Third Reich, every positive tie to reality was destroyed."³⁸

As the above passage implies, despite the dangers involved in drawing comparisons, the parallel between the fate of art in the USSR and in the Third Reich is unavoidable not least because of the more or less simultaneous attack on the avant garde. Freedom of artistic expression is one of the many litmus tests by which we judge the state of democracy. The

37 Barthes, Roland - *Mythologies* - Paladin - 1984 - p149

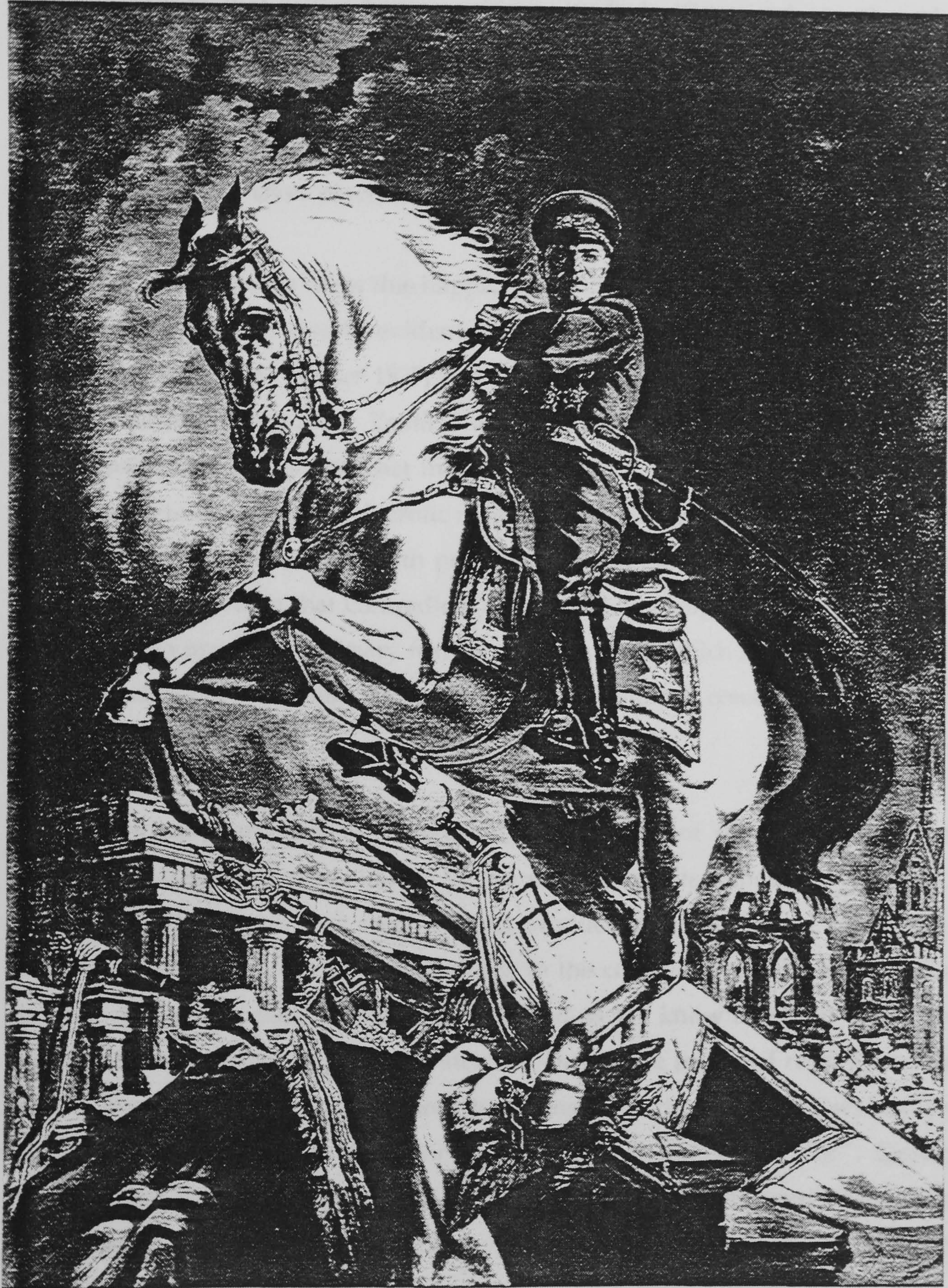
38 Hinz, Berthold - *Art in the Third Reich* - Blackwell - 1979 - p163

REWRITING HISTORY



Gerasimov, A - Lenin on the tribune, 1929-30

History, as the history of great individual men



Yakolev, V - Marshal Zhukov, 1948

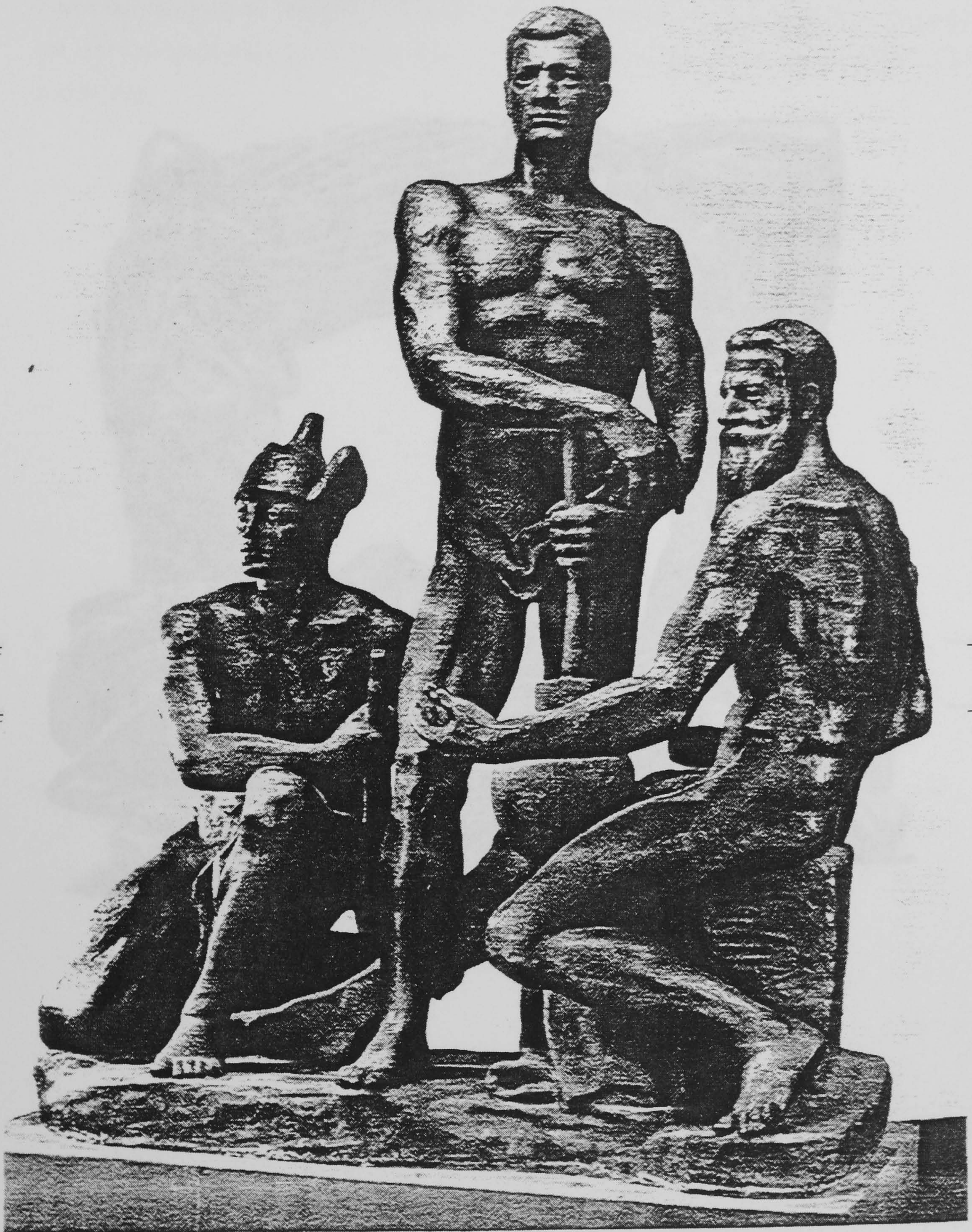
juridical and violent suppression of art and its replacement by myth is one index of its negation. In both societies we witness the centralised administration of the production of an aesthetic culture that reifies human relations and glorifies, work, sport, and the healthy ordered individual. The production of art in such circumstances becomes part of Foucault's carceral archipelago.³⁹ Whilst we wait for incarceration we remain subject to the technologies of discipline and normalisation imparted not only through the institutions in which everyday life takes place, but by the mass production of images of the ideal.

One of the most obvious ways this happens is in the classical mythologisation of the shape of the human body most clearly evident in Soviet works of sculpture like Matveev's *October 1927*, Sinanski's *Young Worker 1937*, and is replicated in such paintings as Saliger's *Mars and Venus*, Hackenbroich's *New Youth*, Kampf's *Venus and Adonis*. (See fig 70) There are of course major differences not least in the portrayal of women, which in German Art of this period tends to be of the naked, erotic mother and in Soviet painting tends towards the heroic female worker. However they both project the human subject as something otherworldly, a picture of the physique that contradicts the actual knowledge we have of our own bodies. It produces then one of the primary features of alienation, which is the alienation of the human subject from his or her actual body. They are the historical cousins of the Barbi doll and the Action man. (See fig 71)

Other forms of imprisonment emerge in the concepts of race and nation. Whilst Soviet appeals to nationhood were limited by the rhetoric of internationalism, "Soviet" nationalist myths and folkloric themes, crept into art production, as a rallying cry to accompany the advent of war and of course as an antidote to the critique of the theory of 'socialism in one country'. Blood and Soil, myths of race played as we know a central role not only in the organisation of Nazi art but also architecture. Just as the reality of rural life on the collective farm is mythologised in Soviet painting, German painting mythologises nature, landscape and natural reproduction. (See for instance Erler's *"Blood and Soil"*, Cissarz's *Time of Ripeness* and *Farmer plowing*, Walther's *Motherliness*, and Mazzetti's *Mountain Landscape* which has the Alps crowned with a Swastika). It hardly needs adding that German leaders were also subject matter for painters. (See Einbeck's *Reich Minister Rudolf Hess*, and Erler's *Portrait of the Fuhrer*.) As in the Soviet Union the pre-eminence of figurative painting should in no way be confused with that of realism. In that both these painting traditions

³⁹ The two obvious references here are to Foucault, Michael - *Discipline and Punish* - Penguin - 1987, and *Madness and Civilisation* - Routledge-1987. See also Rabinow, Paul - *The Foucault reader* - Penguin 1991

IDEALISING THE MALE BODY



Matveyev, A - October, 1927

FIG 70

REALISM AND THE IDEALISING THE FEMALE BODY

actively and openly distort the actual world beyond all recognition, if anything they are closer to a form of surrealism. This is the real basis of their attempt to create a new art, that is more honest yet consistently contemptuous of the masses and of the material social life.



Mukhina, V - Bread, 1939

actively and openly distort the social world beyond all recognition, if anything they are closer to a form of surrealism. This is the real basis of their identity, a mode of production of art, that is mass based yet ultimately contemptuous of the masses and of the realities of social life.

THE MAKING OF AN IMPERIAL CITY

walking the boulevards

There was always something very reassuring about the rich mixture of benzene and papirosi. It was the smell of the street, comforting and recognisably human, aromas that swirled at the foot of the triumphant city. A physical testament to progress and to repression, to the grandest of spectacles, to the discovery and annihilation of truth.

On what basis are we able to evaluate this towering colossus? Not through the proffering of pejorative and entirely subjective comments on the development of Moscow. This is to ignore the dialectic of history, and to erect yet more masks that obscure the making of city. The analysis of its construction during the years of Stalin's rule must commence from the contradictory structure of new social relations. This refers primarily to the development of new class relations between an emergent bureaucracy and a politically and economically appropriated working class, and immediately makes the notion of a 'socialist city' or indeed a 'socialist architecture' questionable not only in relation to the USSR but as an objective in any social formation. It is an intrinsically utopian concept that can only lead to the idealising of one particular form of architecture. The notion of an architecture that seeks to capture the dynamic reality of social life is however another matter, but this along with other concepts central to the realist project was to be frozen. Once however we strip away the empty rhetoric of 'developed socialism', we find by the greatest of paradoxes, that Moscow, is in fact true to itself. What more appropriate architecture and urban landscape could there be for a new bureaucracy and ruling class that captures the ossification of the revolutionary process than an Imperial city that would cast in stone the new rule of law for ever. All documents of authoritarian rule impress, precisely because their magnitude and power feeds off our own vulnerability and our desire to absolve responsibility for the world to a higher authority. Grandiose feats of the architectural imagination are invariably linked to a notion of an absolute God.

the socio-spatial dialectic

The development of new ideas about form cannot be reduced to some notion of individual taste, autocratic desire or bureaucratic predilection whether it be Peter the Great, Stalin or Kruschev. We have seen how in both late nineteenth century Moscow and in the early period of the avant garde, social relations are bound together with spatial relations in a dialectical unity. The presumed liberation of social relations from the process of reification that provides the stimulus for the revolutionary process, implies not only the redefinition of the relation of labour to itself, to the products of work and nature, but as we have noted to space.

Similarly in the circumstances where social relations are becoming fetishised in new ways we should also expect to see the reorganisation of space at all levels of the social totality. The partial solution to the riddle of *heroic monumental architecture*, which is one way of describing the formal characteristics of architecture from this period, is to be found in the way that the production of architecture functions as one wing in the production of new forms of ideology that fetishise social relations by claiming to be the opposite of what it actually is, i.e. an architecture of an imperial bureaucracy laying claim to socialism.

We described how the avant garde project sought to redefine social relations at a global, territorial, and regional level, within the settlement plan, and within the spaces of education and work. One aspect of the continuity between the thirties and the twenties is how this project is transformed under the emergent regime. For every significant change in the character of social relations and in the form of labour, we find corresponding transformations in the form of the built environment.

One of the ways that this was inaugurated was through the medium of the competition. There were three in particular that were important. The *Plan for Moscow*, the competition to design the *Palace of the Soviets*, and the competition to design the *Ministry for Heavy Industry*. Despite the appearance of pluralism and tolerance that architectural competitions offer, they were in fact a tool for establishing Party rule over architectural production, for proclaiming the 'right answer' and for removing both criticism and opposition. Although most of the arguments had been already discussed and aired, the 1935 plan drew all strands of the new direction in architecture together.

the 1935 plan

In what amounts to perhaps one the most contradictory and ludicrous statements in any book on Soviet architecture, we are informed that 1931 saw "the resolution of the basic social problems of the nation"¹. This 'solving of social problems' enabled the Central Committee of the CPSU to pass a resolution calling for the development of a Master plan for Moscow. This as we have mentioned was an important document, not only as a statement of policy but because it set the structure for the future development of the city right up to the present day. It is also of unique historical importance in another sense, for there can be few examples in the history of architecture and urban design that have sought to plan a whole built environment in such an integrated and comprehensive manner.

¹ Posokhin, Mikhail - *Towns for people* - Progress - Moscow -1980- p112

Following the great international interest in the possibilities for generalised planned urban development that the Soviet Union was unique in offering, and which had encouraged Corbusier, Ernst May and Hannes Meyer to submit schemes for the new Soviet capital, the plan for the creation of a "genuine socialist city" was finally published on July 10th 1935, with the innocuous title "On the general plan for the reconstruction of the city of Moscow"². It contained programmes for the infrastructural development of the Metro, the Moscow - Volga canal, the rebuilding of the banks of the Moscow river, the asphaltting of roads, a decision to strictly limit the growth of the city and to surround Moscow by a green belt. This was to be accompanied by a vast and ambitious programme of housing, social and commercial construction including, cinemas, hotels, supermarkets, schools, and factories. It is however the spatial restructuring of the city that is most revealing. Here we find the conscious decision to amplify the historic radial-ring road system of streets, not only through the construction of new 'magistrals' but through the widening to between thirty and forty metres of existing boulevards.³ The classical character of the city was to be completed by the planned construction of "several monumental buildings of state importance", the reconstruction of town squares with new names, "Komsomol", "Soviet", "Triumphal", "October", "1905", and a new crown in the sky line, The Palace of the Soviets to replace the Church of Christ the Saviour. (See fig 72) Finally, new buildings were to be constructed along the boulevards that were to be the best examples of 'classical' and 'new' architecture, with the most important boulevards, crossroads and city nodes being adorned with the "most expressive and parade like compositions" with housing blocks between seven and fourteen stories.⁴ That this plan led to the construction of buildings and boulevards that as passers by we can admire and contemplate with the same awe we reserve for a trip to the sites of Rome, should not be surprising and is not contested. It is primarily to the objective contradictions of such an architecture that we turn our attention, an investigation of the consequences of which reveal the paradox of pleasure that comes from awe.

Whether it be the grand plan or the individual building we see the same tensions reproduced that we have discussed previously in relation to the labour process, realism and ideology. We meet the negation of the aesthetic and political programmes of the avant garde, the idealisation of history and social progress, the projection of absolute and universal

² **Reshenie partii i pravitelstvo po khozaistvennim voprocam** - Tom 2 - 1929 -1940 - Moskva - 1967 - Postanovaenie Sovnarkoma CCCP i TsK VKP - July 10 1935 - *O generalnom plane rekonstruktsia gorods moskvi* - p534-546

³ *ibid* 538-9

⁴ *ibid* 540-1

THE PLAN FOR THE IMPERIAL CITY, MOSCOW, 1935



▲ north

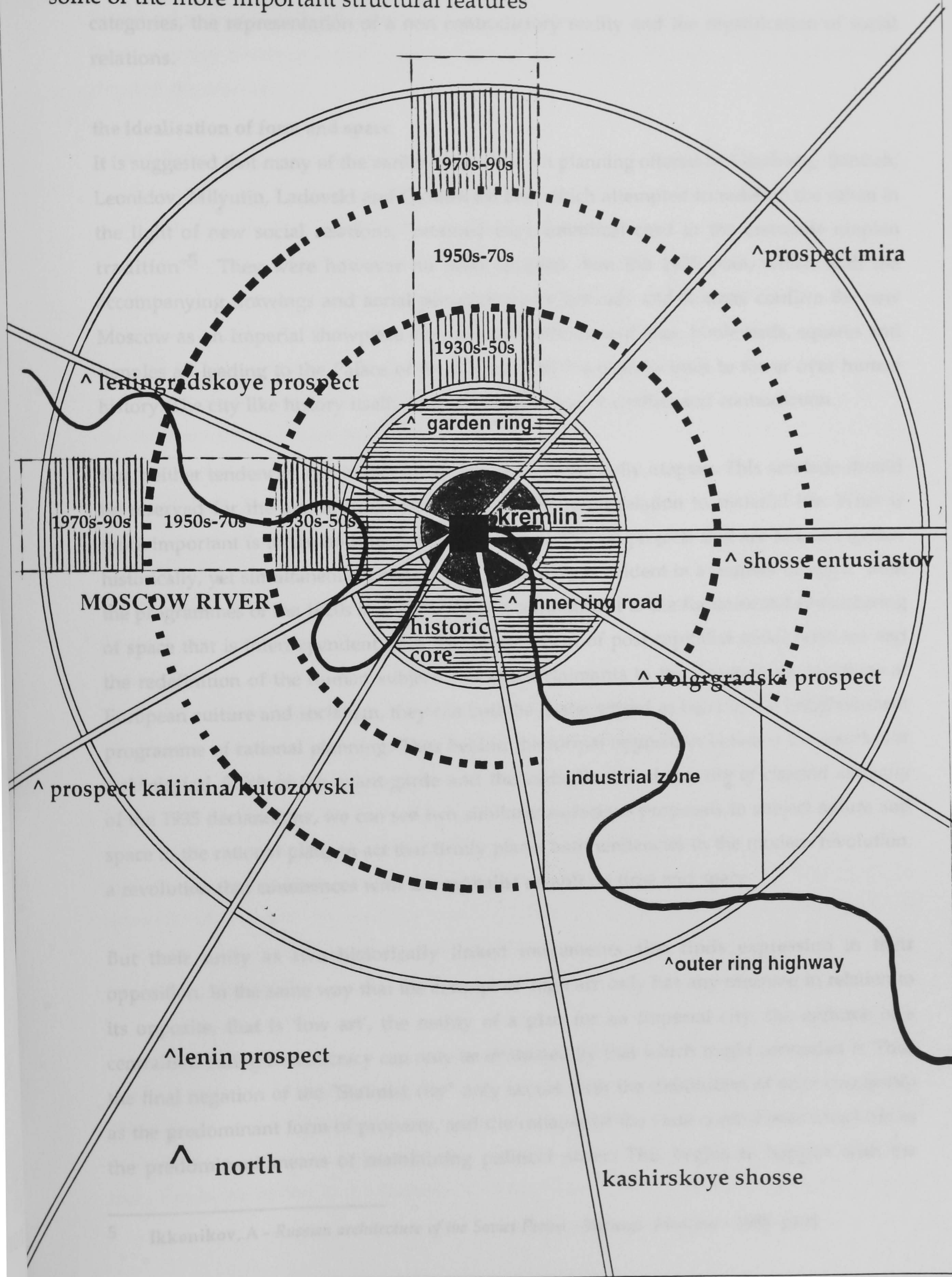
'wedding cakes' = ●

proposed boulevards = —

FIG 72

DIAGRAMMATIC PLAN OF MOSCOW

Below is illustrated a generalised and approximate map of Moscow that indicates some of the more important structural features



categories, the representation of a non contradictory reality and the mystification of social relations.

the idealisation of form and space

It is suggested that many of the earlier ideas on town planning offered by Ginzburg, Barshch, Leonidov, Milyutin, Ladovski and Okhitovich and which attempted to redefine the urban in the light of new social relations, "retained their umbilical cord to the erstwhile utopian tradition"⁵ They were however no more utopian than the 1935 plan, which with the accompanying drawings and aerial perspectives by Schusev and Rudnev confirm the new Moscow as an Imperial showpiece city. An agglomeration of axes, boulevards, squares and temples all leading to the Palace of the Soviets which would be built to tower over human history. The city like history itself, is shorn of the curse of conflict and contradiction.

But, neither tendencies can in fact be described as intrinsically utopian. This accolade should be reserved for the architectural fantasy which bears no relation to material life. What is more important is to see both tendencies as potentially real projects that are bound together historically, yet simultaneously negate each other. This is evident in a number of ways. Both the programmes of the 1920s and 1930s share a commitment to the fundamental restructuring of space that is interdependent with the development of post capitalist social relations and the redefinition of the human subject. As equal claimants to the progressive traditions of European culture and socialism, they can both be characterised as heirs to the Enlightenment programme of rational planning. Thus behind the formal opposition between the *disurbanist technological fetish* of the avant-garde and the embodiment of the *city of classical antiquity* of the 1935 declarations, we can see two similarly audacious proposals to subject nature and space to the rational plan, an act that firmly places both tendencies in the modern revolution, a revolution that commences with the capitalist assault on time and space.

But their unity as two historically linked movements also finds expression in their opposition. In the same way that the concept of 'high art' only has any meaning in relation to its opposite, that is 'low art', the reality of a plan for an Imperial city, the epitome of a centralised ruling bureaucracy can only be evaluated by that which might contradict it. Thus the final negation of the "Stalinist city" only occurs with the dissolution of state ownership as the predominant form of property, and the collapse of the State control over social life as the predominant means of maintaining political order. This begins to happen with the

⁵ Ikkonikov, A - *Russian architecture of the Soviet Period* - Raduga - Moscow - 1988 - p105

introduction in the 1990s of differential rents, the commodification of land, labour power, 'parliamentary democracy' and other features of the drive to legalise private property and develop the market.

A far different critique is of course to be found in the work of the avant-garde. To argue for the invalidation of the Soviet avant-garde on either aesthetic or technological grounds, is to miss the fact that its impossibility lay in the assumption that the fundamental transformation of social relations necessary for the development of new directions in spatial design had taken place. One of the ways in which the work of the avant garde is distinguished is by the combination of a radical politics with the imperative to imagine the possible and to contemplate the improbable. Despite the various contradictory and confused attempts to locate new historical ideals, the question of history and the problematic of space nevertheless remains open ended with the avenues of criticism preserved. It is exactly into these gaps opened by the avant garde that the bureaucracy inevitably steps, in order to pull the world back from the brink of the unknown and to protect it from ideas now deemed to be both unreasonable, semi - fanciful, and dangerous.

We encounter the unambiguous logic between the concept of the state as the only repository of freedom and democracy and the offering of an absolute city that in essence calls on a single historical ideal, the architecture of the state appropriation of the slave. As the concept of spatial mobility is replaced by that of stability and immobility, the question of the dynamic of history and the emergence of new forms of property is declared shut and closed. The tendency to an absolutist conception of social life tends to be replicated at all levels of the social totality. State property as the *highest form* of socialist property, the stakhanovite hero worker as the *highest form* of labour, the neo-classical urban plan as the *most appropriate* urban pattern for the socialist city, historical development from hereon as the *unburdened and non contradictory* march of science and technology, are all aspects of absolutist tyranny that deny the dialectical unity of the forces and relations of building production. (See fig 73)

By resurrecting the past in an idealised manner, the 1935 plan offers a way of rejecting the future and negating the present. In the situation where all political and economic power is concentrated with in the hands of the ruling bureaucracy in Moscow, and where economically exploitative relations are being fostered between the Russian and non Russian territories, there can be no option to the creation of hierarchically ordered and centrally administered

ABSOLUTISM



The Liubianka, Moscow, (Dzershinsky Place in Soviet times), home of the Secret Service,

space. In institutionalising the 'universal' and 'absolute' city, the plan plays a role in the removal of opposition and in marginalising the possibility of the creation of an alternative plan for urban development. The subordination and exploitation of the Soviet worker becomes objectified in an architecture of authoritarian rule that is presented as the victory of the socialist city. In place of its liberation, time and space fall under a new reign of order and administration. This ordering of space was to be replicated in the post war plans for the reconstruction of Perm, Stalingrad, Novorossiski, Cheliabinsk and other cities.⁶ (See fig 74) Whilst as we shall see in the case of Moscow the proposals were to become tempered by the 1950's housing crisis, the logical out come of the absolutist city are vividly encapsulated in the proposals by Iofan for Novorossisk (1943-1944) and by Arkin for Stalingrad (1944-1956).⁷ (See fig 75)

the spectacle of the militarised city

The reinforcement of the radial character of the city had other consequences. The arterial roads made the traversing of the city far easier, not only for civilian transport but of course for the military. The breadth of Moscow's main boulevards, Lenigradskoe Shosse, Leninski Prospect, Kutosovski Prospect, and Prospekt Mira, (See fig 76), enable aircraft to be landed right in the middle of the city, they also enable the sealing off of one part of the city from another and the rapid deployment of troops. This can be explained by the conversion of the Soviet economy into one dominated by the military industrial complex, but in the situation of civil unrest this militarisation of space facilitates the division and segregation of territory and people, assisting the reimposition of order and control. This is fully revealed by the ritual staging of parades and demonstrations when the militarised plan of the city is exposed. On such holidays as Red Army Day, May Day, November the 7th, the side streets were closed and all roads lead directly to Lenin's mausoleum, as the city became transformed into a massive 'theatre' of war. (See fig 77) This was another very important device for veiling deeply rooted antagonistic relations. We no longer have real class warriors but 'actors' dressed in bolshevik outfits riding on horses, SS20 missiles on trucks appearing out of nowhere, ranks of tanks trundling around the ring road, smiling masses holding portraits, and chanting slogans. (See fig 78) Such a carnival stage and magical grandeur creates an intoxicating atmosphere, in which historical events and the role of individuals could be

⁶ See *Sovietskaya Arkhitektura*. 1917 -1957 - Moskva 1957-p6. The editorial committee included Vlasov and Abrosimov, prominent architects of this period, and is remarkable not least for not even mentioning the avant garde in the introductory retrospective, referring just to certain 'formalist theories' and 'deviations from the party line.'

⁷ See Tarkhanov, A and Kavtaradze. S - *Stalinist architecture* - Laurence King 1992 - p100-103 for excellent reproductions of these and other notable drawings from this period.

POST WAR PLANS FOR RECONSTRUCTION

Order and celebration through the boulevard, axis, and monument

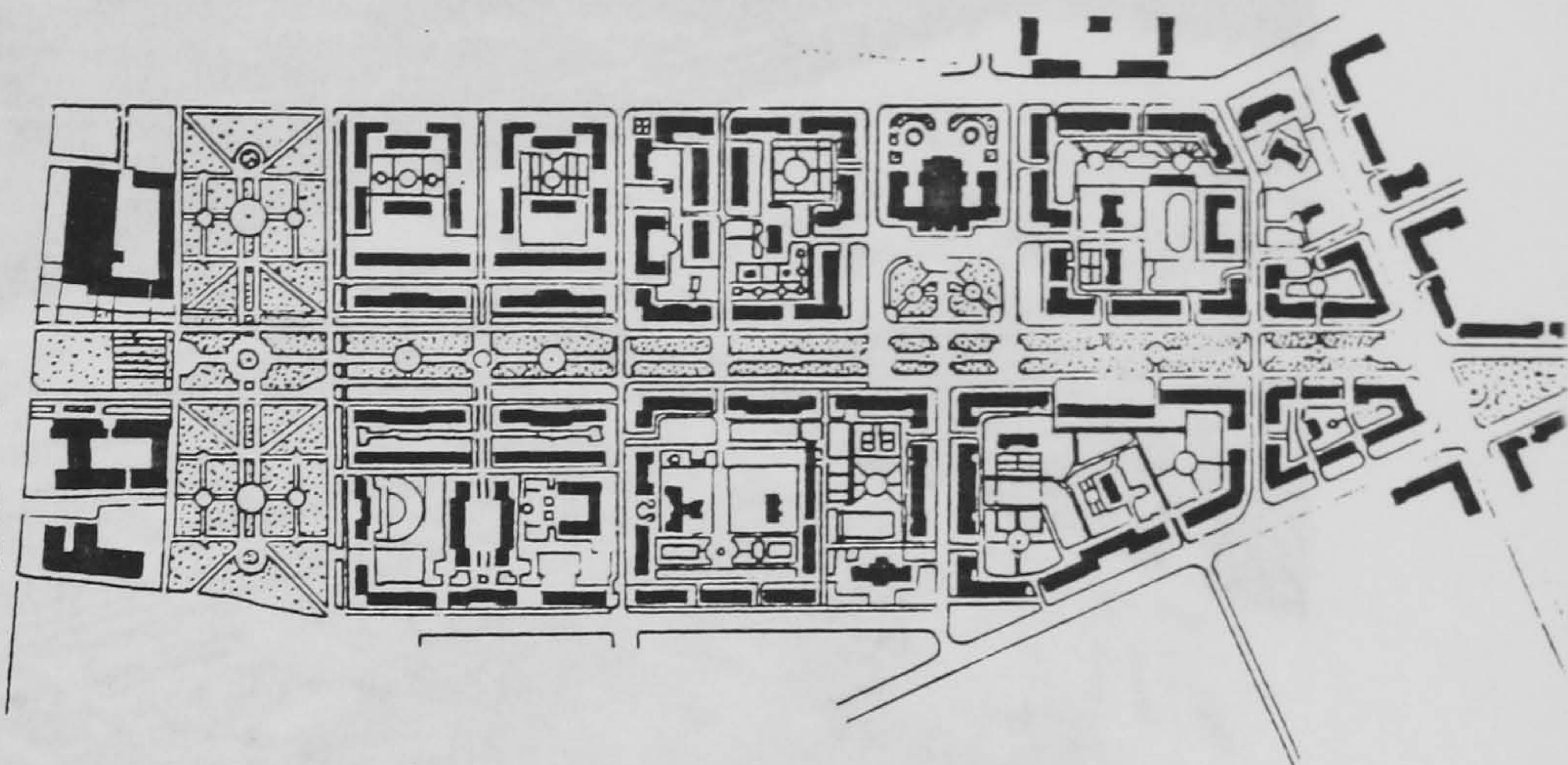
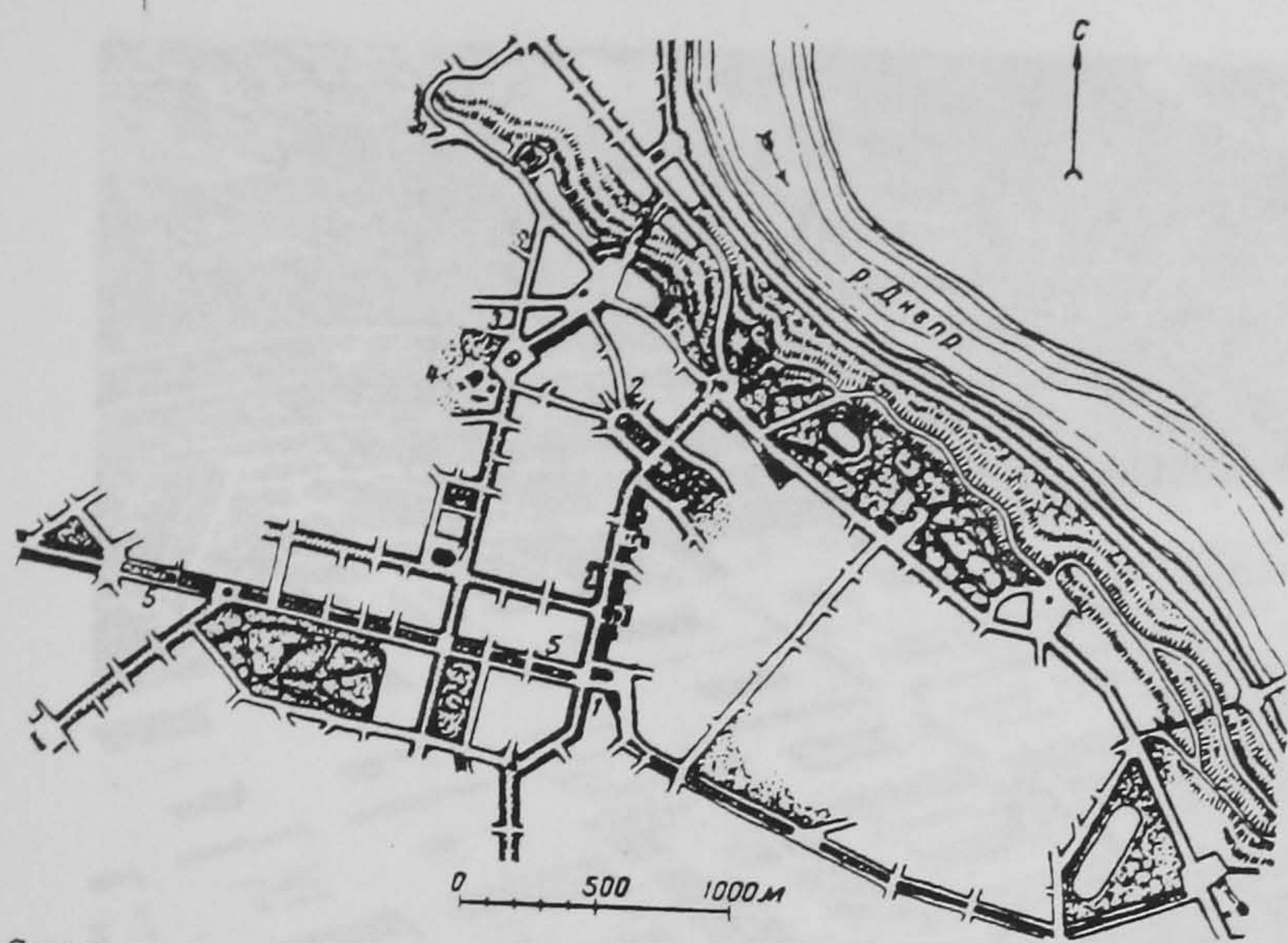
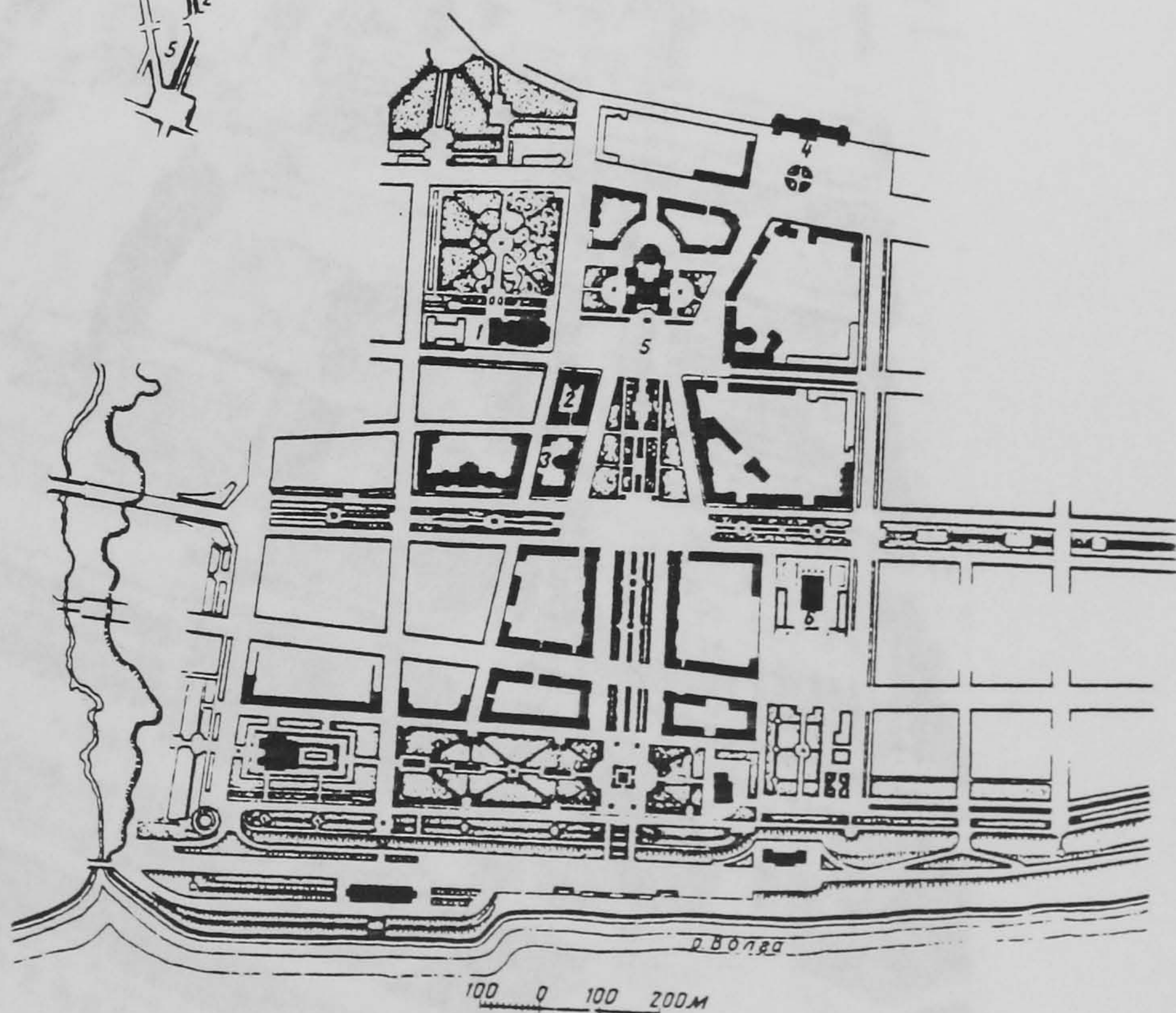
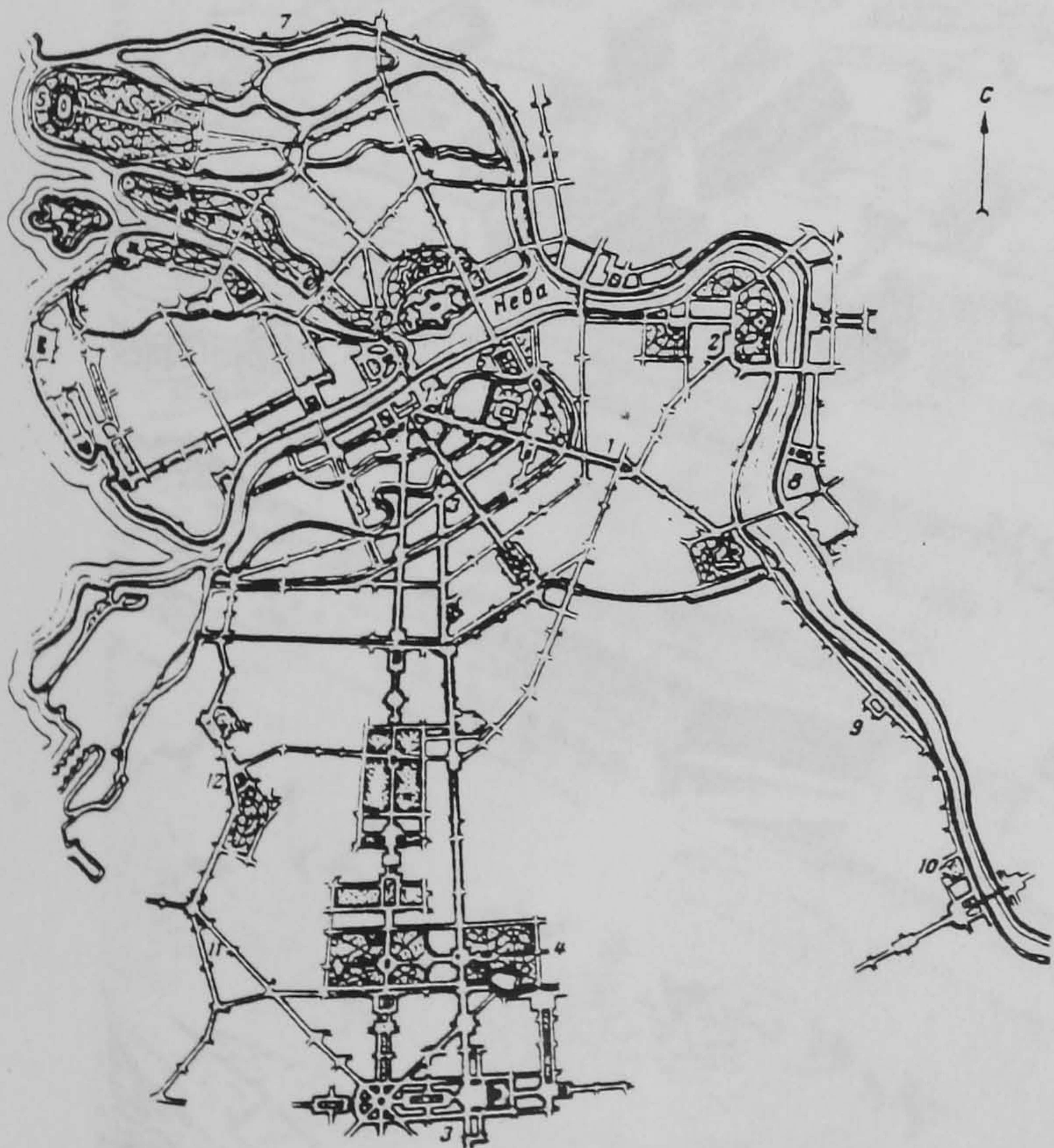
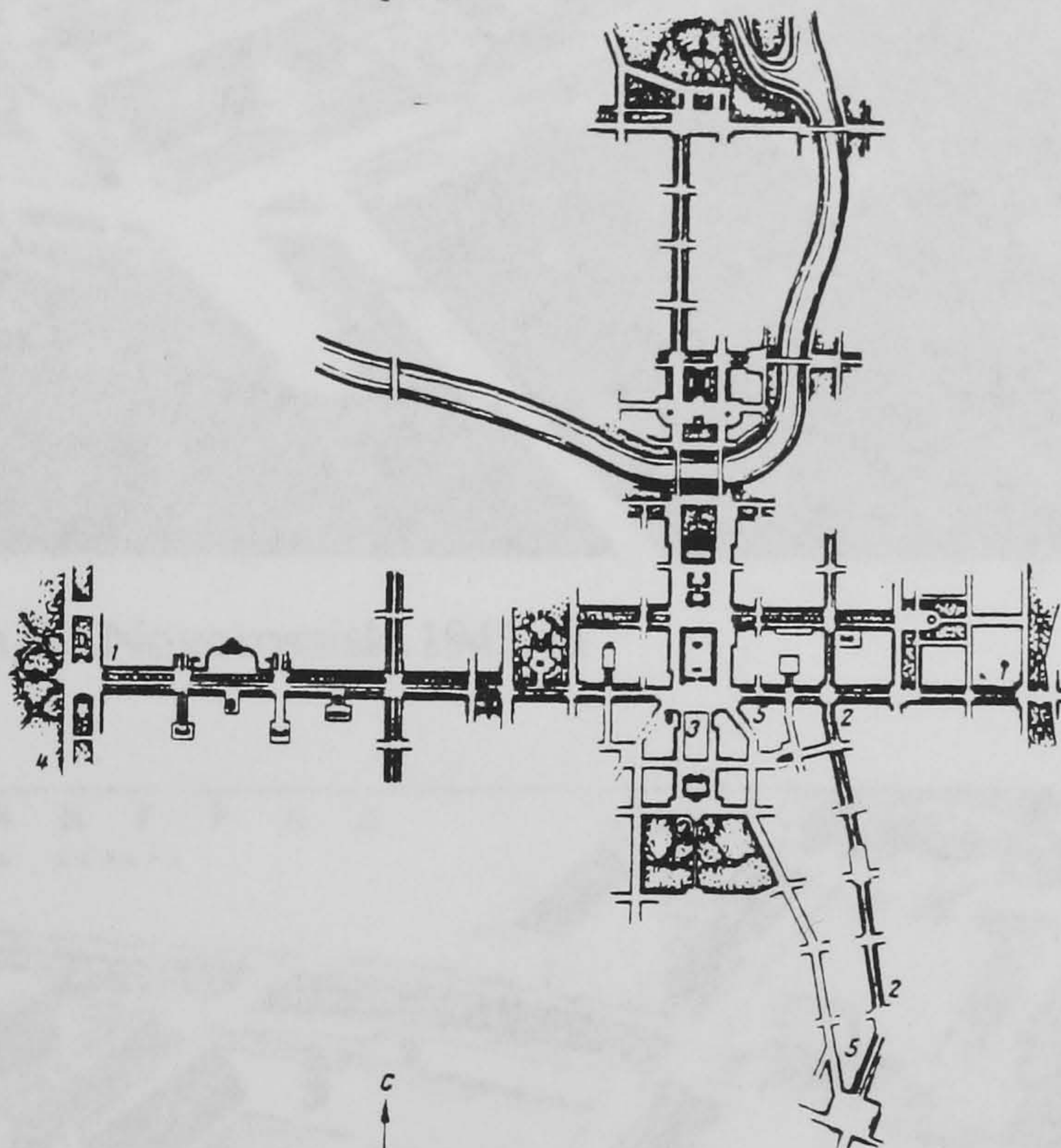
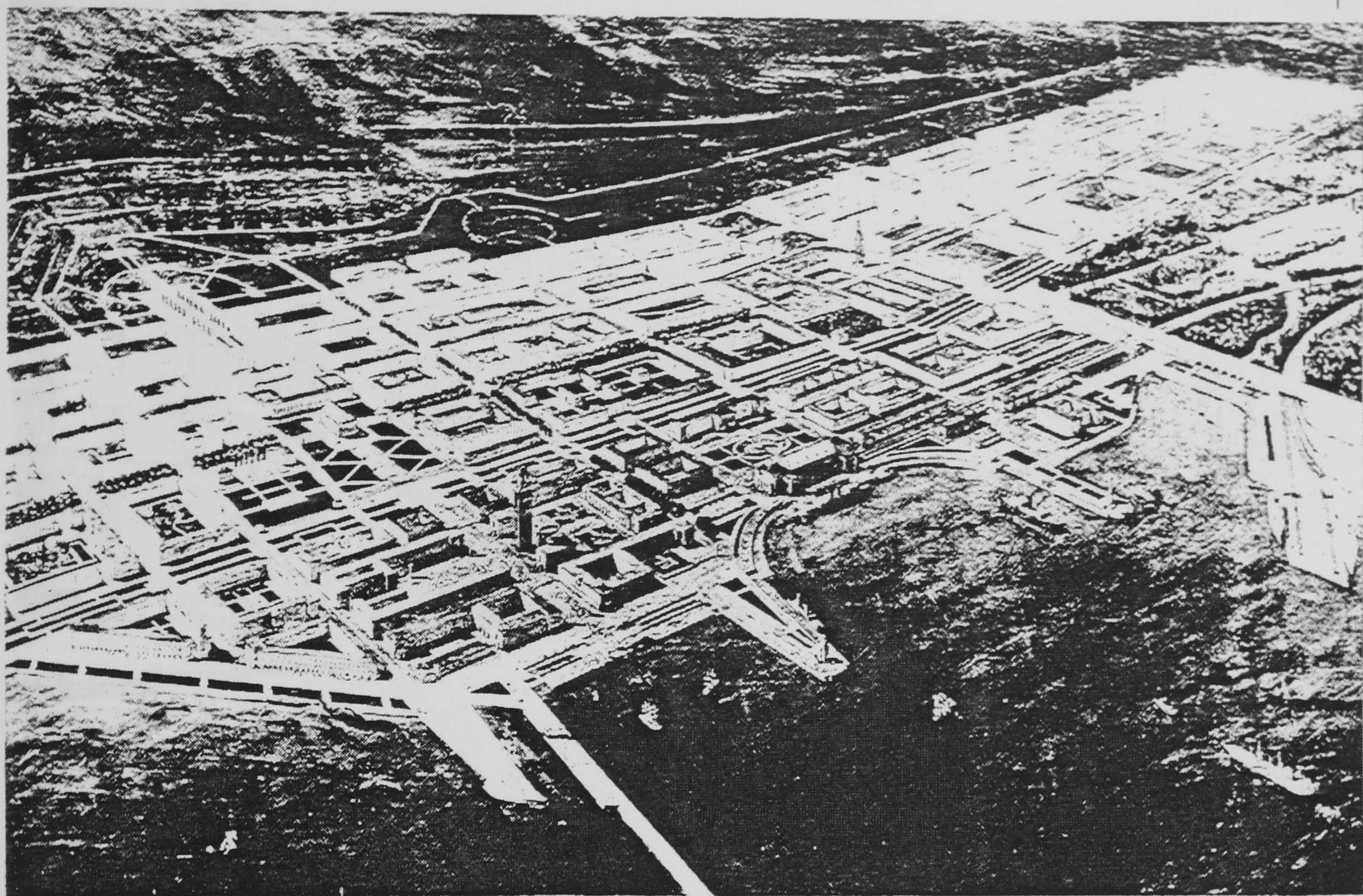


Схема главных магистралей и площадей центральной части города: 1 — улица Крещатик; 2 — площадь Калинина; 3 — памятник Богдану Хмельницкому; 4 — Софийский собор; 5 — бульвар Шевченко; 6 — здание Верховного Совета УССР; 7 — Оперный театр

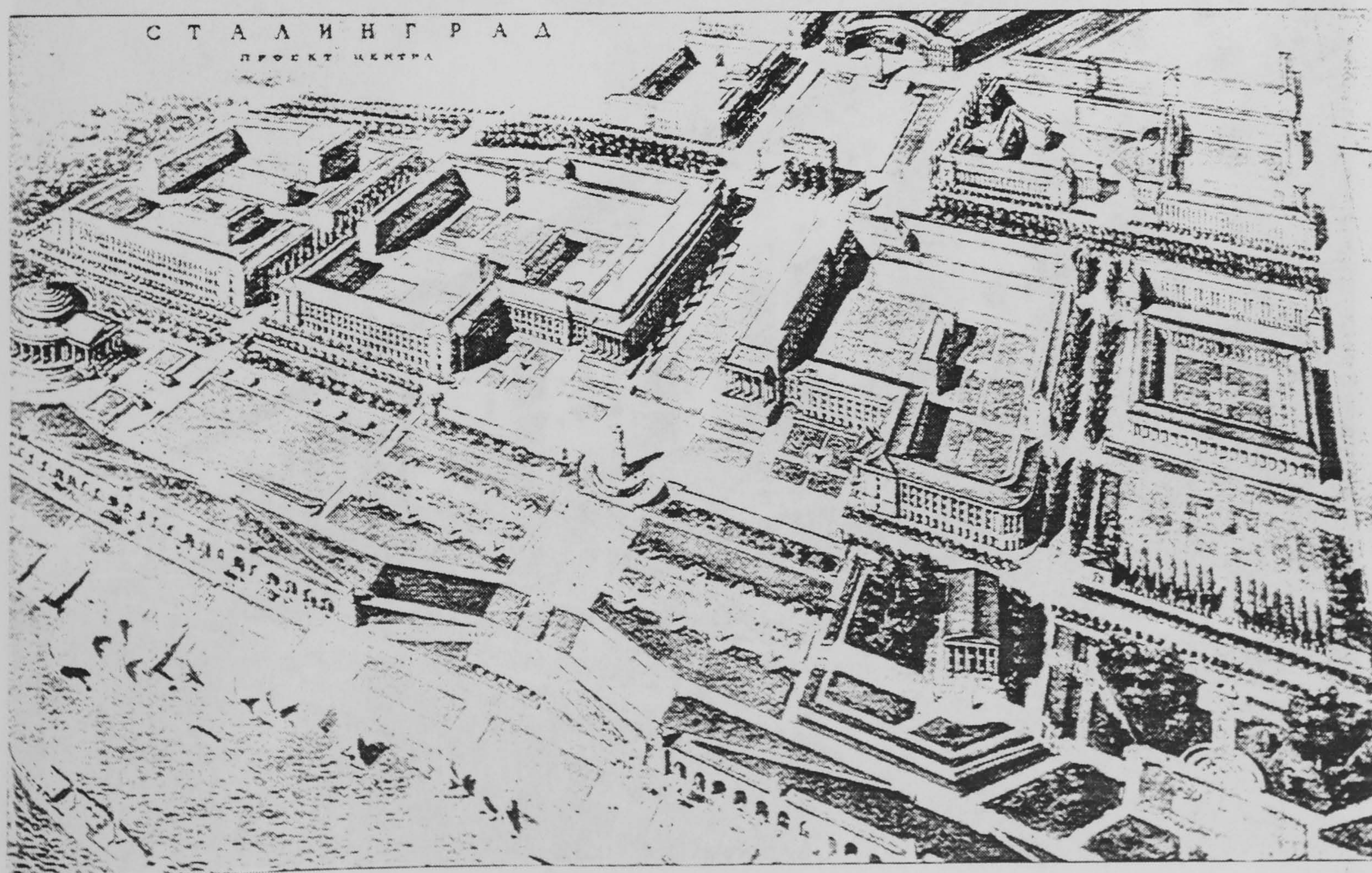


Top- L, Kiev, R, Perm Middle-Cheliabinsk, Bottom-L, Leningrad, R, Stalingrad

MAKING AN IMPERIAL GRANDEUR



Iofan, B - Plan for Novorossisk, 1943-44



Arkin, D - Design for Stalingrad, 1946-52

Cutting up space with the boulevard



Lenin Prospect

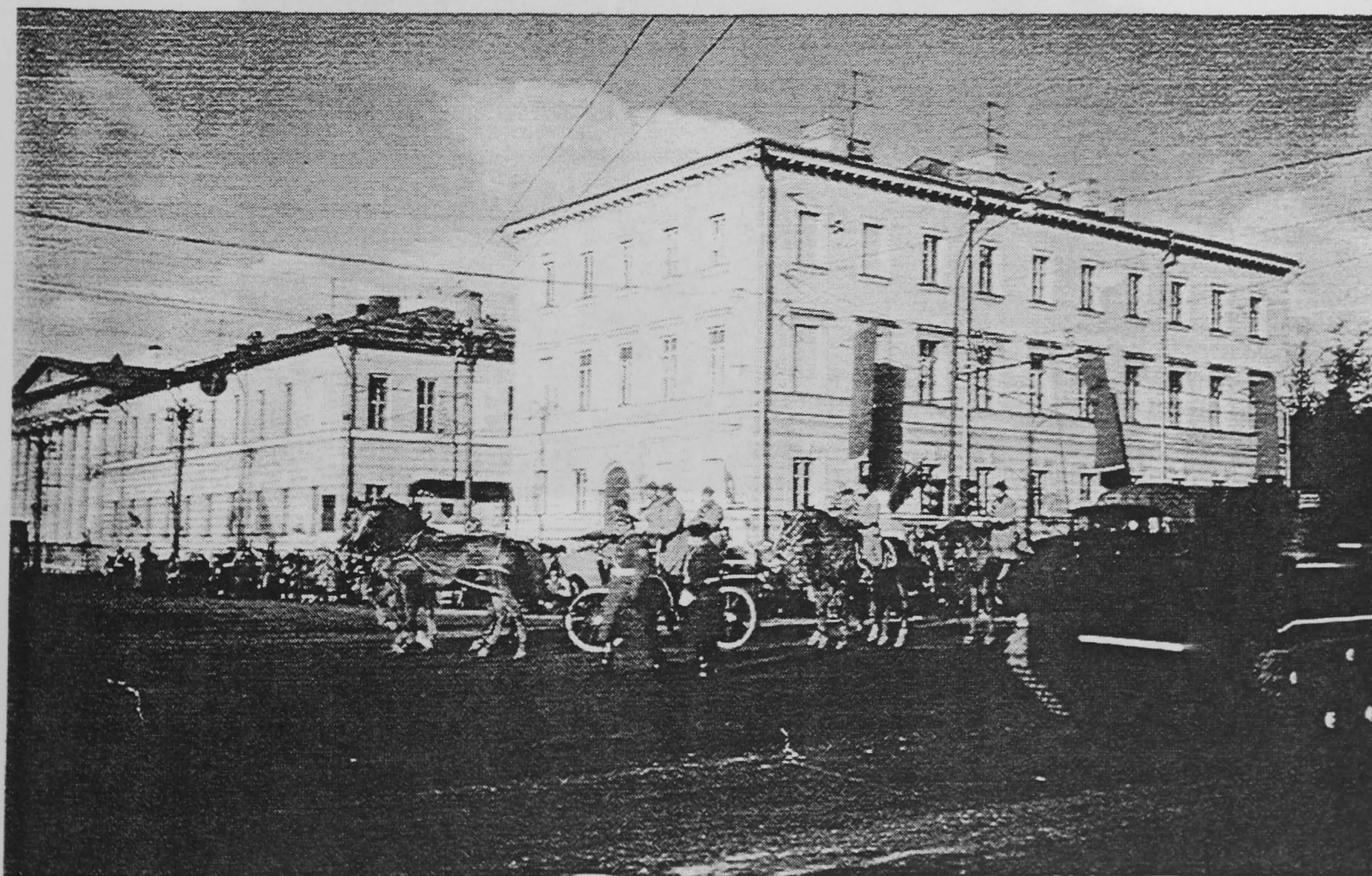


Gorky Street (now Tverskaya Street)

THE THEATRE OF WAR



SS 20 nuclear missiles in Red Square



The seventieth anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution

The mass organisation of militarised ritual



Tank in front of a wedding cake

completely mythologised. For every portrait held aloft signalling the greatness of Lenin and Stalin, there remains a subtext which declares the subordination of the masses. Such performances operate in exactly the same way as the 'realist' figurative paintings, in which the world is cloaked in a romanticism that is all pervading and borders on sycophancy.

Such parades are hardly unique features of the Soviet regime. The organisation of ritual as a means of strengthening social cohesion is one of the fundamental characteristics of all class societies. Whether it be the gladiatorial confrontations of ancient Rome, Royal processions, executions in revolutionary France, the show trials of the 1930s, the McCarthy trials of the fifties, or the great leisure shopping experience, what passes as entertainment and pleasure also fulfils the function of disguising the critique of the society of the spectacle. It is simply that in the situation of dictatorship the manipulation of the spectator becomes particularly vivid and naked to the eye. This sits in marked contrast to the short lived happenings and events of the early 1920s. Again it is part of our dialectic that the spontaneous events, gatherings, sculptures and art that celebrated the revolution and of the opening up of new horizons indicated the overwhelming importance of ritual in the development of consciousness, with one crucial distinction. Whereas the former promised to turn the individual into an active and creative participant in a free and voluntary art, the latter became a strictly organised ritual that gives the mass the illusion of participation whilst reducing them to the role of an army of passive spectators. In the very celebration of labour we witness its defeat.

architecture and the idealist notion of truth

The reliance on myth and historical deception is not to be explained by the inappropriate application of the methods of realism to architecture. It is to be found as with painting and literature in the replacement of a critical method by a subjective notion of truth.

Let us momentarily continue our fantasy story with more Party pronouncements on the character of Soviet realism as it was meant to apply to architecture. In the editorial columns of *Arkhitektura CCCP* in July 1933, the new tasks for architecture were declared. The first task was the application of the totally arbitrary concept of 'ideanost'. "The new socialist content, lying at the base of each new Soviet construction, must dictate to the architect the appropriate technical and economic organisation, its planning and internal arrangements, and its architectural- artistic decisions," in which one of the most important methodological acts

was to be the "critical assimilation of previous architectural heritage"⁸. Similar to the instructions to writers and painters, architects were informed that this was not to be achieved through some kind of "bourgeois eclecticism" but by the "profound assimilation of the workings of previous architectural compositional methods and principles for the expression of the new socialist content."⁹ Thus under the slogan of "architects to the scaffold", the new architecture was required to "aspire in its stylistic quest for realistic foundations - for clarity, precision in its images, easy to read and intelligible to mass perception"¹⁰.

Thus the concept of realism is reduced to vague concepts of truth and comprehensibility, a clarity of meaning that was to be achieved through historical research or rather historical mystification. Claims to the superiority of the dialectical method are parodied in what was in effect an old fashioned argument for populism, the antithesis of the notion of progressive historical transformation, in which populist claims to diversity and freedom can be revealed as re-affirmations of homogeneity and stability. The possibility of launching a critique from a materialist perspective was made all the more difficult when faced with a language that justified itself through the use of 'marxist' categories. The analysis of the reification of social relations becomes a life threatening option in the face of declarations that confirm uncritically the epoch of socialist democracy, "the workers await bright new homes, worthy of a Soviet citizen, industrial buildings, appropriate to the nature of socialist labour, monuments to the great creativity of the Stalinist epoch" an epoch in which the reign of the fetish is claimed to have passed.

"Human relations, liberated from the fetishism of things, from all deceptions created in class societies, are not obscured by the genuine and fundamental meanings of creativity in all fields of art. Socialist Realism as the leading method of Soviet Art in opposition to naturalistic contemplation and idealistic organicist bourgeois art, stands for the free activity of people, of a dynamic world, directed on the scientific basis of Marxism and Leninism..."¹¹

As if by stealth, the work of Rubin and Pashukanis is incorporated and turned on its head. 'Socialist realism' becomes the very method by which the process of reification is negated. It is able to do this precisely because as a realism it lays bare the "deceptions" of class societies. But for all the essays by Lunacharsky and Lukacs, realism becomes an apology for an aesthetic critique of the social world. As such and within the logic of this aspect of aesthetic autonomy, it can of course never reveal to itself the fact that Soviet realism has negated the

8 Arkhitektura CCCP - July 1933 - p1

9 ibid p2

10 ibid p2

11 Arkhitektura CCCP - August - 1936 - p4-5

negation of social relations and reified them in new ways, not least within the very structure of language itself, and perhaps most gloriously in the production of architecture and space .

assimilation, eclecticism and an Hegelian aesthetic

Ultimately such phrases are meaningless as a theory of architecture or as a method for understanding the real nature of the physical transformation of the city. As the Party struggled to find "an appropriate style", a truly Soviet architecture that would "strive for realistic criteria - for clarity of precision in its images", and which would "be easily comprehensible by and accessible to the masses", the slogans of the avant garde were replaced by new ones that relentlessly tried to find the right words to describe socialist realism, such as "Truth in Art", and "mastery of the heritage" .¹² The search for an architecture becomes dominated by the pursuit of an ideal, an architecture of purity that captures the essence of socialist man and woman. The religious or rather metaphysical overtones of such a programme leads inevitably into a world where like literature, the periods of architectural history can be classified into ranks where the most progressive of forms earn their position by virtue of being closest to the truth. For all the cries of materialism, the Soviet quest for an appropriate architecture is deeply Hegelian.

For Hegel the Ideal is to be found in the classical. It is within the realm of classical art that content and shape are united.¹³ Hegel argued that since the human acts as the foundation for the development of both the form and content of classical art, such art can justly lay claim to a Universality.¹⁴ Whilst Hegel was more reserved about the merits of classical architecture he nevertheless considered it to display a similar appropriateness of purpose such that it could become freed from confusion with the organic and the symbolic. Thus classical architecture "subserves a purpose, it comprises a perfect totality in itself which makes its one purpose shine clearly through all of its forms."¹⁵ It is this same historic search for truth and for an ideal unity of form and content that lies at the centre of the Soviet project, and was celebrated in the synthesis of 'national' form and 'socialist content'. But to call the architecture of this period classical, is to stretch the meaning of such a descriptive category to the point of emptiness.

12 Tarkhanov, A and Kavtaradze, S - *Stalinist architecture* - Laurence King-1992-p49-54

13 Hegel, G.W.F. - *Aesthetics. Lectures of Fine Art.*- Volume I - Oxford UP - 1975 - p427

14 *ibid* p476

15 Hegel, G.W.F. - *Aesthetics. Lectures of Fine Art.*- Volume II - Oxford UP - 1975 - p660

For all the new chatter, Soviet architecture from this period is far more structured by romantic conceptions of the Russian rather than any progressive vision of the Soviet. In terms of form we only have to compare the work of Chechulin, Fomin, Iofan, Golts, Golosov, Zholotovski, Mordinov, Blokin, and any number of others to expose the fallacy of the *critical* assimilation of the architectural heritage. (See fig 79 and 80) Whilst architectural history was undoubtedly assimilated, the choice of form was driven far more by individual competition between these new academic masters than by any truly rational concept of history. What we are left with is an extraordinary collection of buildings that are highly idiosyncratic, and ultimately eclectic in their use of historical references.

claiming the classical tradition

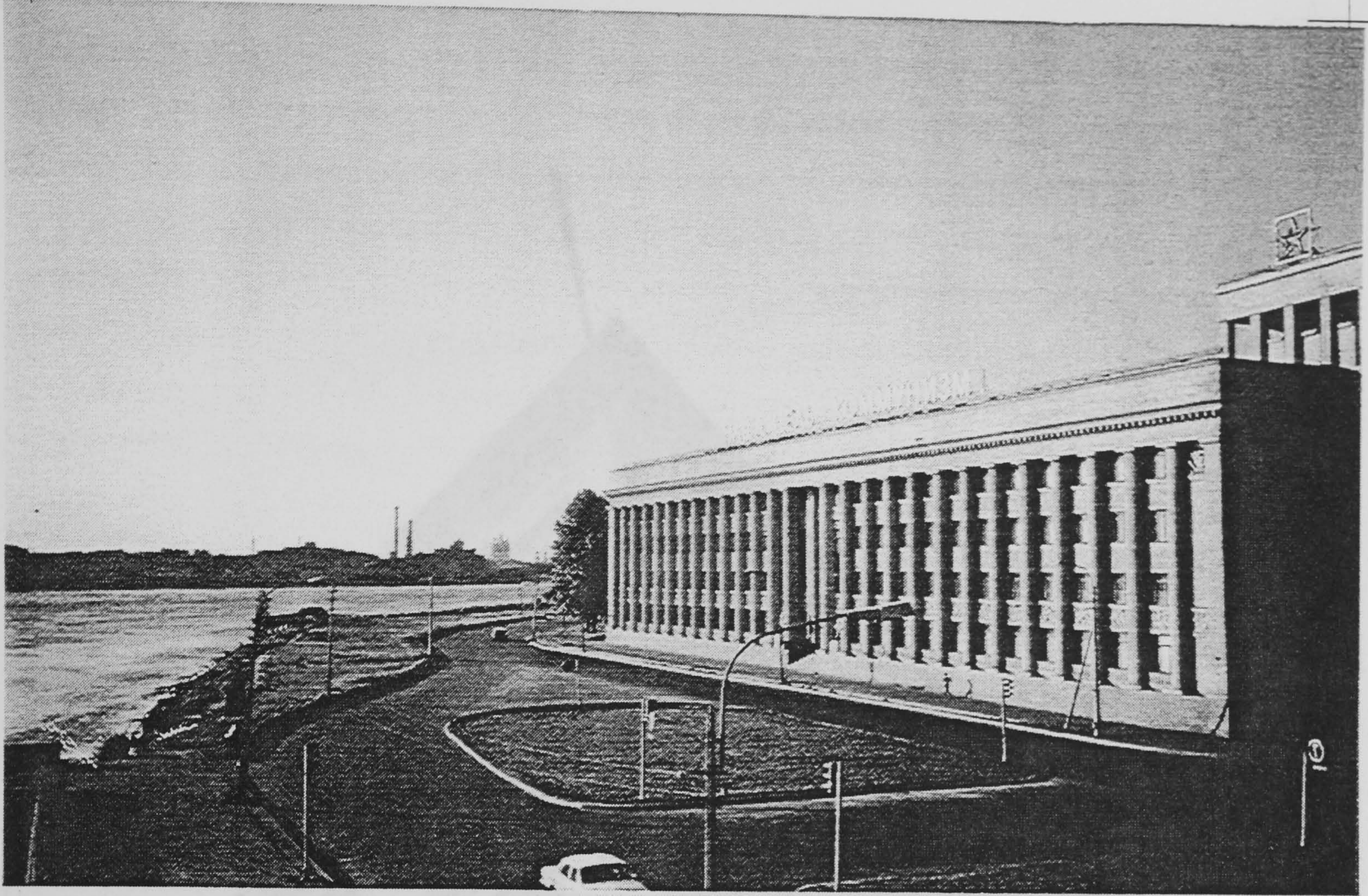
At least in this the architects remain firmly in the tradition of the nineteenth century. The grand European drive of Peter the Great and Catherine had permanently installed the classical in the architectural vocabulary and as we have seen this led to the widespread penetration of classical principles of urban and building design into the traditions of Russian architecture. This as we know unfolded in the struggles of ideas between the *neo-classical* and the *eclectic*. Many of the architects who re-emerged in the 1930s such as the Renaissance revivalist Zholotovski and the author of the *red doric* and *proletarian classicism*, Fomin, had been educated in the pre revolutionary academies. (See fig 81) They thus brought to bear on Soviet architecture not only the noted traditions of hierarchical work relations, but the traditions of scholarship and a rich knowledge of 19th century architectural history.

The littering of neo classical masterpieces in so many Russian towns and cities made it easy for the revivalists of the 1930s to claim the classical heritage as their own, with of course its particular characteristics that had come from its historic collision with the 'Byzantine' and mediaeval Russian tradition. As such neo-classical architecture was claimed at the height of Soviet xenophobia as being an example of profound originality that was "organically linked with the national life".¹⁶ In addition it could be argued that the return to the heritage of classicism reflecting as it did national Russian tradition was entirely appropriate to the creation of a new Soviet style, a convenient antidote to the 'internationalist excesses' of the modernists and ultimately a fitting accompaniment to the theory of socialism in one country.

However, the formal character of these buildings cannot be embraced by any one genre. They remain a highly eclectic, dare we say a "post modern" mixture of historical symbols and

¹⁶ See the introduction to Cracraft, J - op.cit p15-17-- for a discussion in english of the Russian claim to the classical tradition

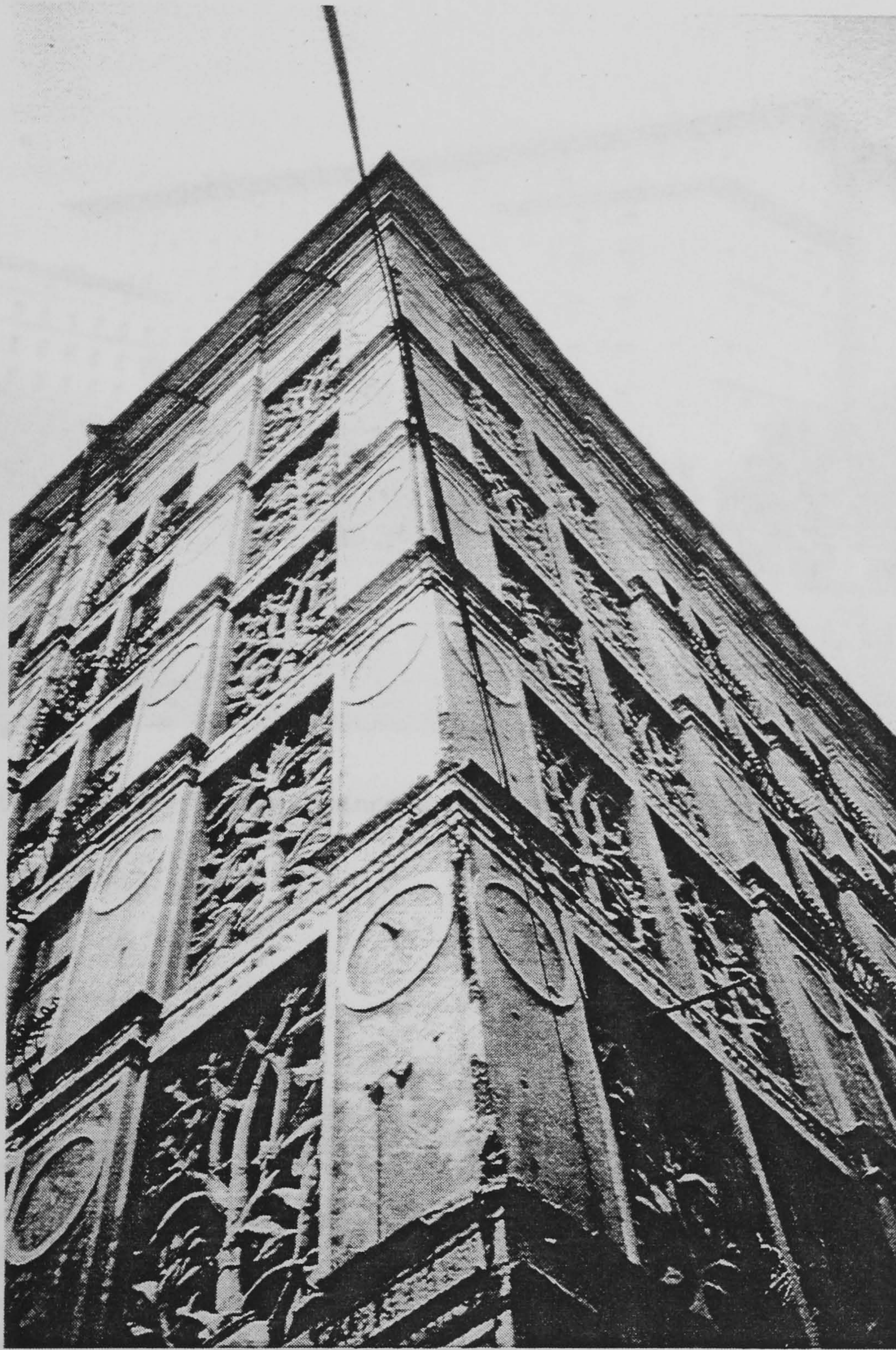
The assimilation of architectural history - re-inventing classicism



Soviet neo-classicism on the banks of the Neva, St Petersburg - the caption reads "Our goal - communism"

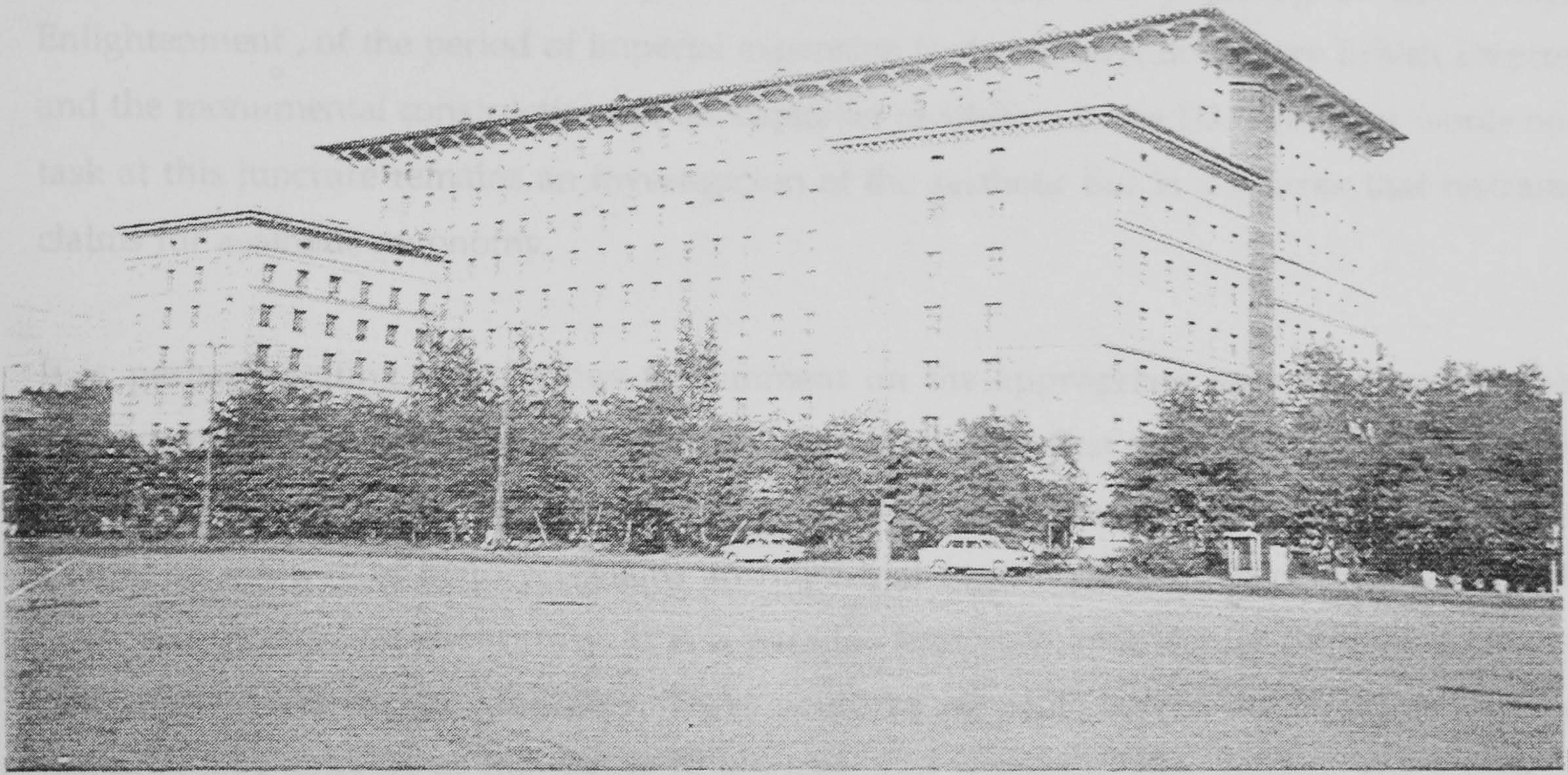


Housing on Chkalova St, Moscow, by Ribitsky, E, 1949



Housing scheme on Leningradskom Prospekt, Moscow, by Blokin and Burov, 1941- Despite the decorative details, this house was in fact an early experiment in the use of mass produced large blocks

THE MAKING OF AN IMPERIAL CITY
THE HEROIC AND THE MONUMENTAL



Zholtovski, I (1867-1959) - neo-renaissance housing on Prospect Mira, Moscow, 1951-1957



Fomin, Ivan (1872-1936)- "Proletarian Classicism", Dynamo Sports Association, Moscow, 1928-29

meanings that pay homage to the orthodox church as much as to classical antiquity. To refer to them collectively as lying within the tradition of a heroic monumentality, brings us closer to a basis for a real understanding. This links many of the schemes not with periods in the history of style, but with transformations in the production of social life. Here we think not only of 1930s Germany and Italy, but the architecture and planning of the French Enlightenment, of the period of imperial expansion in the nineteenth century British Empire, and the monumental constructions of the capitalist revolution in the USA. In other words our task at this juncture remains an investigation of the aesthetic but in a manner that restrains claims for aesthetic autonomy.

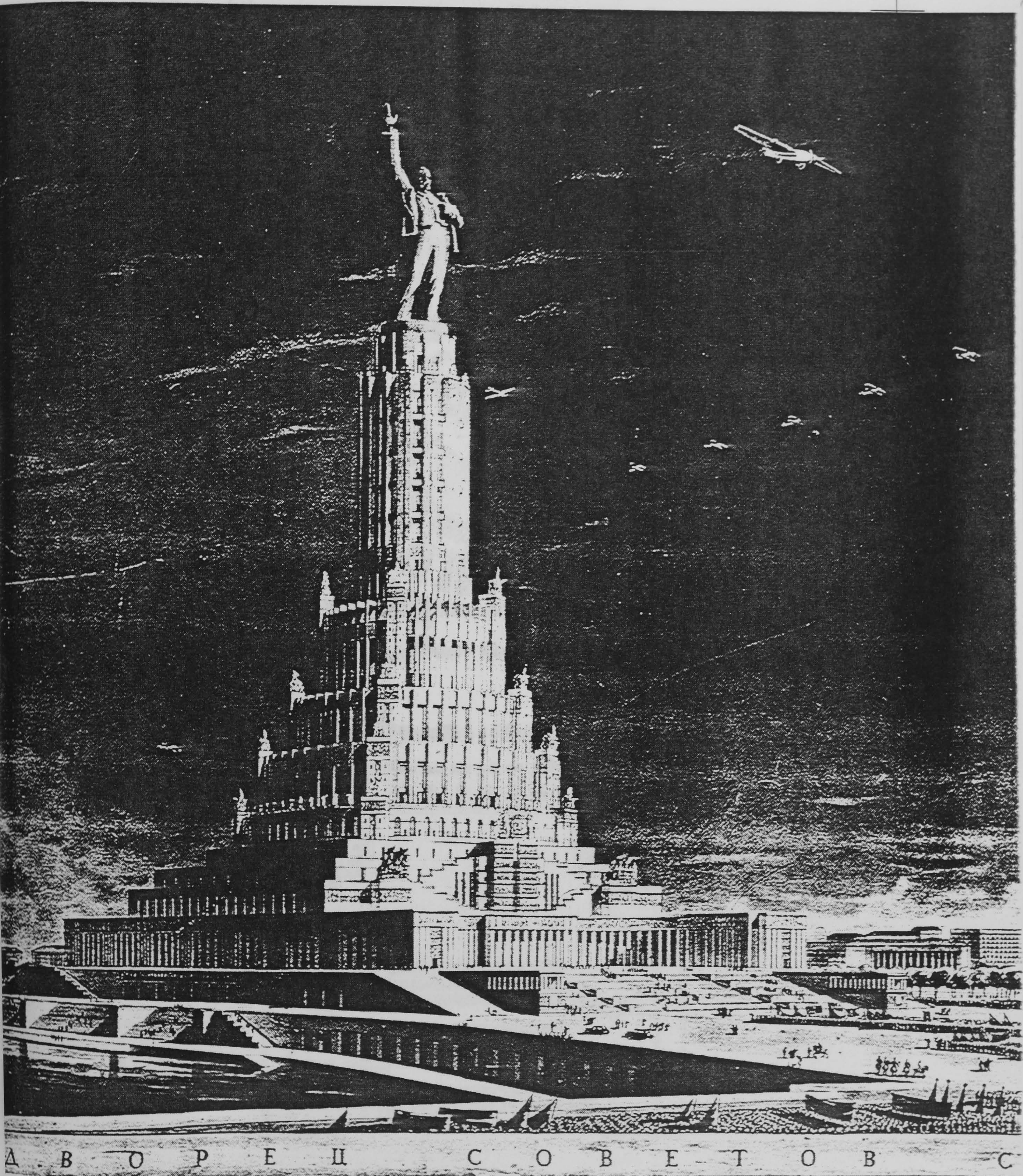
It is perhaps stating the obvious to comment on the appropriate nature of such heroic monumentality to the ruling bureaucracy. It was hardly the first time, and unlikely to be the last that a ruling class or social group has adopted a historic melange as architectural policy. Claims to mastery of history remains an important ingredient of other claims to political, economic, and social superiority. It is a paradox that such architecture fulfilled the Party objectives of 'clarity' so admirably. There could be no confusion in the minds of visiting peasants and workers of the reality of a strong and powerful State system. The means of production of social life belonged to them like everything else through the Party and the state, what greater gift could there be than the appropriation on behalf of the peasants and workers of two thousand years of architectural history, the perfect union of ideology and truth.

Palace of the Soviets and the Commissariat of Heavy Industry

The palace of the Soviets was central to the 1935 plan. There are many apocryphal stories that surround the proposed site which are used to explain why it was never built, not least the revenge of God. But the impact of the competition on the future of Soviet architecture was profound. The competition understandably received great coverage in the press¹⁷, this was after all the building to house the first ever workers government in the world. The approval of the scheme by Iofan was for a colossal and monumental building comprising of stacked cylinders of decreasing diameters and which was to be crowned by a statue of Lenin taking the overall height to 415m. (See fig 82) Approved by both Lunacharsky and Stalin, the Palace drew obvious comparisons not only with the tower of Babel but with Boulees project for a cenotaph to Newton (1784). Rather more unfortunate comparisons can be made with Speer's

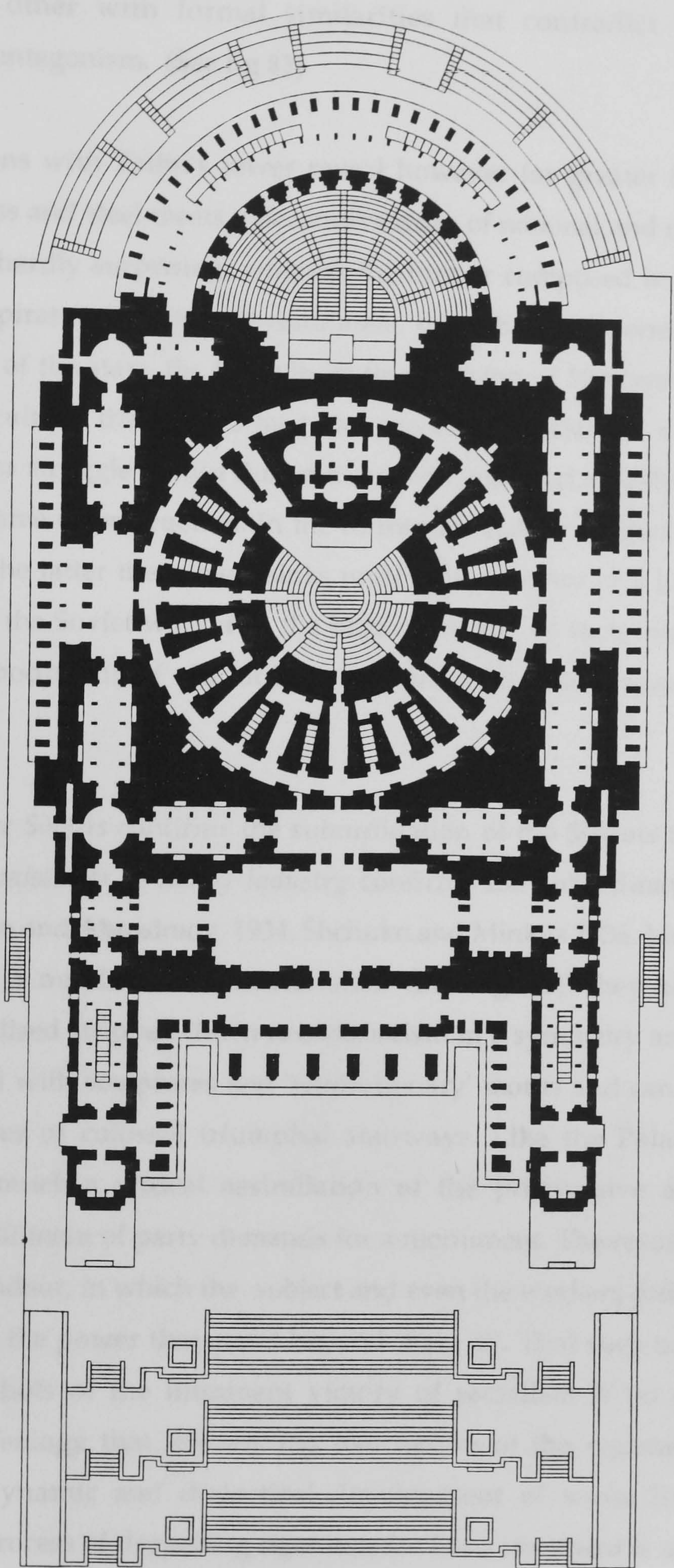
¹⁷ This competition along with all the other projects from this era were of course documented in the two main journals. The Palace of the Soviets project was published in *Stroitelstvo Moskvi* - No 3 - 1932 - p13ff, and in *Arkhitektura CCCP* - July 1933 - p5ff

THE PALACE OF THE SOVIETS



Iofan, B (1891-1976) - Scheme design with Schuko and Gelfreich, 1937

IOFAN, B, SHCHUKO, V and GELFREICH, V
Plan of the winning entry for the Palace of the Soviets 1937

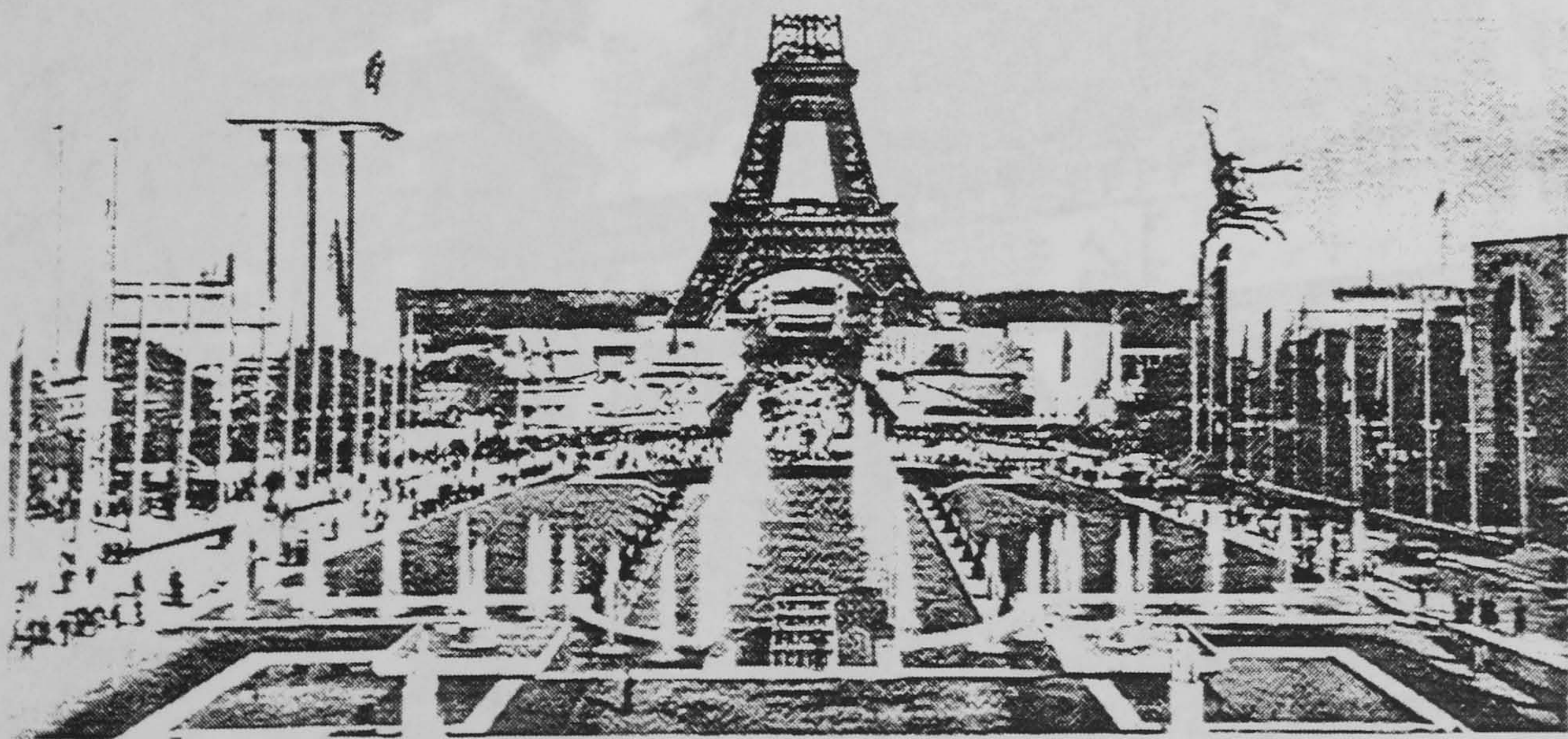
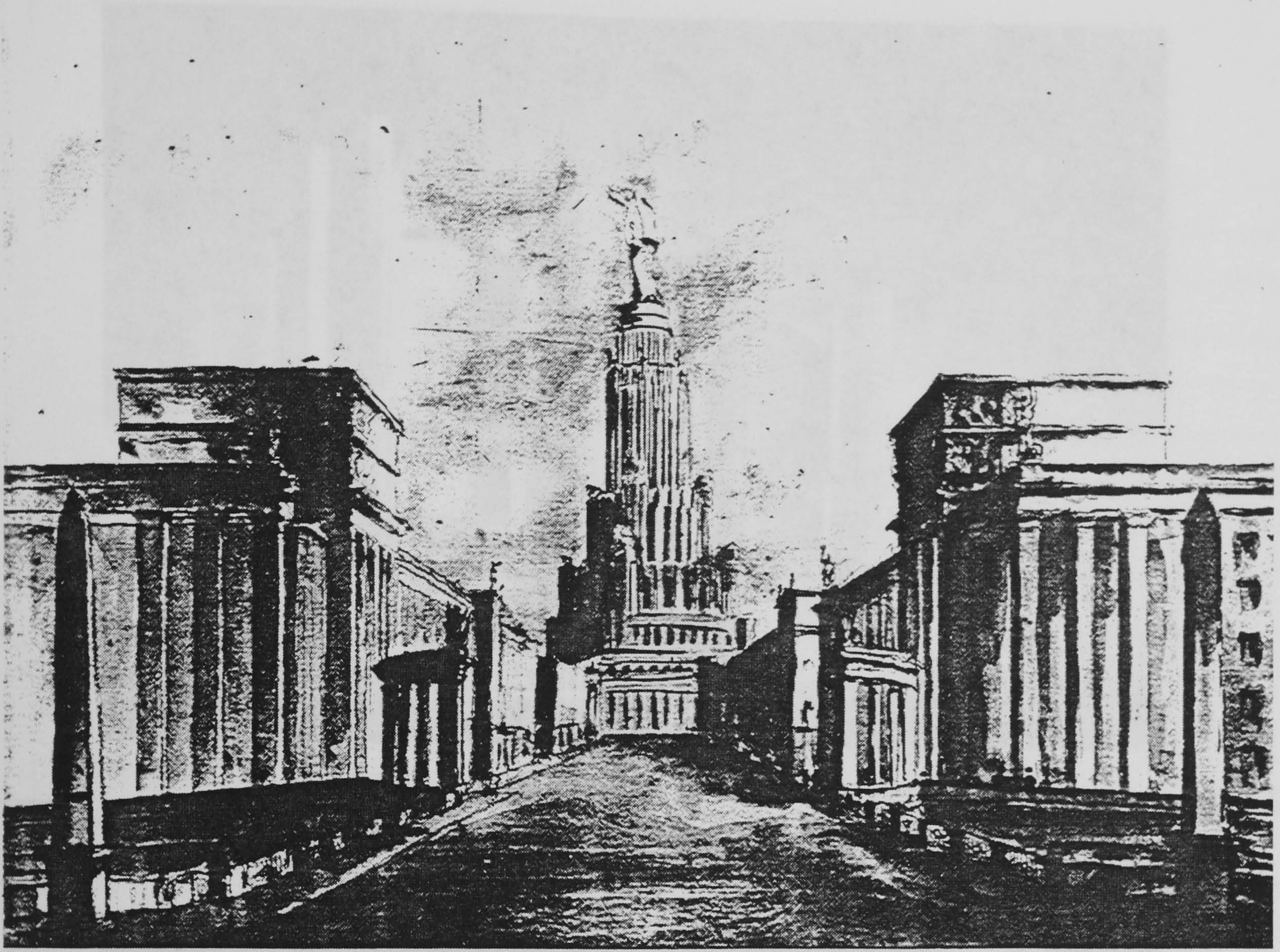


Reich Chancellery in Berlin. Nowhere is the race to become the heir to Rome more explicit however than in the 1937 Paris World Exhibition in which pavilions by Speer and Iofan confront each other with formal similarities that contradict the display of mutual opposition and antagonism. (See fig 83)

The comparisons with Tatlin's tower reveal however far greater contradictions. A kinetic structure, of glass and steel meets a decorative mass of national and neo classical symbols and motifs. This is hardly surprising, whereas the former composed in (1918) was imbued with the dynamic aspirations of the Internationale, of global and permanent revolution, of the withering away of the state, the latter in its final version of 1936 was conducted in the midst of a political culture that proclaimed the success of socialism in one country, that had declared the class struggle within Russia to be over, and had abandoned the withering of the state for its massive reconstruction. In the former the human subject remains a participant in government in the latter the subject sinks under the masonry of a building that declares the Soviet state, not the Soviet worker as the historic victor. As such, the Palace of the Soviets is the perfect embodiment of the unity of centralised state ownership and bureaucratic dictatorship.

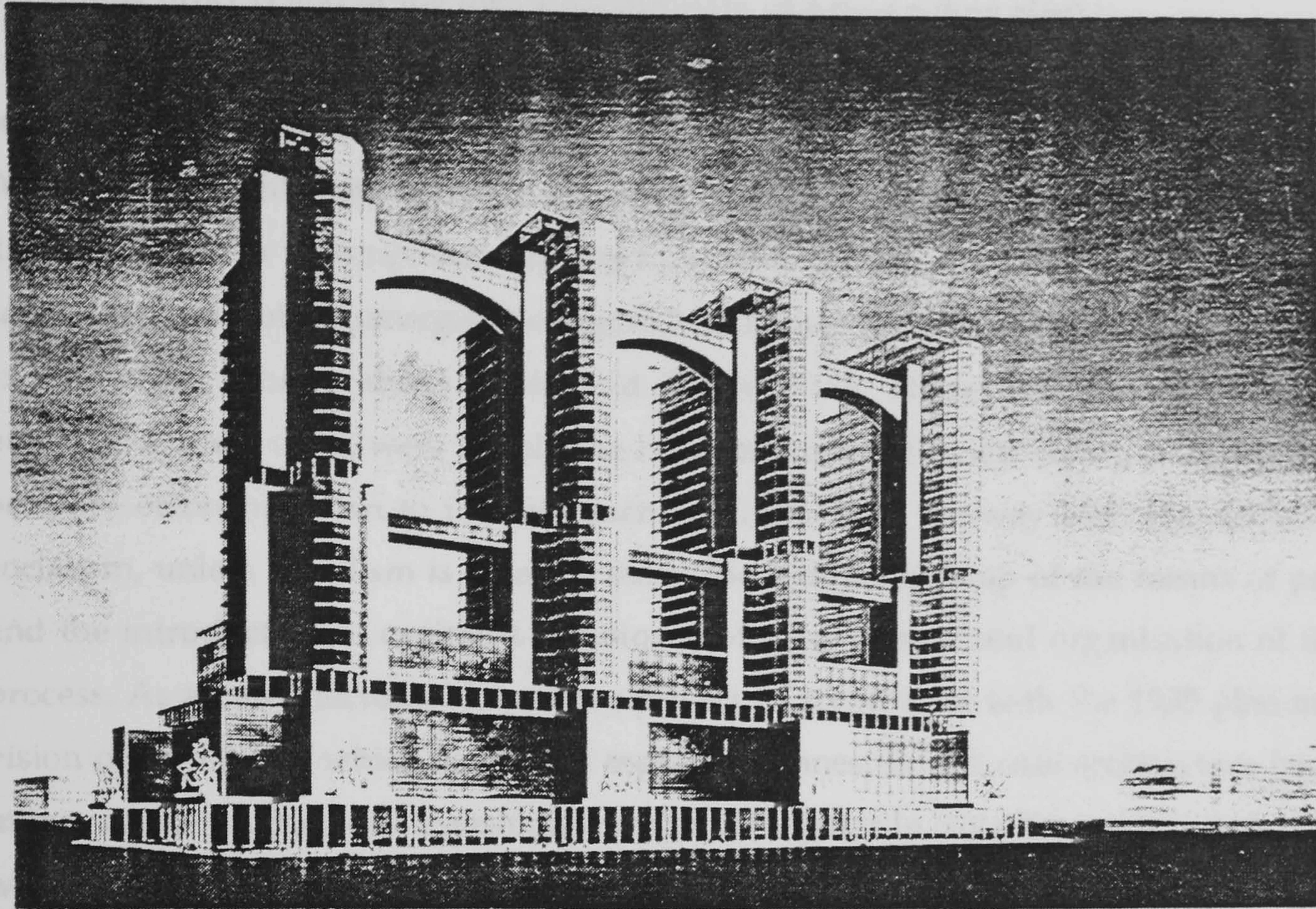
If the *Palace of the Soviets* confirms the subordination of the Soviets then the competition for the *People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry* confirms the subordination of the worker. The schemes by Fomin and Abrosimov, 1934, Shchuko and Minkus 1936, Mordvinov, 1936, and even Melnikov share a number of characteristics. (See fig 84) They are all massive in scale, employ a rationalised stripped down neo-classicism in a symmetry arranged around a central axis, are adorned with sculptures and 'revolutionary' motifs and can only be approached by mounting a series of colossal triumphal stairways. Like the Palace of the Soviets, they display not so much a critical assimilation of the progressive aspects of architectural history, as the fulfilment of party demands for a monument. The results can only be described as a despotic grandeur, in which the subject and even the workers collective stands in passive contemplation of the power that exists beyond them all. That such schemes were held up at the time as symbols of the imminent victory of socialism is no more than part of the production of ideology that distorts the real nature of the regime. If realism was about 'capturing the dynamic and dialectical development of social life', then these visions encapsulate the process of deepening rigar mortis. Their statement is an unequivocal denial of decentralised workers' control of production, and of the democratic management of industrial

The competition THE PALACE OF THE SOVIETS

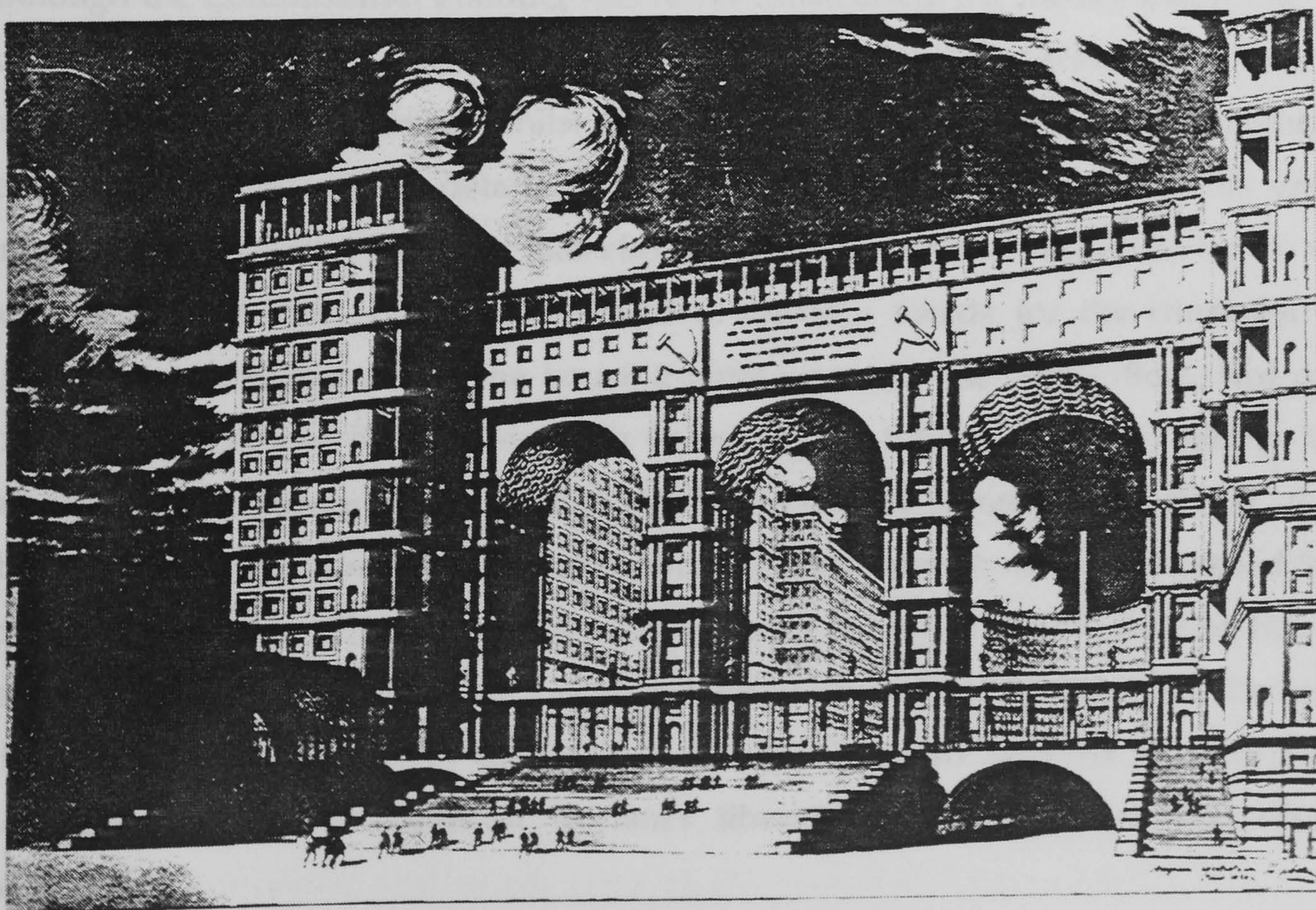


Speer's Reich pavilion challenges Iofan's Soviet pavilion at the 1937 Paris World Exhibition

The competition for the commissariat of heavy industry, Moscow, 1934



The Vesnin brothers - the dilution of modernism



Fomin, Abrosimov and Minkus - the definition of the monumental

development. Such schemes embody the degeneration of the revolutionary transformation of the labour process and of the institutionalisation of a new ruling class.

completing the absolutist city

With the hindsight that we now have, none of these comments are particularly original. The links between a triumphant architecture and dictatorship are well established and acknowledged. But the emergence of architectural ideas as an aspect of consciousness cannot be explained by stories about Stalin and Kaganovich. These individuals, prominent and powerful as they were, were simply the representatives of a new ruling class. Nothing could be more erroneous than to identify such architecture in anyway with the development of socialism, unless socialism is taken to mean the state ownership of the means of production and the introduction of capitalist techniques of management and organisation of the labour process. As an architectural vision they project in accordance with the 1935 plan an *absolute* vision of the city, in which new Gods replace old ones. In this case architecture becomes the mirror of the production of absolute surplus. The latter in the name of the state, pushes the worker to the absolute limits of human labour, the former is the very medium in which this must happen and which must extend construction technology to the very limits of mass, scale and height, high enough to conquer the remnants of the Orthodox church and Kremlin.

Although the Commissariat building was never constructed, the themes that it introduced to Soviet architecture were to become reproduced if at a more modest scale in the construction of public buildings and housing. Whilst work was conducted that sought to introduce typical sections and standardised details, the most impressive schemes from this era are the prestigious individually designed 'neo classical' housing schemes. Reserved on the whole for bureaucrats and Party officials, the need to create a facade for the triumphal avenues replaced the development of the housing commune and the *Novie Beat*. Not only were collectivist notions of living rejected in favour of the typical bourgeois family, but more importantly the revolution in gender relations that the commune promised, that is the liberation of women from universal obligations in the domestic world were refied in law but abolished in practice. The new Soviet man became a parody of the old Russian man, and the new Soviet woman had achieved a strange form of liberation. Not only was she required to still carry out the majority of domestic duties, but was also 'allowed' to work and labour alongside men. In the name of women's liberation, women's alienation was doubly compounded.

Whilst the size of some of the housing schemes enabled an economy of scale in the replication of details and apartment plans, architects indulged themselves in the production of schemes which whilst dependent on the same technology, that dependent on brick, masonry, plaster, ceramic tiles, did not lend themselves to the mass production of housing. As in the construction labour process, the only form of collective identity admissible was that which corresponded to official state organs. Architects like workers found themselves in relations that were founded on a notion of individual competition. Thus the 'hero worker' joins arms with the 'hero architect'. In a situation where collective bonds were being undermined, the possibility of a critique of dominant architectural practice became as difficult as the critique of the labour process.

This of course is no more than one more aspect in the repression of any mass activity that did not conform to party rules. The boulevards of Moscow are littered with these housing schemes of which the neo - renaissance block by Zholotovski on Mokhovaya Prospect 1934 (See fig 85), the "romantic symbolism" of the scheme by Golosov on Yaruskom Boulevard, 1934-36, (See fig 86), and the monolithic 'renaissance' blocks by Vaynstein on Chakalova St, 1936-37, (See fig 87) are representative examples. The contradictory nature of such ostentatious architecture is obvious yet entirely predictable. Despite the urgent need for a mass housing programme, for the whole seventeen year period, 1923 - 1941, the housing fund of Moscow increased by only one half of that in the pre-war period.¹⁸ Ginzburg, the Vesnins and other Constructivists had indicated and briefly shown what Ernst May in Frankfurt had proved conclusively, that it was perfectly possible with the political imagination and will to set in motion a house building programme that was revolutionary in both its formal and social aspirations.

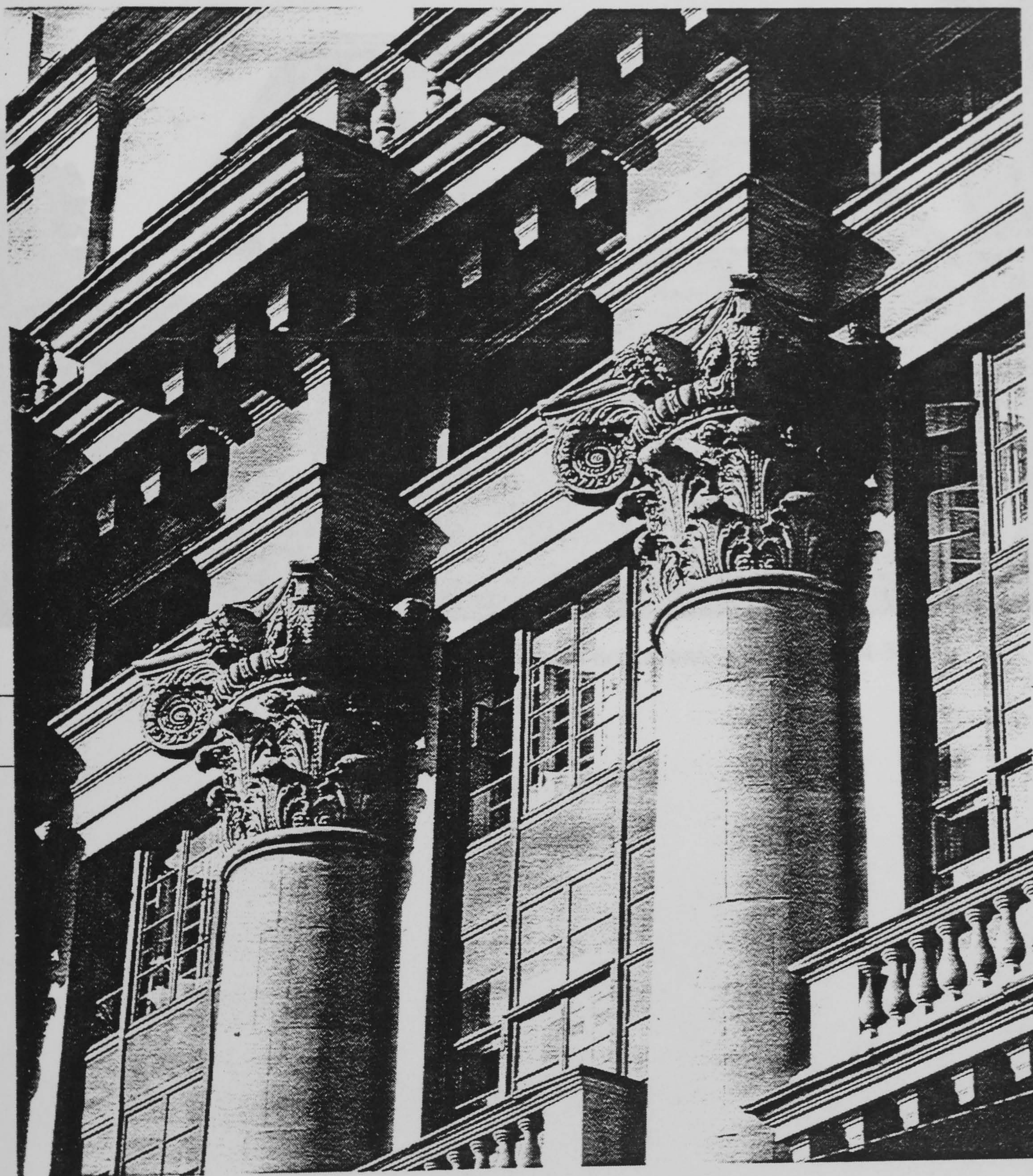
But the architecture of conspicuous bureaucratic consumption which in its formal and social programmes represented the complete negation of Ginzburg's *Dom Perekhodnova Tipa*, continued to enjoy a privileged position right up until the 1950s, reaching its apogee in Chechulin's towering housing complex on the banks of the Moscow river, 1948-1952, and Posokhin's housing scheme on Vosstania Square, two of the complex of 'fortress' buildings that included the Moscow State University, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that altered the Moscow skyline for ever. (See fig 88 and 89)

In the history of the Imperial city, the Palace replaces the Internationale, the castle replaces the commune, and in the place of the universal access to knowledge and books

¹⁸ Dichter, Ya, E, -*Mnogo etashnie shilishye stolitzi* - Moskovskii Rabochie - 1979 - p9 (Mutli storey housing in the capital)

ZHOLTOVSKI, Ivan - Architect, 1867-1959

A 'master' of Russian architecture and leading classicist before and after the revolution



Zholtoovski, I, fragment of apartment block on Mokhovaya Street, Moscow, early 1930's

HOUSING FOR HEROES



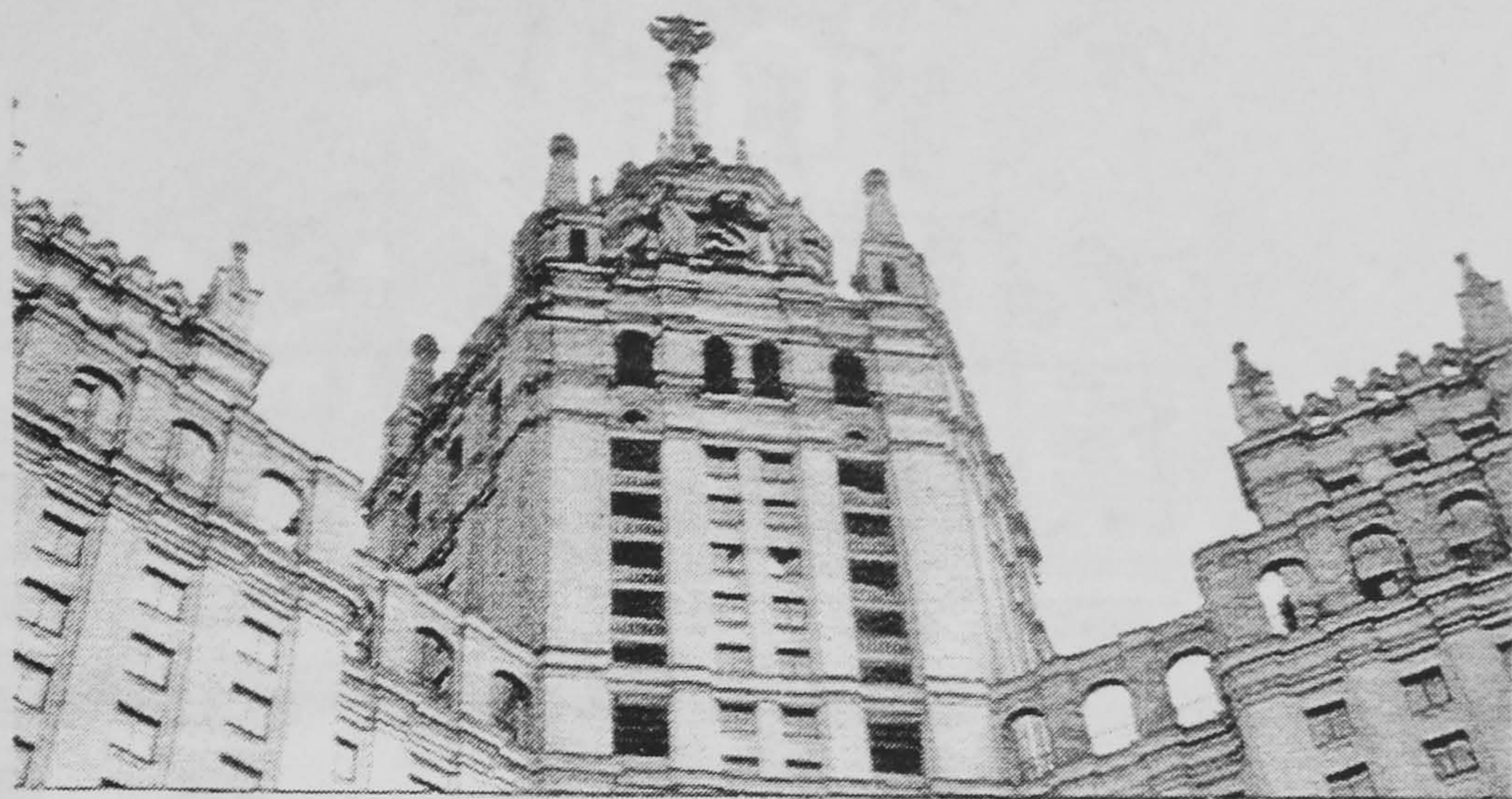
Golosov, Ilya, housing on Yaruskom Boulevard, Moscow, 1934-36

HOUSING FOR HEROES



Vaynstein, Ilya, born 1902, - Housing on Chkalova Street, Moscow, 1936-37

REBUILDING THE MOSCOW SKYLINE



Above - Fragment of housing block by Chechulin, Moscow, 1948-1952
Below - Rudnev, and Abrosimov, - Moscow State University, 1949 -1953

REBUILDING THE MOSCOW SKYLINE



Gelfreich, V and Minkus, M - Ministry of foreign affairs, Moscow, 1948-1953



Dushkin, A and Mezentsev, B - Housing and administrative block, Moscow, 1949-1953

expressed in Leonidov's Institute of Librarianship, the Lenin library was built, an unimaginative sterile neo-classical block, in which access to the far reaches of the interior, to the deep sources of truth become closely guarded and impenetrable. (See fig 90)

The saturation of the city with these new forms did not of course stop above ground. The metro system was equally a place to celebrate the construction and the appropriation on behalf of the workers of all that was grand, magnificent and historically beyond the grasp of ordinary mortals. The synthesis of the greatest building craft and the greatest volumes of blood and sweat, now at long last the proletarian could travel to work through the Palace of Versailles, or linger marvelling at the stainless steel vaults of the Mayakovski station. (See fig 91)

The opening of the metro was the most perfect example of the "fight for a new culture, for new labour, for the new person, for an immediate, bright and splendid life for all human kind".¹⁹ Here we remember Konstantin. Such an achievement could leave the worker in no doubt as to the legitimacy of the regime. Nothing could dull the pride of the shock workers at a feat the completion of which would have all citizens trembling in awe at the greatest union of engineering, art, and labour the world had yet seen. We finish this part of the story recalling the words of Kaganovich;

"In every piece of marble, in every piece of metal and concrete, in every step of the escalator is manifest the new human soul, our socialist labour, our blood, our love, our struggle for the new person for a socialist society....The worker sees in the metro his strength and power, If before only the rich used marble, now under our power, this construction - is for us - the workers and peasants - the marble columns, are the peoples, Soviet and Socialist.....in every one of these palaces burns a flame, moving forwards to the victory of socialism.....Greetings workers, engineers, technicians, party and union organisers, non party individuals, everyone who built the metro with love, with belief, they built not only for themselves but for socialism....Greetings to the victorious Party of Lenin and the great builder of communism, our comrade Stalin"²⁰ (See fig 92)

the realism of social deception

It has been argued that the austerity of 1920s modernism was replaced by forms that reflected 'the optimistic belief in man's omnipotence', with the use of tradition to contribute to a "warm humanity".²¹ It could equally be argued that the emergent architecture of the 1930s displayed the exact opposite, the pessimistic reality of the individual's powerlessness. Such historical games within architecture always run the danger of reproducing myths. What was

¹⁹ Kosarev et al - *Kak Myi Stroili Metro* - Izd "Istoria fabrik i zavodov" - Mosckva - 1935 - Kaganovich.L.M - *Pobeda Metropolitena - pobeda šozsialisma* - p28

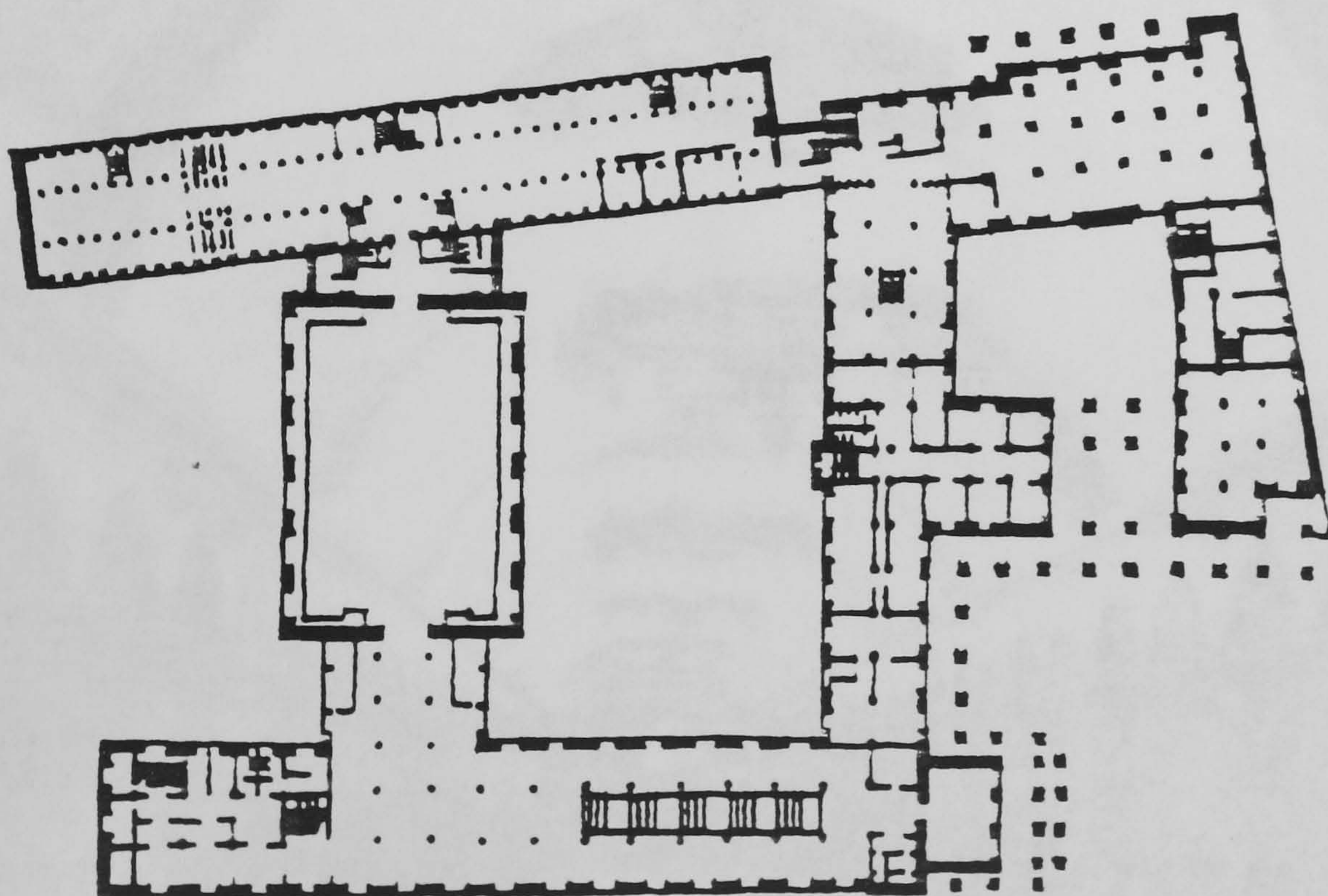
²⁰ ibid excerpts p32 - 35

²¹ Ikkonikov - op.cit p178

THE MOSCOW METRO

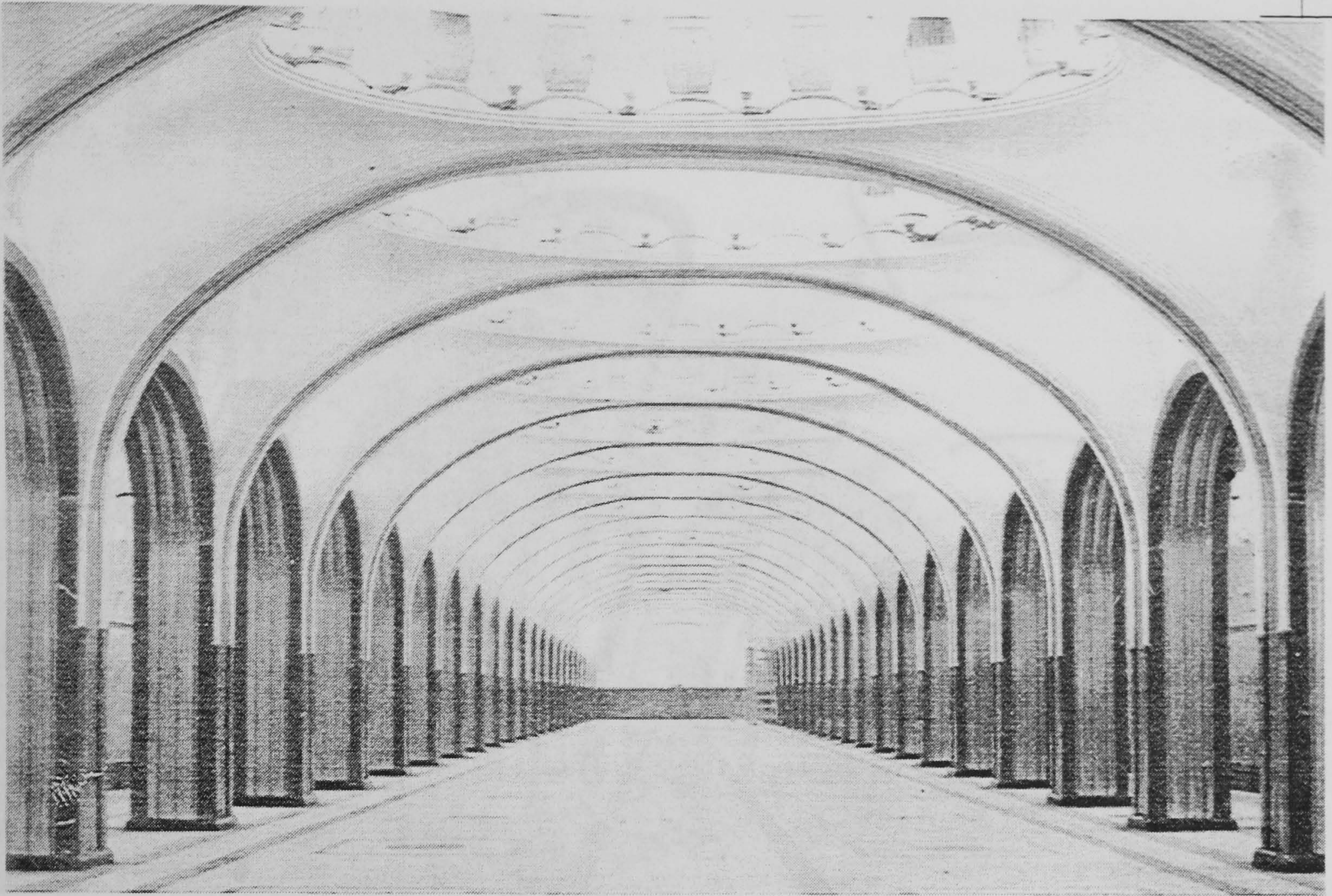
THE LENIN LIBRARY

Making knowledge a privilege



Schuko, V and Gelfreich, V - Moscow, 1929-1941

THE MOSCOW METRO

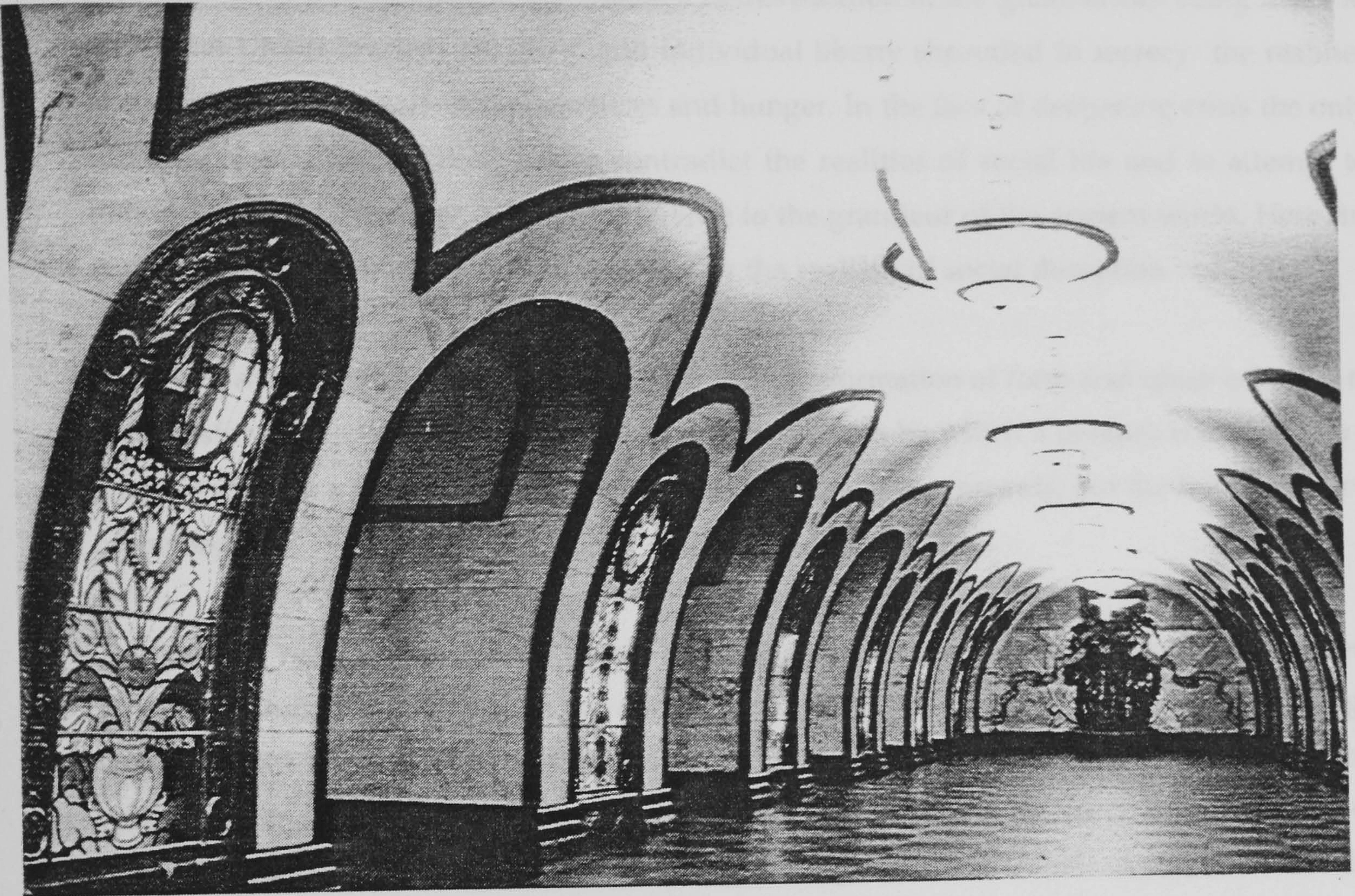


Dushkin, A - Mayakovski station, 1938

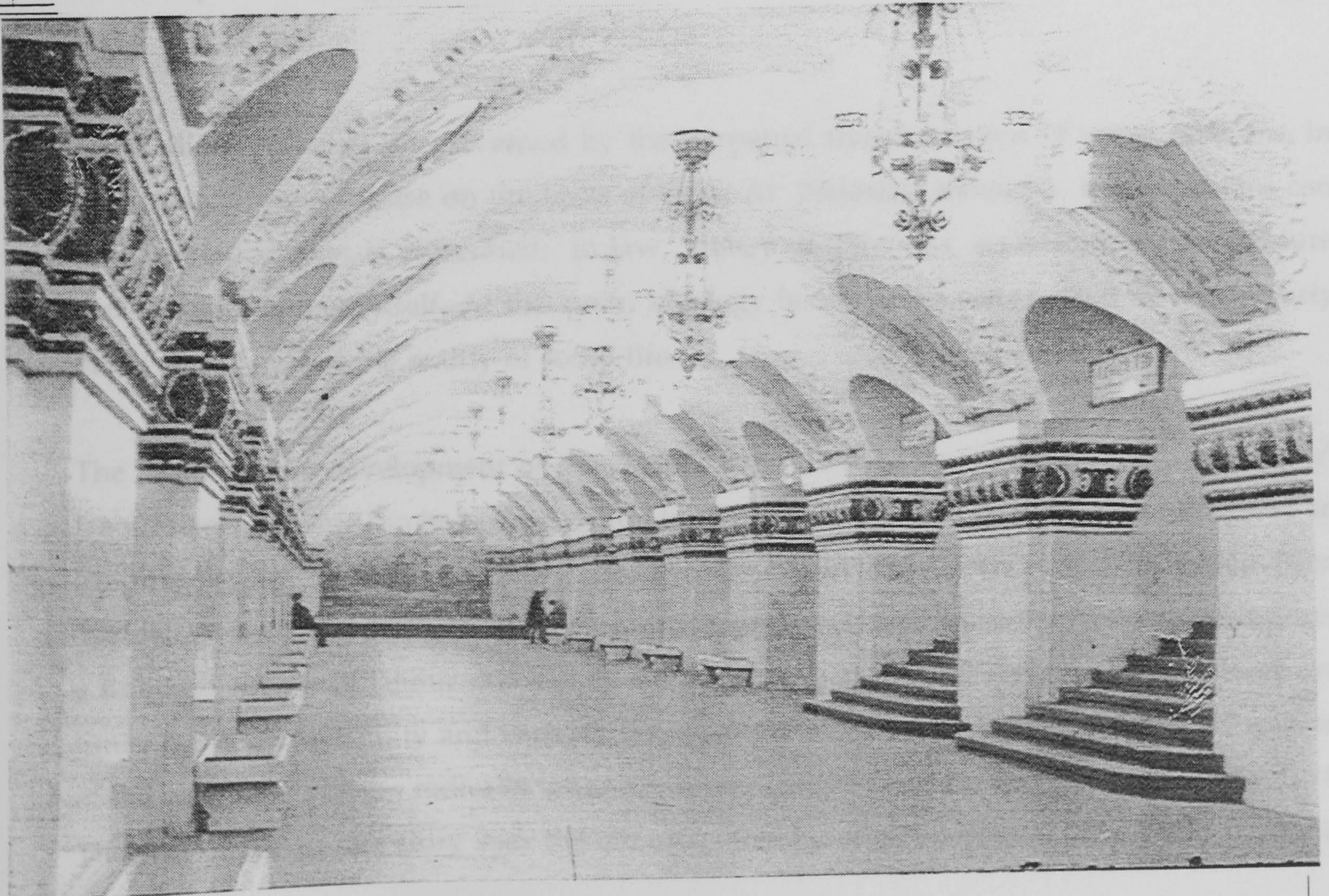


Schusev, A - Komsomolskaya station, 1952

THE MAKING OF AN ARCHITECTURE
THE MOSCOW METRO



Novoslobodskaya station



Kievskaya station

supposed to be a showpiece to the world, a demonstration of the great strides being made in the Soviet Union towards socialism and individual liberty shrouded in secrecy the realities of the purges, showtrials, disappearances and hunger. In the face of deepening crisis the only route for Soviet architecture was to contradict the realities of social life and to attempt to build in stone an ideal city, a forlorn reference to the grandeur of the ancient world. Here the real definition of 'socialist realism' emerges as the realism of social deception.

By now it should hardly need repeating that the transformation of form and space is bound to the transformation of labour. For each step in the process by which a peasant is turned into a wage worker, we see not only the rationalisation of the labour process, but the transformation of the object.

The peasant worker in the 'artel' builds the mansion house, the semi-proletarian in the new state trust builds the first railways and factories, the first urban based brigades of wage workers build the first housing schemes, and the fully proletarianised stakhanovite building worker gives blood to build the workers' city. Here there is no mechanical process of determination but a series of directly corresponding historical transformations within the practice of politics (the exercise of control and domination), economics (the structures of ownership and the regime of accumulation) and culture (the production of ideas, knowledge, and a way of life).

All of these practices are governed by the perpetual transformation of social relations, in particular those that arise on the basis of class. At historical moments, these relations can become reified, that is objectified; in law, policy declarations, architecture, art, literature and within language itself. At this point ideology becomes the cement that simultaneously binds and disguises the reality of social life.

The limits on the development of the "heroic" city are entirely set by the limits of "heroic" labour itself. Borders can be broken within the imagination, but to fulfil the construction of an Empire city by means of a labour process, that is in the throes of the transition from 'handicraft' building production, to a primitive largely unmechanised manufacture, requires a limitless supply of labour that can be constantly expended and replaced. Just as there are limits on the availability and capabilities of labour so there are limits on the development of the city. This changes radically when the construction labour process becomes mechanised. The final stage in our story sees the simultaneous homogenisation of labour and the built

environment that accompanies the all out drive towards industrialisation. This is the real story of modernity.

a peculiar inheritance

As it emerges from the aftermath of the second world war Soviet society displays some peculiar features. That it should inherit many of the characteristics of the bourgeois world and of 19th century thought is not in question; the slightest knowledge of the process of historical change would indicate this as inevitable. But that they should become permanent features of a society is deeply problematic for any theory that maintains that it was socialist, deformed or otherwise. The labour process was dominated by capitalist techniques of management, aesthetic theory was dominated by archaic notions of the artistic ideal and absolute, the process of reification born in capitalist society is continued and reproduced in new ways, its only real claim to historical originality is in the unification of all of these tendencies under a state regime, that bears more than a passing resemblance to the state of Hegel. Thus socialism becomes defined not by the revolution of everyday life but by the State, and this of course lies at the root of its undoing.

CHAPTER

THE TRANSFORMATION OF QUALITY INTO QUANTITY



1978
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The quality of the environment in the cities was being destroyed by a by-product of the industrial revolution. The air was filled with smoke and soot, and the streets were littered with refuse. The quality of life was being sacrificed for the sake of quantity.

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Fragments of true stories

1978

Cruising in a giant Volga courtesy of the Moldavian Republic the countryside reminded Alex of old vampire films. As the chief engineer for the construction of seven wine producing plants he was on his way to inspect the ancient wine cellars that lay deep in the hills. The car stopped at a gate which seemed to lead nowhere but directly into the cliff face. The doors opened and leaving the car behind they entered into a tunnel with racks of wine on either side. After a hundred metres they faced a set of wooden doors which the leader of the six strong delegation from the Moldavian Ministry of Agriculture opened majestically. "This" he said "is where we shall live for the next forty eight hours". They looked into a baroque dining room dominated by a long table overflowing with food and drink. "Comrades let us drink to our prosperity and our leader Leonid Brezhnev." With uncontrolled mirth the party faithful set co-ordinates for destination oblivion.

1986

Natasha lay shocked but wide awake. The concrete panel had clipped her shoulder and sent her into a spin. Pulling herself up from the mud she shook her head not so much in despair as in the knowledge of inevitability. Everything goes in threes and that was the third. Shaking as friends gave her a coat and a cigarette, she had the strange idea that the concrete panel on the end of the chain had been a letter, the same one she had received telling of her suspension from the party and her demotion from the position of manager in the panel factory.

She was popular and from this she drew a certain calm. As a good Komsomol the year before she had been nominated and elected as a deputy in the local Soviet. But her refusal to become involved in the 'money for favours' system led directly to her dismissal from office after only six months. Her pride in never having compromised herself tempered the feelings of disillusionment but not the pains of the broken shoulder that only vanished as the needle went into her arm.

INDUSTRIALISATION AND THE LABOUR PROCESS

"..the open gates of the New Tower of Babel, the machine centre of Metropolis, threw up the masses as it gulped them down.."

taken from the script of Metropolis by Fritz Lang 1926 (See fig 93)

Dragged from the primitive commune and sold into slavery, history's vagabonds make their first tentative steps into the modern world. Wrenched from the land during the feudal period, they eventually come to rest on the machine. All the historic struggles over land and bread were merely rehearsals for this first and final act of the modern when in all but a few remote corners of the planet every human subject has become a wage worker, thus completing the annihilation of space through time.

The first circumnavigation, the first dream of the Internationale, the optimistic naiveté of the global village, football, coca cola and Christianity are just a few of the more self evident indices of the shrinking globe of which the Internet is but the latest fetish. But all of these phenomena are little more than the fragile shells discarded as the accumulation of capital becomes ever more rampant and ever more mystified. It is a peculiar but predictable paradox that as the forces of capitalist economic development integrate and shrink the world, writers and thinkers become ever more determined within the media of the word and image to rescue culture from the grasp of the commodity and to continue the onslaught against vulgar economic determinism.

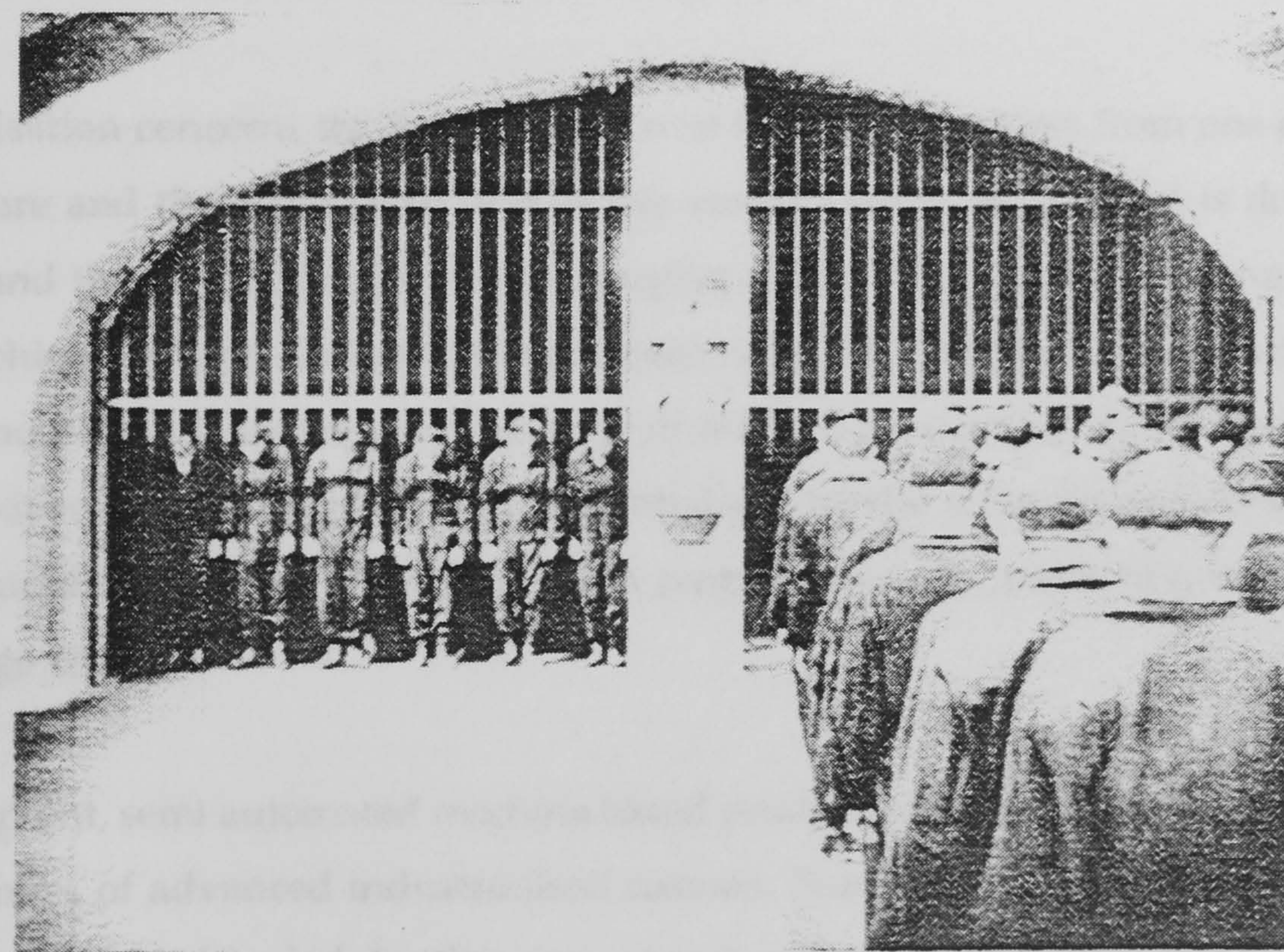
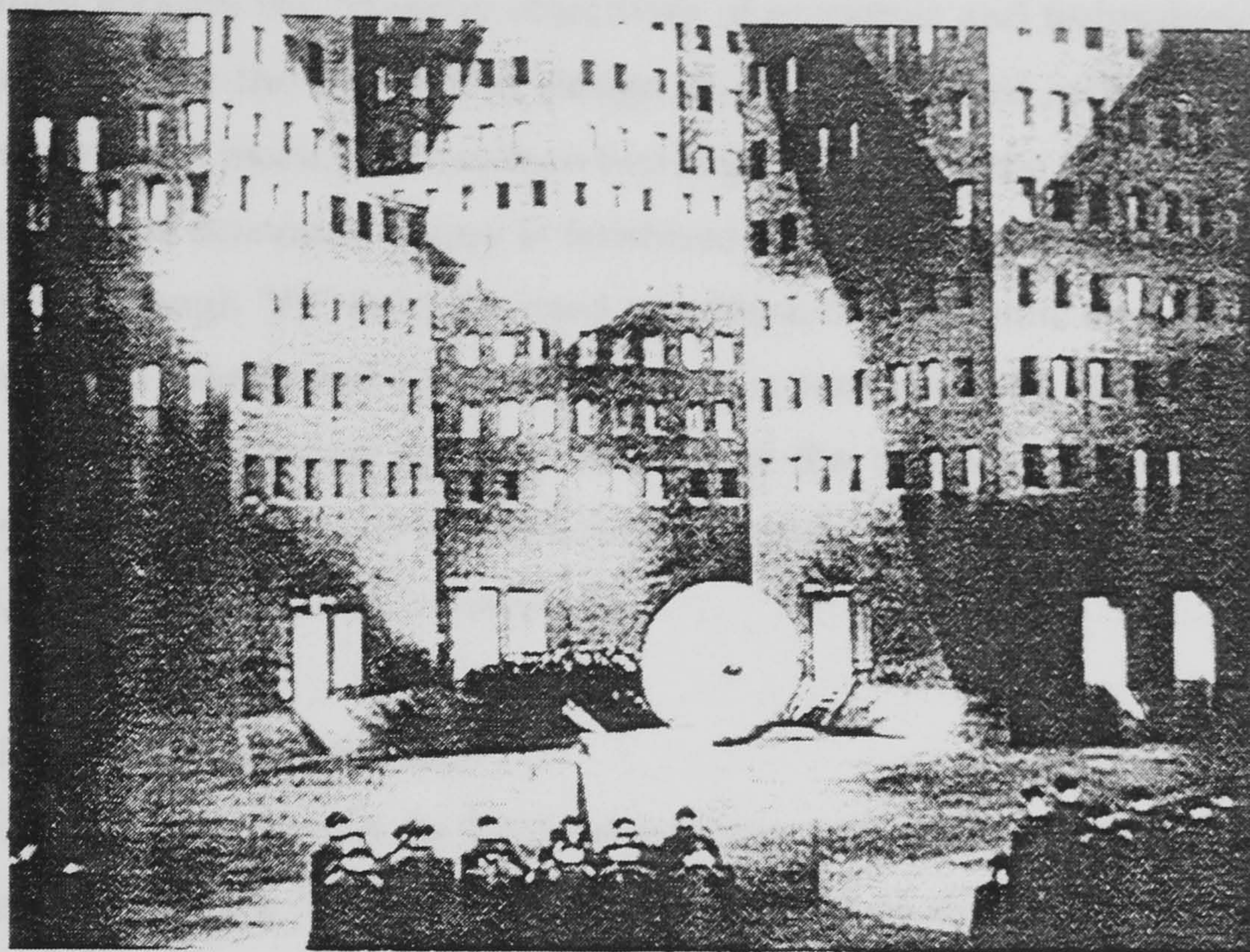
But to marginalise the economic has always and inevitably lead to the de-politicisation of knowledge. The contradictions of the modern world become understood as predominantly aesthetic, and while reference is made to the mysteries of the 'commodity', the proper historical discussion of labour, accumulation, and capital, which is as important for the production of culture as for the production of gold, vanishes from the text. We have turned full circle, and unwittingly continue the romantic tradition of lancing the ugly from social life.¹

That so much work has been invested into language and meaning can only be welcomed, but it can all too easily be grasped as an opportunity to avoid that aspect of material life which

¹ An unfortunate example of this can be found in Jameson's writing. For all of the insights and elegance in his work there is a creeping suspicion that the labour process, capital and even class are slowly retreating into the footnotes and margins of the text. An example of this is the essay on Frank Gehry's house in "Post modernism, or, the cultural logic of late capitalism". That Gehry is worthy of study is not questioned. What is so contradictory is that at the moment when Los Angeles was burning (a truly 'post modern' bit of urban renewal), Gehry's house is presented as such a significant event, which in the development of the American built environment at the end of the twentieth century is largely irrelevant.

METROPOLIS

The fear of industry



Scenes from Fritz Lang's film Metropolis, 1926

remains centred on the accumulation of surplus and capital. Thus, if the previous chapter appeared as an essay in ideological determination, this part of the story tells of a world in which nothing escapes the crushing objectivity of economic and technological development. Despite our pleas for the freedom of design, the production of architecture for most of its modern history never manages more than two steps away from the process of accumulation. In the situation where economic theory is fetishised as accounting, and technology is fetishised as a liberation through 'VR' toys, the need to rethink the economic and the technological has to encounter well established barriers. Building is reassuring for if anything establishes in clear and unequivocal terms the true mission of the modern, which is to generalise the commodity form of labour and to convert every available corners of social life into an arena for capital, then it is the built environment.

industrialisation as a total process

Industrialisation has tended to become synonymous with the notion of technological innovation. In so doing it mystifies its true meaning as a decisive phase in the historic unfolding of the dialectic of the forces and relations of production. As an antidote to the mysteries that arise from viewing industrialisation as a matter purely of technology, let us begin with labour. Straight away it is apparent that the changes in the character of human labour have been as profound as the revolutions in the 'instruments' of production, that is the technologies, with which labour transforms nature.

Industrialisation concerns the transformation of the labour process from one characterised by manufacture and the production of absolute surplus value, to one that is dominated by the machine and the production of relative surplus value. Whilst the steam engines, looms and early machines of the industrial revolution take the crafttools from the hands of the worker, and propel labour towards the site of modern production, the greatest catalyst in the historical development of capitalism is symbolised by the scientific technological revolution which occurs from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, and assists in the generalisation of the wage relation.

From this point, semi automated machine based production acquires a predominant position in the economies of advanced industrialised nations. The ability to mass produce the means of production inexorably led to the mass production of consumer goods. The historical significance of this moment follows not only from the formation of a social consumption fund, but from the subsequent penetration of the commodity form into this and all other sectors of

social life. This is the moment of totality, whereby not only labour, but form, time, space, and the experience and meaning of everyday life become changed beyond all recognition².

Everyone's favourite historical example is of course Fordism, the genesis of the total regulation of life at work, at home and at leisure. As a tendency in the development of capitalism, Fordism has been described as an "articulation between the process of production and mode of consumption, which constitutes the mass production that is the specific content of the universalisation of wage-labour."³ In other words, Fordism describes a moment in the history of capitalism, when a transformation in the labour process based on semi automatic assembly line production, revolutionises work and with it, everyday life. This has been described as the combination of a predominantly extensive regime of accumulation, that was concerned with the reorganisation of the labour process, with an intensive regime of accumulation that creates a "new mode of life for the wage earning class by establishing a logic that operates on the totality of time and space..."⁴ Such a thesis is important because it attempts to theorise at an abstract level the way in which the commodity form permeates all aspects of social life in the late twentieth century. The Soviet citizen is confronted with a situation that is analagous. First the labour process is irrevocably transformed, and at the same time as the worker as a producer is being socialised in new ways, so the mass of workers are consitituted as consumers. Similar to the classic phase in the history of capitalist accumulation, the process of Soviet accumulation operated on the basis of the integration of "department one", (that is the production of means of production), with "department two", the (production of mass consumption goods), and "department three"(military).⁵

Elements of this are by now a familiar story, one that we introduced in part three of chapter two. Its repetition acts not only as a prelude to its detailed investigation, but serves to remind

² The industrial revolution not only helped redefine the human subject as a direct producer or as an assistant to the process of mass production, it also remade us as mass consumers, firstly for money itself and then for all of the commodities like cars, fridges, and cookers that help define modern life. This is a process that is achieving new heights with the profusion of DIY stores where we buy the products of industrialised production, and thereby mass produce the spaces of our home lives. Such familiar changes have been accompanied by perhaps the most important contemporary innovations of all, which are those connected with mass communication and information systems. Here we have the television, the radio, the video, the Personal Computer, the Satellite, along with the whole arsenal at the disposal of modern publishing and advertising corporations. The massive increase in the production of information as a commodity, and of pleasure devices in the form of new technologies are all part of the armoury and fabric of industrial society. Indeed, their proliferation is wholly dependent on the industrialisation of production. It would be easy to see such improvements in the quality of life brought by the consumer and communication revolutions as wholly positive and by their very nature, democratic. However this would presume that such new technologies are able to develop in an autonomous way beyond the limitations set by political and economic interest groups.

³ Aglietta, Michael - *A theory of capitalist regulation. The US experience* - New Left Books - 1979 - p116-117

⁴ *ibid* p 71

⁵ It is worth remembering that the production of the built environment operates in both sectors.

us of how in the process of industrialisation we witness the complete interdependence of different social practices. It is not surprising that so much 19th and 20th century philosophy and critical thought became pre-occupied with the notion of a world in which all things were in some manner connected with each other, either as an "expressive" or a "structured" totality. It is in the modern world that for the first time the economic, the political and the aesthetic merge together in a social totality that is impossible to ignore and is all embracing in its simultaneous unity and disintegration.

An equally familiar and no less profound story concerns the changes that take place in the production of the built environment. The quantitative and qualitative possibilities opened up by the advent of the mass production of buildings, changed not only the labour process, and the form of buildings, but vastly accelerated and altered the framework of urbanisation and of how we think about living. Just as with the general process of industrialisation, the industrialisation of building production was all about reorganising time and space. As an historical transformation it was comprehensive in its nature, and could only occur with the conscious merging of political, economic and aesthetic practices, which were invariably state regulated.

the unhappy unity of Soviet and American economic regimes

One of the main objectives here is to offer a critical evaluation of the Soviet experience of industrialisation particularly as it affects the production of the built environment. Our expectations of difference and our apprehension towards simplistic convergence theories of Soviet and American development should not blind us to their similarities.

In the history of capitalism, industrialisation can be thought of as a catalyst in the generalisation of the commodity form. In the USSR it was very much the catalyst in the implementation of the increasingly ambitious targets set in the five year plans. The consequences of the 'hegemony' of the plan were not confined to economic development, and as the fetishism of the commodity ascended to ever greater heights in the west, in the east the fetishism of the plan grew like a cancer to grip all corners of daily life. The factory floor, the research institute, the production of beer, art and the construction of the micro region, all became subject to the rule of the plan.

For all of the political pessimism of Adorno and Marcuse, their real objectives were simply to explore how the commodity form had become so generalised as to make the construction of

alternatives along the traditional lines of political revolt ever more elusive. Similarly it is the way in which the plan becomes the regulator of social life that is important. However, all forms of resistance are ultimately fruitless unless they seek to confront the dominant social relations that structure particular historical social formations, without the reproduction of which they collapse. The aesthetic critique of capitalism or of socialism, important though it is, misses this point. At this juncture as in the prelude to all histories, we are compelled to establish the exact manner in which surplus is appropriated from labour, and how the results of this unpaid labour time are distributed.⁶

In the situation of the 'cold war' a whole generation was encouraged to believe in the image of two mutually incompatible social systems. Nothing of course could be further from the truth. In both social systems we find administrative and management systems that are centralised and concentrated under the jurisdiction of a ruling class within which the military industrial complex pre-dominates. In both capitalist societies and the USSR we see two ruling classes supervising an accumulation process, tempered by oppositional forces, but overwhelmingly geared to the private accumulation of capital in the west, and the State appropriation and redistribution to individuals of surplus in the east. For beneath the housing statistics and May day parades, we find a Soviet bureaucracy immersed in an all embracing rationalised plan of accumulation, a desperate recourse to technological determinism that was breathtaking in its efficiency at channelling surplus into the arms race and equally accomplished at wasting human labour and natural resources. These features it shares with the ruling class in the west, the great distinguishing feature being the scale at which the Soviet bureaucracy achieved these goals particularly within the building industry, which at its high point employed up to thirteen million workers in the mass production of factory pre fabricated buildings, what amounts in strictly capitalist terms to the wholesale transition from absolute to relative surplus value.

In both systems the process of building industrialisation serves two primary functions. One as a means for ensuring social reproduction through the production of shelter, as an index in the qualitative improvement in life, and second as a vital sector in the general process of accumulation. The production of the built environment is both a source and consumer of surplus. Whether in the USSR, the USA or Western Europe, all talk of efficiency and productivity in relation to building production is thus predicated on the economic concept of how the built

⁶ See Burawoy, Michael - *The politics of production* - Verso - 1985 . This is the starting point for Burawoy's analysis of the labour process, which is one of the best written and comprehensive analyses that explores the wider political and ideological dimensions of the historical organisation of work in both capitalist and socialist societies.

environment either absorbs or produces surplus.⁷ In that the appropriation and distribution of surplus presupposes the division of a society into a class of producers and a class of owners and managers, the process of industrialisation, and by implication the development of technology is a directly political and social process.

As a summary, the central dialectic of industrialisation in the production of the built environment is expressed in the balancing act it must perform in meeting the twin needs of the reproduction and expansion of capital (the pursuit of value) and the reproduction and qualitative improvement in the life of labour (buildings and wages).

technology and the wage relation

Whilst we can entertain the idea that the fundamental characteristic of capitalist development has been the wage relation, it seems far more obvious to attribute historical change to what after all is one of the more demonstrably tangible aspects of modern history, that of technology. This is not in itself illusory. For every step in the development of the wage relation we have witnessed momentous transformations in the instruments with which labour transforms nature. The first revolution in the productive forces occurred with the transition from manufacture to machinofacture, the second phase begins with the scientific technological revolution that sees machine based production becoming semi automatic and organised on a production line, and the third revolution sees the introduction of fully automated systems and computers. Furthermore, each of these technological changes have tended to be accompanied by general changes in the formal possibilities of building construction. This leads us to closely identify the history of building form with that of the history of technology, to the point where we think of modern building very much as a technological system, a piece of technology, not unlike the construction of a big machine. However, we are concerned not only with technology, but with the productive forces, which include technology, but also embrace the objects of production, space and labour power. In addition we are concerned with the social relations within which the forces of production operate, and it is of course the analysis of the dialectic between the two that offers us a far more complete and comprehensive picture of the transformation of building.

⁷ See Harvey, David - *The urbanisation of capital* - Blackwell-1985, for an introduction to how the built environment operates as a framework for the accumulation of capital.

productivity and the composition of capital

We have touched briefly on the transition from the production of 'absolute' to 'relative' surplus value, which corresponds to the arrival of machine based production. We need now to delve deeper into the transition that leaves the peasant crafts men and women as historical relics and commodities in the heritage industry. We begin with the concept of *productivity*, that seemingly ahistorical tendency for humankind to develop more and more productive ways of transforming the world. But what does 'productivity' actually refer to ? For a clue to this riddle we turn to Marx:

"Generally speaking, the mode of producing relative surplus value consists in raising the productive power of the worker, so as to enable the worker to produce more in a given time with the same expenditure of labour. Labour time continues to transmit as before the same value to the total product, but this unchanged amount of exchange value is spread over more use-values; hence the value of each single commodity sinks" ⁸

In this passage Marx introduces us to two aspects of productivity. The first concerns physical productivity involving relative increases in the production of more things and objects. This is the difference in productivity between a building worker who by handicraft can produce two concrete lintels, but who with a new machine and with little or no additional effort can now produce ten. As if by magic the same amount of worker's labour time, social abstract labour, is now spread over more lintels than before. This suggests another notion of productivity, one which relates to the notion of 'value'.

Marx argues, that under capitalist conditions, the category of productivity, like that of labour power, and the commodity possesses a dual nature. Just as the notions of labour power and the commodity have both abstract and concrete qualities, so productivity. As such we can speak of *physical* and *value* productivity. ⁹

This is an important distinction because it immediately establishes the political character of the labour process in relation to the accumulation of capital. That is, the labour process is not 'aimless' and 'ahistorical', it has an intention beyond a mere increase in the quantity of goods. Its 'other intention' is to produce surplus value. It is a distinctly *capitalist* definition of labour productivity, where capital is understood as *value in motion*, and where value is understood as a historically specific social relation, embodied in the notion of abstract labour

⁸ Marx, *Capital* p408

⁹ Harvey, David - *The Limits to Capital* - Blackwell -London -1984 - p104

power. This emphasis on value productivity, enables Marx to "debunk the notion that capital is itself somehow productive."¹⁰

The concept of a specifically capitalist notion of productivity, enables us to describe capitalism as a system which operates "under the perpetual and relentless imperative to revolutionise the productive forces (understood in terms of the value productivity of labour power). This is, we have argued, an abstract proposition rendered concrete by reference to the specifics of technological change."¹¹

But it is not just technology that renders such a proposition concrete, but the actual concrete aspects of labour power. Put quite simply, the tower block which is a symbol of a revolution in labour productivity has two aspects a *physical concrete* aspect, understood in terms of the production of steel frames, nuts, bolts, and the skill levels of building workers, and an *abstract* aspect understood in terms of value.

The concept of 'value productivity' draws us into three related and controversial debates within economic theory. The composition of capital¹², the Law of the Rate of Profit to Fall¹³, and the theory of crisis¹⁴. Situated at the heart of all these debates are the methods

¹⁰ *ibid* p104-105

¹¹ *ibid* p116

¹² For two recent discussions of all three issues see **Fine and Harris - Rereading Capital** - Macmillan 1983, and **Harvey, David - The Limits to Capital** - Blackwell 1984 . The composition of capital it is suggested has three aspects. The first is what is called the technical composition. TCC This is associated with the physical productivity of labour and is simply the ratio between "the mass of means of production consumed per production period..to the mass of wage goods" (**Fine and Harris** p59) As such the technical composition of the capital employed in a concrete panel factory would be an expression over a period of time of the amount of energy, machinery, materials used up to produce a number of panels over the number of workers involved in their production. It is immediately apparent that any attempt to measure this ratio runs into an immediate problem in that we are dealing with different material quantities that are difficult to measure on the same basis. What is called the value composition of capital, is an expression of the same ratio but at their current changing values, a ratio of what is called constant to variable capital, C/V. This has been expressed elsewhere as the "general relationship between living and dead labour" (**Harvey** p135) However, the two ratios move in different ways. The increase in physical productivity "changes the values per unit of means of production and wage goods; it reduces them and may do so at differential rates". (**Fine and Harris** p59) The third ratio is called the Organic composition. This is the same ratio, that is C/V, but "where the elements of the means of production and wage goods are valued at their old values" Such propositions represent an attempt to theorise at an abstract level an important aspect of capitalist production, that steps beyond the concept of the measurement of economic development by a single quantitative index. What it is argued Marx is trying to indicate are two dialectically related processes. First, the way in which increases in the organic composition of capital are proportionate to and match step for step the technical composition of capital, "and second, the consequent reduction in values of commodities associated with that increase". (**Fine and Harris** p60)

¹³ Because of the empirical evidence that points to the historical resilience of capitalism, many have sought to argue against Marx's law. In contrast, **Fine and Harris** maintain that it is best conceived of as an abstract tendency rather than an as an empirical one, that is, it relates to the long term historical movement of capitalist society and is better thought of as "The Law of the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall and its counteracting influences"

¹⁴ **Fine and Harris** point out that Marx specifies the Law of the rate of Profit to Fall as a consequence of a rising Organic composition of Capital, (**Fine and Harris** p62). **Harvey** adds that "The problem for capital in general is somehow to stabilise the value composition in the face of a perpetual tendency to increase the

by which capitalism can reproduce itself and avoid major crises that threaten to disrupt the balance of accumulation. Capital is inevitably driven to seek increases in the value productivity of labour. Technological innovation offers this possibility and understood in a purely economic sense, exists "as a prime lever for furthering the accumulation of capital through the perpetual increase in the value productivity of labour". The results of increasing the value productivity of labour has two aspects; the cheapening of labour, and an increase in the rate of surplus value".¹⁵

However the long term success of transformations in the productive forces are far from guaranteed. One of the contradictions of technological innovation that require large investments in *fixed capital* is that it is initially extremely costly to install and once in place can act as a barrier to further innovation. At the worst extreme we can see this dilemma in contemporary Russia. The Soviet construction industry invested heavily over a period of thirty years in the formation of fixed capital necessary for the mass production of concrete. This left an industry overwhelmingly geared to the production of concrete building components that on social and aesthetic grounds alone have been severely criticised. However for the short term at least it is stuck with its several thousand concrete plants. To shift technologies would require the devaluation of virtually all of the fixed capital in an industry which remains dominated by pre fabricated concrete production. Even if this can be accomplished, the introduction of new technologies faces another barrier, labour. Historically, workers have opposed the introduction of machinery wherever it has threatened their economic position or their ability to control the labour process. Second, new technologies require new types of skill, a cost that has to be born either by the State or Capital. This begins to throw into ever sharper focus the real profundity of the problems that emerged with the wholesale transformation of the labour process in the Soviet Union. It also asks us to think about the consequences of technological innovation not just at an objective level but at a subjective level in terms of what happens to 'concrete' labour.

To summarise then, the single act of productivity has both a 'physical' and a 'value' aspect. To achieve a long term increase in productivity requires innovations in the productive forces. This is achieved through technological innovation and the transformation of the character of both concrete and abstract labour. The two principle forces behind the drive to raise productivity through technological innovation are the competition and mutual

organic composition through technological change within the enterprise. What Marx will ultimately show us is that there is only one way that this can be done: thorough crisis" (Harvey p135)

¹⁵ Harvey -Limits to Capital-op cit p 133-134

interdependence that exists between capitalists in the pursuit of surplus value, and the class struggle that exists between capital and labour. The latter takes two forms in particular; first, workplace struggles amongst workers for control over the labour process and its products. This motivates capital to introduce machinery which lessens labour's direct control over the immediate work and its products¹⁶. Second, the historical confidence of workers to demand the mass availability of goods that forces States and capital to regulate technological innovation. It is to the actual character of labour and technology that we turn to next.

technology and labour

Despite technology's dominant position in our images of the modern world and in the contemporary labour process, it acquires its meaning only through the relations in which it exists and the purposes to which it is put. How then can we assess the social character of technology? Is technology essentially neutral and assumes a social character only when it is set in motion under particular social relations, or is technology by virtue of the fact that it always develops within the context of particular societies imbued from birth with a political and ideological character? Is there for instance such a thing as a capitalist machine? Is a concrete plant simply a neutral piece of technology that assumes a social character only when owned and managed by the state or a private company? If this is so, is the difference between capitalist and socialist industrialisation merely one of ownership? These questions have been the focus of works by Braverman, Marcuse, Habermas, Burawoy and a whole number of contemporary authors on the labour process. They almost invariably start with what Marx had to say, and this is indeed where we begin.¹⁷

machines and miracles

As we have noted it is tempting faced with the miracles of technological innovation to depart into a metaphysics of the machine, and similar to the misconceptions about the productivity of capital, we find just as many in relation to the notion that technology is somehow intrinsically productive. (See fig 94) Many of the best discussions on the character of work and labour in the late capitalist era draw their inspiration from Marx's chapters in

¹⁶ Marx cites the example of how as soon as "the increased production of surplus value by the prolongation of the working day was once and for all put a stop to, from that moment capital threw itself with all its might into the production of relative surplus value, by hastening on the further improvement of machinery" *Capital* op,cit 408

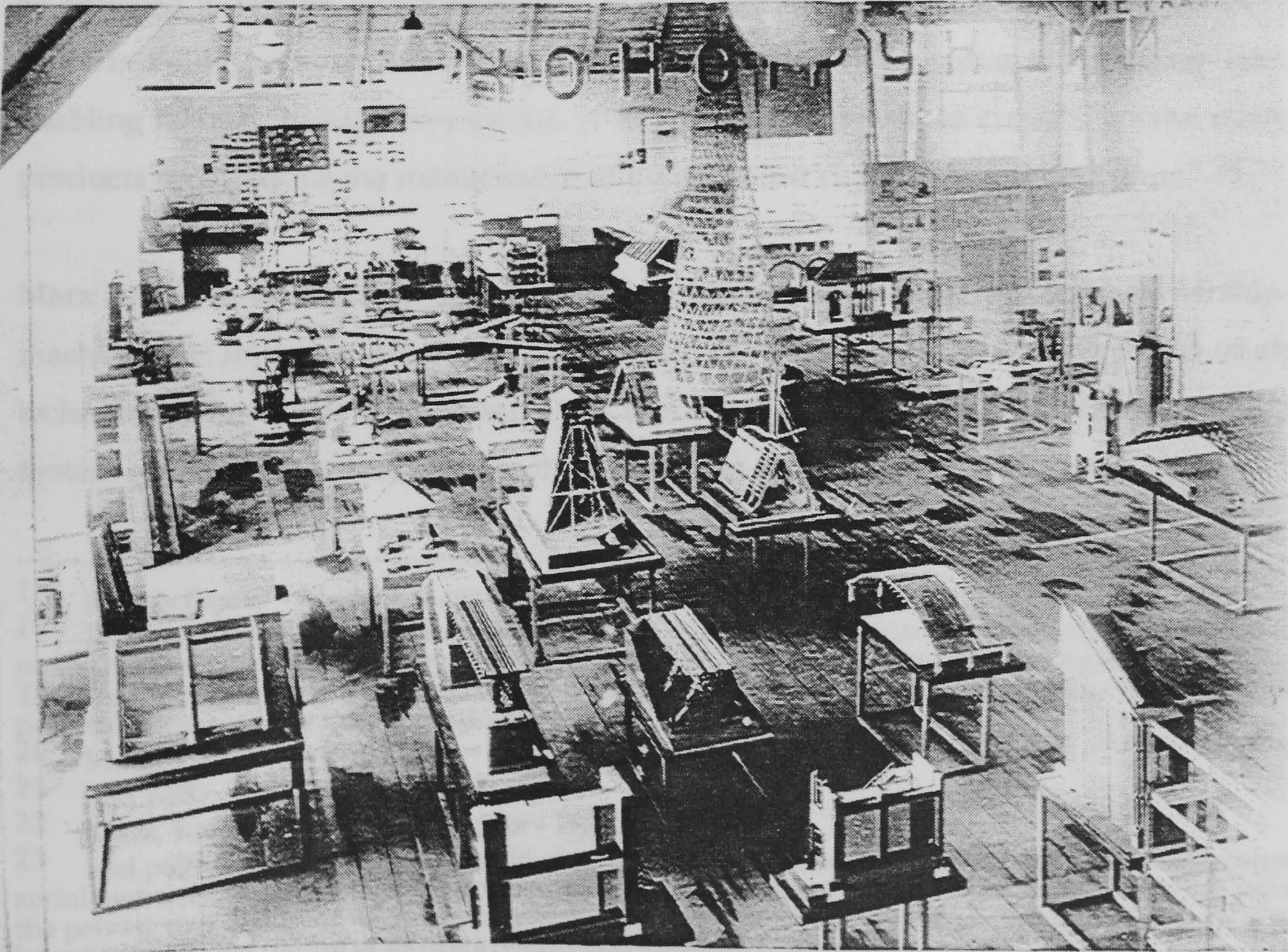
¹⁷ At this point a distinction should be made between the isolated tool and the mechanisation and multiple organisation of such tools into a whole system, that is a machine or a series of machines. This is a technology in the proper sense of the word. Seen for instance in isolation a drill or a lathe are creative tools which save us from heavy labour yet still give the carpenter creativity and imagination. When a whole series of them are combined in an assembly line process that implies a set of technical and social relations between workers and between management and labour we are dealing with a quite different situation that transforms the social significance of the drill or lathe.

THE MACHINE

The historical accumulation and objectification of human labour



Celebrating technology and science - Soviet textile design



Celebrating technology and engineering- Soviet exhibition from the 1920's

Capital on Machinery.¹⁸ . For all of his admiration for the productive potential unleashed by capitalism his comments are always either prefaced or concluded with warnings and demonstrations of the social contradictions that arise from the development of technology under capitalist conditions.¹⁹

Marx begins by reminding us that "in manufacture the revolution in the mode of production begins with labour power", whereas "in modern industry it begins with the instruments of labour"²⁰. For modern building industries, this refers to the machinery and assembly lines that were developed for the production of window frames, doors, concrete details and all other mass produced building components. These new pieces of machinery embody value but cannot in themselves *create* surplus value. "Machinery, like every other component of constant capital creates no new value, but yields up its own value to the product it begets."²¹

In two important respects however, machinery can *produce* surplus value. In the first case this is simply because a machine has value by virtue of the fact that it is the product of labour, "a certain amount of labour in objectified form".²² Machinery as "the most adequate form of fixed capital, is simply the historical accumulation "of knowledge and of skill, of the general productive forces of the social brain", which are subsequently "absorbed into capital, as opposed to labour, and hence appears as an attribute of capital.." ²³ In the second case, it imparts value because "it increases the relation of surplus value to necessary labour, by enabling labour, through an increase of its productive power, to create a greater mass of the products required for the maintenance of living labour capacity in a shorter time."²⁴

Marx seems to be arguing that the problem lies not only in the capitalist ownership of the machine, but in the development of the machinery itself. That is a specific kind of *capitalist* technology. But what if anything does this mean? First of all, a particular technological system can facilitate an increase in the production of surplus value by sweeping away "every

¹⁸ Marx - *Capital - Machinery and Modern Industry* op.cit

¹⁹ In the most obvious sense that classes own and manage particular technological systems we need look no further than the arms industry to indicate that technology can be a deeply ideological and political issue. That the Military Industrial complex is cited so often as the catalyst for the development of technologies for peaceful purposes must raise some doubts.

²⁰ Marx, Karl - *Capital* p366

²¹ *ibid* p383

²² Marx, Karl - *Grundrisse* - Penguin - 1981 - p701

²³ *ibid* p694. This has always seemed at an intuitive level one of the most convincing arguments for the social ownership of the means of production. It is incomprehensible how any one individual can lay claim to the private ownership of what represents the combined and historical accumulation of human labour and knowledge. By the nature of its origins such knoweldge is collective.

²⁴ *ibid* p701

moral and natural restriction on the length of the working day".²⁵ This refers to that aspect of its social character that arises from the relations of ownership and management in which it operates. But for this to happen it must be designed in such a way that as far as possible all of the creative tasks that are dependent on human labour are incorporated into the machine. This is the other aspect of its social character, that Marx seems to be inferring is a property of the machine itself. Indeed much of the language with which Marx talks about the introduction of new machinery seems to confirm the dual aspects of technologies' social character.

All machinery to one extent or another alleviates the load of heavy labour. But there are clearly different ways of accomplishing this, that are not only determined by class and gender (see below) but relate to the actual creative content of work itself. Marx ;

"The lightening of the labour, even becomes a sort of torture, since the machine does not free the labourer from work, but deprives the work of all interest. Every kind of capitalist production, in so far as it is not only a labour process, but also a process of creating surplus value, has this in common, that it is not the workman that employs the instruments of labour , but the instruments of labour that employ the worker."

Instruments of labour that confront the workers "in the shape of capital, of dead labour, that dominates, and pumps dry, living labour power"²⁶. This polemic against the machine is taken up again in the *Grundrisse*:

"The worker's activity, reduced to a mere abstraction of activity, is determined and regulated on all sides by the movement of the machinery and not its opposite. The science which compels the inanimate limbs of the machinery, by their construction, to act purposefully, as an automaton, does not exist in the worker's consciousness, but rather acts upon him through the machine as an alien power.....In machinery, objectified labour confronts living labour within the labour process itself as the power which rules it: a power which, as the appropriation of living labour, is the form of capital.In machinery, objectified labour materially confronts living labour as a ruling power and as an active subsumption of the latter under itself....".²⁷

The logic of the argument seems to proceed as such. It is socially abstract labour that constitutes value, it is value and surplus value that a capitalist needs, thus capital requires machinery that belongs to a form of labour power that is increasingly homogenous and in which the concrete aspect of labour can be fulfilled by relatively unskilled labour. The latter

25 Marx, Karl - *Capital* - op.cit p406

26 *ibid* p423

27 Marx, *Grundrisse* op.cit p693

theme in particular is taken up and extrapolated in Braverman's thesis on the *Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. For Braverman, "The key innovation is not to be found in chemistry, electronics, automatic machinery, aeronautics, atomic physics, or any of the products of these science-technologies, but rather in the transformation of science into capital"²⁸. Whilst Burawoy argues that Braverman is ambiguous as to whether machines are innocent or not, there is no ambiguity in the consequences of the fusion of science and capital. With the full power of modern science, Taylorist and Fordist management techniques, capital is now able to ride roughshod over the labour process, slowly stripping away all that is left of the autonomy and independence of the craft worker, and slowly reducing labour to its simplest and most abstract form;

"Labour in the form of standardised motion patterns is labour used as an interchangeable part, and in this form comes closer to corresponding, in life, to the abstraction employed by Marx in the analysis of the capitalist mode of production"²⁹

The fear of the reduction of the human subject to the status of an automaton was of course widespread, and has been a pre-occupation not only of marxists but film makers and novelists throughout the course of the twentieth century. At about the same time as Fritz Lang makes *Metropolis*, the first and greatest dystopian film in which the masses are depicted as servants to the machine, Gramsci described Taylorism as an expression of the "brutal cynicism of American society" that was leading to the break up of "the old psycho-physical nexus of qualified professional work, which demands a certain active participation of intelligence, fantasy and initiative on behalf of the worker," a system that reduces "productive operations exclusively to the mechanical, physical aspect"³⁰ Braverman's book thus stands in a long tradition that includes Orwell and Huxley. That the nightmare has not come to pass should not blind us to the essential character of its critique.

The value of Braverman's work lay in turning attention precisely to the subject of labour, and his book acted as a benchmark for subsequent studies of the labour process. Somewhat predictably, and although apparently loyal to Marx, his central thesis concerning the absolute appropriation of labour, has been criticised for a number of reasons. For neglecting the ability of workers to resist capitalist domination,³¹ for concentrating on the appearances

28 Braverman, Harry - *Labour and Monopoly Capital* - MRP - New York - 1974 - p167

29 *ibid* p182

30 Gramsci, Antonio - *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* - Lawrence and Wishart - 1986 - p302

31 Harvey, David - *Limits to Capital* - Blackwell - 1984 - p111

of capitalist domination at the expense of its causes, for betraying a residual romanticism and nostalgia for the craft worker, and for paying too much attention on the methods of control as they arise in the workplace at the expense of other forms of political domination. ³² However, this 'narrow' focus on the labour process is also its strength.

For all the residual belief in the inevitability of workers fighting to gain control over the labour process, and in the face of the evidence concerning the emergence of new skills, there remains something very compelling about the 'degradation' thesis. If it is treated as an empirical observation, then clearly there are countless examples that we can find which contradict it. Rather we should treat it in the same way that we do the Law of the Rate of Profit to Fall, as an abstract idea that seeks to theorise the long term *historical tendencies* of capitalism. With the introduction of new technologies, it is undoubtedly true that old skills have been transformed and new skills have emerged in the building industry. There are three tendencies in particular at work here; the reduction in the skill content of traditional crafts - compare for instance the work of a plasterer before and after the introduction of plaster board; the emergence of multi-skilled flexible workers - the worker who can lay concrete, erect steel, and make a stud partition; and the rise of the general fitter - the assembler of kits. However, in each of these three tendencies there has been a long term drive towards increasingly abstract and simple labour, characterised by a marked reduction in job learning time and the ease with which labour can be replaced. If then with certain reservations we might uphold the long term tendency towards increasingly abstract social labour, can we reach any conclusion with regards to the machine itself ?

To ask this question is to ask one of the most important questions of all; "Can socialism operate with capitalist machines ?...Does the assembly line or the numerically controlled lathe require certain forms of hierarchy, alienation and so on, at odds with socialism ?"³³ Such questions invite us to make sweeping and problematic generalisations of the type made by Marcuse with regards to the character of technology.

If however we seek to make distinctions between historical tendencies in the development of capitalist technology and individual examples then we encounter a far more contradictory situation in which as in all of the chapters in the history of capitalism we see technology presented first as a weapon in the process of liberation and emancipation as demonstrated in

³² Burawoy, Michael - *The Politics of production* - Factory regimes under capitalism and socialism - Verso - 1985 - p62 -63

³³ *ibid* p50-54

the experience of Lucas aerospace, energy saving technologies, prosthetics, potential aspects of the PC revolution, and second as the means to deepen forms of oppression and repression - military and nuclear weaponry, the mechanised sweat shop, socially ecologically dangerous industries, and modern security and surveillance systems being just a few of the examples

Marcuse adopted what has probably been the most radical position with regards to science and technology. Not only does the "liberating force of technology - the instrumentalisation of things - turns into a fetter of liberation; the instrumentalisation of man"³⁴, but scientific thought itself is ideological. Inheriting the polemic of Adorno and Horkheimer, Marcuse whilst acknowledging the distinction between a value free pure science, and an applied science, maintains that even pure science retains a 'positive' character, a tendency to strip matter of all but its quantifiable qualities.³⁵ Thus even the principles of modern science were a priori structured in such a way "that they could serve as conceptual instruments for a universe of self propelling, productive control; theoretical operationalism came to correspond to practical operationalism. The scientific method which led to the ever more effective domination of nature thus came to provide the pure concepts as well as the instrumentalities for the more effective domination of man by man through the domination of nature."³⁶ In attempting to resolve the human subject's alienation from nature, Marcuse concludes that "technology has become the great vehicle of reification - reification in its most effective form."³⁷ We have then another tale of the apocalypse not unrelated to Braverman's book which was published only ten years later. It is not difficult to predict the critique of such a thesis for neglecting amongst other things, the development of alternative technologies, and the historic struggles against such forms of total domination.³⁸ Habermas resisted the temptation to characterise science and technology as inherently ideological, but acknowledged that this did not exclude the possibility despite their progressive character of

³⁴ Marcuse, Herbert - *One dimensional man, Studies in the ideology of advanced capitalist society* - Ark paperbacks - 1986 - p159

³⁵ Abstract mathematics is exactly that, abstract. Applied mathematics is abstract maths put to some specific purpose. Thus Mathematics travels from a position of political neutrality to assume a deeply social significance. Similarly, the Laws of motion in physics are clearly abstract and neutral, and can be applied in the production of either a missile or a pinball machine. Technology is of course exactly this, the practical application of scientific knowledge towards some end. It seems important and justified then to retain the distinction between pure science and technology. Part of the confusion appears to lie in the fusion of pure science and applied science.

³⁶ Marcuse, Herbert - *One dimensional man, Studies in the ideology of advanced capitalist society* - Ark paperbacks - 1986 - p158

³⁷ *ibid* 169

³⁸ One of the most sustained critiques against Marcuse comes from Kolakowski, L - *Main Currents in marxism. Volume III. The breakdown* -1978 -p415-420 Marcuse is characterised as a semi romantic anarchist, who offers a Marxism without history, science, the proletariat or work. Marcuse is condemned as a leader of middle class students who know nothing about material production or need.

becoming "the sources of the new ideological consciousness".³⁹ Here Habermas has in mind the way in which science and technology took on ideological functions that help reproduce an image of society as a purely technical object, such that human social problems become projected as technological ones, with all the negative consequences that this has for the understanding of the political character of the human condition.⁴⁰ But this in many ways is just a more sober version of Marcuse's arguments. Whilst it is possible to accuse Marcuse of having a "feudal contempt for technology, the exact sciences and democratic values" and of replacing the tyranny of logic and science with an equally tyrannical mythology based on deeper intuition⁴¹, this should not blind us to the central thesis which concerns the character and application of the instruments of production as a new form of domination. In other words, we do not have to agree with the political conclusions of Marcuse's work in order to take on board the argument that technology, in itself and in its application is a political issue. The main problem is that the political character that Marcuse assigns to it is one sided and non dialectical.

In complete contrast, Kolakowski is insistent that "neither science nor technology...offers any basis for a hierarchy of aim and values." Their social character arises from the means to which they are put. The qualitative difference between a factory producing window frames in the east or the west has little to do with the machinery itself, and derives simply from the purposes to which it is given, State housing as opposed to private speculative housing. With such a thesis Marcuse's question of the possibility of a new science and a new technology appears as a romantic utopianism.

It is clear from the work of Marx, that it is precisely the human consequences of the development of capitalist machinery that is so contradictory. This has several aspects; the design of technologies that strip the concrete aspects of labour of interest and creativity, and the 'use value' of the objects and commodities produced (socially useful and socially harmful goods). Marx was as interested in the subjective consequences of capitalist development for the working class as he was in the process of accumulation.

The full and proper discussion of the relationship between science and ideology, forms the backdrop to these introductory remarks, and is dealt with at length in the arguments that

³⁹ Larrain, Jorge - *Marxism and ideology* - Macmillan - 1984 - p105

⁴⁰ Kolakowski, Leszek - *Main Currents in marxism. Volume III. The breakdown* - Clarendon Press - 1978 - p387-395

⁴¹ *ibid* p418

surrounded Althusser's distinction between science and ideology.⁴² It is nevertheless possible to arrive at a tentative conclusion.

All technology has a directly political character, in the way in which it is designed, in the purposes to which it is put, and in the role which it plays in the depiction of a technological utopia, that functions as a non contradictory social world. There remains the implication drawn from this, that under different social relations, the productive forces, including the character and content of technology and labour could develop in qualitatively new ways.⁴³ To speak of a 'socialist' technology is to replace the critique of the metaphysics of the capitalist machine with a new metaphysics that is equally utopian and problematic. We can however talk of qualitatively new types of technology and machinery that liberate the subject from heavy work but enable the worker to contribute creatively to the production process, that restore or rather create the conditions by which workers can gain control over the whole process of conception and execution. Forms of technology where the speed and organisational features of the work can be regulated directly by labour. Forms of technology that are socially useful rather than destructive, life enhancing rather than life threatening. This suggests aspirations that go beyond the job enrichment programmes that have come with the transition to what has been dubbed 'neo - fordism' .⁴⁴ It implies and is indeed predicated on the wholesale transformation of social relations inside and beyond the work place.

It is not only issues of class that throws the social character of technology into focus, but gender as well⁴⁵. It is quite conceivable that machine based technologies could be developed that accommodate the physiological differences of women and indeed the disabled. Technology at the very least offers the possibility to create production processes that are not dependent on human strength. Yet many of the instruments of labour in the "heavy" industries, that assist in the reproduction of gender stereotypes by marginalising women, have catastrophic consequences for many men as well.⁴⁶ Women are left with the central contradiction between 'mutilation', doing it like a man, or 'marginalisation' that comes from

⁴² See Althusser, Louis and Balibar, E - *Reading capital* - New Left - 1970

⁴³ This returns us to the early speculations of the workers' opposition'

⁴⁴ Palloix, Christian - *The labour process: from fordism to neo-fordism* - In *the Labour process and class strategies* - CSE Pamphlet- 1978 - p62-65

⁴⁵ See here a useful collection of essays edited by MacKenzie, D and Wajcman, J - *The social shaping of technology* - OUP - 1988

⁴⁶ Nothing contradicts the macho stereotype of the building worker more than a labourer with a stooped back at the age of fifty. During the 1980's there was a campaign to get a bag of cement reduced from 50 to 25 kilos. Carrying such a weight is a matter of technique as much as it is strength. But regardless of who carries it, many backs, shoulders and necks have been permanently damaged, a fact that did not persuade materials suppliers to alter bag sizes, claiming that to have done so would have proved to costly.

refusing to engage with such work at all. A third way suggests the creation of labour processes and indeed technologies that are created on women's terms.⁴⁷

For our particular story, we face the contradiction that the technology used in the Soviet construction industry does not differ in any significant way from that which we would find in an industry organised along capitalist lines. To conclude that the layout and design of machinery in a factory producing concrete panels has no social significance beyond its ownership is clearly problematic. The truth of the matter is that the means and methods of extracting surplus in the Soviet labour process were closer in their similarities than in their differences to those in the west. Similar technological and management systems were employed in a supposedly 'socialist' labour process, the products of which were technologically and formally closely related to those found in many metropolises in the capitalist world, one of the main distinctions being the gigantic scale on which such developments took place in the USSR.

⁴⁷ Cockburn, Cynthia - *Caught in the wheels: the high cost of being a female cog in the male machinery of engineering* - In MacKenzie, D and Wajcman, J - *The social shaping of technology* - OUP - 1988 - p62-63

At the end of the twentieth century the periodisation of architecture through transformations in form faces its greatest dilemma. The innovations in the technologies of building production like those in the production of music have made it possible to reproduce in an increasingly authentic manner almost any style from the history of form. Just as in the music industry we can sample and reproduce Bach, Bulgarian folk songs, medieval English music, rockabilly, rap and reggae, so in the field of architecture we can offer a consumer, a Scottish baronial castle, an English Tudor cottage, a gem of thirties modernism, all with a supermarket in the shape of an Egyptian ruin. Such a new development has of course been celebrated as an indication of a new pluralism, the beginnings of a new era in pluralist consumer democracy, a post modern celebration of diversity and heterogeneity, and indeed it would be foolish to rehearse talk of the loss of 'aura' and authenticity. Many of the possibilities opened up by new forms of production and electronic media are to be welcomed. What is more important is to recognise such developments for what they are. One thing they most certainly are not are post industrial. What we are seeing is in actual fact a new phase in the process of industrialisation, the response of capital to the crisis of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Quite what we call the different phases in the organisation of the labour process in twentieth century capitalist societies is a semantic problem. However, just as we have sought to periodise Russian architecture through the significant historical changes in the dialectic of the forces and relations of production, so the history of twentieth century industrialisation can be periodised through the changes that take place in the manner in which surplus is produced. This acts as the basis for an alternative periodisation of twentieth century architecture based not on the exclusion of questions of form, but on the changes in material production that open up the possibilities for significant formal transformation.

Phase One - This is the period between the wars when machinery is only just being introduced into building production. The labour process still remains at a 'manufacturing stage', is dominated by the traditional crafts and tends to be spatially fixed. The production of surplus is still dependent on 'absolute' methods, that is by rationalising, the management and movements of building workers along Taylorist lines. The formal possibilities of architecture at this stage are still limited and overwhelmingly dependent on the hand and head of the building worker. This is the era of some of the grand 'crafted' projects of Soviet Realism. (See fig 95). Industrialisation is however beginning to develop, not only in the production of bricks and other building components, but in a number of public housing schemes and prestigious

INDUSTRIALISATION THE TWILIGHT OF THE STALIN ERA



Fragment of housing block on Prospect Mira. Built in the early 1950s on the eve of the full scale industrialisation of building production

FIG 95

public and private buildings that required the use of mass produced components.¹ In both capitalist countries and the Soviet Union, this interwar period sees an intensification in the spatial division of society along class lines. This manifests itself in the form of buildings and in the organisation and control of territory. (See fig 96)

Phase Two - This is the period of post war reconstruction, when throughout Europe the nation State becomes involved in the direct regulation of building production on an extensive scale.² Mandel has described the period between 1945 to 1965, as "late capitalism" a "long wave with an undertone of expansion", in which we arrive at the apogee of 'fordist' production, in which invention becomes a business, and science is seemingly completely integrated into capital³. In the next thirty years building becomes increasingly dependent on the factory mass production of not only components but whole building systems.⁴ Many of the standards, rules and technological hardware, become global in their distribution and employment.

From an industry based on the production of absolute surplus, it now becomes dominated by the production of relative surplus. The widespread introduction of machinery alters the skill basis of the industry such that by the end of the century apart from in one off prestige projects, the traditional plasterer, mason and bricklayer of the pre war period have all but vanished. The process of industrialisation penetrates all areas of building and is defined as much by the transformation of 'traditional' brick and timber domestic construction as by the introduction of the concrete panel.

The twin aspects of productivity are exposed in all of their clarity. On the one hand the imperative in the post war situation of maintaining the rate of profit, of increasing the value productivity of labour, and at the same time of ensuring that physical productivity matches

¹ Within Europe experiments into the possibilities of pre fabrication had of course been conducted since the turn of the century. Ernst May had helped pioneer the widespread use of factory made components in the Praunheim and Hohenblick housing schemes built in the twenties, and as we know pre fabrication was a pre occupation of designers not only in the Bauhaus but in Vkhutemas. Some of the more impressive examples of the widespread use of factory pre fabrication that included the use of concrete panels were built in France, the Cite de la Muette (1932), and the Ville Urbane, Lyon (1934).

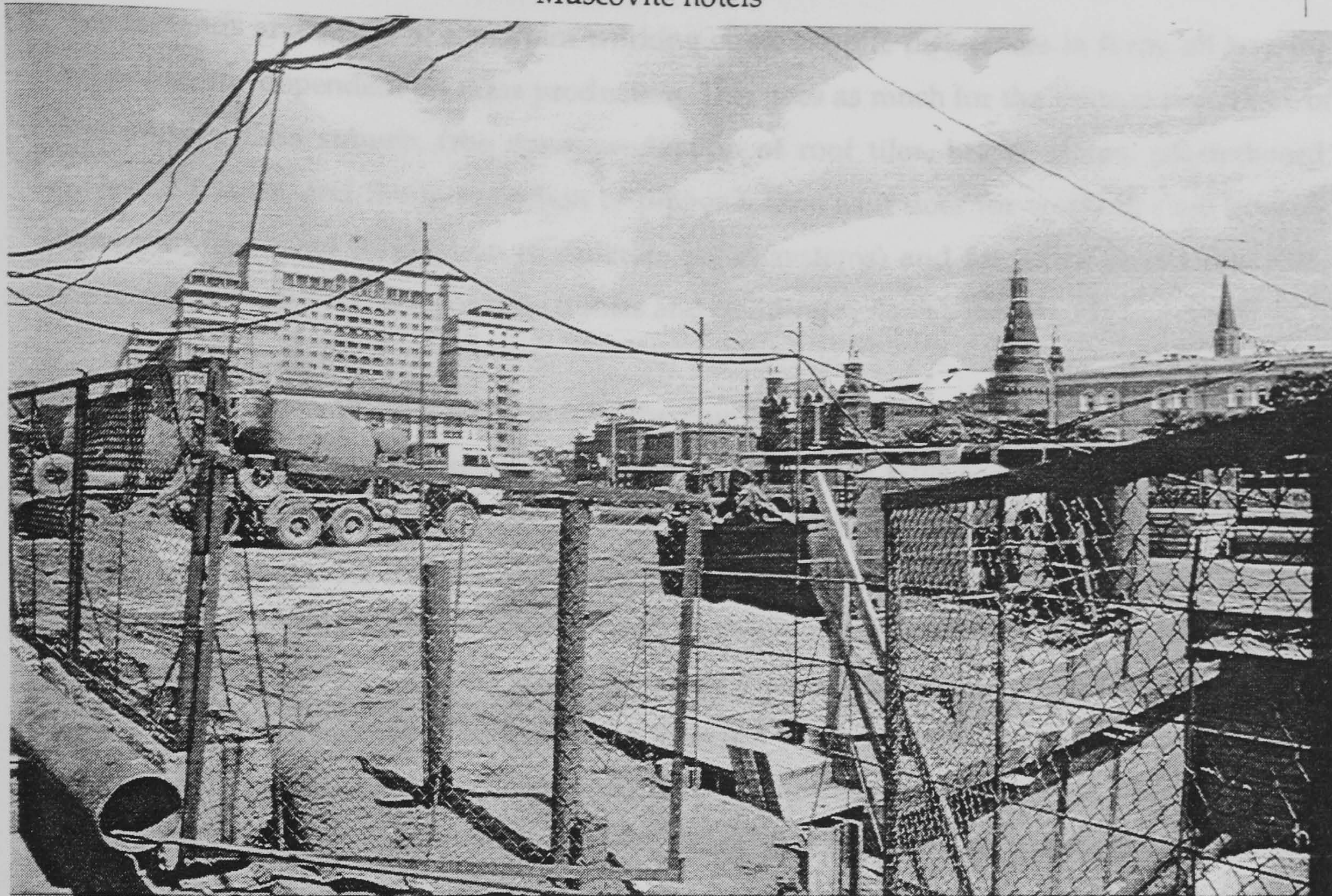
² In Britain, with the unprecedented wholesale intervention of the state into building activity, construction output tripled between 1948 and 1964 and doubled between 1955 and 1970, and it is from this period that the giants Wimpeys, Laings and Taylor Woodrow consolidated their position at the forefront of the British Building Industry. This is a position that they still enjoy, not least because of their involvement in the speculative mass production of pre fabricated kit housing and new suburbs that emerged throughout Britain in the 1980s and 1990s.

³ Mandel, Ernest - *Late capitalism* - New Left Books - 1975 -p249 As a supplement to the work by Braverman and Aglietta, Mandel lists ten fundamental characteristics in the transformation of the labour process. These include an increase in the organic composition of capital, the increased predominance of preparatory and supervisory labour that accompanies a rapid acceleration in technological innovation, a shorter life span for fixed capital and so on. p195-198

⁴ Two of the most famous being the Bison, and Reema systems which were completely pre fabricated reinforced concrete systems.

The construction of privilege

Muscovite hotels



The Moscow Party Hotel- Shchusev, A , 1936



The Ukraine hotel - Mordinov, A , 1950-1956

the demands and needs of a militant working class. Despite differences in form, all housing types become dependent on mass production. This goes as much for the 'cottage paradigm' of the middle class suburb, (the mass production of roof tiles, bricks, doors, plasterboard, window frames, and the introduction of timber frame) as it does for working class housing schemes, (the mass production of concrete panel systems) and for office blocks (the mass production of steel frames, concrete frames and cladding systems). (See fig 97)

The consequences of the penetration of the commodity form at this stage in the process of industrialisation, imbues labour, building form and space with similar characteristics. First there is a process of *rationalisation*, which refers to the fragmentation and division of the object into many parts. Second is the process of *homogenisation*, whereby all of the parts have similar qualities and are bound back together as a whole. What we see happening is the process by which every part of labour, every part of space and every part of form is being turned into a commodity in its own right. This is a process that has global dimensions. Thus the Fordist regime of accumulation finds its perfect architectural expression in Frank Lloyd Wright's *Broadacre City*⁵, in Corbusier's *Ville Radieuse*, in the production of abstract speculative office space, in the concrete panel and in the formal repetition of the suburb and the tower block. (See fig 98)

Phase three - This is the period in which capital seeks to find its way out of the deepening crises that began to grip capitalist economies in the late sixties as the post war period of growth began to crumble culminating in the recession of 1973. However, it was far more than just a blip in the trade cycle, it was a crisis that had assumed a general social and economic character, and which promised not only to disrupt the reproduction of capital but to fracture the social fabric of advanced capitalist societies.⁶ Within the labour process, this has been described as a crisis of Fordism, at heart a "crisis of the reproduction of the wage relation".⁷ Three reasons in particular are offered for this breakdown. First; the tendency towards increasingly homogenised mass production systems had begun to induce imbalances and time delays that increased with the fragmentation of tasks. Second; disruptions were increasingly occurring due to the counter productive consequences of total work automation on the physiology of workers. Third, the contradictions that arose with the increasing ability

⁵ See Gunn, Philip - *Frank Lloyd Wright and the passage to Fordism* - In the Proceedings of the BISS - Volume 11 - 1989 - p157-165

⁶ For discussions on the notion of crisis see Habermas, Jurgen - *Legitimation crisis* - Heinemann - 1976 and Harvey, David - *Limits to capital* - Blackwell - 1984, O'Connor, James - *The fiscal crisis of the State* - St martins 1973, Clarke, Simon - *Marx and the theory of crisis* - 1994

⁷ Aglietta, Michael - *A theory of capitalist regulation. The US experience* - New Left Books - 1979 - p122

THE SPECULATIVE HOUSE OF THE 1990'S
New industrialised landscapes

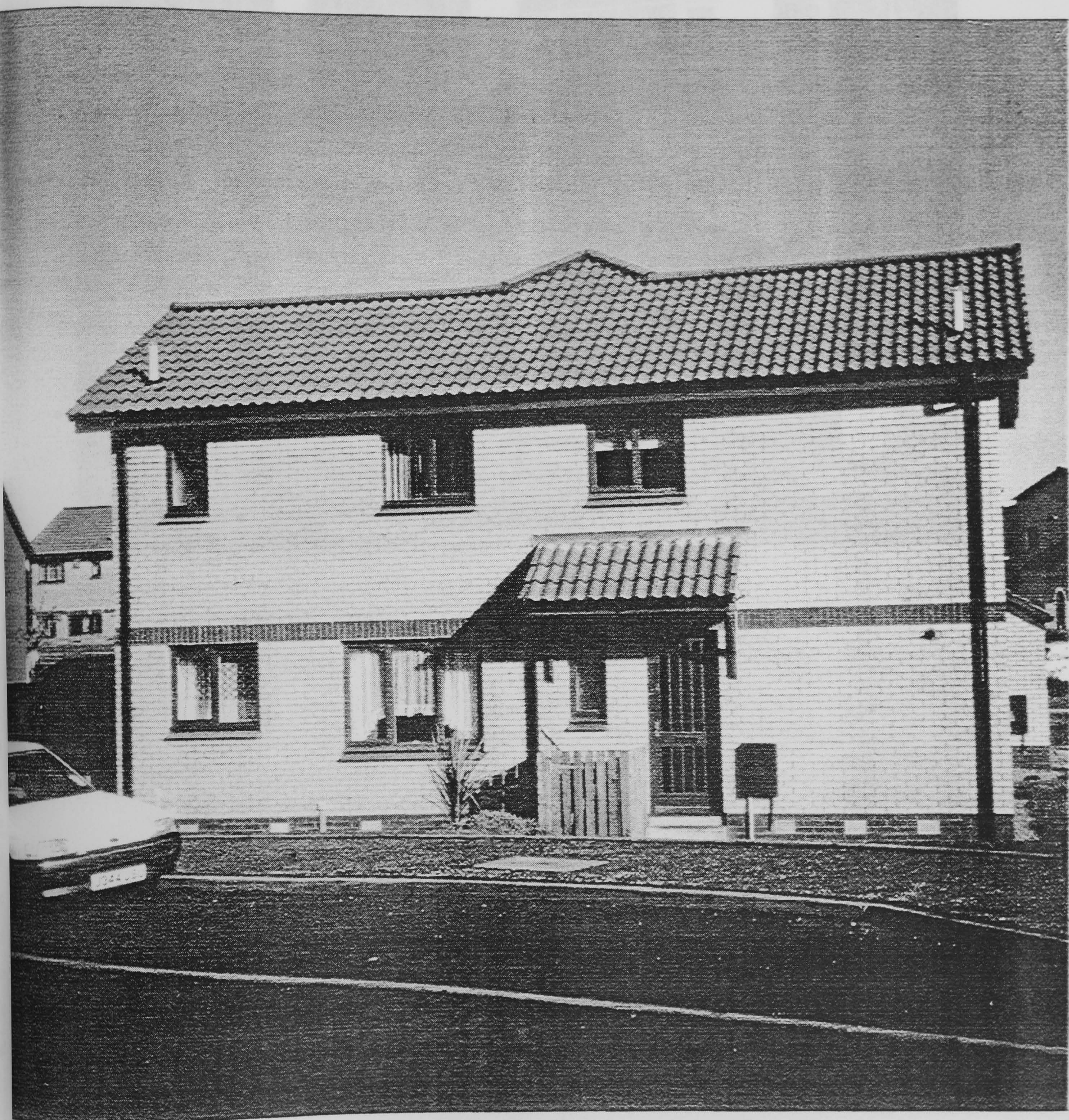


FIG 97

HOMOGENEOUS ABSTRACT OFFICE SPACE

London 1990's



FIG 98

of workers to collectively fight against work conditions, workers who had become unified as a result of their socialisation in large enterprises.⁸ Burawoy has pointed out that one of the ironies of Taylorism "lay precisely in its limited capacity to enhance capitalist control over the labour process, thus necessitating the transition to a new type of labour process inaugurated by the scientific technical revolution."⁹ Similarly, from being one of the most innovative ways of increasing productivity, Fordist style production processes had begun to produce counter acting tendencies in which the value productivity of labour and the profitability of enterprise were being undermined. As a way out of this crisis, capital embarks on a new round of industrialisation seeking to commodify new areas of social life.

Harvey uses the term 'flexible accumulation' as a way of describing the increasing flexibility of the labour process, labour markets, products, and patterns of consumption¹⁰, that seem to distinguish the new era from the monumental, homogenous rigidity of the Fordist stereotype. At first glance there seems to be a significant rupture between *fordist production* and *just in time production*¹¹, a difference which is reinforced by the corresponding transformations of space, ideology and in state policies towards social and economic regulation. All of this is of course echoed in the 'post modernist' mania for new forms of representation. But in the midst of all the seemingly incontestable changes, there appear to be some strikingly familiar features of this big break in history. Capitalism has always been driven by the ideology of growth and progress.¹² In relation to the notion of dynamic change, it has always been defined by three things; continual technological and organisational innovation, the continual reproduction of the capital - labour relation, and the contradiction that arises from competition and the imperative to territorially expand in the pursuit of new markets, and more often than not for new sources of cheap labour. This enables us to speak not only of the social and spatial divisions of labour, within home, workplace, region and nation state, but of an *international division of labour*, of which the former are sub-divisions.

Stripped of all its gloss, *flexible accumulation*, can be seen like *fordism* to be a technological and organisational putsch enriched by an ideology of mass deception that is frantic in its attempt to "safeguard the wage relation".¹³ Whilst some of the features as the increased

8 *ibid* p119-121

9 Burawoy, Michael - *The Politics of production - Factory regimes under capitalism and socialism* - Verso - 1985 - p42

10 Harvey, David - *The condition of post modernity* - Blackwell - 1989 - p147

11 *ibid* p177-188. Here Harvey reviews the different ways in which the 'transition' from Fordism has been theorised

12 *ibid* p180

13 Aglietta p122

role of finance capital and the new forms of "spatial and temporal fix" are significant, there are strong arguments to suggest that just as Taylorism gave birth to Fordism, the latter gave birth to "flexible accumulation" in an historical development that can be seen "as a particular and perhaps new combination of mainly old elements within the overall logic of capital accumulation"¹⁴

With these cautionary comments in mind we can look at some of the changes that have taken place in the labour process where we find important changes in the concrete aspect of labour and in technology. We can summarise the main changes that take place as follows. The process begins with the introduction of sophisticated automatic, electronic and latterly digital technologies. These tend to be more adaptable and flexible in the range of operations that can be accomplished and in the variety of objects that can be produced. Compare for instance a pre-World War II lathe with recent universal woodworkers and moulding machines. In almost all industrial sectors, machines emerge that can control their own operations, thus liberating the production process from the idiosyncracies of human labour. This allows a more thorough automation of the whole production process avoiding time delays. In addition, with the replacement of electro mechanical systems with electronic ones, the value of constant capital is reduced thus offsetting the tendency for the organic composition of capital to rise. These changes in technology have important consequences for the spatial organisation of production.

At the same time as a far more advanced centralisation of management occurs there is a decentralisation in production units. Massive concentrations of the working class are no longer needed either in the old or the new industries. Small batches can be produced by smaller units, but within an enterprise which if anything has increased its monopoly share of the market, and in many cases diversified out of its traditional areas.¹⁵ As the qualitative characteristics of labour become almost completely transferred to the machine and the worker is left as an operator, new management schemes of job enrichment and worker participation are introduced to ameliorate the negative consequences of what in some sectors becomes absolute deskilling.¹⁶ By a mixture of organisational, technological innovation and product diversification capital manages to ride the crisis. This discussion is important not only

14 Harvey, David - *The condition of post modernity* - Blackwell -1989 -p196-7

15 One of the ways in which British based construction firms rode the crisis was precisely by diversifying outside of the building sector.

16 For a discussion of such management strategies see Littler, Craig - *The development of the labour process in capitalist societies* - Gower - Aldershot -1986

for understanding the changes that have taken place in the production of cars, domestic appliances and electronic goods, but within building.

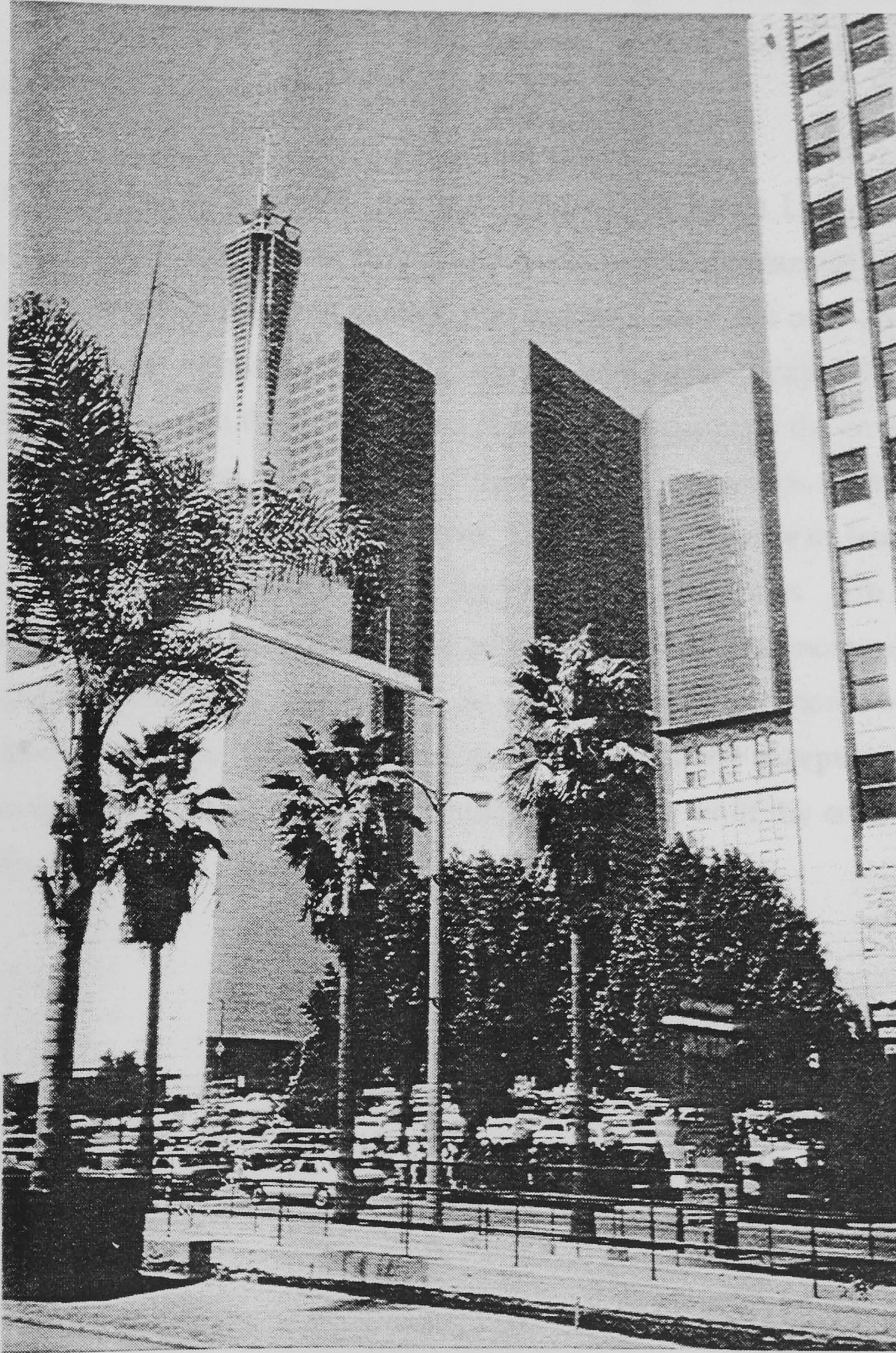
All the signs indicate that the process of industrialisation is accelerating rather than slowing down. Whilst building remains dependent on 'on-site' human physical labour, it is prevented from the complete automation¹⁷. However, almost all contemporary buildings are completely reliant on factory pre fabricated building components. In addition like other industrial sectors, construction is feeling the effects of the scientific and technological revolutions which have come from the application of more sophisticated electronic machines and computer based technologies. This has opened up new possibilities in the manipulation of form that contradicts the stereotyped image that we normally associate with industrialised building. The timber framed house, the populist Wimpey and Barratt home, the speculative office block, the MacDonalDs, the Safeways stores, and the light industrial factory unit are all building types that are completely dependent on the factory pre-fabrication of components and are reliant on a site labour force that is mobile, and which has been largely retrained with 'fitter' type skills. This lethal combination means buildings and space can be produced and transformed with ever increasing speed in a situation where capital turns over with equal rapidity. (See fig 99)

As such the tower block as the most stereotypical image of the 'industrialised', homogenised, mass produced home from the factory, does not represent the end of industrialisation but rather its pre-history.¹⁸ Its evolution and its demise mirror precisely the rise and ultimate crisis of Fordism in advanced capitalist societies. The social and aesthetic critique of the tower block and of the housing schemes and blocks that punctuate the peripheries of all of the major metropolises, undoubtedly played a role in their downfall, but the underlying reasons are to be found in the crisis of profitability that hit the construction industry. The post modernist celebration of difference and playfulness is no more than capital becoming increasingly flexible in where it can reproduce itself and in what form. Thus the flexibility of production in the post modern building industry can be understood a response to a crisis and a new phase in the history of productivity, the same burning imperative to maintain the

¹⁷ It could be argued that the difficulty of adapting on site building work to assembly line assembly line conditions, the random character of production, and the casualised market for building labour have been impediments to the total application of Fordist principles to the building process. It seems more consistent to argue that the building industry has its own peculiarities that confronts the crisis of Fordism in different ways

¹⁸ Mandel comments that "late capitalism, far from representing a 'post industrial society', thus appears as the period in which all branches of the economy are industrialised for the first time.." **Mandel-Late Capitalism** -op.cit p191

The mass production of the administrative fortresses of governing bureaucracies



Los Angeles 1989

value productivity of labour whilst increasing the range of commodities available. Here, the 'need' of labour has moved way beyond biological reproduction, and has entered into a new phase where the conferring of status and the meaning of housing assumes ever greater importance, something that has been described as "symbolic capital", a symbolic capital that has gone global.

When in the 1990s we find almost identical buildings in Kuala Lumpur, New York, and London, we are not surprised. Their formal and technological similarities are no more than an indication of the global mobility of capital, that carries with it not only an economic system but a set of values and meanings that are inscribed into the landscape. But there is an equal homogeneity to be found in the form of mass housing that decorate the environments of what were supposed to have been qualitatively different social formations, such that a twenty two storey tower block on the outskirts of Moscow, St Petesburg, is more or less indistinguishable from Paris, Sao Paulo, and Glasgow. (See fig 100) Such similarities are neither accidental nor superficial.¹⁹ But whereas, within the advanced capitalist economies, industrialisation could change gear sufficiently fast enough to offer the tenant and home buyer an increased choice and flexibility²⁰, the Soviet building industry with a few exceptions remained locked into the homogenous mass production of building right up until the crisis finally arrived in Moscow in the mid 1980s.

¹⁹ As must be by now demonstrably obvious, despite our desire to believe that the essential contradictions associated with capitalist economic and industrial development had been overcome, we see direct parallels in the organisation and management of the labour process, the organisation of building form, and the organisation of space.

²⁰ A quick circuit around the building sites of Britain in the 1990's confirm that in terms of offices, housing, and retail outlets, far from a celebration of choice we are being confronted with a new twist in the tale of conformity and uniformity.

THE GLOBALISATION OF CONSTRUCTION TECHNOLOGY



St Petersburg



Glasgow

construction and crisis

We are dealing with an historical period that like the epoch of 'late capitalism' is sandwiched between two crises. We begin with the general social and economic crisis that followed the mass destruction of human life, nature and the built environment wrought by the second world war, and we end in the early 1990s with the general social and economic crisis that followed the 'long period of stagnation with undertones of rebellion'.

Following a period in the 'fifties and 'sixties of relative economic growth in which the quantitative indices of housing provision, foodstuffs, and commodities rose, the collapse of industrial productivity in the 1970s and early 'eighties, the so called years of stagnation, was drawn out and long.¹ It was in many ways a crisis of accumulation, the inability of the Soviet system to accumulate enough surplus from workers to finance civilian social, economic and technological development at the same level of investment as in the defence industry. As the cold war gathered pace, the military- industrial complex became a bottomless drain on the Soviet system, such that it proved increasingly difficult on a generalised basis to improve the quantity or quality of consumer goods. This would imply that behind the statistics testifying to a massive increase in the square metres of housing, tons of steel and concrete, there was a crisis in the actual *value* productivity of labour, whereby not enough surplus could be generated to finance continued improvements in the quality of everyday life.

As an era it represents the most profound transformation of labour and space in Russian history and is arguably the most interesting and relevant to the history of the modern world and to the experience of everyday life. It is the least talked about because it is the most difficult to relate to through the superlatives and adjectives of aesthetic jargon. We are dealing with the wholesale transformation of working class life at home and at work, and this remains an unpopular subject for historians.² As ever we should take care as to how we

¹ In terms of industrial productivity and the consumer goods sector the crisis is only paralleled by the crises in 1945 and 1921. The years of stagnation under Brezhnev are not called that for nothing. During the three five year plans from 1971-1985 the rate of growth of national income fell nearly 2.5 times. Aganbegyan, A-*The challenge. The economics of Perestroika*.-Hutchinson.-1988-p2. Similarly, the rate of increase in capital investment fell from 42% in the plan from 1971-1975 to 17% in 1981-1985. *Stroitelnie Komplex- Novoe Kachestvo Razvitiia*.-Mockva.-1989.-p 10 This perhaps needs qualifying with respect to certain consumer durable such as televisions and fridges which had been acquired by many Soviet families in the course of these two decades. There nevertheless remains a much publicised surplus of money capital circulating in the economy.

² At this point it is impossible to avoid the obvious polemical or vulgar sociological axiom, that this reveals more than ever the class character of history writing. For historians and indeed architects it remains an imperative in a purely programmatic sense that attention and study is devoted to the general and real changes that take place in social life, that is to the changes that practically affect the overwhelming majority of the population.

characterise such changes. Similar to the transitions between the Avant Garde and Realism, serf labour and wage labour, Taylorism and Fordism, the differences should not prevent us from seeing the latter as continuations of the former.

Nevertheless the transition from an economy based on the *production of absolute surplus*, to one dominated by the *relative production of surplus* and which seeks to operate on the 'totality of time and space' characterised by Aglietta as a predominantly 'intensive' regime of accumulation, leads to a complete departure in the character and content of social labour and in the temporal and spatial organisation of social life. This is one reason why the Soviet experience is a close relative of Fordism. Indeed, many of the features of this period in the development of capitalism we find replicated in the Soviet Union, with a far greater intensity than the corresponding experience of industrialisation in the USA or Western Europe. The Soviet economy embarks on a mass production programme in all three 'departments'. The mass production of the means of production, of consumer goods and housing, and of military hardware. All of the time zones in the vast territory of the Soviet bloc are integrated into an economic unit, such that the accumulation process quite literally operates on a totality of time and space³. It hardly needs adding that this was backed up by an ideological machinery that continued to export a revolutionary rhetoric of morality and sobriety, but in a language that had largely ceased to have any meaning and which had increasingly begun to live a life of its own.

The Soviet regime was faced with exactly the same problems as any other rapidly industrialising country. The shift to factory based mass production represents nothing more than a new stage in the development of the dialectic of the forces and relations of production. Like any capitalist regime the Soviet government was faced with the problem of how to balance physical productivity, the need for more housing and consumer goods, with value productivity, that is maintaining in the Soviet context a sufficiently high rate of the production of surplus so as to expand the basis of social production. This reveals itself in many guises, as the dialectic between quantity and quality, centralisation and decentralisation, concrete and abstract labour, necessary and surplus labour. In the next section we will look at the main characteristics of the Soviet labour process in this period and in the concluding section examine the spatial and formal consequences of these transformations.

³ The colonial status of many of the former Soviet Republics has caused deep problems following the break up of the empire, not least because of the single crop and single commodity status of the regions i.e. cotton and silk in Uzbekistan, hazardous chemical industries in Kazakhstan, electronics in the Baltics and so on.

the structure and organisation of the construction industry

The central co-ordination of a construction industry that was to operate in eleven time zones and was to stretch from the Baltic to the borders of China, was a feat unmatched in its optimism and arrogance. The audacity of a plan to conquer time and space on such a monumental scale made the institutionalisation of centralised state property both a precondition and an inevitable consequence.

In the forty years that followed the second world war, the building industry continued to be organised along the lines of an administrative command system, in which the State ownership of land and the means of building production remained the predominant form of property. Officially labelled 'democratic centralism', the structure of the construction industry continued to be defined by a vertical division of labour, in which plans and 'commands' from the top were supposed to incorporate demands from below. (See fig 101)

Ever since the birth of the command system that had accompanied the creation of the State building industry in the 1920s, the task of co-ordinating construction activity across the Soviet Union was confronted with the contradiction that arose between the simultaneous tendencies towards centralisation and decentralisation. This related not only to general issues of democracy, the formation and fulfilment of norms and plans, but to the relations between the bureaucracy and labour, and between the different ethnic groups within the empire.

After the death of Stalin, the industry went through four main stages that reflect the changing relationship between core and periphery. Presented as an attempt at refining and improving the 'technical' efficiency of the planning process, these measures were concerned with how to make the system of state property responsive to the demands of workers and local soviets, without the bureaucracy renouncing its centralised control over the economy. The 'departmental system' of the 'fifties based on all-union ministries, was partially decentralised and reorganised on a territorial basis between 1957 and 1967. Between 1967 and 1986 an increasingly complicated system dual system emerged based on all union and republican based ministries. Despite the attempt between 1964 and 1967 to rationalize the industry and to devolve more responsibility to Republican based construction ministries, the reforms of 1967 effectively reinforced the centralised hierarchical structure of the industry. This was the organisational system that the reformers of the *perestroika* period inherited, and who were to subsequently embark on yet one more attempt to transfer rights to Republican

THE VERTICAL DIVISION OF LABOUR

The structure of the construction industry on the eve of perestroika

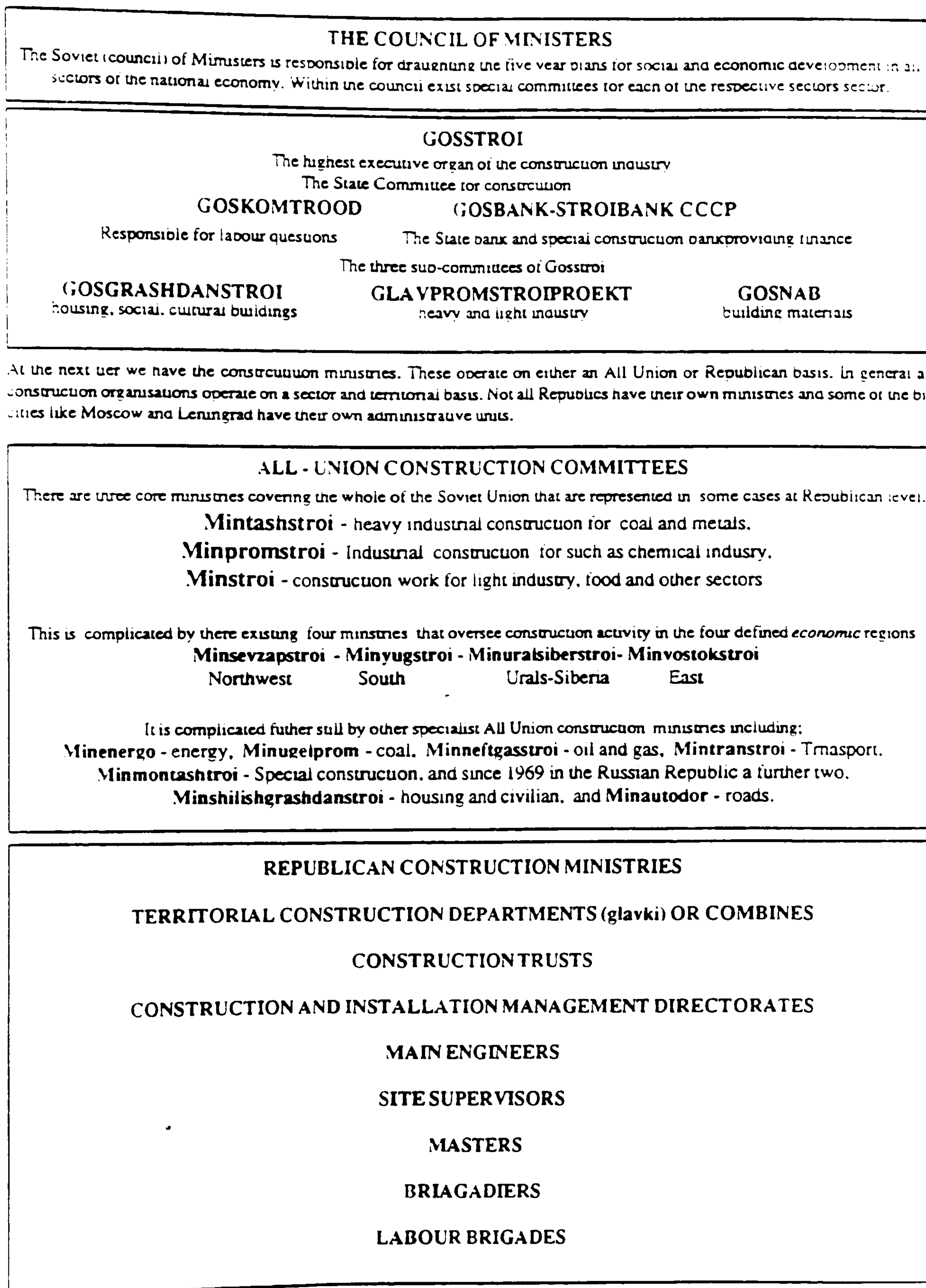


FIG 101

and Regional Ministries.⁴ In no period however was the ultimate authority of the Executive State committees called into question. The industry's organisational history was a case of fine tuning rather than major surgery.

The command system of management had left its hallmarks on all aspects of the building industry, its size alone was a monument to bureaucratic centralised planning. By the 1980s the Soviet government was faced with a colossal sleeping dinosaur, the sheer scale of which raised serious doubts about the possibility and likelihood of achieving any rapid or profound transformation. As of 1987 the industry employed over twelve million workers, occupied in nearly two thousand design organisations, over three thousand 'construction-assembly trusts', and thirty four thousand construction-assembly subcontracting firms.⁵ The overwhelming majority of these organisations were not only State owned and run, but tied to a technological system devoted to the pre-fabrication and assembly of reinforced concrete. This in turn demanded the complete rationalisation of both design and construction labour, such that the homogeneity of building form throughout the territory of the former USSR was replicated in the homogenous and universal character of 'concrete' labour.

The pyramidal structure of the industry is a metaphor through which we can view all aspects of the industry's activities at all of its operational levels, a physical demonstration of the consequences of totalised state property in which the state ownership of land, buildings and other means of production was considered synonymous with the 'highest and most progressive category' of property under socialism. This tendency was to be reinforced by the transition to the 'fordist' style organisation of the building labour process in the late 1950s. The rapid industrialisation of the building industry and the wholesale transfer of its technological base required massive amounts of investment into fixed capital for the creation of equally gigantic 'production and assembly' combines and trusts. Such a programme of investment and development could only be carried out by central state organs. Consequently the possibility of achieving greater local democratic control over the building process and of the emergence of a form of building production organised around property relations that differed from the dominance of a centralised, nationalisation of property, were in complete contradiction with the hierarchical and bureaucratic management apparatus required to carry out such a programme of industrialisation. Despite the ideological reproduction of the

⁴ For a description of the organisation and structure of the Soviet building industry see Ovsianikov, O, A, - *Organisatsia upravlenia v stroitelstve* - Moskva - 1987, (The organisation and management of construction), and Pedan, M. P, - *Ekonomika stroitelstvo* - Moskva - 1987, (The economics of construction).

⁵ *Stroitelnie Kompleks - Novoe kachestvo razvitiia*. - Moskva -1989. p3-4. (The building complex - A new quality of development)

language of workers rights, social ownership and socialism, a strictly vertical division of labour and responsibility dominated the working practices of all organisations within the industry from brigades of site workers to the management teams of an enterprise and Republican building organs. The vertical chain of command became the organising principle in the formulation of plans, for economic development, for technology, design, and wages policy. Like other aspects of Soviet history, the institutionalisation of planning through the command system was unique in that there is no other period in human history in which a regime has attempted to plan and regulate social production on such a comprehensive level.⁶

Social life became increasingly regulated by a form of plan fetishism. In such a system, social contradictions could be portrayed as arising from technical weaknesses in the system of planning. Thus the plan and the norm became another form in which the origins of class power could be disguised. The five year plans for construction were drawn up in Moscow and distributed downwards to building and design organisations who were subsequently legally obliged to fulfil their requirements. Despite the continual declarations of the principles of democratic centralism, by which local social organisations, soviets, and labour collectives (who were in any case invariably duplications of local Party organisations), could assist in the creation of plans, their ability to do so in a manner that differed from the Party line was restricted. Whilst it was possible to dream about alternative or oppositional visions of the built environment, ones that would more fully correspond to real and actual needs, such visions inevitably became marginalised in a situation where the building industry was geared to meeting the legal and quantitative output norms of each plan, often irrespective of the qualitative social benefits of such output.

The practical problems of implementing five year plans for construction in such a bureaucratic jungle of ministries and departments is plain. The size of the industry caused serious problems not only in the managing of the exchange of information and goods, but in the relations of accountability and responsibility between different production units. This was of course not only a product of its complexity and size but of its hierarchical and centralised structure. It became openly recognised that amongst all the other contradictions that such an organisational system fosters, there had emerged one very practical problem. It frequently

⁶ For details of recent construction plans see Brukov, A, T and Domoshtrov, G, N - *Deciataya piati letki stroiteli* - Moskva - 1978, (1976-1980) Brukov, A, T and Domoshtrov, G, N - *Stroitelstvo v Odinnatzojye piati letki* - Moskva - 1983 (1981-1985, Brukov, A, T and Domoshtrov, G, N - *Dvenadzataya piati letka stroiteli* - Moskva - 1987. (1986-1990). (The tenth, eleventh, and twelfth five year plans) The last plan for instance includes sections devoted to an analysis of the previous five year plan, (report backs on housing, industrial construction and other building types), economic methods of calculation, technical progress, mechanisation, labour, capital construction, scientific research, co-operation with foreign firms, social organisation and agitatorial and propaganda.

occurred that in any one Republic, up to eight separate ministries could be simultaneously contracting out work, often duplicating functions, and competing for the same materials and labour. In a situation where construction organisations were legally obliged to fulfil plans, this inevitably led to corruption, and various types of 'competitive bureaucratic sabotage' such as enterprises falsifying output figures, hoarding materials, and delaying deliveries.

Whilst in theory each of the constituent republics of the Soviet Union had design and construction organisations responsible for the development of the built environment within the boundaries of their territory, all major decisions within the building industry concerning capital investment in the building materials sector, major housing, infrastructural developments and architectural design had over the course of seventy years been increasingly concentrated and centralised in Moscow. Despite the appearance of autonomy, in the field of policy towards the overall development of the built environment, local Republican design and construction departments remained ultimately subordinate to the All Union State Committees and Ministries⁷.

Design organisations were to develop in the same way as building organisations. During the 'sixties and 'seventies the state design offices were to become increasingly large and centralised. Architectural labour, like that of the building worker, undergoes a process of rationalisation that transforms the character of work, and results in a tendency towards an increasing homogeneity in the tasks an architect is required to perform within a structure defined by an increasingly extensive vertical and horizontal division of labour. In any republic it was possible to find the same workers involved in the same tasks at the same time. But whilst most republics possessed their own architectural schools, research facilities and construction organisations, resources and authority for large scale projects remained concentrated in the hands of the bureaucracy in Moscow.⁸

The inability of the construction sector to meet local and regional needs was symptomatic of all the other contradictions in the political, economic and cultural life of the Soviet Union, and which were to contribute to the explosion of nationalist sentiment in the 1980s and early

⁷ There are of course dangers with such generalisations. If we were to study in detail the history of the built environment in all of the Soviet Unions regions and republics, then we would find examples for instance in the Baltic Republics and Georgia, where there had been attempts to wrestle control away from Moscow. Nevertheless, even in situations where greater regional autonomy appeared to have been achieved, the internal mechanism of such local building organisations still displayed many of the features of the command system of management.

⁸ The situation is epitomised by the fact that until the early 1990s an aspiring student from Uzbekistan wishing to complete a doctorate in architecture was obliged to study in Moscow.

90s as Republics attempted to gain increased control and discretionary powers concerning building activity on their territories.⁹

technology , concrete labour and utopia

The technocratic culture that dominated the unceasing drive to iron out deficiencies in the general system of state planning, was mirrored in post war Soviet attitudes to the transformation of the labour process. The notion that fundamental class contradictions had been resolved through the combination of state property and a system of centralised state planning, helped to further legitimise the concept of socialism as the development of the productive forces. This reinforced notions inherited from the 'thirties and 'fifties of the neutral character of scientific and technological innovation. Socialism was to be defined by progressive increases in the productivity of labour, in which the miracle of the machine left the realm of science fiction and stood as the key to universal liberation.

By the early 1960s the industrialisation of building production was accelerating rapidly. It seemed a real possibility that the housing crisis could be solved once and for all, and indeed many Soviet citizens for the first time in memory enjoyed a qualitative improvement in living conditions. However this undoubted achievement in increasing the quantity of housing had been accomplished by a transformation in the labour process which was to have lasting and damaging consequences. Not only were workers 'irrevocably retrained' but over ninety percent of them were being paid on piece rates, almost wholly divorced from the means of production, with no more than a 'juridical' right to use them. The building worker of the late sixties and seventies was left with nothing but his or her labour power that could be sold to any number of State owned enterprises. Under such conditions the transition to the machine production of buildings leads inevitably to the deeper alienation of labour, as the concrete aspects of labour undergo a profound transformation.¹⁰ Here the process of Soviet accumulation is not concerned with gender, it is as willing to appropriate

⁹ Just three examples amongst many illustrate this contradiction. The loss of life as a result of the earthquakes in Armenia and Tashkent in the 1960s, was largely due to the collapse of buildings constructed out of prefabricated concrete panels, an inappropriate "deck of cards" in a known earthquake zone. Many of the buildings constructed out of traditional materials, were not only far more successful climatically but survived the earthquake. The notorious concentrated development of the chemical industry in Kazakstan, greatly exacerbated nationalist feeling as more and more children and adults began to show signs of poisoning. Chemical plants were not only badly built, but were constructed in close proximity to residential areas.

¹⁰ Throughout the period 1965-1985, building workers stay steady at approximately 10% of the total workforce. Between 1965 - 1985 the numbers of concrete workers, drivers, machine operators and metal workers more than doubles, the traditional trades like carpenters, brickies, joiners and plasterers remain stable, whereas the number of unqualified labourers declines by a factor of four. (Trud v CCCP-Statistichiski sbornik -Moskva - 1988 - p66) These statistics do not take into account the widespread use of conscripts and students for construction work

and use up female as much as it is male labour. The liberation of women is transformed into the permission to work in the same alienating way as men. ¹¹.

Exactly the same forms of technology were used in the Soviet construction industry as in the west, organised on a factory floor in exactly the same way, demanding exactly the same forms of obedience and attention. The wholesale transfer of all of the qualitative aspects of labour to the machine, did not lead to the establishment of new and creative forms of labour, in which the Soviet building worker was liberated to perform independent and intellectual tasks, its effects were exactly the same as anywhere else. Not only did the development of such technology reduce the Soviet building worker to a mere appendage of the machine, but in a situation where the increasing horizontal division of labour was accompanied by an increasingly hierarchical vertical division of labour, he or she had no control over the labour process or its products, apart from going on 'walkabout', slowing down the pace of work, deliberate sabotage or theft. In the drive to produce ever greater quantities of housing and ever greater quantities of surplus, the labour process and the form of buildings became subject to the same kind of instrumental reason, that defines quality by a steady increase in the indices of quantity, mass, volume, density. The qualitative aspects of liberated space, free form and creative labour cannot be reduced to a quantitative measure, any more than the pleasure that comes from good sex can be given a number.

It is no surprise that the orthodox response to the introduction of machinery and its effects on labour was that it was non contradictory, by virtue of the fact that it existed under state ownership. Thus, all of the negative consequences of industrialisation described by Marx were deemed inapplicable to the Soviet labour process. In fact the complete opposite was argued. The introduction of machinery into the labour process, would not only increase the material satisfaction of the masses, but would resolve the contradiction between manual and mental labour, thus leading to a new mature "communist notion of labour". If Braverman offers us the apocalypse, Soviet authors offer us heaven on earth. The hagiographic character of Soviet realism finds another resting place in the machinery of mass production. Here we find a de-politicised technology that will liberate us from need and from labour, a technology that will deliver us to the threshold of the new world. These Soviet technological dreams, form

¹¹ Women were common in the Soviet building industry not only as on site plasterers and decorators, but as factory workers and forewomen. The percentage of women working in the building industry in 1968 stood at just under 30%. There is not a statistical breakdown for the number of women working in the building industry in the late 1980s although it is estimated that 46% of workers through out the industrial sector were women. (*Trud v CCCP- Statistichiski sbornik -Mosckva - 1968 -p76*) It is not an insignificant detail that at the end of the fifties 10% of construction firms directors, 60% of laboratory heads, and 44% of technicians were women. (*Dodge, Norton - Women in the Soviet Economy - John Hopkins - 1966 - p178-9, 204*)

part of the history of naive optimism that has continued unabated from the first days of the enlightenment, and has followed every innovation up to the 'liberation theology' of the contemporary computer technocrat.

Whilst Braverman bemoaned the decline of crafts Soviet authors celebrate it. Whereas under Fordism it was argued that there was a negative tendency towards deskilling, in the context of Soviet industrialisation this deskilling is seen in a positive light as it gives rise to a new division of labour in the building industry, where increasing numbers of technical and managerial staff emerge and where the slow 'liquidation' of unskilled workers accelerates. It was argued the new technology of the machine production of buildings would lead to the further resolution of contradictions associated with a capitalist labour process, such that "Under socialism the contradictions between mental and manual, simple and complex labour are overcome and removed."¹² In a situation where the lorry driver becomes a crane driver, the old carpenter a lathe operator, the plasterer a machinist, mechanisation it is argued would lead to a sophisticated reskilling of labour, such that "the most important index of technical progress under socialism is the growth in the level of qualified workers, which is defined by the increasing complexity of concrete labour and the influence on the whole level of productivity"¹³ Such utopian sentiments are echoed elsewhere.

The mechanisation of the building industry would inevitably lead to the replacement of unqualified labour, with complex labour, that demands physical expertise but a greater expenditure of mental energy, which when backed up by state policies that guaranteed freedom of choice of occupation, a budget for continued education, guaranteed wage levels and material needs, can lead only to "an increase in the cultural and technical level of workers", enabling any worker to transfer with ease from one branch of industry to another.¹⁴ In the midst of such a socialist revolution of the labour process a new worker is born, multi skilled, highly qualified, intellectual, liberated from heavy manual labour and in full control of a labour process in which his labour has assumed a directly social character. It comes as no surprise to find that these texts were written in the atmosphere of optimism that came with the Khrushchev thaw and the scientific technological revolution in the 1960s. However, the

¹² **Boroboev, I, I** - *Izmeneniya sostava i usloviya ispolzovaniya rabochik kadrov v svyazi s tekhnicheskoy progressom. Na primer stroitelstva* - Kazan - 1967-Avtoreferat dissertatsiya-p12 (Changes in the composition and conditions of labour in connection with technical progress)

¹³ *ibid* p14

¹⁴ **Nikonov, M, I** - *Tekhnicheskoy progress v stroitelstve i tendentsiya v izmeneniya kharaktera i sodershanie truda rabochik* - Avtoreferat - Moskva - 1969 - p10 -22 (Technical progress in construction and tendencies in the character and content of labour)

recourse to increasingly utopian dreams if anything accelerated during the 1980s with the prospect of automation.

It was declared that "the creative character of labour under socialism...is an objective necessity". To achieve this qualitatively new stage in the development of labour, not only was it necessary to ensure "the economic equality of freely associated producers in relation to the means of production", but to ensure rapid scientific technological innovation, that would lead to the automation of production and the liquidation of physical labour.¹⁵ This liberation from onerous labour would necessarily have three stages; multiskilling, the improvement of qualifications, and the eventual transfer to purely intellectual work, the point at which manual skills had been all but transferred to the machine. "Labour in such production becomes more creative, of an engineering-technical nature, assisting its intellectual development, the result of which is to smooth over the socio-economic differences between mental and manual labour". As a demonstration traditional industry was compared with a hypothetical 'automated' industry. If in the former the workers divide as follows, 35-37% non qualified, 33-60% qualified, 4-8% with middle education, 1-2% with higher education, in the latter situation it was predicted there would be no non qualified workers, 40% would be qualified, 40-60% with middle education, and 20-40% with higher education.¹⁶

All such technological utopias possess a common character. The further they elaborate on the possibilities of freedom the further they become removed from the political critique to which it must subject itself in order to escape from dreamworld.¹⁷ This dialectic is revealed in the physical transformation of Moscow in the 'sixties and 'seventies. A monument to the improvement of a populations' living conditions, but a built environment that was produced under a regime that defined quality by the statistical indices contained in the plan. Under such a system any notion of quality that cannot be quantified becomes suspect.

¹⁵ Smirnov et al - *Obshchestvennaya forma truda pri sotsializme* - Moskva Ekonomika - 1984 - p62-64 (The social form of labour under socialism)

¹⁶ Ivanova, R.K - Karpukhin, D, N, - *Izmeneniya kharaktera i soderzhaniya truda na sovremennom etape razvitiya sotsializma* - Nauka- Moskva - 1987 - p34 (Changes in the character and content of labour in the modern stage of the development of socialism)

¹⁷ The liberation from heavy manual work, the social ownership of the means of production, and the development of technology that is socially useful and with which labour can creatively interact and engage remains a possibility, but one that is entirely dependent on a broader social and political movement.

the city as a time clock

It is not difficult to find your way out of Moscow. Any one of the main boulevards will propel you away from the historic centre towards the micro regions that surround the city. A walk along one of these arteries is to travel through clearly demarcated time zones, a kind of economic and technological time clock, a permanent reminder of the historical transformation of labour and space that is a testament to seventy years of state regulated urban development¹. (See fig 102)

The clear division of space along class lines that distinguishes many capitalist cities is not so immediately obvious in Moscow. In most capitalist cities working class residential areas, consumption centres and patterns of movement within the metropolis are clearly differentiated from middle class and bourgeois areas. In recent decades this spatial division has been further emphasised by the appearance of prestigious buildings that announce with utmost clarity the power of modern finance capital. Within Moscow, much of the class character of Soviet society is hidden or integrated into what at first glance seems to be an homogenous landscape. The exception is of course to be found in the city centre, which is dominated by the seats of power and the administrative headquarters of the bureaucracy, such as the Kremlin, the headquarters of the KGB, the Moscow Party Hotel, the White House, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, the residential areas that lead away from the city centre, can not be readily distinguished from each other with regards to class. Although there always existed housing blocks reserved for senior party officials, luxurious dachas in the countryside, there was little in the way of an *immediately visible* demarcation of territory between bureaucrat and worker. In other words the class division of space within the city on class lines occurs as a separate matrix that is overlaid on the physical structure of the city. (See fig 103) There existed a 'hidden' hierarchy of space and class, one that was integrated into the structure of the city - an 'invisible' network of individual blocks, special shops, dachas, clubs, and offices, to which the general public were denied access. In a society that denied the historical emergence of any new collective exploiting class, such a phenomena was to be expected of any ruling elite that is forced to hide its own existence and the sources of its power.

Unlike the fragmented market regulation of urban development characteristic of most capitalist cities, the usual mixture of order and chaos, the development of Moscow in the

¹ The routes that connect Ulitsa Gorkovo with Leningradskii Prospect and the micro region Strogino, or that which joins Prospect Kalinina with Kutozovski Prospect and the micro region Krilatskoe are good examples.

VISIBLE AND THE RULING CLASS
PROSPECT KALININA



Looking west from the Lenin library

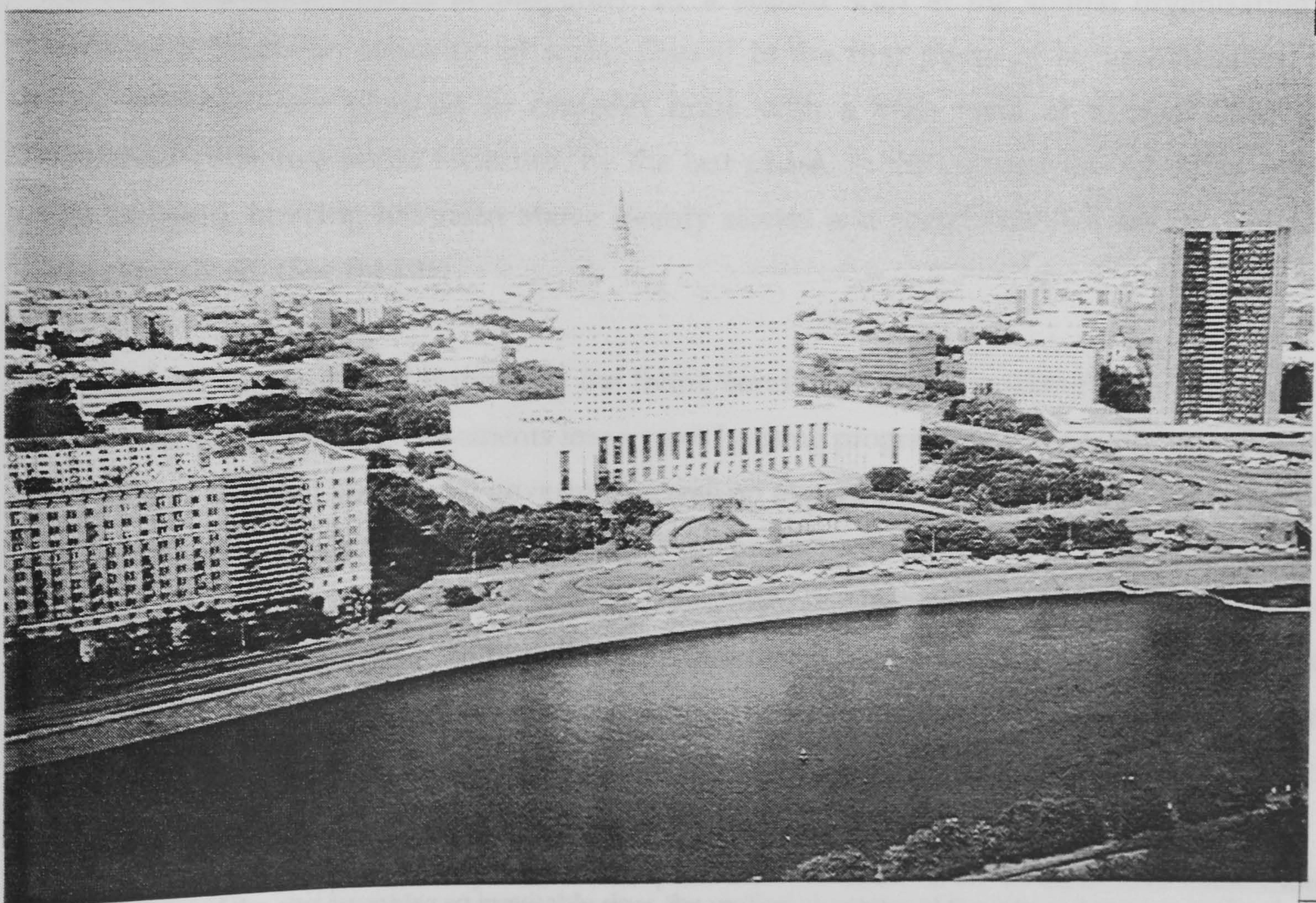


Looking east from the Ukraine hotel

VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE HOMES OF THE RULING CLASS



Diplomatic compounds



The 'White House'

Soviet period, as a consciously planned city, possesses a physical and spatial form that appeared as far more ordered and directly regulated.² As such, the transformations in the form of building provide a clearly identifiable record of changing State policy towards the labour process and space.

As we move away from the historic centre of Moscow these formal and accompanying spatial transformations can be clearly seen as a series of zones. Once past the Sadovoye Koltso, The Garden Ring, we enter into areas that are predominantly residential, and which apart from the edifices that flank the immediate edges of the main boulevards were built from the mid 1950s onwards. As the clock ticks we travel from the infamous *piatai etashnie* (five storey) *krupno-blochnie* (large concrete block) housing units of the late 'fifties and early 'sixties, through the first generation concrete panelled six to fourteen storey blocks of the late 'sixties and early 'seventies, until we arrive at the twenty storey blocks of the late seventies and eighties. (See fig 104 and 105)

In this journey we are witness to a quite extraordinary correspondence between plan targets and physical reality. As each new five year plan sets ever more ambitious quantitative targets for the amount of housing to be built, so the scale, height, mass, and density of building increases. This is accompanied by a similar shift in the spatial organisation of territory towards an economy of scale. Thus if in the first phase of industrialisation, the *piatai etashnie* were planned in compact units with a high level of decentralised and dispersed collective social facilities, by the last phase, in the construction of *micro regions* like Strogino, housing has risen above twenty stories and social facilities are concentrated and centralised. (See fig 106)

The historic imperative of improving the living conditions of the working class, has coerced many twentieth century governments into a mass housing programme and programme of public works, and the post war Soviet government was no exception. On moral, ethical and broader social and economic grounds it was obliged to conduct a critique on the individualism and egoism of the thirties architects and to transform the technological foundations of the industry as fast as possible. In probably no other urban history has the technological transfer of the building industry been so complete and so rapid. By the late 1980s over ninety per cent of all new housing in Moscow was being constructed out of pre fabricated concrete panels. The

² This is a characteristic of many Eastern European cities. Needless to say as the unified bureaucratic management of the city crumbles so inevitably does the unified character of the city as a market for land and buildings emerges.

THE TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF HOUSING



The infamous "piati etasniye" , first generation five storey pre-fabricated large concrete block housing in the 1960's

FIG 104

THE TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF HOUSING

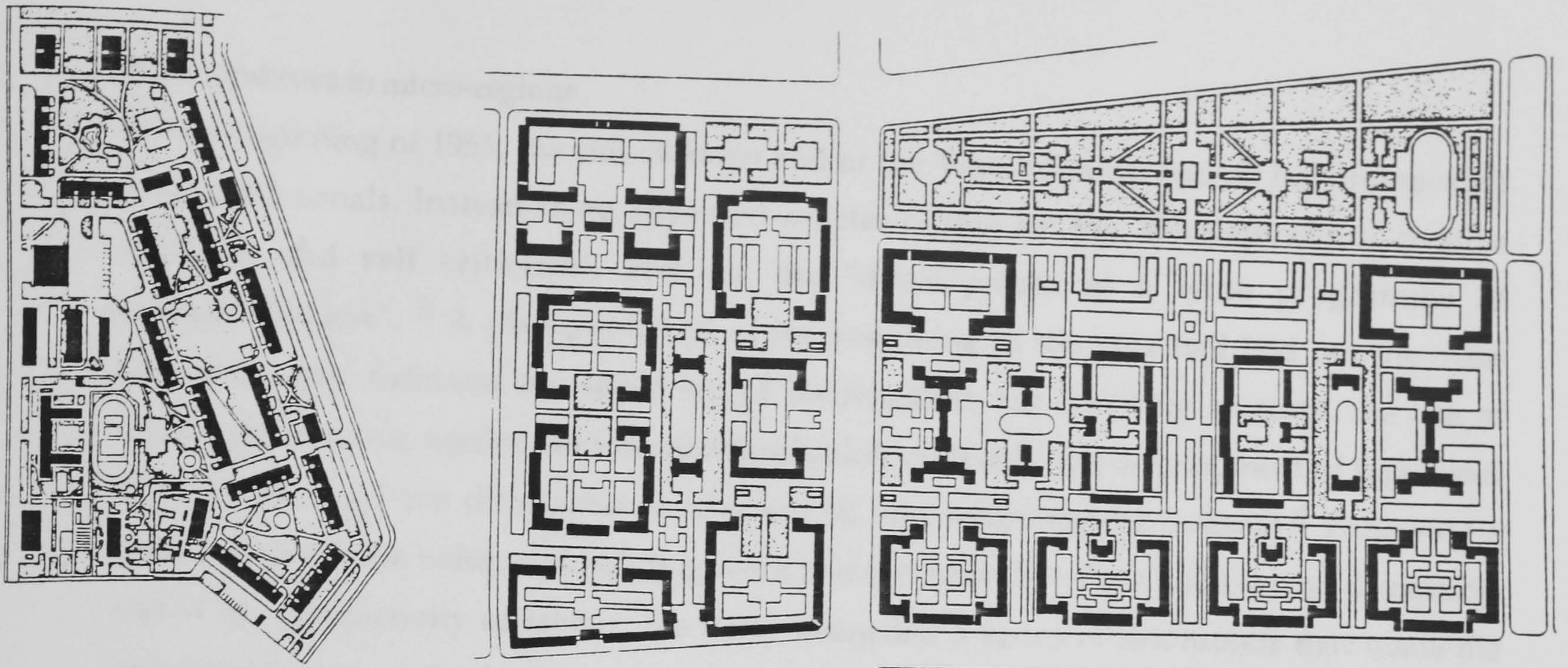


Twelve storey pre-fabricated concrete block housing. Late sixties early seventies

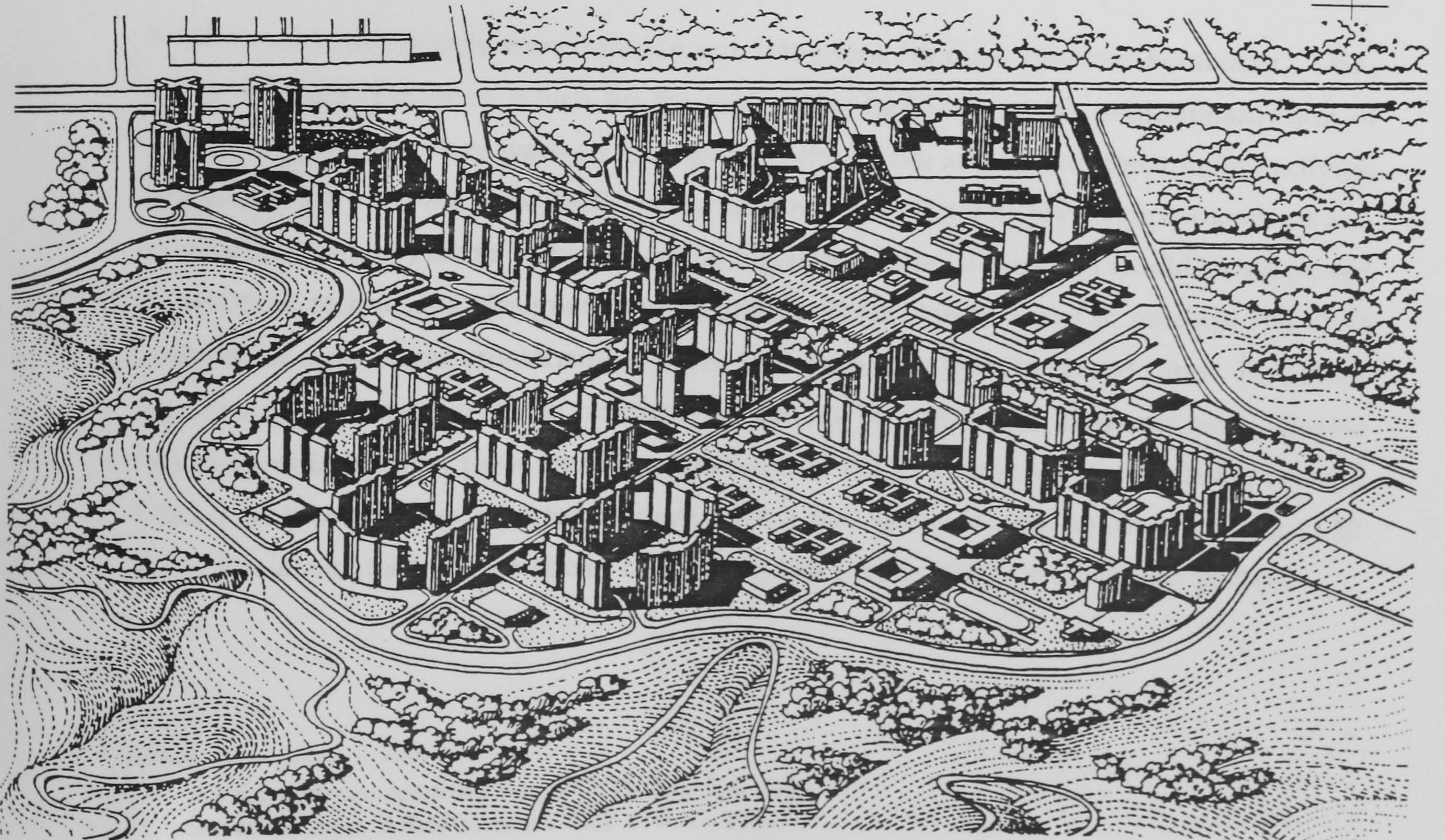


Sixteen storey pre-fabricated concrete panel housing. Late seventies early eighties

The imperative of constant quantitative expansion



The first generation of micro-regions. left Noviye Cheremushki, 1957-1958
Right, - Eyugo Zapadnaya region 1951-1960



Last generation of 'super' micro-regions. Plan for Krilatskoye area, Moscow, 1979-83

same can be said for all major urban centres throughout the USSR, irrespective of cultural and climatic differences.

from combines to micro-regions

By the beginning of 1955, the cult of Stalin and of the 'hero building' had all but disappeared from the journals. Instead there appeared articles calling for the "development of creative criticism and self criticism", and for the "development of a wide programme of industrialisation".³ A plan published at the beginning of the year had laid out the main objectives, that included the speed up of construction, the lowering of costs, the use of reinforced concrete, mechanisation, standardisation of details, the development of typologies of buildings, and the development of scientific and technological research.⁴ Following a period in which the volume of building work had increased but there had been no discernible rise in the productivity of labour, the Party instigated a series of resolutions that made the industrialisation of the building industry and the transfer to the mass production of pre fabricated buildings a legal obligation.⁵ This in itself was a feat of considerable historical significance. From 1959 onwards enormous amounts of capital were poured into the construction sector. The consequences were immediate and widespread with the mushrooming of the 'piati etashnie' from Uzbekistan to Moscow. (See fig 107)

Builders and technicians were reorganised into giant "domo-stroitelnie kombinati", DSK, house building combines, which by the mid sixties had become the predominant form of labour organisation. They were an attempt to unify off site and on site construction activity, thus under one umbrella most DSK's would have had both factories preparing components and 'montash' (assembly) teams putting them all together on site. These units would be supported by teams of technicians, designers and engineers. Their objective was to produce and erect housing on a continual uninterrupted basis, to meet plan targets in record times. That there was a massive increase in labour productivity can not be questioned. There are many tales no less extraordinary than those from the 'thirties that tell of all known records being broken. DSK -1 in Moscow was reported to have built a five storey, eighty apartment block in 52 days. Other reports tell of combines completing five storey blocks in as little as 18 days.

³ See for instance *Arkhitektura CCCP* - Nos 5, 6, 1955

⁴ See editorial in *Arkhitektura CCCP* - No 1 - 1955

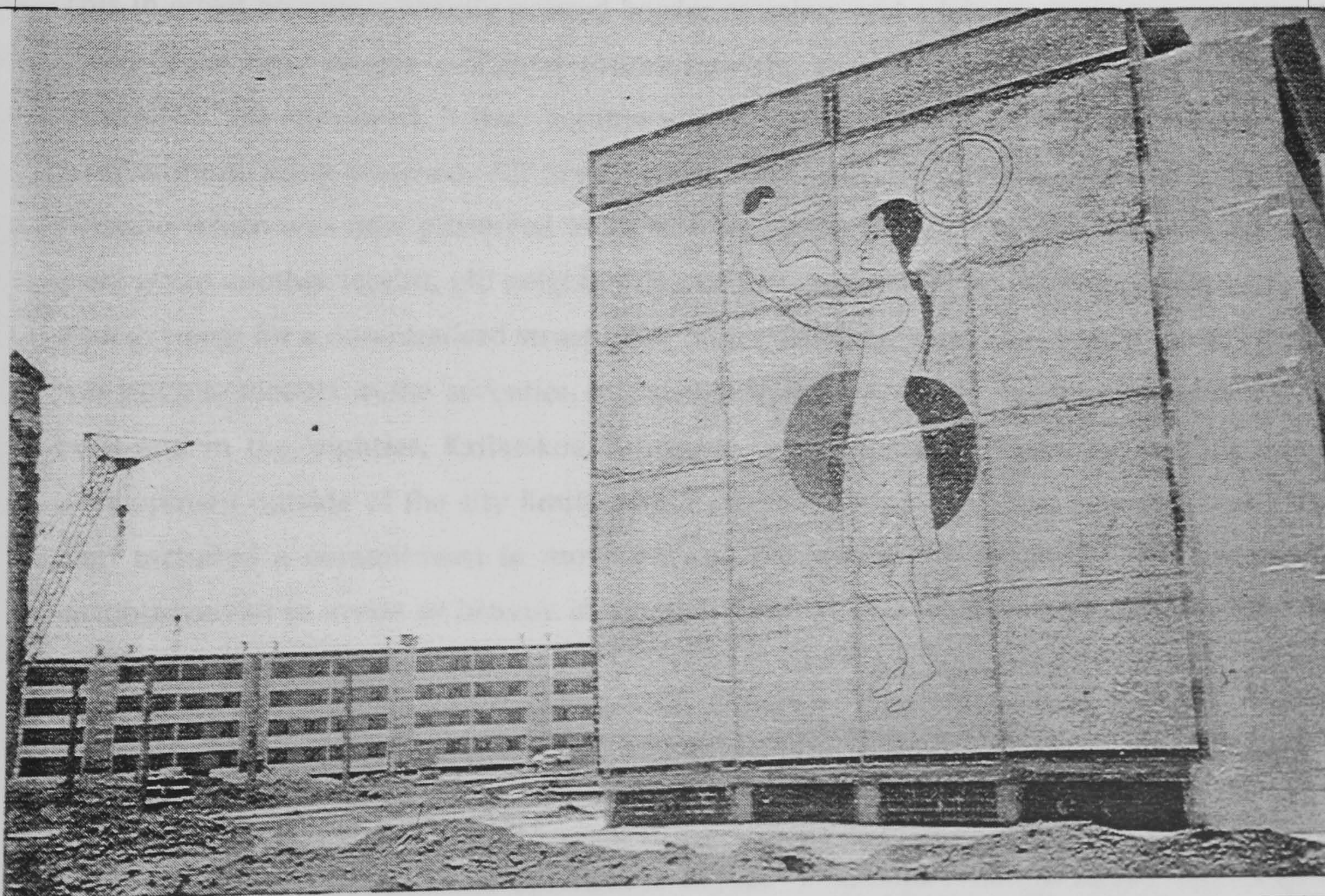
⁵ *Kommunisticheskaya Partia Sovetskogo Soyuza - V rezolutsia i resheniakh ciezdom, konferentsia i plenumov* - Tom Sedmoi - 1955 - 1959 - p249, 279, 526. (Resolutions of Party conferences - Volume 7)

THE TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF HOUSING

The piati-etashniye



Looking down on the NoviyeCheremushki region, Moscow



Building the piati-etashniye in the desert regions of Uzbekistan

However, although satisfying plan targets, the poor construction of many of these schemes was a time bomb that duly exploded in the 1980s with leaking roofs, poor sanitation, no lifts, and inadequate waste disposal.⁶ In addition the logic of industrialisation towards increasing the quantitative mass of product, meant that by the end of sixties they had been replaced by bigger, higher and better built blocks. These were part of a new round in the rationalisation of building production that culminated in two pieces of legislation.

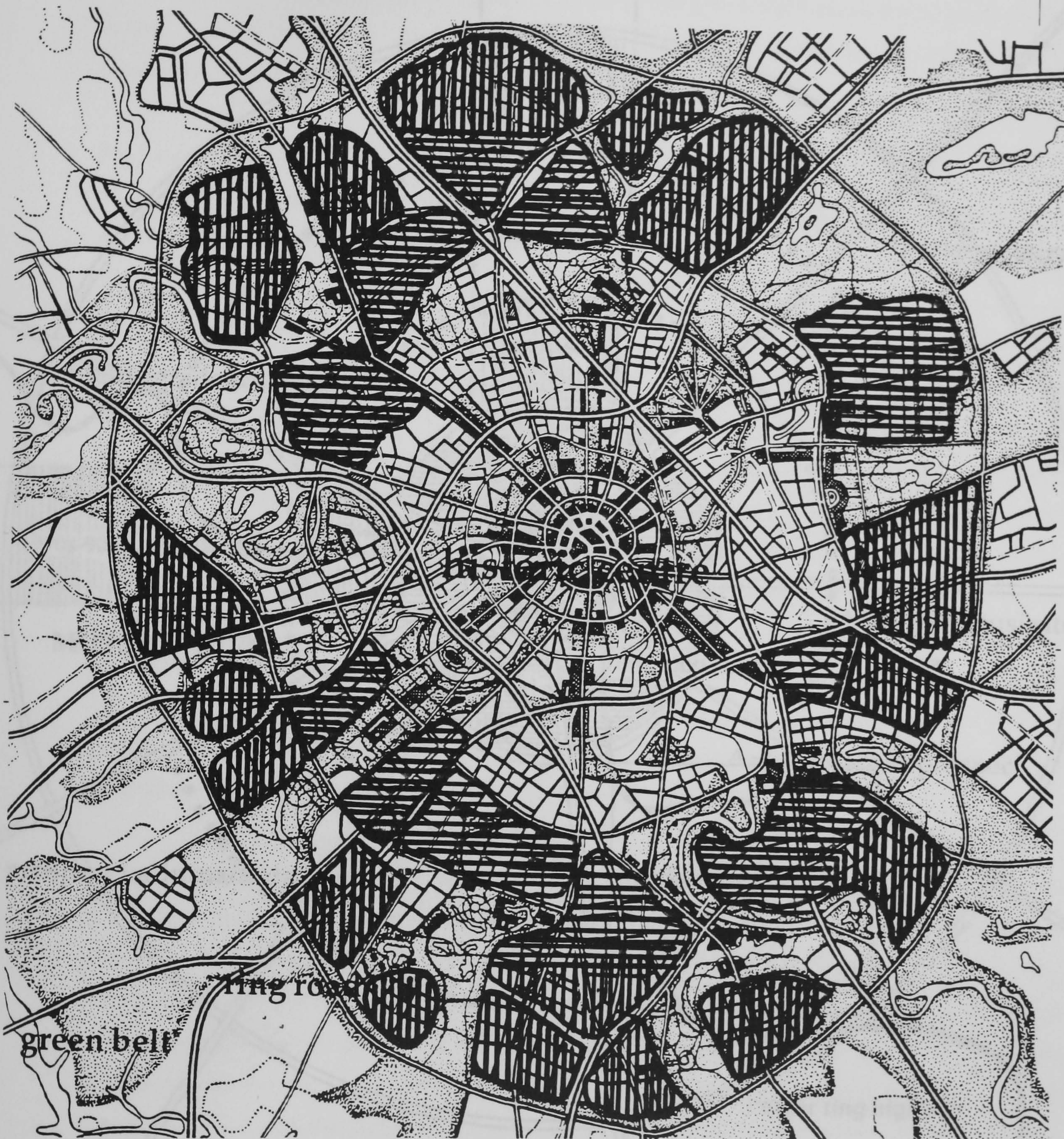
The first was an astonishing thirty two point plan for "improving the quality of construction". Whilst advocating increased rights for the executive committees of local soviets to exercise overall control over building activity, more rights for architects and planners, the setting up of experimental construction units, the overwhelming emphasis was on the introduction of new machinery, new technologies, and the further standardisation of design procedures. This was accompanied by a new list of piece rates and bonus schemes⁷. In brief it was an attempt to convert the mass production of buildings, both construction and design processes into an exact science. Two years later in 1971, the plan for the further development of Moscow was published.⁸ This re-emphasised Moscow's role as the cultural and economic centre of the USSR. It placed a limit on the outward growth of the city, which became defined by the construction of an outer ring road, and the maintenance of a green belt. This in effect became a heavily policed border crossing, and a leisure -cum- 'no-mans' land. There were now twelve principal routes into the city, all of which could be carefully controlled and supervised. It thus became virtually impossible to enter or leave the city by road without being watched. All twelve routes lead directly into the centre of power, the Kremlin which was now preserved as an historic centre. (See fig 108) The main boulevards were given another facelift, old neighbourhoods like Izmailovo, and Fili were reinforced and a programme for a decentralised structure of mini towns (micro-regions) within the city limits was put into motion. In the 'seventies, regions like Yasenovo, Orecho-borisovo, Biberovo, were built and in the 'eighties, Krilatskoe, Strogino, Tiopli Stan and others. All further urban development outside of the city limits would take the form of 'satellite' suburbs. Lastly the plan included a commitment to move beyond the sixteen storey limit. Whilst it seems uncontroversial to invest so heavily in a nation's capital, it is important to acknowledge the

⁶ This started a fierce debate in the architectural magazines on the relative merits of rehabilitation or demolition. In the event the former won and a whole series of competitions were launched to come up with schemes for the their reconstruction.

⁷ *Kommunisticheskaya Partia Sovetskogo Soyuza - V rezolutsia i resheniakh cezdov, konferentsia i plenumov*- Tom deciatii - 1969 - 1971 - O merak po ulushenia kachestvo shilishno-grashdanskovo stroitelstva - p47 - 61 (Resolutions of Party conferences - Volume 10)

⁸ *Kommunisticheskaya Partia Sovetskogo Soyuza - V rezolutsia i resheniakh cezdov, konferentsia i plenumov*- Tom deciatii - 1969 - 1971- O generalnom plane razvitiia Moskvi - p476 - 481 (On the general plan for the development of Moscow)

DIAGRAMMATIC PLAN OF MOSCOW
MOSCOW DEVELOPMENT PLAN 1971



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north



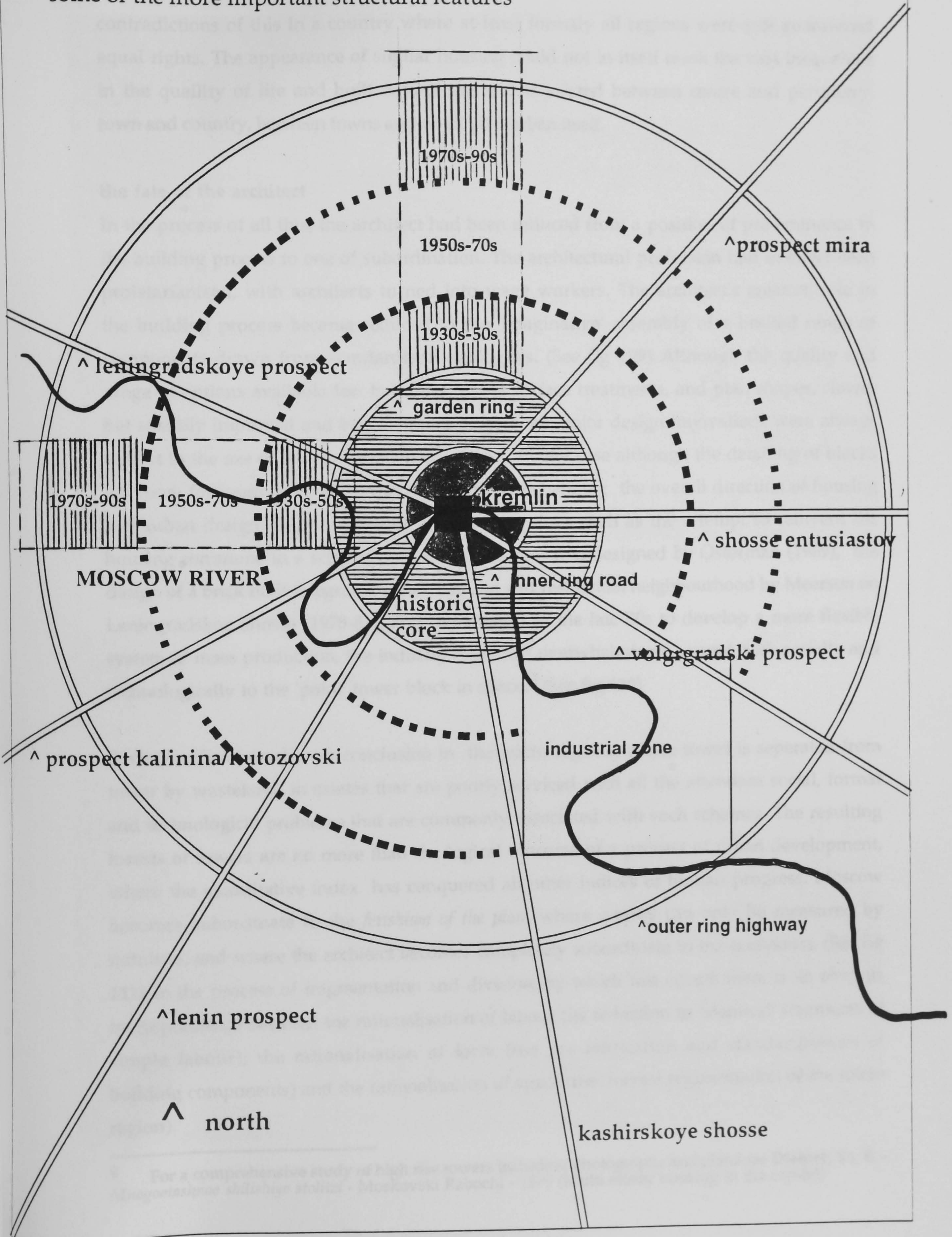
micro-regions 1960s-70s = 
micro-regions 1970s-80s = 

FIG 108

DIAGRAMMATIC PLAN OF MOSCOW

Below is illustrated a generalised and approximate map of Moscow that indicates some of the more important structural features



contradictions of this in a country where at least formally all regions were still guaranteed equal rights. The appearance of similar housing could not in itself mask the vast inequalities in the quality of life and built environment, that existed between centre and periphery, town and country, between towns and within the urban itself.

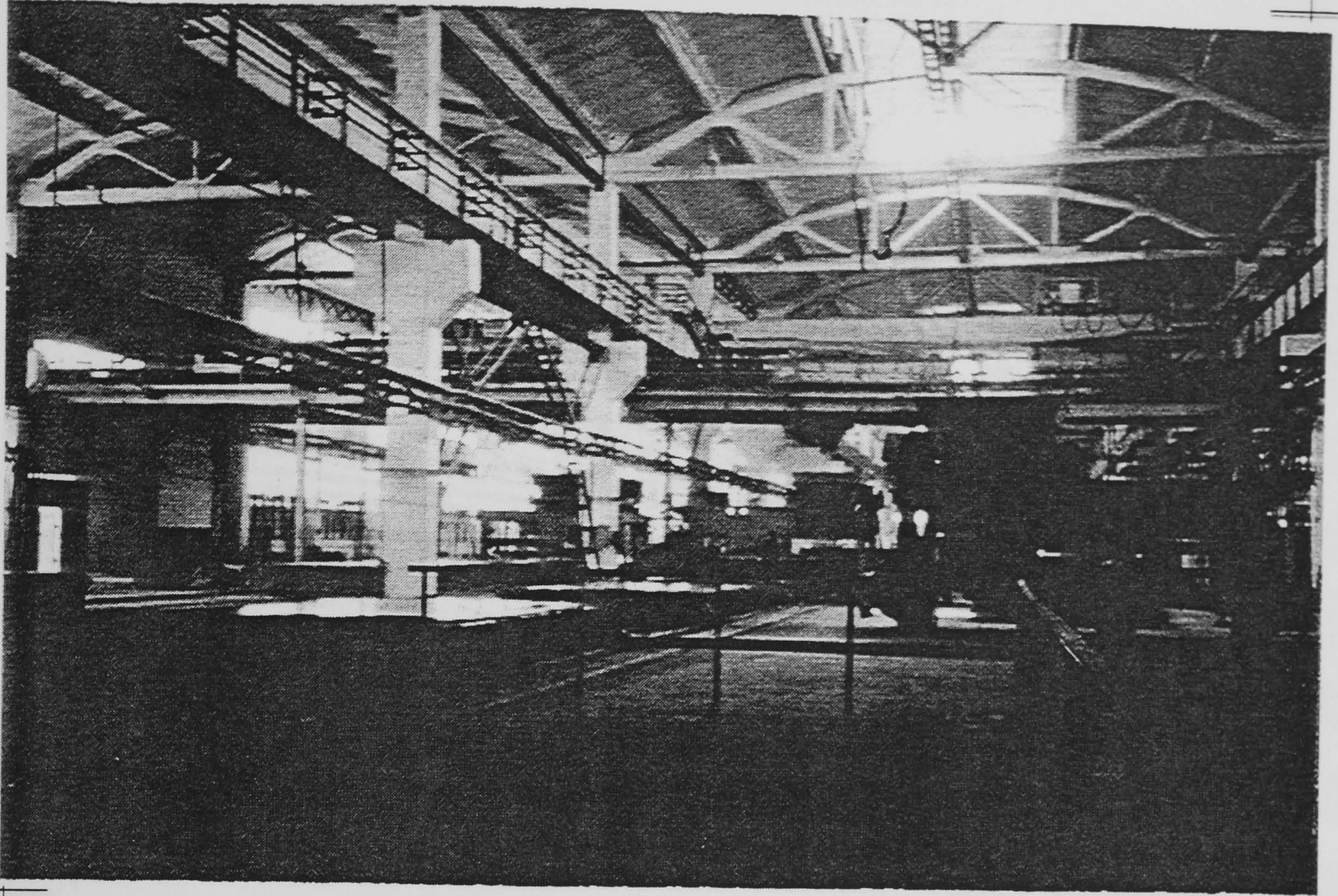
the fate of the architect

In the process of all this, the architect had been reduced from a position of pre-eminence in the building process to one of subordination. The architectural profession had in effect been proletarianised, with architects turned into wage workers. The architect's creative role in the building process became reduced to the 'imaginative' assembly of a limited range of components drawn from standardised catalogues. (See fig 109) Although the quality and range of options available for balconies, panel surface treatments, and plan shapes, slowly but steadily improved and became more diverse, all major design innovations were always subject to the axe of the construction economist. In any case although the detailing of blocks left room for innovation, there was no question of changing the overall direction of housing and urban design. With a series of notable 'exceptions' such as the attempt to reinvent the housing commune in a scheme on Bolshoi Cheremushki designed by Osterman (1969), the design of a brick built integrated social, cultural and residential neighbourhood by Meerson on Leningradskoe Shosse (1978-81), and the attempt in the late 80s to develop a more flexible system of mass production, the industry remained overwhelmingly geared both socially and technologically to the 'point' tower block in space.⁹ (See fig 110)

Soviet 'fordism' reaches its conclusion in the micro regions, where tower is separated from tower by wasteland, in estates that are poorly serviced with all the attendant social, formal and technological problems that are commonly associated with such schemes. The resulting forests of towers are no more than the logical outcome of a process of urban development, where the quantitative index has conquered all other indices of human progress. Moscow becomes subordinate to the *fetishism of the plan*, where quality can only be measured by numbers, and where the architect becomes completely subordinate to the economist. (See fig 111) In the process of fragmentation and division, by which this occurs there is an obvious correspondence between the rationalisation of labour (its reduction to 'identical' fragments of simple labour), the rationalisation of form (the pre fabrication and standardisation of building components) and the rationalisation of space (the formal regimentation of the micro region).

⁹ For a comprehensive study of high rise towers including photographs and plans see Dichter, Ya, E, - *Mnogoetashnoe shilishiye stolitzi* - Moskovski Rabochi - 1979 (Multi storey housing in the capital)

THE TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF HOUSING

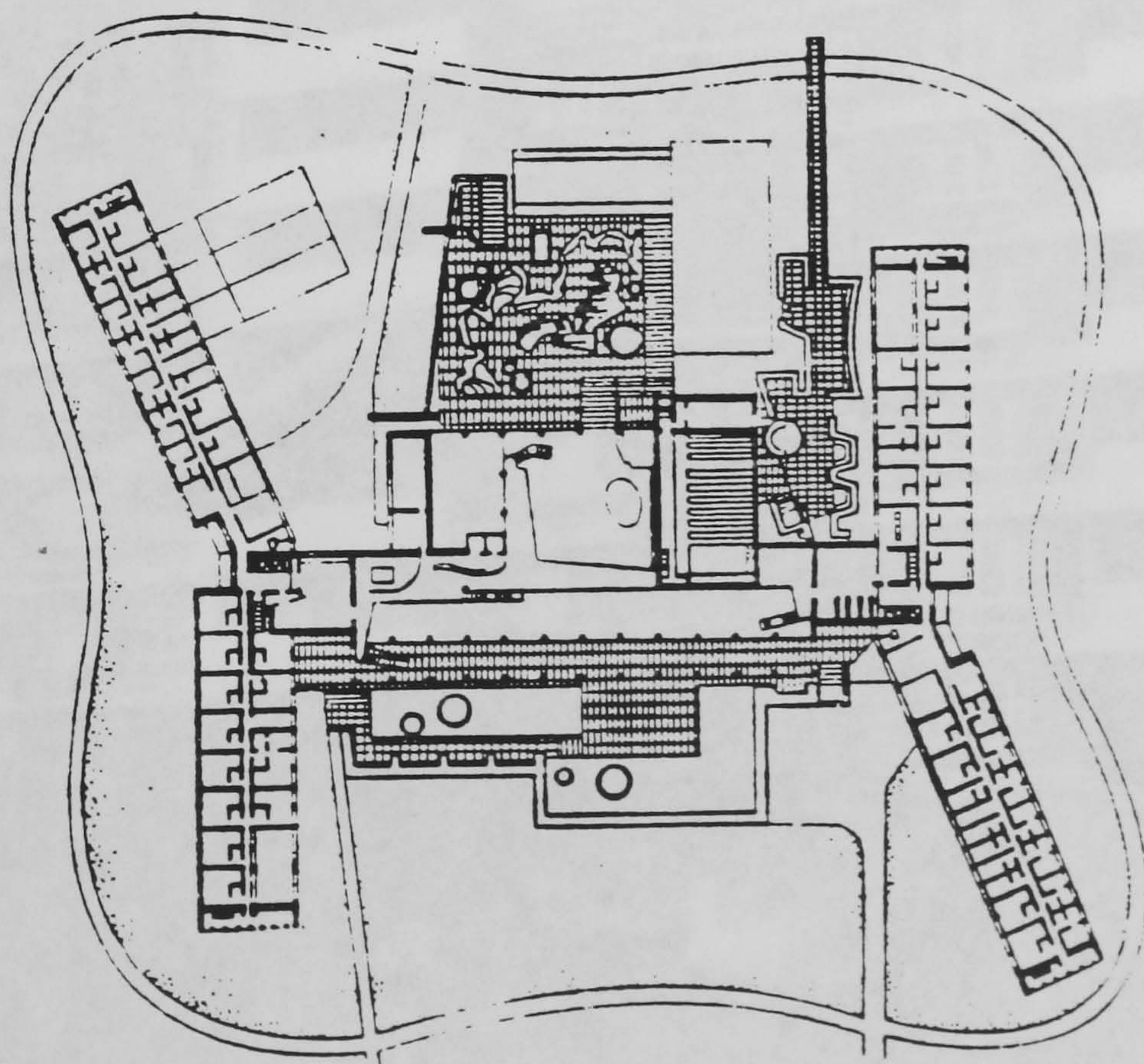


Inside the concrete panel factory



Twenty storey pre-fabricated large concrete panel housing blocks, Moscow

EXPERIMENTAL HOUSING



Design by Osterman, N for a contemporary version of the housing commune where residential and social facilities are integrated into one unit. Moscow, 1969

FIG 110

THE FORMAL AND SPATIAL TRADITION OF ARCHITECTURE
QUANTITY

The conquering index of human progress

This then is the epoch that assimilates the earlier

housing, and homogeneous space. (See fig 111.) A

wind could be felt that threatened to reduce the

social life to their lowest common denominator

packaged and then thrown back together again.

It is generally acknowledged that the basic

production of mass consumption goods

is the result of the



On the building site in 1994

FIG 111

This then is the epoch that accelerates the tendency towards *homogenous labour, homogenous housing, and homogenous space*. (See fig 112) Against the optimism of social renewal, a cold wind could be felt that threatened to reduce labour, form, space and indeed the whole of social life to their lowest common denominators. Fragmented, broken up into little pieces, packaged and then thrown back together again having been shorn of all quality.

It is generally acknowledged that the transformations in the labour process and in the production of mass consumption goods that followed the second scientific and technological revolution revealed the totalising imperatives of capitalist development. The same can be said for Soviet history. The universalisation of wage labour that makes the worker a consumer as well as a producer was far more than just an economic issue, it was overwhelmingly ideological and moral in character. If Ford was obsessed with the behaviour and general sobriety of his employees this was nothing but the prelude to the State organised production of the 'citizen stereotype' that reached its apogee in the McCarthy trials and 1968. Similarly, whilst the Soviet bureaucracy issued norms contained in the production targets of enterprises, these were always mirrored by the call to social conformity and moral order. Under this moral regime all social behaviour that did not conform to the stereotype of the good citizen could be branded 'anti soviet' deviancy and be criminalised. Thus the 'new Soviet man and woman' of the 1970s, was a rather sad descendent of the shock worker and a miserable and distant relative of the *Novie Beat*.

Within the global history of industrialisation and the mass production of buildings by machine processes, the Soviet experience occupies a premiere position, not just because of the almost incomprehensible scale of the change in the labour process, but also because of the totality of the transformation that occurred in the temporal and spatial organisation of social life.¹⁰ All attempts to resolve the crisis when it erupted in the nineteen eighties thus faced a major dilemma. The system of bureaucracy and with it the system of political and economic relations between classes and between geographical regions and Republics was as entrenched and fixed as the technological character of the construction industry.

¹⁰ In Moscow tower cranes were first seen in the late 'thirties, and there is a famous example of a housing unit designed by Blokhin in 1941 that was constructed out of factory pre-fabricated components.

THE MICRO-REGION

The homogenisation and rationalisation of labour, form and space



On the edge of St Petersburg, late 1980's



On the edge of Moscow, late 1980's

In the media circus that surrounded the ascension and disappearance of Gorbachev and the perestroika project, the real reasons for the crisis and thereby the significance of those events for the understanding of social development in different social formations, became obscured.

It had become clear that without a radical restructuring of social relations, social and economic life would continue to disintegrate. Not only was it impossible to generate sufficient amounts of surplus to continue funding the arms race, but the production of quality consumer goods and services, necessary to quell an increasingly volatile population could no longer be guaranteed. The whole process of accumulation was thus grinding to a halt, and with it the political credibility of the bureaucracy was called into question. Faced with impending collapse, the bureaucracy sought to 'adjust' social relations in order to encourage initiative within the economy, to accelerate the rate of accumulation, but to do this without relinquishing political power.

It was openly recognised that the crisis was very much to do with a crisis of State property, and just as this had repercussions at all levels of the social totality so the bureaucracy's reforms attempted to restructure social relations in a similarly comprehensive manner. One of the many objectives of perestroika was the creation of a new phase in Soviet society built on the 'strict observance of law'. During the course of the 1980s new laws were passed concerning almost every aspect of social life, from the rights of local Soviets, to the rights of workers. Indeed, it was generally agreed that the pre-condition for any long term reform programme was dependent first on changes in the law, to set up the legal mechanisms for transition. It is though, one of the greatest paradoxes of Soviet history that legal proclamations are no guarantee of the implementation of the objectives and goals of new laws. This in many ways was the tragic dialectic not only of perestroika but the whole of Soviet history.¹ Whilst formally within the constitution there existed democratic organisations, in reality they did not work.² Thus the historic rupture between what we might call the *juridical representation of reality* and the *reality of the representation of law in social life* is given a new lease, whereby the 'legal fetish' discussed by Pashukanis becomes transformed and elevated to a whole new level. Just as within capitalist society juridical forms of the commodity emerge and disguise their common social origins, so in the late Soviet era from a guarantor of social

¹ Such a dialectic had become painfully obvious to many inside the Soviet Union. Laws could be passed and ignored, by those whose interests they threatened. In an interview in Moscow News, Leonid Abalkin a prominent reformer had commented that people were "living in the euphoria of law creation", with "a romantic belief in the strength of decrees on State power". *Moskovski Novosti* - No 44 - 29th Okt 1989

² Kagarlitsky. B - *The thinking Reed*. - Verso-1988 - p 78

liberty, the law becomes a mask that obscures the reproduction of the class rule of the bureaucracy, disguising its desperate attempt to cling to power through the statute book.³

Whilst seeking to 'administrate' and 'legislate' a pathway out of the crisis, many of the majority of new laws passed bore a formal commitment to the democratisation of social relations. However, this could only be done through the existing structures of relations, that is through the command administrative system. For many observers, not only outside of the Soviet Union but inside it as well, it was considered impossible to democratise Soviet Society from the top down, and that any long term chance of achieving success was dependent whatever the consequences on the prior dismantling of the whole apparatus of the State.⁴

A dream of Sweden

Predictably the Western representation of the struggle in the Soviet Union as that between 'old guard conservatives' and 'rampant free marketeers' disguised the real complexity of the situation and of the power struggle taking place within the bureaucracy.⁵

At the heart of the debate, leaving aside those who advocated a direct transition to capitalism, was an attempt to clarify what kind of categories of ownership would develop and remain compatible with a vision or version of socialism as the state attempted to withdraw from the complete and direct regulation of the national economy. Bubbling away discretely since the 1960s, there were open attempts to rehabilitate the idea of the market⁶

There emerged a clear identification between the social - economic crisis, and the legacy of socialist state property and the 'administrative command' system of economic management,

³ The obsession with law creation also has a rather uncomfortable historical precedent in the battle that occurred in the 19th century between the 'legal marxists' such as Struve and Ziber and the revolutionary marxists such as Lenin. Despite the supposed historical defeat of the legal marxists ideas, their influence can be seen on the development of Soviet marxism in the twentieth century.

⁴ In brief, the passing of laws does not guarantee the participation of the working people in planning social development. It certainly cannot guarantee the emergence of a situation whereby the ruling bureaucracy will give up its priveleges and hegemonic position as political and economic masters. As Kagarlitsky comments; "For State property to be really 'property of the whole people', it is not enough to write fine words in a constitution. What is needed is democratic social control over the means of production and the administration, with wide participation by the masses in the discussion and implementing of descisions." *The thinking reed* op.cit p77

⁵ One need only have stood at the start of 1990 on the corner of Gorky Street (now renamed Tverskaya Ulitsa) under the burnt out offices of 'Moskovski Novosti', Moscow News, to witness the fragmentation of political life in the Soviet Union. Here a pedestrian could openly buy, 'green' broadsheets, various nationalist and neo-fascist newspapers, anarchist papers, and a selection of papers representing all the colours of the democratic left and right.

⁶ An argument began to emerge that there has always been a market in the history of human society. This is perhaps questionable especially with respect to a market for labour - that is labour as a commodity, which as a category is specific to capitalism.

the beginnings of an explicit recognition of the real reasons for the crisis. But the question of the legal ownership of the means of production in relation to the construction industry revealed the considerable confusion that surrounded the question of property rights. It was stated that whilst the "state was giving the enterprises the right of possession, of the diffusion and use of the means of production", and whilst the means of production "lay at the disposal of the enterprise they would nevertheless remain State [social] property, the economic independence of the enterprise being relative".⁷

Leading economists such as Popov and Abalkin had become increasingly critical of the state sector. Popov advocated the recognition and necessity of different forms of property and socialism. He was particularly fond of the Swedish experiment in the creation of what he called a "social fund of consumption". Not so much the transfer to the market in its "elemental form" but a progressive kind of welfare state.⁸ Other authors perceived the necessity of the development of co-operative⁹, mixed and personal property, with the simultaneous diffusion of State property backed up in law to regional and local States.¹⁰

Others argued that whilst the democratic half of the principle of democratic centralism had historically failed to manifest itself, its principles should be maintained as the only way of ensuring the co-ordinated development of society. The problem lay primarily in the administrative methods of management, where the practice of 'mestinchestvo', that is giving priority to local interests had all but vanished, and where individual and collective needs had become completely subordinate to general state interests. The solution lay in the marriage of central economic planning with commodity money relations, in the development of workers' control of the means of production through the Council of Labour Collectives, and with the rapid development of co-operative and individual labour activity.¹¹

Few would probably argue with Abalkin's claim that in many situations, under the banner of socialist state property, workers had seldom enjoyed democratic control over the production process, but rather new forms of exploitation and alienation. However, he argued for the retention of central organs of management or indeed state ownership. The latter in particular

⁷ *Novoe Kachestvo* op.cit p158

⁸ See editorial in *Voprosi Ekonomiki*. - *K nashi chitateli*. - No 1.-1990 - p 3-13

⁹ It has become popular as a validation of Co-operatives, to recall Lenins comments on Socialism as being a "system of civilised co-operatives"

¹⁰ *Sitnikov*, B P. I. - *Sotsialistichiski predpriatiya ot podchinenia k samostoatelnosti*. - Moskovski Rabochi. - 1989 (Socialist enterprises from subordination to independence)

¹¹ See *Vid. L. B. e Ivanov. E. A.* - *Novaya filosofaya planirovania*. - Moskva.-*Ekonomika*.-1990.-p37 -48. (New philosophy of planning)

circumstances he maintained could still offer the best service and the former should be transformed into organs for regulating the "socialist market".¹²

In addition it was suggested that there was an immediate need to set up a centralised banking and financing system.¹³ It was proposed that Gosplan should become more of a data base and resource centre, which rather than being the source of directives, collected and collated plans as they arrived from individual enterprises. Other central organs would have become responsible for the overall State strategy for economic, social, and scientific development.¹⁴

But in none of this was there any question of the bureaucracy renouncing its hold on state power. What was being offered was not the dismantling of the state system but its transformation.

The most important set of laws were those passed concerning the economic restructuring of state enterprises and production organisations. These laws affected not only the relations between the State and the construction organisations, but also internally, that is between an enterprise's or combine's management and its workers.

The thrust of these proposals for economic reform were centred around a form of state deregulation of the national economy. The objective was to relinquish the State's direct control whilst retaining the formal ownership of enterprises. The intention was that they would operate on a *cost accounting, self managing and self-financing basis*- the three main principles of "khozraschot". There was in essence nothing mysterious about these reforms and they can be seen for what they were, a straightforward extension of commodity money relations mixed up with a self justifying language about the "diffusion of rights"

decentralisation

The reform of architectural design and the building industry was intended to have taken place throughout all levels of management, from the ministry all the way down to the labour collective. But for reform to occur within the enterprise, it also had to take place at the higher executive levels of the industry, in the Ministries and State Committees. In line with

12 **Voprosi Ekonomiki** - *Radikalnaya reforma- ot konceptsia k praktishim dayistviem.* - No 1.-1990.-p14-16 (Radical reform from conception to practical action)

13 **Voprosi Ekonomiki.**- *Sozialno-ekonomichiski krizees kak krizees gosudarstvonnovo sobstvennosti.* - No.2-1990 -p62 (The socio-economic crisis as a crisis of State socialist property)

14 **Figurnov. E** - *Centralised management and the market.* - In a "Case for perestroika"-Progress.-1989. p 86-87

general laws on economic development, decision making power over design and capital investment in construction was to have been decentralised away from Moscow to Republican and local social organisations. As if in recognition of this, the twelfth five year plan proposed to implement a plan for decentralisation¹⁵. It was openly admitted that the central management of construction activity particularly with regard to housing, cultural and industrial buildings, had given rise to "negative tendencies" whereby the control and responsibility of local organisations in the field of construction had been greatly weakened. As a result, fourteen construction ministries were created, one for each Republic with increased rights and powers on matters concerning construction activity. Alongside these new ministries specialist ministries responsible for gas and transport would have continued to operate. As before, however, the State Committee for Construction, 'Gostroi' would retain its name and most of its previous functions with regard to party decisions on major issues of capital investment. ¹⁶

reforming the enterprise

Another set of laws passed in June 1987 created the general framework for the transfer of enterprises onto a system of 'full cost accounting', *polnie khozrascot*.¹⁷

In the process of the transfer to *polnie khozraschot*, state architectural and building firms through self management and self-financing were to have gained greater economic independence. Under the conditions of *khodzraschot*, enterprises, whilst having to respond to five year plans in respect to any state orders, economic norms and limits, could to a large extent work out their own individual plans independently.¹⁸

What was intended to have emerged in the building industry (as in other sectors) was a market for design and construction services and products. Here the old state enterprises would compete with and forge direct commercial links with the co-operative sector, each other and potentially with foreign backed joint ventures. The state would still remain a major client, reaping a proportion of the surplus, whilst the enterprise would eventually be responsible for all its running costs and capital expenditure, operating independently of state subsidies.

¹⁵ See Brukov, Domoshirov- *Dvenatsataya niatiletki stroiteli*. - Moskva, Stroizdat.- 1987

¹⁶ *Stroitelnie Komplex*-op.cit p64 - 66

¹⁷ *Polnie khozraschot e samo-fiancirovania. Sbornik Dokumentov* - Moskva-Izdatelstvo Pravda - 1988 -p5-37 - 1. *O perevodie obyedinenie, predpriatii u organizatzii otracli narodnovo khozaistvo na polnie khozaistvennie raschot u samofinancirovania*.-Postanovlenbia Centralnovo Komiteta KPSS -11. 6.1987 No 665 pp37 - 2. *Zakon CCCP o gosudarstvennom predpriatii. Priniat na sedmoi sessii Verxnovo Sovieta*. 30.6.1987 (Both laws refer to the re-organisation of state enterprises)

¹⁸ Aganbegyan A - *The challenge; economics of perestroika*. - Hutchinson 1988.-*The radical reform of management*. pp 109 - 123.

the reform of labour

Perhaps the most important legal reforms were those relating to labour. Despite the monolithic blanket against all overt dissent, since the 1960s there had been a gentle thaw, as much to with the conscious recognition on the part of the bureaucracy that the continual repression of the masses had absolute limits. During the 1980s work in the field of political economy, and the social sciences had begun to find a critical space. In a system that celebrated 'labour' and elevated the concept of 'work' and the State to universal and mythical levels, the system of closure could never be complete.

The resurgence of interest in the *character* and *content* of labour was contemporaneous with the publication of Braverman's book and the labour process debate that followed. In the USSR as in the west, attention became focused not only on *what* labour was producing, but in *what social form it was doing it*.

The orthodox position as ever was defined by the identification of socialism with state property, and that was only through Statified forms of control and ownership that historical contradictions could be resolved. Thus a book prepared for translation in the 1980s declared in time honoured fashion that "once private ownership of the means of production is abolished, and the means of production are put at the disposal of the Socialist State, it becomes impossible for one group to appropriate surplus from another"¹⁹ But alongside the reaffirmation of the supremacy of State property, there occurred other texts in which contradictions were openly discussed.

To have even mentioned the "dialectical relationship between the technico-technological and socio-economic aspects of labour" twenty years earlier would have been tantamount to a criminal offence.²⁰ Up to the mid 1950s questions concerning abstract labour had simply not been discussed. Up to that point value relations were considered to have only a "formal character" in a society that had transcended all of the fundamental contradictions by which capitalism was defined.²¹

However from the mid 1950s, the Soviet economy became increasingly reliant on commodity-money forms of regulation as the methods associated with cost accounting, (*khozraschot*),

19 Manevic, Efim - *Labour in the USSR* - Progress Publishers - 1985 - p174

20 Ivanova, R.K - Karpukhin, D, N, - *Izmeneniya kharaktera i sodershaniya truda na sovremennom etape razvitiia sotsializm* - Nauka- Moskva - 1987 - p169

21 Smirnov et al - *Obshestvennaya forma truda pri sotzializma* - Moskva Eknomika - 1984 - p91 (The social form of labour under socialism)

were given a new lease of life. From a symptom of capitalist degeneration, by the early 'eighties value relations (*stoimostnie otnoshenie*) were claimed as an "integral element in the system of socialist production relations".²² In the face of glaring economic decline, economists and sociologists could no longer ignore what were called "contradictions arising from the character of labour", that were "hindering" economic development.²³

With a few exceptions, Soviet economic literature had been dominated by the notion that under socialism, abstract labour has the "form of direct social labour". Socialist labour came to be defined by the negation of the fetish character that distinguished the development of abstract social labour under capitalism. Accordingly, the "socialist social form of labour is characterised by the liquidation of the antagonistic character of the division of labor and product into the necessary and the surplus". In addition, socialist labour acquires a new non contradictory homogeneity that results from the liquidation of the contradiction between mental and manual labour and between labour in the town and in the country.²⁴

Thus, under socialism the "maturity" of social labour is expressed in its immediately visible and directly social character, as opposed to capitalism where the mechanisms for extracting surplus are buried and obscured in the wage relation. It was acknowledged that this sought-for maturity in the form of labour had not yet been attained. One contradiction it was suggested lay between the 'direct social aspect', and its simultaneous 'relative isolation' that arose from the divergent "isolated" interests of enterprises in the Soviet economy²⁵. The study of this contradiction between its effectively social and private characters was essential for the understanding of commodity money relations under socialism. As part of this theoretical programme, a new analysis was needed of the role and fate of the *subjects* of economic relations, in particular the labour collectives, and how and whether State property operated as social property. Soviet economists did not need western theorists, to point out that a juridical relationship that defines rights of ownership, does not guarantee access to the use of the means of production. By implication "social property is only realised as collective property through its solitary proprietorship (*obosoblenie vladenie*)". In other words the point of general social property is quite simply to give the "production unit" the possibility of

22 *ibid* 91

23 Ivanova, R,K - Karpukhin, D, N, - *Izmeneniya kharaktera i sodershaniya truda na sovremennom etape razvitiia sotsializm* - Nauka- Moskva - 1987 - p167

24 *ibid* p173

25 Smirnov et al - *Obshchestvennaya forma truda pri sotzializma* - Moskva Eknomika - 1984 -p94-95

using it, and there can be "no other point for the functioning of general (obshenarodniye) property"²⁶.

The deterioration in the productivity of labour lay at the centre of the economic crisis, and one of the reasons for this was precisely the alienation of the Soviet worker from state property. The motivation of workers and their allegiance to the reform movement was vital not only in regenerating the Soviet economy but in the reproduction of the bureaucracy as a ruling class. Inevitably then the new labour laws displayed a dual aspect. They were principally aimed at motivating productivity by the introduction of limited 'workers' rights' in relationship to state property, that is how to make it more fully socialised, and a series of economic reforms that made the wage almost entirely linked to the work output of the labour collective. By making the collectives directly responsible for the continuation of the crisis, the bureaucracy had found another way of deflecting attention away from its own activities. The next section looks at the details of the proposals for the political and economic restructuring of the labour process

"brigadniye podriad"

Within the enterprise, the production brigade was the primary cell of the labour collective. It was the brigades who actually carried out the building work, and the principles of "khozraschot" were supposed to have been extended to the operations of these brigades of workers. This became known as 'brigadnie podriad', and by the mid 1980s the number of brigades operating in the industry on this basis had reached a quarter of a million.²⁷ By increasing the role that self-management and self-financing played throughout the enterprise, the objective had been to raise productivity, encourage motivation, improve quality and to instil in workers an interest in the end products of their work.

Under *brigadniye podriad*, brigades received whole packages of work from the management of the enterprise. As in any contractual relationship a price was agreed and the brigade became responsible for the completion of the task, for its own internal organisation and management. Their wages were directly linked to their output and they received what was effectively a *collective piece rate*, which was then divided according to skill and what was called the *co-efficient of labour participation*. The term, *kollektivniye podriad*, 'collective

²⁶ Aroio, J - *Zakon stoimosti pri sotzialism* - Moskva Ekonomika - 1988 - p29-31 - (The law of value under socialism)

²⁷ Mansurov, N, C, i Kasumov, T, K, - *Trudovoi kollektiv stroiteli*. - Stroizdat - Moskva -1985 - p44 (The builders labour collective)

contracts', was when all the brigades in an enterprise were operating according to the principles of *khozraschot*.

But as we have seen "*khozraschot*" like "*brigadnie podriad*" was not new. Lenin first advocated cost accounting at the beginning of NEP. Similarly Boxan ²⁸ points out that by the late eighties, the Soviet economy was entering into the fifth phase of 'brigade contracts' which were first seen on building sites in 1931.²⁹ By the end of the decade stimulated in particular by the initiatives of the famous 'hero building workers', Zlobin and Serikova, '*brigadniye podriad*' had become the pre-dominant form of labour organisation in the industry, or seen from another angle, the predominant method of extracting surplus from workers. The main distinctions between the system in the late 1980s and previous phases, was first its generalisation throughout the industry. Second the idea of "*ckvoznie brigadniye podriad*", when all the departments within a combine from materials manufacture, to transport, and to site assembly are working together as a kind of production line. Third, and more importantly, were the legal rights given to workers as part of the reform package to actually determine the actual tasks themselves, as opposed to simply being delegated responsibilities by an often unaccountable management system. This was not unlike the 'job enrichment' programmes, that accompanied the transition towards the regime of flexible accumulation in the west.

Its objectives were in many ways exactly the same, how to increase the 'value' productivity of labour whilst preserving the wage relation. Put another way it could be seen as the difference between a highly restricted and in many ways illusory form of workers self management, to one which seeks to introduce real workers power.

workers' control and the STKs

One of the principal innovations of the perestroika era, was the development of the Labour Collectives and in particular the Council of Labour Collectives, known as the STK's, '*Soviet Trudovik Kollektivov*'. This organisation was introduced to assist in the transfer of enterprises and brigades onto the conditions of *khozraschot*, and to ensure the rights of workers' brigades within the enterprise. Whereas the construction *brigade* was the primary

²⁸ Bokhan B.F - *Brigadnie podriad v stroitelestve*. - Moskva - Stroizdat -1987-pp 4 -19 (Brigade contracts in construction)

²⁹ By 1935, 26% of all construction brigades were operating according to the principles of '*brigadniye podriad*'. Under this system, a foreman would give tasks to brigades in accordance with centrally determined norms concerning productivity, quality and quantity. The brigade would subsequently be responsible for the completion of the tasks set.

cell of organised labour on the construction site, the *labour collective* was considered to be the "fundamental cell of socialist society, uniting all the workers within an enterprise".³⁰ The Council of Labour Collectives, the STK, was the executive body of the Labour Collective, the principal "organ of socialist self-management" to which were elected representatives from all of an enterprise's workers. As such they were intended to include not only rank and file workers from the brigades, but also brigadiers, masters and representatives from the administration, with the provision in law that the latter would represent no more than a quarter of the elected personell.³¹ It amounted in many ways to one more contradictory attempt by the bureaucracy to introduce workers' control without relinquishing the basis of their own power. It was only now after seventy years that the working class could apparently be trusted with the management of an enterprise.³²

all power to the labour collectives

One of the main rallying slogans of the reform movement, "All power to the Soviets" was now to be accompanied by "All power to the Labour Collectives"³³. Here we are reminded of Trotsky's warning against organisational fetishism, when the discussion of the actual class character of organisations is replaced by empty slogans. However, to dismiss all of the reforms as bureaucratic tricks is to ignore the very real attempts, however flawed the arguments, to rescue socialism by rethinking many of its fundamental categories. As 'glasnost' gripped academia, authors became bolder, arguing that workers in the course of Soviet history had lost any real opportunity to participate in either the management of enterprises or in fundamental questions concerning economic and social development, as a direct consequence of all decision making power lying in the hands of the directors of administrative bodies.³⁴

The remedy for this alienation, for this feeling of powerlessness and for the absence of any real control over the means of production lay in the further democratisation of production relations and in strengthening of the role played by the STKs. For many, the possibility of

³⁰ *Trud i zarabotnaya plata v SSSR - Slovar e spravochnik* - Moskva. Ekonomika - 1989 - p366 (Labour and wages handbook)

³¹ *ibid* p 319

³² See for instance Oleg Yun - *Improvement of Soviet Economic Planning* - Moscow - Progress - 1988 -pp71-83.

³³ This was articulated in a more long winded version; "the increasing level of maturity of the relations of general-peoples property, is expressed in the modern period by the difusion of rights to primary production units, securing their economic independence on the basis of full Khozraschot, the creation of appropriate conditions for the expansion of economic 'emulation', for the satisfaction of the demands of consumers, and for the development of socialist self managment, exerting direct influence on the character of social labour". In Ivanova, R, K, and Karpukhin, D, N, - *Izmeneniya khractera i sodershaniya truda na sovremenom etapiye razvitia sotsializm* - Nauka - Moskva - 1985 - p175

³⁴ Gerchikov, V.I. - *Demokratizatzia upravlenie na promishlennom predpriatie*. In "Ekonomicheskaya Soziologia e peretsroika." Progress 1989 p122. (The democratisation of management in industrial enterprises)

building a new phase in the development of socialism was closely bound up with ensuring the representation of workers from the brigades in the STKs. It was further dependent on guaranteeing the rights of the Council of Labour Collectives to run an enterprise on the basis of self-management, to participate fully in all major decisions, to elect managers and directors and simultaneously dismantle the legacy of 'edinonachalia', one man management.³⁵

Again we cannot escape the 'constitutional contradiction' that laws granting the STK greater rights and powers in the management of the enterprise as part of the transition to full cost accounting were passed. But then most Soviet literature on labour questions is imbued with the rhetoric of democracy. Ever since the 1960s Party resolutions had consistently referred to the need to diffuse rights to workers, and in 1983 a law was passed granting to labour collectives rights in the management of an enterprise³⁶. Amongst other things were recommendations for the participation of the collectives in economic management, the planning of wages and labour organisation.³⁷ Five years later with the advent of perestroika these rights were to be further extended;

" The management of the enterprise is to be realised on the basis of the principle of democratic centralism, uniting centralised direction and the socialist self management of the labour collective. Socialist self-mangement is to be realised in the conditions of the wide and open participation of the whole collective and its social organisations in the working out, control and implementation of important descisions , in the election of directors and managers and in the management of the enterprise", and further on; " The Union of Labour Collectives.... decides questions on the development of the management and organisational structure of the enterprise" ³⁸

Coupled with another law passed on the 8th of February 1988, obliging Party and Trade Union organisations to assist fully in maintaining the authority and rights of the labour collectives in matters concerning production, social development and labour questions, it would appear at least formally, that workers were being given legal rights unheard of since the proclomation on workers' control in 1917.

³⁵ *ibid* p125-126

³⁶ "Zakon SSSR o trudovik kollektivov e povishenie ix rol v upravlenie predpriatiami, uchershdeniami, organizatiami." 1983- Verkhovno Sovieta SSSR

³⁷ Mansurov op.cit 30 - 35

³⁸ Sbornik Documentov op.cit p13 and p127 -O poriadke izbrania sovieta trudovik kollektivov e provedenia vborot rukovodeeteli predpriatii.Postanovlenie centralnovo Komiteta KPSS.

But this of course needs qualifying. Leaving aside momentarily the degree to which the labour collectives were able to exercise these rights in practice within the enterprise, the details of the laws were ambiguous, especially with regard to the Union of Labour Collectives ability to influence or elect the top managers and directors of enterprises³⁹. Whilst in the new language of democracy workers were supposed to have the right to determine all aspects of an enterprises social and economic development, the law would imply that these rights were restricted to the lower levels of management and that ultimate power and responsibility remained in the hands of senior administrators and directors, the "higher organs of power".

In the absence of a democratic revolution of senior management, directors simply remained Party-State appointees. This placed obvious limits on the possibilities of achieving any real democratisation of the labour process.⁴⁰ As with the passing of other laws, there was of course no guarantee that increasing the rights of labour collectives, of republican and local social organisations would ensure more control in practice. There remained an ambiguous relationship whilst the republican ministries stayed ultimately subordinate to the decisions made by Gosstroi, and the labour collectives to the higher organs of management. Like the issue of the economic independence of enterprises, the independence of the republics, and the issue of real workers democracy persisted in being at the best relative, and at the worst illusory.

talking to the workers -Trade Unions , STKs, and architects

After years of mythology about the high levels of training, health and safety and plan fulfilment, the 1987 Construction Workers' Trade Union Congress began to rediscover an element of self criticism and contradiction. Just as the Writers' Union, and subsequently the Architects' Union began to feel the pulse of openness so the building workers. The central committee duly called for the transfer of all construction trusts onto a full cost accounting basis, the "new economic conditions" of perestroika, polnie khozraschot.⁴¹

³⁹ On the one hand the labour collectives were being given the right to elect their own representatives to the Council of Labour Collectives, and subsequently on the workers behalf this Council was supposed to have the right for organising the election of directors. On the other hand, the law stated explicitly that both elections were to be carried out under the supervision of the Party. In addition whilst any workers in theory could propose their own candidate, both this and the actual procedural matters of the election had to be agreed with what are called "higher organs of power".

⁴⁰ "Councils of labour collectives were established in the factories, but in most cases the administration laid down their powers and tasks and the method by which they were to be set up. Very often the directors headed the new "organs of self management" and turned them into an appendage of the administrative apparatus." Kagarlitsky - *The dialectic of change*. - Verso-1990 -p350

⁴¹ These notes and the following are taken from the tenth congress of the Union of Construction Workers "Materiali desiatovo ciezda profsoyuza rabochik stroitelestva" - Moskva - 1987

In line with the traditions of Soviet wage policy it sought the strengthening of the role that commodity-money relations, wages and material incentives played in stimulating labour productivity. In a slightly more optimistic note it argued in line with the new laws for the necessity of strengthening the power of work brigades, the increased diffusion of rights within the enterprise and reducing the management apparatus. Whilst at a rhetorical level such proclamations are like many of the general slogans of perestroika about mobilising the initiative of the masses and increasing democratic control over the labour process, it was already becoming clear in 1987 that real success was slow in materialising. Only half of the construction enterprises had commenced the transition to full *khozaschot*. Two of the reasons it would seem were associated with management opposition firstly because it made managers accountable for their activities and secondly because of the potential increase in workers' rights that the full implementation of *khozaschot* would bring. There were public admissions that the flow of trained building workers entering the industry was too slow, and that labour discipline was becoming steadily worse, such that in the construction materials sector it was estimated that one in every six workers was a truant. Whilst the Union continued to provide holiday and rest homes, life on the building site still displayed a high degree of accidents. The eleventh five year plan had seen seventy one million working days lost through sickness and illness, 274,000 per day due in the main to unsatisfactory working conditions particularly related to noise, dust and vibration.

A review of the development of the new economic conditions and of the STKs in the late 1980s revealed some alarming contradictions.⁴² A survey amongst the workers in the building materials sector of the Moscow region, had shown that only 9.4% of rank and file workers were participating in the STK. Furthermore, sixty per cent of workers were completely ignorant of how the STK worked. In general amongst the Moscow construction organisations three types of STK were emerging. In the first case the council was little more than a council of existing directors, the antithesis of the objectives of the STKs. The second case was where the council was concerned mainly with immediate production issues like the need to rebuild a factory. Again this council was predominantly made up of managers. The third case was where the council was operating as a transitional measure between the existing council of brigadiers and the introduction of "full blooded organs of self management". The success and transcendence of the third type was further hindered by the confusion as to the precise role of the labour collectives. Within any typical construction organisation there already existed the Council of Brigadiers, Party and trade union Committees, and the Economic Council. It

⁴² Shkurko, S, and Simakov A, G - *Soviet trudovo kollektiva*. - Moskovski Rabochi.-1989.-p38-70 (The Union of labour collectives)

emerged that over half of Trade Union activists within the industry, thought that the STK should be actively involved in an enterprises management, although only 14 % had actually witnessed this in practice.⁴³

To complicate matters further only 17.5% of workers, and 38% of Trade Union activists had read the new laws and understood them. Once again Soviet Society was witnessing the paradox of the failure of laws to manifest themselves in practice. The reasons were clear and were connected with the difficulty in introducing new working methods into an industry dominated by a vertical system of commands.

“The traditions of the administrative command method of management, the authoritarian tendencies of many directors is unfortunately very alive”⁴⁴

From democratic organs of workers' self management the STKs were fast becoming just another subdivision of the bureaucracy. This in particular was borne out by another survey in 1988 of the social composition of the STKs in the construction industry in the Moscow region. This showed that on average only 21.9% of the 'elected' representatives in the STK's were rank and file workers. The remaining 78% of representatives were exclusively made up of senior directors and middle level managers.

Whilst the late 1980s most certainly saw the development of an aura of 'openness', the glasnost side of the leap forward, and the creation of an atmosphere where criticism and opposition could begin to be publicly articulated, in general it has to be said that real changes in working practices within the construction industry were very slow in materialising, and arguably remain so. A study trip to the Namangan region of Uzbekistan in May 1988 had shown that whilst some changes had occurred they were few and far between.

The Major of the local soviet reported that for the first time since coming to power, it was unnecessary for the local soviet to gain any higher authority on decisions concerning house construction, and that the individual and co-operative sector was beginning to develop, such that by the year 2000, it was estimated that 50% of new house construction would be being completed by individuals. Also, whilst there persisted a shortage in the availability of

43 *ibid* p52

44 *ibid* p65

building materials, new laws obliged state building materials suppliers to sell to members of the public.

At the other end of the scale the manager of a the local DSK, a state house building combine, reported that all eight hundred of the concrete panel factory and site work-force were working on the basis of brigadnie podriad, with brigades varying in size from 18 to 50 workers. The most revealing information came from the results of a questionnaire distributed to forty construction workers, both to site workers such as concrete erectors and carpenters, and factory workers such as machine operators and formworkers. In response to the question of whether they considered the trade union's work to be adequate in the sphere of health and safety, special clothes and work conditions there was an emphatic 'no' from almost all of them. They were virtually unanimous in their view that the introduction of brigadnie podriad had seen an increase in productivity, but no equivalent increase in wages and no obvious improvement in the quality of work. In reply to another question as to whether as a result of perestroika they had more control as workers in the management and running of the combine, the majority not only commented that they were not being given access to the levers of power, but that generally speaking perestroika had yet to significantly manifest itself in their lives either inside or outside of work. To qualify this, two workers noted that whilst perestroika was very slow in getting off the ground, they had as workers theoretically been given more rights, the problem was that the majority of workers did not comprehend how to exploit these new powers and did not understand the objectives of the programme of economic restructuring.

In reply to a Soviet questionnaire asking a group of building workers, first "Whether you believe in perestroika ?", and second, "what do you expect from perestroika ?", three categories of answers appeared. The first attitude was "yes we believe and we are waiting for our independence", the second, "no we do not believe and we do not expect anything particularly good, how about, housing , clothes and food", and the third asked why "the question was couched in such a religious way, why should one blindly believe, and as for what to expect, it is simple, normal working conditions" in which work would be "intelligent, peaceful, creative and without conflict". The author of the questions concluded that what was needed was the transition from "unscientific, bureaucratic, destructive methods of management to democratic, constructive methods of self management and people's power".⁴⁵

⁴⁵ *Arkhitektura i stroitelstvo Rossii - Perestroika; provovaya ekonomika e upravlenie* - No 7 - 1989 - p18-19. (Perestroika; economic law and management)

Similarly, N.Travkin one of the pioneers of brigade contracts and Labour Collectives in the construction industry comments that, "if we can combine the work of the labour collectives councils with the system of Soviets, we will have real democracy".⁴⁶

Architectural workers and Technology

Beyond the restructuring of social relations throughout the industry, another precondition for a radical change in the qualitative aspects of the Soviet built environment implied a fundamental change in the construction industry's technological base. But as we have noted, such a transformation would have involved a massive devaluation of fixed capital as obsolete concrete production plants closed and new production processes were created. Attempts were being made to introduce a degree of flexibility into the mass production process, in order to produce curved components and different shaped panels, theoretically allowing greater room for creativity in the design stage. But this like the few experiments in cast in situ concrete work, "monolit", and brick construction was lacking in research funding and plagued by the poor quality of manufacture of materials. As of 1988 90% of all new housing construction in Moscow was still being built out of large prefabricated concrete panels, in up to 25 storey high blocks. (See fig 113)

The problem was exacerbated by the lack of suitably trained building workers who were able and available to cope with a planned diversification and change of direction in the development of building technology. This had become glaringly obvious when Soviet architects were faced with the problems of either restoring ancient monuments or rehabilitating old hotels to western European standards. Without new technology and newly trained labour the architect's task of providing Soviet society with a qualitative leap forward would remain impossible .

Nevertheless, the late 1980s saw the development of a body of work that gained international attention, entitled 'boomashnaya arkhitektura', paper architecture.⁴⁷ The content of this work was valuable because it acted as a catalyst for a sorely needed debate on the state of the profession which like the building industry was languishing in a sea of inertia. At one level through its range of metaphorical, bleak visions and apocalyptic images, it represented a satirical comment on the condition of Soviet society and its built

⁴⁶ Travkin, N - *Democratisation*. - In "Soviet scene 1989; One way ticket to democracy" - Progress- 1989 - p15

⁴⁷ For a detailed analysis of this work and the power struggle within the Architects Union see Cooke.C. - *A picnic by the roadside or work in hand for the future* ", in "Nostalgia of culture; Contemporary Soviet visionary architecture." - Architectural Association- London - 1988.

THE TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF HOUSING



The attempt to introduce a greater flexibility and diversity into the mass pre-fabricated production of concrete panels and components. Moscow, 1988

FIG 113

environment. On another level it was criticised for not engaging with the very real problems that were being faced such as leaking roofs, what to do with the first generation of systems building, demolish or rehabilitate, collapsing infrastructure and so on. In truth like all such experiments in language it had the ability of being heroic or tragic, optimistic or despairing. (See fig 114)

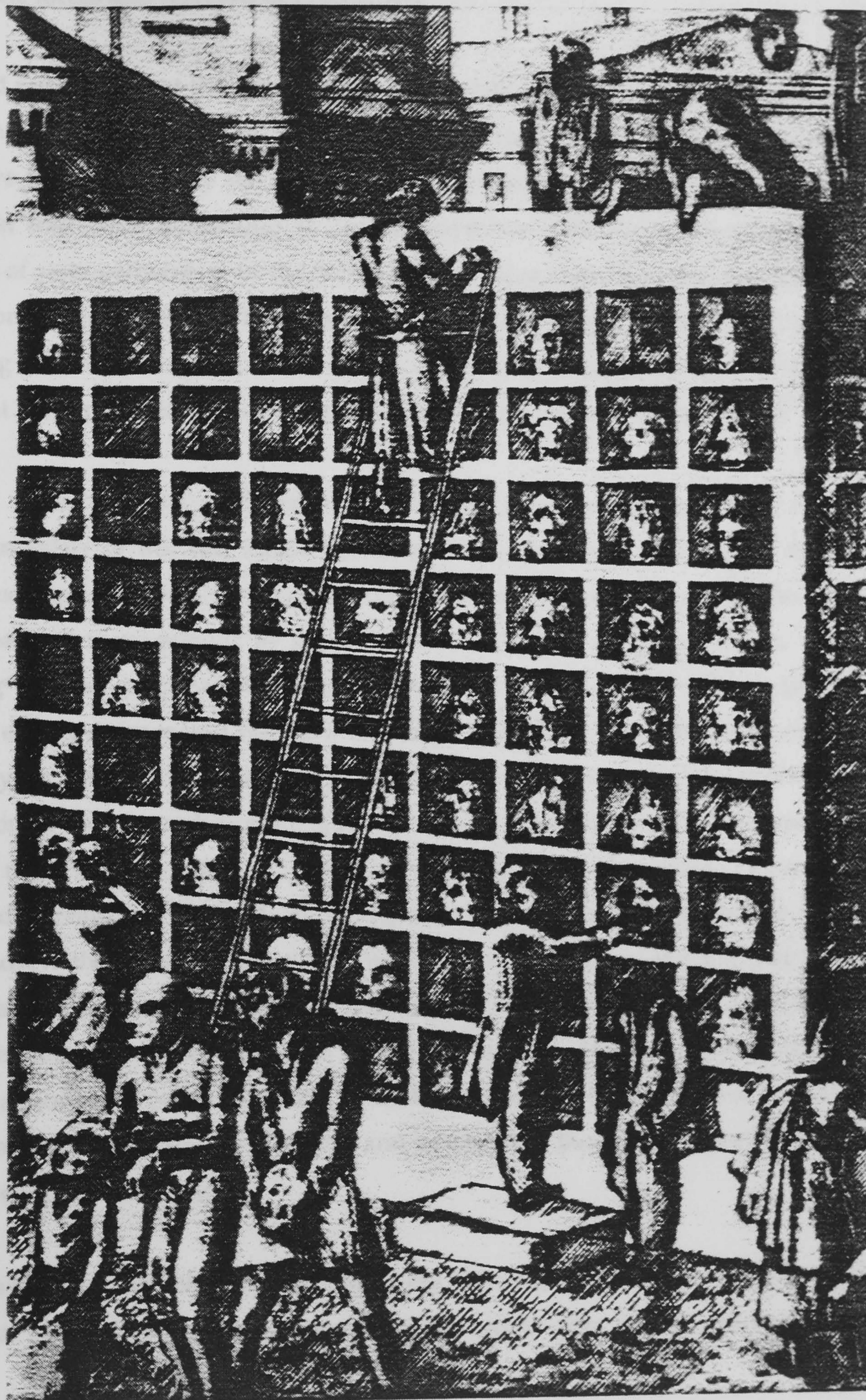
For the majority of architects, the main problem was how to regain a position in the design process from where they could assist in the creation of new types of social relations so as to stimulate the future development of Soviet architecture in a direction that would make it more democratic and responsive to specific needs. On this front there have been several significant developments. Whilst hitherto unheard of mechanisms were being set up to involve users and members of the public in matters concerning town planning and design, the Architects Union saw a heated debate, a change in leadership and the election of an architectural lobby to the Supreme Soviet to campaign for changes in the law. Simultaneously, following the new laws on Co-operatives, a few bold groups have set up design co-operatives, and new and independent research departments have begun to emerge⁴⁸. These changes are of course important, but there remained the problem of how to regenerate and invigorate the State design offices. By 1990 in a considerable number of the many enormous and unwieldy offices, the process of transfer to *khozrascot* had at least begun. This had seen the division of design teams into much smaller collectives headed by senior architects. Relative to the past these new collectives gained considerably more control over the creative process and the choice of work. In a discussion over the new forms of design activity it was proposed to create associations of design teams that would eventually be completely self managing, and be able to independently define their volume of work and wages. On whether this restructuring had seen a radical improvement in the quality of work, opinions were divided. In reply to the affirmative there was of course a negative response, which pointed out that such a qualitative transition was impossible without the transformation of the construction industry's material base and the creation of new clients and customers.⁴⁹

The crisis for which perestroika was supposed to have been the medicine, is often portrayed as a crisis of productivity, of bad management and the failure to achieve a qualitative technological leap forward in sectors outside of defence. In some ways of course this is exactly

48 Whilst perestroika provided the pre-conditions for the development of cooperatives, they were on the whole restricted to the services sector and consumer items.

49 *Arkhitektura i stroitelestvo* - *Krishna dliya svobodee* - No 4 -1990 - P6-7 (A roof for freedom)

PAPER ARCHITECTURE



Krupin, A , Miroshin, A and Tregubova, O - *The intelligent market*, 1987

what it is. But like NEP the real reasons are to be found in the contradictory relationship between the forces and relations of production.

Lenin had perceived that the continuation of the state ownership of the means of production, of nationalisation during the 1920s would inevitably hinder the development of the productive forces. Similarly the architects and builders of perestroika were dealing with the realisation that State ownership is not synonymous with social ownership, and that the character of state ownership in the Soviet Union rather than liberating the productive forces had distorted and hindered their development. Perestroika like the period of NEP saw a deepening of class and social contradictions. There was no guarantee despite the optimism of some, that the process of restructuring would lead to a new type of socialism.⁵⁰

Travkins' vision of socialism based on the union of local soviets and labour collectives was already in crisis in the late 1980s. Criticism and reports were mounting that the labour collectives elections were being rigged and fixed, and that there was very little willingness on the part of management to support the Collectives' right to manage. Furthermore, following Yeltsin's proposal in 1990 to privatise and sell off considerable portions of Russian industry except defence and railways to foreign capital, it was difficult to imagine foreign firms buying into an industry where the managers were elected by workers. As if in recognition of this contradiction the Supreme Soviet in the middle of 1990 passed yet another law with regards to the rights of labour collectives. This new law, passed by a desperate and frightened bureaucracy reneged on the radical content of the laws passed in 1987 and 1988, and withdrew the right of labour collectives to elect managers, arguing that managers and workers should be represented equally within the STK.⁵¹ This apparent cynicism from the ruling bureaucracy was only matched by the efforts of the Moscow soviet to dilute the social crisis by agreeing to the construction of a McDonalds hamburger 'palace' and a Pizza Hut, which along with new business centres and hotels were the most noticeable of perestroika's achievements in architecture.

The realisation by some that the dialectic of the productive forces and relations of production needed a systematic re-elaboration,⁵² and others that Soviet marxism had become

⁵⁰ See for instance *Voprosi Ekonomiki* - No 4 1990 p21 article by Berliner.G

⁵¹ See Panitch.L and Gindin.S - *Soviet workers;a new beginning ?* - in "Monthly Review"-vol 42.-No 11. April 1990. A report on a series of meetings with workers organisations in Togliatti and Yaroslavl to discuss the success of the laws concerning workers rights.

⁵² Oizerman T. I - *The strategy of acceleration* - In "Soviet society; philosophy of development" Progress 1988. p90-91. Amongst other things he argues that attention should turn to issues such as the distribution

vulgarised and corrupt,⁵³ came too late to rescue marxism in the Soviet Union from the almost universal contempt held for it amongst the young. This was something that different wings of the the bureaucracy could capitalise upon as a power struggle erupted in the early 1990's.

By this stage the USSR was hovering between what had become the 'fetishism of the plan', that is the subordination of human needs and values to the quantitative fulfilment of the plan, and the "fetishism of the commodity"- that is the subordination of human needs and values to the operations of the market. Both fetishisms reduce socio economic progress to numbers and surpluses, quality to quantity, labour power to an input co-efficient and tenants' rights to square metres. Thus the new Russia finds itself again in a situation that is historically unique. The conclusion speculates on the historical significance of this predicament.

of the means of production, the social division of labour and the relations of co-operation and subordination.

⁵³ Ambartsov. E. A. - *"Soviet society; philosophy of development"* - Progress-Moscow-1988 - p4-11.

Fragments of true stories from the last tourist

The lure of pointless speculation beckons all and sundry to pass meaningless judgement, and to affirm in a sweeping gesture the end of one historical epoch or the beginning of another. Not only was it the end of the USSR, but the end of socialism and all other 'modernist' conceits that revolved around some notion of a social totality in which universal emancipation and progress could be guaranteed.

But beneath the 'end of history' tourist din, a familiar army of cockroaches marches relentlessly through the humid walls of Muscovite flats. This drives the late twentieth century 'muzhik' to continue the hunt for the great Siberian mushroom, only to be confronted with bananas, for in the year 1994, everything began with a 'B'. Banks, BMW's, Bananas, Bullets, and Bandits.

Meanwhile the privatised paratroopers, employees of the new 'banana' Republic hustle the God ridden grandmothers from the streets. There is no place in the free market for one who is not 'protected', and protection like anything else has a price.

As old bandits become new bandits, apparatchiks become mercenaries and the squabble between them intensifies, we are left to applaud the continuity between old slogans and new. The joker censor has done no more than sprayed the white banners red, and substituted the phrase "invest your money in the Olga bank and we will guarantee you a 1000% profit", for "invest your labour in the State and we will guarantee you socialism".

It is plain for anyone who wishes to see, that "Obmen Valuta" (hard currency exchange), is a cynical quip on "Obman Valuta" (hard currency deceit). From this it is obvious that the authors of the guarded cynicism of old sloganeering have been courted and incorporated into the new regime, and are continuing to rewrite history, one of the greatest traditions of the Soviet bureaucracy.

In the heat wave of the summer madness of 94 no one can distinguish any longer between Lenin's mausoleum, the macabre disembodiment of history and the new Mac Donald's on Gorky Street, the officially franchised dream of not only culinary but cultural catastrophe. Outside in the streets between the neo-fascists and the hare-Krishna's, stalk fundamentalist American Christians selling God to the thousand year old Orthodox church. The invasion of godly right wing management consultants became proof that civilisation and salvation lies for ever in the west. The East, as we always suspected is inhabited by barbarians.

Pleasure is only a small part of the devil's agreement with daily life

The central argument of this thesis has been that changes in the social production and representation of labour and space are always linked to changes in the character of social relations, and that the examination of the historical transformation of the class and ideological structure of production provides us with a key to unlocking the mysteries of the built environment. With the transition to a society in which capitalist relations predominate and which are released from their staid forms, we would fully expect to see profound changes within the labour process and within the organisation and division of space. The construction of shops, kiosks, and the appearance of Turkish and new bands of migrant construction labour dressed up in corporate suits building banks, would seem to provide evidence of the liberation of the commodity form and of the development of markets for labour and land. However many of the changes are superficial and others simply formalise the inequalities that existed under the old regime. For the poor workers and pensioners there is little difference between the specialist shops in the old Union where Party and state bureaucrats could buy imported goods, and the appearance of French supermarkets that are equally beyond the pocket of average wage earners. The notion of a 'trickle down effect' is derided as much in Moscow as it is in the poverty stricken regions of western Europe.

Faced with the gnawing memory of inconceivable millions of dead, it is inevitable that many should seek solace in fantasy shopping and fantastic space. The Park of Economic Achievements becomes a giant supermarket, Yuri Gagarin plays host to a disco 'rave' scene, luxury apartments are available for sale in one of the wedding cakes and after years of prohibition the streets were awash with poisoned vodka and psychotic alcoholics. The grotesque kitsch of eating in the 'soho restaurant' in what was a workers club for a now defunct textile factory, is not lost on the dollar laden smiles of the nouveau riche who congregate and compete with each other in the new productivity challenge, to burn money faster than your neighbour. But for every one player in the casinos there are a thousand window shoppers. This is to be expected in a situation where class divisions are being intensified and mummified feudal relations, deep frozen socialist relations and embryonic capitalist relations are forged in a social formation that is spectacular and brutal.

In a fragment of time, social life spins in an historical circle that links together the years of 1989, 1936, 1917, 1905, 1861, and 1848. New NEP men, speculators, merchants, the old nomenclatura, and a new class of capitalists fill a landscape in which the appropriation of

surplus from labour takes on three distinctive forms. The first is not unlike a system of feudal bondage with parasitic speculators and entrepreneurs accumulating the surplus generated by labour with the sole purpose of hoarding it and spending it in ostentatious rituals of truly conspicuous consumption. The second is closer to the capitalist relation where a new group of industrialists hire labour but invest part of their profits back into production, and the last is similar to the old stasised forms, where the state appropriates the surplus from workers, the proceeds from which are used to subsidise social and economic development and prop up the system of privilege.

What had started in the mid eighties as a power struggle within the bureaucracy had acted as a catalyst in the slow consolidation of a new ruling class. But the emergence of new forms of property such as private and co-operative building and architectural enterprises outside of the tourist and services sector has been limited. Large scale industrial production including building remains within the state sector however ragged and unstable it may be. For these reasons alone it is unlikely that capitalism in Russia will develop in familiar ways .

Capitalist utopias have always been attractive to those in power in capitalist societies precisely because they offer the opportunity to eulogise about democracy and freedom whilst promising to leave the institutional structures that support private property intact. Within Russia, such magical assurances have inaugurated a new chapter in the history of mythologies. The development of new class relations has sharply exacerbated the temporally and spatially uneven and unequal character of social development. But this time no attempt is made to dress these contradictions in the language of socialist emancipation. On the contrary, freedom is to be delivered through the categories of interest, profit, rent and wages, the formula in which the social character of capitalist relations was first mystified.

If in 1980 the dollar was the symbol of spiritual and material enslavement, the paradox of the transformation of the devil into god is clear to a population who despite years of mass propaganda and repression retain a commitment to certain notions of equality and collective solidarity. The protagonists of the dollar utopia thus meet some deeply instilled beliefs in social justice one of the contradictory inheritances of the old Soviet States employment of revolutionary slogans.

Russian society remains locked in the contradiction between the fetishism of the commodity and the fetishism of the plan. In this the Russian state can no more dispense with planning

than Sony, ICI, or the British State. Nowhere is this more painfully revealed than in the field of architecture and construction, where the responses to the crisis have oscillated between the completely absurd, such as building 'ideal home suburbs' all around Moscow, selling the construction industry to foreign capital, to the deeply pessimistic but predictable indulgence in paper architecture.

In the vacuum left by the collapse of the Soviet system, capitalism can be declared as the end and goal of human progress, to the point where being synonymous with nature and the natural way of doing things, as a word and concept, capitalism begins to vanish from the vocabulary. This has thrown into sharp relief all of the previously cherished notions of freedom and history. Even if the old contradictions that have afflicted capitalist development for the last three hundred years still pre-dominate, new arguments and methods of communication are required to both describe it and provide a critique. As differential rents, private land ownership, and commercial districts become formalised within Moscow, the spatialisation of class contradictions are accentuated, but in a situation where the political forces that may have offered a critique have been discredited or kept locked away. The mass of workers are not of course gullible and passive recipients of such free market ideologies, and beneath the official version of Soviet history there had always remained at an informal and underground level an opposition who challenged both left and right wing orthodoxy's. But in the absence of a sustained critique workers are just as likely to support the forces of reaction as those of progress. This process of progressive political disintegration and nihilism is mirrored in the west, the difference being that whereas in Russia it is a process that is visible to all spectators, in the advanced capitalist nations the system of acquiescence and assimilation is far more subtle and sophisticated.

Here we have come almost full circle. Freedom means nothing if we do not possess the means to transform the material world. But this in itself is contingent on our desire to know freedom. We are left contemplating Hegel's notion that "World history is the progress of the consciousness of freedom - a progress whose necessity it is our business to comprehend"¹.

¹ Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich - *Realisation of spirit in history - Lectures on the philosophy of world history* - CUP - 1988 - p54 -55

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