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Review of Russian Housing in the Modern Age: Design and Social History

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tutional convulsions in that sector with a lively sense of their human impact. The chapter by Robert Lewis on the role of technology in the transformation of the economy gives a vivid sense of the campaigns and costly errors that undermined Soviet progress.

The chapter by Peter Gatrell on the 1914–1920 period of World War I and war communism assembles new statistical evidence to trace economic developments in a balanced and revealing way. The chapter by Mark Harrison on the 1939–1945 period of World War II draws on his major research effort to build a set of national accounts for these years and to trace the impact of wartime campaigns on the economy and the peoples of the USSR. Together with the attention given to the Russian starting point in 1913, these chapters link the whole record together to provide a new long-run perspective on the formative period in Soviet development.

The volume starts with an overview chapter, followed by a chapter on Soviet statistical skullduggery and then one on properly estimated national income. There is also an interesting chapter on employment and industrial labor by John Barber and Robert Davies, an intriguing one on transport by John Westwood and an informative one on foreign economic relations by Robert Lewis. Only a chapter on the service sectors dealing with education, medical care and the arts is lacking.

The economic system analyzed in this study prevailed for eight more years under Stalin, adding further distortions to the economy, and during the 1954–1991 period the deformed system simply proved to be unreformable. One might suggest, therefore, that this book covers the decisive events that account for the eventual collapse of the Soviet economic system.

Holland Hunter
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In their introduction to this volume the editors write: "Our authors seek to provide a comprehensive review of Russian housing design and practice, from the transformation of concepts of private housing during the two decades before 1917 to the creation of mass, industrialized housing structures in the post-Stalinist period." While they have succeeded admirably in fulfilling this primary goal, they have far exceeded it by compiling a cohesive, complex and at times moving history of an idea that continues to have very particular resonances in Russia. Representing a number of disciplines, the contributors treat the concept of housing in its broadest and most humanistic sense. They examine both architecture and the more abstract concepts of living space and social planning, the look of buildings and their function, the physical requirements of shelter as well as the compelling psychological need for domesticity, for a home of one's own in a country where all land belongs to the state. As a result, what might have been just a typology of Russian housing types over the past century—from the izba, the oselniak and the dokhodnyi dom to the agro-town, the komunalka and the dacha—is instead a rich social history that will be of real value, not just to art historians, historians, social and political scientists, but to anyone trying to understand how the lifestyle and psyche of Russians have been shaped and reshaped by the treatment of their living space.

Of the nine essays the first three deal with housing before 1917, laying out some of the central issues that give the collection its strong thematic unity and sense of direction. In his discussion of space organization in the peasant izba Robert Edelman examines gender as a shaping factor in the use of living space, the individual vis-à-vis the family and the social unit, the relationship of town and country, tradition at loggerheads with change and the issue of choice in determining the domestic environment. While William Brumfield's chapter on the prerevolutionary private house

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essentially recaps his valuable work on the stylistic formation of Moscow and Petersburg moderne, his analysis of the apartment house as a symptom of the rise of capitalism and as a symbol of the break-up of the peasant social structure breaks important new ground and confronts the goals of “social history” implied in the title.

Milka Bliznakov’s meticulously documented chapter on experimental architecture of the 1920s brings us to the heart of the volume’s intentions by using architecture as an instrument of sociological, not just art historical research. Her re-examination of the utopian schemes of the avant-garde sheds new light on the “love-hate relationship” of Soviet architects with their counterparts in Europe and America, shows how communal housing was conceived as a tool of social engineering and examines the way sex roles shaped living space. Vladimir Paperny’s chapter on, “Men, Women and the Living Space” (a misleading title, since the “subordinate role of women” receives no more attention than “the special treatment of water”), considers living space in light of the wölfllinan comparison of distinct constructivist and stalinist cultures already familiar from his book Kultura “Dva.”

The remaining four articles not only employ the methodologies of the social sciences, they also point out the impact that this new discipline had on Soviet housing after World War II. Stephen Kotkin shows how communal living in the industrial town of Magnitogorsk was both coerced and enforced through the provision of crucial facilities, and bred in the process ideal conditions for surveillance and the komunalka. Judith Pallot’s chapter on housing the agricultural labor force focuses on the pro-urban bias in rural housing, the growth of a school of rural architecture in the 1970s and the resurfacing of a desire for private housing under perestroika. The issue of domesticity—both its decline and its possible rebirth—is central to the last two chapters. Blair Ruble examines the aesthetic deprivation that resulted from Khrushchev’s mass housing program and a construction industry determined to cut costs by imposing uniformity and standardization on Soviet citizens, while Aleksandr Vysokovskii’s insights as a consumer or victim of Soviet housing remind us that the current state of housing in post-perestroika Russia is the logical conclusion to the theories and practices discussed in the preceding chapters (the multipurpose bedroom-diningroom, for example, is a grim survivor of the constructivist furniture of the 1920s).

Having built up, chapter by chapter, a sobering narrative of the systematic undermining of personal choice, privacy and domesticity in the name of communal living and mass construction, the editors nevertheless conclude on a note of cautious optimism that the overpowering need for an environment of domestic tranquility is beginning to reassert itself in Russia, as more citizens begin to build their own homes and dachas.

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This is a rich collection of important documents on the history of pre-war Soviet society. Müller and Schröder have carefully selected and commented on these documents and have written an introduction to the volume. The result is a book of considerable interest although of limited use for Anglophone students.

The editors have assigned about an equal amount of space to the three distinct periods of the pre-war Soviet era: the revolution and civil war, the New Economic Policy and the 1930s. The aim of the volume is to document “the social history of political rule in its multifaceted interdependence with the overall social processes.” The editors have avoided readily available decrees and laws and have included instead less known but important material. The majority of the documents are translated from