To the New Shore:
Soviet Architecture's Journey from Classicism to Standardization

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Figure 1: "K novomu beregu," *Arkhitektura SSSR*, November 1955.

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In November 1955, the leading Soviet architects' journal, *Arkhitektura SSSR,* featured a "friendly cartoon" (*druzheskii sharzh*) satirizing the uncertain state of the architectural profession (Fig. 1). Titled "To the New Shore," this image showed the greats of Soviet architecture as they prepared to embark on a journey away from the errors of their past work. "After a lengthy and expensive stay on the island of excesses," the cartoonists explained in their narrative printed alongside the image, "the architectural flotilla is preparing itself, at last, to depart for the long-awaited shore of standardization and industrialization in construction."[1] At the lower right of the cartoon, three of the architects of Moscow's *vysotnye zdaniia* say goodbye "from the bottom of their hearts to their excesses (*izlishestva*),"[2] which they have been prohibited from taking on board. Other key figures of Stalinist architecture are guided toward the vessel by their younger colleague, and most vocal critic, Georgii Gradov. Ivan Zholtovskii and his students from the Academy of Architecture file onto the ship, concealing proportional dividers from Gradov's watchful eye, and Baku-based architect Iurii Iaralov impatiently tries to out-pace the vessel by blowing hot air into the ornamental balloon of national form up in the sky. "They will have a difficult voyage," conclude the cartoonists, "but all are certain that the ship will arrive on the blessed new shore in time."[3]

This caricature, a Khrushchevian gag uncharacteristically appended to the final pages of the usually highbrowed *Arkhitektura SSSR*, made light of an event that was foremost on the minds of architects across the Soviet Union in late 1955. From November 26 to December 3, the Union of Soviet Architects held its second-ever Congress since its establishment in 1932.[4] At this meeting, the official style of Soviet architecture shifted from the neoclassical approach adopted in the 1930s to one that broke with the past in favor of new building materials and "progressive" modern technologies. This change in theoretical approach from architecture-as-art to architecture-as-science had a profound effect on everyday life in the Soviet Union. Once architects reached the

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[1] G. Shchukin and I. Kadina, "K novomu beregu," *Arkhitektura SSSR*, 1955(11): 54.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] The first Congress was held in 1937.

new shore, their standardized designs radically changed the form of Soviet cities, shaping the lives of those who inhabited them for years to come.

That Soviet architects embarked in 1955 on a journey from classicism to standardization is as visible on the pages of *Arkhitektura SSSR* as it is in the prefabricated concrete apartment blocks so distinctive even today of cities of the former Soviet Union. The reasons motivating architects to take this mid-century journey are, however, less easily discernible. In part, the shift in architecture in the 1950s was a result of the economic imperatives of the post-Stalin government: the postwar housing crisis was not alleviated in the last eight years of Stalin's leadership, and Khrushchev targeted the most conspicuous examples of what had been built instead—a ring of neoclassical skyscrapers in Moscow—as evidence of Stalinist excesses. Providing mass housing quickly became a priority under Khrushchev. While the low-density, high-cost Moscow skyscraper was not a feasible model for this task, Soviet architects had access to alternative building methods. Wartime alliances had offered Soviet architects and engineers opportunities to learn about new techniques in pre-fabricated construction. In May 1945, for example, Soviet urban experts attended an American-Soviet Building Conference in New York that focused on sharing U.S. advancements in pre-fabricated materials and techniques.[5] But these new methods were not put into place on a mass scale until over a decade later, when they became the basis for the Khrushchev government's 1957 Housing Decree. With the goal of eradicating the housing shortage in the Soviet Union within twelve years, the decree of 1957 set commitments in the millions for new square meters of living space in each Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR)—the Russian SSR alone was to gain an additional 217 million square meters of housing by 1961.[6] By the mid-1950s, the turn away from neoclassical design was explained by party leaders and architects alike in economic terms: classical ornamentation on the façades of buildings was, quite simply, too expensive.

[5] *Proceedings of the American-Soviet Building Conference: May 5 1945*, Architects Committee of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, (New York: Architectural Forum, 1946). Richard Anderson discusses the wartime and postwar connections between American and Soviet urban experts in "USA/USSR: Architecture and War," *Grey Room*, vol. 34, 80-103. For a discussion of the development of standardized design and industrialized construction under Stalin, see Dmitrii Khmel'nitskii, *Zodchii stalin*, (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2007), 276-306.
[6] *O razvitii zhilishchnogo stroitel'stva v SSSR: Postanovelinie Tsentral'nogo komiteta KPSS i soveta ministrov SSSR, primiatoe 31 iiulia 1957 goda,* (Gos. Izd-vo polit. Lit-ry, 1957), 10.

Yet the economic rationale behind Soviet architecture's journey to the shores of standardization is only part of the story. In order for this trip to have been feasible, the entire architectural profession had to change over the course of just a few years. From pedagogical institutions to the tools used to design buildings, the 1950s saw a revolution in Soviet architecture. The old approach to design was not just swept aside, it was declared ideologically bankrupt. Architects' journey in the 1950s was part of the broader process of de-Stalinization, as the new leadership, with Khrushchev at the helm, sought to differentiate itself symbolically from the Stalin period. At architectural and building conferences and in state decrees of later 1954 and 1955, Khrushchev rehearsed his program of de-Stalinization with an attack on the material culture of the previous regime. These same criticisms would be directed more systematically towards the vestiges of the former state in the 1956 "Secret Speech," but by then the language of de-Stalinization was already institutionalized in Soviet architecture. As historian Stephen Harris argues, the Khrushchev regime's hopes of reviving the communist project after Stalin led the Central Committee to rethink the housing question: the move from communal to single-family apartments that took place in the late 1950s and early 1960s was a crucial part of the reconfiguration of state-society relations after Stalin. Unlike the single-family dwellings built for the Stalin-era elites, housing was distributed under Khrushchev to "the one social group—the family—that cut across all other social divisions."[7] This was a policy that, Harris argues, reflected the populism of Khrushchev's social agenda and it was the means through which ordinary Soviet citizens most palpably experienced the Thaw.[8] The ideological imperatives of the new Soviet leadership, then, also played an important role in the architects' journey of 1955. Providing mass housing in the form of private apartments was part of a whole host of reforms that stressed a return to Leninism and the original goals of the revolution, aimed for liberalization and socialist legality, and also introduced a new consumer culture to Soviet citizens.

This paper shows the effects that these changes in economic and ideological policies had

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[7] Stephen Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street: Mass Housing and Everyday Life after Stalin*, (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press/Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 12.
[8] Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street,* 6-12.

on the Soviet architectural profession. Socialist realism, a doctrine that, in architecture, made use of the forms of the past in order to build for the future, lacked the concern for present economic realities that was necessary for Khrushchev's goal to provide mass housing to Soviet citizens. From 1955 onwards, bureaucrats would no longer accept plans from architects for low-density buildings made with expensive materials. Khrushchev succeeded in quickly overturning the monumentalism of neoclassical socialist realist design through state decrees mandating the use of prefabricated low-cost materials. But far from being a revolution "from above," this shift was one of convergence between existing debates within the architectural profession and the goals of the new political leadership. Allied with the new General Secretary was a younger generation of architects and engineers eager to reject the classicism of their professors at the Academy of Architecture in favor of modern design and industrialized materials. Khrushchev was not the author of standardized architecture, but he did send the signal for the move towards it in 1955.

On November 4 1955, the Central Committee published a decree targeting the "excesses" of Soviet architecture.[9] This decree codified Khrushchev's criticisms earlier waged against the architectural profession at the December 1954 Builders' Conference, at which the architects of Moscow's skyscrapers, along with other recipients of the Stalin Prize in architecture, were targeted by name for their buildings that "wasted public funds."[10] Casting the skyscrapers as the vanity projects of the former regime, the Central Committee's 1955 Decree Against Excesses officially condemned Stalin-era architecture along with its practitioners and institutions, calling for a new approach that would be "inherently simple, austere in form and economical to build."[11] Beautiful façades were to be achieved not through the use of "far-fetched, costly ornamentation," but through the "organic connection between architectural form and the function of a building, through good proportions, the correct use of materials and the high quality of workmanship."[12]

In this articulation of the Soviet leadership's aesthetic sensibilities, the Constructivist mantra

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[9] "Ob ustranenii izlishestv v proektirovanii i stroitel'stve,"*Postanovleniia TsK KPSS i Soveta Ministrov SSSR po voprosam stroitel'stva ot 23, 24 abgusta i 4 noiabria 1955 g.* (Moscow: Gos Izd-vo polit lit, 1956), 163-173.
[10] Ibid, 164-165.
[11] Ibid, 169.
[12] Ibid, 169.

of the 1920s—"form follows function"—was resurrected, this time by the Communist Party itself. Although the Khrushchev period was characterized by many at the time as a return to the avant-garde[13]—and Stalinism as a digression in an otherwise "modernist" Soviet architecture—the values of the twenties were being applied in a very different context of the 1950s. For the most part, the utopian designs of the twenties never left the drawing board. With a few exceptions, Constructivism was paper architecture. Though Khrushchev may have been alluding to the visionary quality of the plans of the 1920s, his goal was to build: the form was concrete and the function was housing.

Beyond the realm of architecture, the 1950s was a decade of radical change more broadly within the Soviet Union. Stalin's death in March 1953 prompted a leadership struggle in which Khrushchev emerged victorious. From the mid-1950s, the period known as the Thaw was characterized by the implementation of widespread reforms. From the release of political prisoners to the circulation of Western music, the initiation of a policy of "peaceful coexistence" with foreign nations, to the emergence of a vibrant youth culture, this new cultural and political terrain shaped the ways in which architects conceived of themselves and their profession. On the pages of architectural journals and in state newspapers architects read in 1956 about the 20th Party Congress and Khrushchev's secret speech. Many of them would also have seen Picasso's works exhibited in Moscow later that year.[14] In July 1957, the World Festival of Youth brought foreign cultures and music to the Soviet Union, and *Sputnik* was launched into outer space in October. All of these events were covered in the architectural press, influencing the internal debates of the profession. But just as they responded to the present, Soviet architects reacted against the past. Rejecting the neoclassicism practiced since the 1930s, the architectural profession had wiped itself clean of columns and "excesses" by the end of the decade.

[13] Stephen Bittner, "Remembering the Avant-Garde: Moscow Architects and the 'Rehabilitation' of Constructivism, 1961-64," *Kritika*, Vol 2(3), Summer 2001: 553-576; Catherine Cooke, *Russian Avant-Garde Theories of Art, Architecture and the City,* (London: Academy Editions, 1995).
[14] For a discussion of the Picasso exhibition see Eleonory Gilburd, "Picasso in Thaw Culture," *Cahiers du monde russe*, Vol. 47(1), 2006: 65-108.

The point of departure: the classical 1930s, or, "architecture as art"

When the doctrine of socialist realism was applied to architecture in the 1930s, it went hand in hand with the adoption of neoclassicism as the basis of design. The architect's job was to satisfy the needs of all Soviet people, and this would be achieved through an architecture that was rational, proportional and monumental. How the doctrine of socialist realism would be applied to architecture was established in the 1930s through practice; the first All-Union Congress of Soviet Architects was not held until 1937, and as a result, as Catherine Cooke has argued, socialist realism in architecture had its genesis in competitions, like that for the Palace of Soviets, and in major urban projects, such as the 1935 Plan for Moscow.[15] The central institutions of the new architectural method—the Union of Architects and the Academy of Architecture, headed by high-ranking members of the Union—were created in 1932 and 1934, respectively. Through these guild-like institutions, students and their studio masters alike learned how to design and think according to the new socialist realist principles.

The first publication of studio projects coming out of the Moscow Academy from 1934 provides a glimpse of the search in the 1930s for an approach to form that would satisfy the demands of socialist realism. In manifesto-like descriptions of each project, master architects and their students put forth visions of this new approach to their craft: "the new architecture should be truly humane (*chelovechnyi*), with a concern for the person, in the best way satisfying his needs and wants, including his aesthetic wants."[16] The architect would, of course, play a central role in organizing the "joyful life of the new person,"[17] since architecture was capable of shaping the everyday lives of Soviet citizens, "broadly inspiring the proletarian masses in the fight for the construction of a socialist society and ultimately in the building of communism."[18] But how could

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[15] Catherine Cooke, "Socialist Realist Architecture: Theory and Practice," in *Art of the Soviets: Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-Party State, 1917-1992*, edited by Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 98. Andrei Ikonnikov, *Russian Architecture of the Soviet Period*, (Moscow: Raduga, 1988).

[16] *Raboty arkhitekturno-proektirovochnykh masterskikh za 1934 god*, Tome 1, (Moscow: Otdel proektirovaniia Mosgorispolkoma i Mossoveta, P.K. I K.D, 1936), 14.

[17] Ibid, 9.

[18] *Raboty arkhitekturno-proektirovochnykh masterskikh za 1934 god*, Tome 1, (Moscow: Otdel proektirovaniia Mosgorispolkoma i Mossoveta, P.K. I K.D, 1936), 9.

architecture inspire if it could not talk? Without the help of narrative, architects were faced with a challenge distinct from the writers, filmmakers, visual artists, and sculptors of the day: conveying the political aspirations of socialism on the surface and in the very shape of their buildings. In order to do this, Soviet architects adopted a style that is arguably best suited to the socialist realist task: neoclassicism.

One factor motivating the adoption of neoclassicism for Soviet architecture in the early 1930s was certainly the increasing unpopularity of the avant-garde styles of the twenties, but neoclassicism also provided forms that were inherently monumental and symbolically communicative. Consistent with this style, Soviet architects borrowed from the visual and sculptural arts, representing the construction of socialism and inspiring the New Soviet Person in imagery on the surface of their structures. They also made wide use of the Beaux-Arts method of *architecture parlante*, or "speaking architecture," a technique associated with French architects of the late Enlightenment and French revolutionary period, in which the function of a building is explained in allegorical motifs on the façade, or through the shape of the building itself.[19] Much like a socialist realist novel, architecture in the 1930s was increasingly being rooted in a tradition of canonical exemplars.[20] Borrowing from the classical tradition, socialist realist design sought to achieve order, balance, proportion, and, above all, a beauty that was meant to inspire the Soviet people to reach for new heights. Conceptualized during a moment of rapid urbanization, the doctrine of socialist realism in architecture was part of the larger effort to create modern urban citizens.[21]

At the first session of the Soviet Academy of Architecture in 1934, instructors from the newly created Studio of Theory and History articulated the tasks of their profession with lectures on "The Issue of Scale in Classical Greek Architecture," "The Issue of Synthesis in Renaissance Architecture," and "Architecture of the Era of the French Bourgeois Revolution."[22] These first

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[19] The Beaux-Arts, with its *architecture parlante,* also made its way into the tradition of civic architecture in the United States. Washington D.C. has some of the best examples of this tradition.

[20] See Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

[21] The role played by architecture—in particular that of Moscow—in the creation of the New Soviet Person was narrativized and represented in numerous films of the period, for example in *Svetlyi put'* (1940). Architecture was naturally a key metaphor for the socialist project.

[22] *Akademiia Arkhitektury SSSR 1934-1944: Materialy k VI sessii*, (Moscow: Moskovskii bol'shevik, 1944), 8.

lectures represent three strands of European classicism that Soviet architects turned to for inspiration in the 1930s. The first was classicism proper: ancient Greek architecture had long been the basis of design that sought to achieve beauty through order, balance, and proportion. The second was the Renaissance, a period of classical revival in Europe that turned to antiquity to find a rational, humanistic architecture. The third was the Beaux-Arts, the French Enlightenment-era version of neoclassicism that sought once again to achieve rational design by turning both to antiquity and the Renaissance for inspiration. Each of these styles built upon the next, and Soviet architects of the 1930s borrowed interchangeably from all three periods. The Beaux-Arts, in particular, provided the institutional model for the 1930s, offering both a neoclassical design philosophy as well as an educational method. Students thus began in the new Soviet studios with intensive study of classical forms and their replication in designs, most often carried out in watercolor sketches. This approach to architecture focused on deep knowledge of the past as well as the development of sketching and painting skills. Architectural journals of the period were filled with watercolor renderings of winning entries from the many design competitions held during the 1930s and 1940s. When the approach was phased out in the 1950s, one version of architectural rationalism was eclipsed by another as watercolor was replaced by the gridded site plans of standardized design (compare Figs. 2 & 3). This shift in architectural imagery, from the artful symmetry of façades to scientifically rationalized interiors, reflected the broader transition from architecture-as-art to architecture-as-science. Both approaches strove to rationality, but while the former found inspiration for this in the classical forms of the past, the latter was rooted firmly in new technologies and modern science.
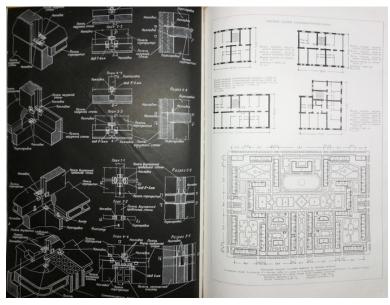
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Figure 2: Ivan Zholtovskii, "Moscow Hippodrome," sketch of tower, *Arkhitektura SSSR*, Jan 1953
Figure 3: "New Standardized Projects," *Arkhitektura SSSR*, May 1956

Students and professors at the new academies across the Soviet Union were exposed to classicism through an array of new Russian translations of key texts, from Vitruvius' *On Architecture* of 15 BCE, to Andrea Palladio's *Four Books of Architecture* of 1570, to Eugène Viollet-le-Duc's *Discourses on Architecture* of 1858.[23] Indeed, many professors from the older generation trained before 1917 knew classicism well. In their studios, master architects like Ivan Zholtovskii encouraged student work based on the "concentrated study of the cultural tradition—taking the best examples from classical architecture, remaining critical of them, but aspiring for the maximum elevation of the general level of culture both within the studio and beyond."[24] In his own work, Zholtovskii was one of the most ardent neoclassicists of the thirties—it was his 1936 translation of Palladio that introduced the younger generation to classical order. In his design for the Central Hippodrome in Moscow (Figs. 2 and 4), Zholtovskii used Corinthian columns topped by a triangular pediment that points up towards a star. Using the technique of "speaking

[23] Ibid, 86-87. Viollet-le-Duc had a fascinating exchange with Imperial Russian architects. In his book of 1879, *Russian art: its origins, its constituent elements, its apogee, and its future*, he argued that Russia had been enslaved for too long to the legacy of Peter the Great, who had encouraged the Europeanization of architecture rather than the cultivation of a national vernacular style. A Russian translation of this text was also published in the 1930s. See Lauren M. O'Connell, "A Rational, National Architecture: Viollet-le-Duc's Modest Proposal for Russia," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians,* Vol. 52(4), 1993: 436-452.
[24] *Raboty arkhitekturno-proektirovochnykh masterskikh*, Tome 1, 3-4.

architecture," Zholtovskii crowned his structure with racehorses, communicating the function of the building to passersby. Soviet architects took "speaking architecture" a step further as they aimed to communicate not only the function of their buildings, but the symbolism and purpose of building socialism more generally. Karo Alabian and Vasilii Simbirtsev's Red Army Theater combined classical and socialist forms with their star-shaped plan (Fig. 4). Somewhat impractical, this unorthodoxically-shaped building nonetheless aimed to communicate the ideological ethos of Marxism with the help of the rational ordering of classicism.
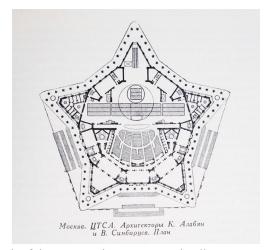

Figure 4: Ivan Zholtovskii, "Moscow Hippodrome," sketch of the entry arch onto Begovaia ulitsa, *Arkhitektura SSSR*, Jan 1953
Figure 5: Karo Alabian and Vasilii Simbirtsev, *Red Army Theater*, ground plan, 1934-40

Historian David Hoffmann argues that the adoption of classicism in the 1930s was dictated by Party leaders' and beliefs in the primacy of economic relations: once capitalism had been abolished and socialism achieved, "it was no longer necessary to use iconoclasm to attack bourgeois culture, now that the economic basis and social classes that had spawned that culture had been eliminated in the Soviet Union."[25] But the turn to neoclassical architecture could also be

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[25] David Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 6. Three other historians have interpreted the 1932 adoption of socialist realism differently: Hugh D. Hudson (in *Blueprints and Blood*) sees it as the result of generational disputes, regional and ethnic antagonisms, and ultimately of political maneuvering that took place beyond the immediate realm of architectural ideas in the early 1930s. Alternatively, Boris Groys (in *The Total Art of Stalinism*) argues that socialist realism was born from the spirit of the avant-garde. Socialist realism is, for Groys, the radical realization of avant-garde principles. Rather than casting Stalinist art as a simple reversion to classical realist aesthetics, Groys characterizes Stalinism as a continuation of the forward-looking agitational art of the avant-garde. Vladimir Paperny (in *Architecture in the Age of Stalin: Culture Two*) sees the move from the avant-garde to socialist realism in terms of an underlying cultural logic that shapes both politics and aesthetics, and vacillates from Culture One to Culture Two and back again.

justified by architects' themselves through Marxism-Leninism. Using the "best examples" from earlier eras, architects connected the Soviet project to history as they designed the shape of the future. "Our architecture," stated Moscow studio master Viktor Kokorin, "like all socialist culture, is the direct heir and successor of the best in the historical legacy of past eras."[26] Citing Lenin, Kokorin asserted that "far from rejecting the most valuable achievements of the bourgeois epoch, Marxism has on the contrary assimilated and refashioned everything of value in the more than two thousand years of the development of human thought and culture."[27] Using the best elements of classical architecture, combined with vernacular forms from each Soviet Republic, architects of the 1930s developed a style that was national and neoclassical in form, but also socialist in content.

The material histories of the Soviet Republics provided an additional source for an architecture that merged universalizing neoclassicism with vernacular forms derived from local folk arts. In their 1934 design proposal for the Kazan' House of Culture, Moscow Academy students P.A. Aleksandrov and L.N. Pavlov borrowed both from Boris Iofan's Palace of Soviets (Fig. 7) and from what they perceived to be the highlights of Tatar design. Their composition included "simple, stately forms,"[28] with a long row of columns extending horizontally across the Palace's façade, which was to face the main square of Kazan'. A tall central tower topped by a statue of Lenin was intended to "complement the silhouette of the city,"[29] alluding to the socialist content of the structure as a whole. In addition to these neoclassical and socialist characteristics, Aleksandrov and Pavlov included in their design an open landscaped courtyard extending onto the central square with pools and fountains in Tatar ornamentation. This attempt to incorporate "constructive elements showing the local oriental color"[30] was part of the effort beginning in the 1930s to add a vernacular patina to the neoclassical style designated for socialist architecture. National elements were not only incorporated into architecture on the periphery. The Uzbek, Azerbaijani, and Stalin Prize-winning Georgian pavilions of the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition that opened in Moscow

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[26] *Raboty arkhitekturno-proektirovochnykh masterskikh*, Tome 2, 3.
[27] Ibid. Kokorin's citation reads: Ленин, Соч., т. XXV, стр. 409-410, Гиз, 3-е изд.
[28] *Raboty arkhitekturno-proektirovochnykh masterskikh*, Tome 5, 40.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.

in the late 1930s brought exotic national forms to the capital of the Union.[31] National form aside, these structures maintained a commitment to balance, proportion, and beauty. The socialist content of the buildings themselves was matched by a socialist realist aesthetic based on, and strictly limited to, the classical orders. The foundational structure of this new architectural canon set in the 1930s was the design that inspired Aleksandrov and Pavlov in their design of Kazan': the Palace of Soviets.
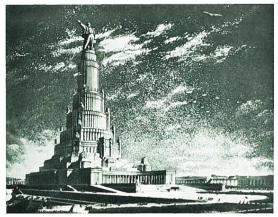

Figure 6: P.A. Aleksandrov and L.N. Pavlov, *Kazan' Palace of Culture*, Design competition entry, c. 1934
Figure 7: V.G. Gel'freikh, B.M. Iofan, and V.A. Shchuko, *Palace of Soviets*, 1934

Historians have interpreted Gel'freikh, Iofan, and Shchuko's 1934 design for the Palace of Soviets (Fig. 7) as the inspiration for Soviet neoclassicism and as the model for how the symbolic content of socialism could be represented in the non-verbal and non-representational medium of architecture.[32] Although this project was never completed, architects of the period discussed their own work in terms of the precedent set by the Palace design. The Academy of Architecture, for example, noted in 1936 that the competition for the Palace of Soviets "occurred at an important transitional period, showing clearly that we could and should not go further down the road [of the 1920s], and that the versatile demands of the new person could not be met and the full value of

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[31] For a detailed discussion of the development of Soviet national forms and the relationship between Soviet architecture and nationalities policy, see Greg Castillo, "Peoples at an Exhibition," in *Socialist Realism without Shores*, edited by Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 91-119.
[32] For example: Selim Omarovich Khan-Magomedov, *Pioneers of Soviet Architecture*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1987); Catherine Cooke, *Soviet Architectural Competitions, 1924-1936*, (Laren: V + K, 1992).

Soviet architecture could not be realized down that path."[33] Historian Andrei Ikonnikov notes that through the model of Gel'freikh, Iofan and Shchuko's design, "the concept of socialist realism in architecture began to shift towards imagery; the rationalist structural arrangement of the building [so central to the avant-garde] became a kind of background for the dominant aspect of artistic imagery—any architectural project was regarded as a symbolic expression of the epoch's main ideas."[34] By rooting their work in the "best examples" of past architectural form—both classical and national—Soviet architects laid claim to the architectural heritage of Western civilization.

Late Stalinism: architecture in transition after the war

The social role envisioned for architecture in the 1930s was not in question in the post-Stalin period. Rather, architects were deemed by the new collective leadership—namely by Khrushchev—to have fallen off track in their mission of satisfying the needs of society. By dabbling in "excesses," party leaders claimed, architects had failed to provide solutions to the primary task of their profession: the building of communism. In the postwar period, housing shortages affected cities across the Soviet Union,[35] and from as early as 1942 a reconstruction committee was formed to find solutions to the crisis brought on by the war.[36] In April 1945, architects met in Moscow for the discussion, "What is New in Architecture." A number of architects at this meeting voiced concern about the lack of new technologies available to them. Andrei Burov praised Constructivism, since "it was truly new architecture."[37] For Burov, who called for his colleagues to push ahead in their design despite the lack of new technologies and materials, Constructivism represented a visionary period in architecture that paid little attention to whether or not a design could actually be built: "we must embrace the principle of newness," Burov stated, "for if each of us said this to ourselves,

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[33] *Raboty arkhitekturno-proektirovochnykh masterkhikh*, Tome 1, 13.
[34] Ikonnikov, 201.
[35] See Donald Filtzer's discussion of postwar housing in "Standard of Living versus Quality of Life: Struggling with the Urban Environment in Russia during the Early Years of Post-War Reconstruction" in *Late Stalinist Russia: Society Between Reconstruction and Reinvention*, edited by Juliane Furst, (London: Routledge, 2006), 81-102.
[36] *Materialy k otchetu pravleniia soiuza sovetskikh arkhitekturov SSSR: za period mezhdu pervym i vtorym vsevoiuznymi s'ezdami sovetskikh arkhitektorov 1937-1955*, (Moscow: Gosstroiizdat, 1955), 16.
[37] "Iz vystuplenii arkhitektorov na tvorcheskoi diskusii 'Novoe v arkhitekture',"*Iz istorii sovetskoi arkhitektury. Dokumenty i materialy*. vol. 4, (Moscow: Nauka, 1978), 172.

we would find the new architecture sooner."[38] Burov's statement was part of a larger postwar sentiment: the potential—indeed the need—to build on a mass scale existed, but the technologies to do so were lacking in the Soviet Union.

Figure 8: "Long Live the Great Stalin, Architect of Communism," c. 1952

The sense that new technologies were needed to build large-scale projects was at the heart of this 1945 discussion, but the more immediate need for practical solutions to the housing problem ultimately took precedence over Burov's call to embrace the theory of "the new." Karo Alabian, longtime Secretary of the Union of Architects, noted in his concluding remarks at the 1945 discussion that the Academy of Architecture's working committee on the tasks of postwar reconstruction was at a loss in the face of the work needed to recover from the war. "We have been trying to determine what construction projects lay ahead of us,"[39] Alabian stated. "The figures are astronomical. We must build millions of square feet of living space and we need to produce ten times more building materials than we did before the war. We must draw many times more manpower to implement our program of construction."[40] With practical concerns on the table, Alabian cut short the discussion begun by Burov and others who praised the methods

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[38] "Iz vystuplenii arkhitektorov na tvorcheskoi diskusii 'Novoe v arkhitekture',"*Iz istorii sovetskoi arkhitektury. Dokumenty i materialy*. vol. 4, (Moscow: Nauka, 1978), 172.
[39] Ibid., 174.
[40] Ibid., 174.

of Constructivism and implicitly called for a shift away from neoclassicism. "Our task cannot affect the direction and nature of Soviet architects," Alabian stressed. "Architecture, like any art, requires a certain direction. I believe that any discussion and debate of theoretical problems is very helpful, but I think that the Union will pay more attention to these issues in the future."[41] Indeed, they would ten years later, but the immediate postwar period had something else in store for Soviet architecture that neither Burov nor Alabian envisioned in their 1945 debate. The pinnacle of neoclassical design in the Soviet Union was achieved, beginning in 1947, with the construction of seven neoclassical skyscrapers in Moscow. Associated with the figure of Stalin—the architect of communism—himself (Fig. 8), these buildings were natural targets of Khrushchev's speeches about the problems of neoclassical architecture in the mid-1950s.

Despite the fact that architects at the April 1945 meeting felt that they lacked the technologies to rebuild quickly and economically after the war, Soviet urban experts did attend a building conference in New York just one month later, in May 1945, to learn about pre-fabricated construction techniques. That these techniques were not put into place on a wide scale as they were to be a decade later is surely due to signals coming from above. While in 1957, the Central Committee published a decree mandating the construction of mass housing, the Central Committee decree in the area of postwar architecture was that of January 13, 1947, mandating the construction of eight skyscrapers in Moscow. Built in the midst of a severe housing shortage, these skyscrapers were interpreted during the Khrushchev period as evidence of the neglect of socialist goals and values under Stalin. When they were built, however, these structures were monuments to the Soviet victory in the Great Patriotic War, to the triumph over capitalism and to the achievements of Stalinism. As Arkadii Mordvinov, President of the Academy of Architecture, stated in 1950, "even at its high point, capitalism could not solve the planning problems we have by building such structures."[42] Moscow's new high-rises were envisioned as a singular composition that would "revive, on a new scale, a historical feature of Moscow as a single and whole ensemble"[43] But

[41] "Iz vystuplenii arkhitektorov na tvorcheskoi diskusii 'Novoe v arkhitekture',"*Iz istorii sovetskoi arkhitektury. Dokumenty i materialy*. vol. 4, (Moscow: Nauka, 1978), 174.
[42] Arkadii Mordvinov, "Vysotnye zdaniia stolitsy," *Pravda*, May 25 1950, No. 145, 2.
[43] Ikonnikov, 234.

the project was conceived in terms greater than the revival of the Moscow skyline. "The figures of these monumental giants," Mordvinov elaborated, "illuminated by rays of sunlight during the day and by a myriad of lights at night, loom over the capital like pillars of glory, speaking the language of architecture, of the inexhaustible spiritual strength of our laboring people and of the bright genius of the wise architect of communism—the great Stalin."[44] With these buildings, the symbolism of neoclassical architecture in the postwar period had come to be intimately associated with Stalin. The turn away from classicism in the 1950s was, thus, simultaneously a turn away from Stalinist design.

Leaving for the new shore: architecture as science

The postwar housing crisis coupled with the "excesses" of Stalinist design provided the justification for the Second All-Union Congress of Architecture, called for November 1955. On the first day of the Congress, Georgii Gradov published an article in *Isvestia* clarifying the reasons and goals for the meeting. "Some architects," he stated,

> "who consider their main task to transform a building into some kind of pompous monument, have resorted to complex technical solutions and created the least comfort at the greatest expense. The tall buildings in Moscow are examples. For every square meter of living or working area the building has a cubic capacity two or three times greater than normal. The main requirements of the creative method of architecture have been violated on a mass scale. Even industrial and hydro-technical installations have been given 'palatial' exteriors."[45]

Singling out the architects of Moscow's skyscrapers by name, Gradov went on to accuse them of "ignor[ing] the functions of buildings and the demands of the economy."[46] "These architects," he stated, "flattered themselves that they were creating monuments to an epoch, [but they] were cut off from life and forgot that genuine monuments to the Soviet epoch are well-built, landscaped cities…"[47] Having overlooked the potential of standardized design, these architects were publicly

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[44] Mordvinov, 2.
[45] Georgii Gradov, "Confronted with Important Tasks," *Izvestia*, November 26 1955, 3. (Published in translation in *Current Digest of the Russian Press*, 48(7), January 11 1956, 15-16.)
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

disgraced in the months leading up to the Second Congress for their "showy, unusual architecture."[48]

True to his name, Gradov was calling for a new approach to construction: one that took into account not just the scale of individual buildings, but one that moved out to the planning of an entire city or region.

Over the course of the debates that took place in the 1950s, neoclassicism was increasingly pitted against technological innovation and economic large-scale planning: the myopic architect concerned with flourishes on the surface of his building was not thinking in terms of mile-upon-mile of planned urban space. One immediate effect of such accusations was that the Academy of Architecture, founded on neoclassical theory and practice, was rendered obsolete. Khrushchev had hinted in late 1954 that the Academy was on the verge of liquidation for not allowing "free exchange of opinions on creative questions, [and] the development of criticism,"[49] and in August 1955 his threat became reality. As of August 23 the institution was abolished. In its place was the new Academy of Construction and Architecture, entrusted with "developments in the scientific problems of construction…research on standardized buildings and facilities…and the training of highly qualified scientific specialists."[50] An annual "Day of the Builder" was also created in 1955, as political favor fell on engineers and builders, and architects were increasingly sidelined.

In essence, architecture's scientific turn meant that the founding principles of design were no longer rooted in the classical past. Instead, new technologies and materials were the basis of architecture. Turning to the international arena for inspiration, the Soviet Union was not alone in the faith placed in new technologies after the war. Soviet delegates were sent to the meetings of a number of organizations that had sprung up in the postwar period, as countries across Europe looked for solutions to housing and other construction problems. The International Union of Architects

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[48] Ibid.

[49] Nikita Khrushchev, "On Wide-Scale Introduction of Industrial Methods, Improving the Quality and Reducing the Cost of Construction," Speech delivered December 7 1954 at the All-Union Conference of Builders, Architects and Workers in the Building Materials Industry, in *Khrushchev Speaks: Selected Speeches, Articles and Press Conferences, 1949-1961*, edited by Thomas Whitney, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963), 173. This is a variation of Stalin's June 20 1950 *Pravda* article "On Marxism in Linguistics," which declared that "it is universally recognized that no science can develop and prosper without a struggle of opinions, without free criticism."

[50] "Ob ustranenii izlishestv v proektirovanii i stroitel'stve," *Postanovleniie TsK KPSS i Soveta Ministrov SSSR 23 avgusta 1955 g., Resheniia partii i pravitel'stva po khoziaistvennym voprosam: sbornik dokumentov za 50 let*, (Moscow: Izd-vo polit. lit-ry, 1968), 167.

(UIA), established in 1948, held its 1958 conference in Moscow on the topic of "Construction and Reconstruction." As Soviet architects reasserted themselves on the global scene in the postwar years for the first time since the early 1930s, foreign architects picked up on the debates happening within Moscow. Alabian was still dwelling on the importance of "recognizing the mistakes of false classicism" in his address at the 1958 IUA conference.[51] To the foreign architects present at this Moscow conference, this speech must have been a fascinating anachronism—they had all reached the shores of standardization and technology long before. Though Soviet architects had been participating in institutions like the UIA since the immediate postwar years, the increased international connections forged by the Soviet Union under Khrushchev provided a wealth of inspiration and technical knowledge for local design. But before Soviet specialists could implement the new technologies being developed both domestically and abroad, change had to be implemented within their own institutions.

Nikolai Baranov, Vice-President of the former Academy of Architecture, addressed the Second Congress of 1955 on the topic of architectural education. He opened with the former Academy's accomplishments: thousands of young specialists had been trained since its establishment in 1934, and their work in the construction of cities across the Soviet Union was not to be overlooked. Nevertheless, Baranov conceded, these accomplishments would have been far greater if their training had been rooted in the "contemporary requirements of architecture and construction technologies"[52]—in other words, in science. Until the 1950s, students had developed what Baranov characterized as a one-sided aesthetic approach to construction, ignoring the important questions of standardization, rationalization, modern technologies and economics.[53] The task of the new Academy was to reorient students away from the artistic aspects of architecture towards its technological potential. Changes to the Academy were necessary in order to remedy the perceived disunity between architects and engineers.

Essentially, the goal coming out of the 1955 Congress was to shift architectural design

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[51] Luben Tonev, "Moscou," *L'UIA, 1948-1998*, (Paris: Les Éditions de L'Épure, 1998), 99.

[52] N.V. Baranov, "Ob arkhitekturnom obrazovanii," *Vtoroi vsesoiuznyi s'ezd sovetskikh arkhitektorov*, (Moscow: Gos. izd-vo lit-ry po stroitelstvu i arkhitekture, 1956), 154.

[53] Ibid.

away from its position as a fine art and towards its potential as a science.[54] Baranov called for "practical training" (*proizvodstvennaia praktika*) to replace the guild-like studio system of the former Academy. The "improper study of heritage and classical forms"[55] required a complete restructuring of the courses introducing architectural design and planning. Students would begin by learning the economics of construction, rather than the classical orders, in order to "elucidate the relationship between the design process and the implementation of a project on the ground."[56] Studying the history of Soviet architecture would suffice as a basis for design. Baranov further proposed that students gain on-site experience in the first two to three years after finishing at the Academy. By working with professional architects and engineers in the field, young architects would develop specializations in the various areas necessary for the new construction projects.[57] The era of the architect sketching classically-based paper architecture in the studio was over; the new method was focused on establishing cadres of construction specialists who worked in the field, not at the drafting board. Architects shifted towards designing buildings using technical vocabulary—their plans were intended for the engineer and the construction worker rather than for each other.

The extent of the changes undertaken after the closing of the Academy in 1955 was enormous, as historian Dmitri Shvidkovskii describes well: "for neoclassically educated architects, who had spent years endlessly sketching and erasing Order-based compositions in Indian ink, the shock of this new development was unimaginable. The architect's very role had changed. Everything an architect had learned was declared false 'adornment,' almost tantamount to criminal activity."[58] That said, the architects chastened in official speeches and in the press quickly took up the new methods. Architects of Moscow's skyscrapers, Arkadii Mordvinov and Dmitri Chechulin, for example, both received major commissions after 1955. The former was the architect of Moscow's Cheremushki housing district and the latter designed the Moskva Pool, the world's largest outdoor

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[54] This tension, between art and science, is inherent in architecture. For a contemporary architect's discussion of this issue see Part 1 of Richard Foque, *Building Knowledge in Architecture*, (University Press Antwerp, 2010).
[55] Ibid, 159.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Richard Foque, *Building Knowledge in Architecture*, (University Press Antwerp, 2010), 160.
[58] D.O. Shvidkovskii, *Russian Architecture and the West*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 376.

swimming pool built on the site slated two decades earlier for Iofan's ill-fated Palace of Soviets.

In theoretical debates, none of the changes undertaken by the architectural profession in the 1950s were considered, at least in principle, to be at odds with the doctrine of socialist realism, though the meaning of this label was shifting.[59] As a rhetorical framework, the "socialist realism" signaled in the debates of 1955 a mythical point of origin that had been lost over the course of two decades of erroneous design. Reinvigorating the founding rhetoric of the 1930s, the new charter adopted at the Second Congress stated that it was in the Soviet Union that, for the first time in the history of humanity, it was possible for architects to "work for all people" (*rabotat' dlia vsego naroda*).[60] The ambiguous relationship to the past that plagued architects of the 1950s also made its way into the charter, as socialist realism was contradictorily declared to be incompatible with "blind copying of the forms of the past, but also inconsistent with a dismissive attitude towards architectural heritage."[61] The primary task of the Soviet architect was "to create a socialist architectural style that embodies the best in past architectural ideas of humanity, and at the same time relies on cutting-edge innovations of Soviet architecture."[62] As neoclassicism was swept aside, the intended emphasis was clearly on the latter task, but this ambiguity caused confusion within the profession. In practice, the difference between neoclassicism and standardization was obvious, but the imprecision of the new theory for architecture penned in 1955, and the unwillingness of architects and party leaders to depart from the concept of socialist realism, led to heated debate between two generations of architects—one reared on neoclassicism, the other trained in the new scientific methods.[63] The issue of history had been resolved during the Stalin period through the

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[59] Richard Anderson argues that socialist realism's relationship to architecture "escape[s] questions of *meaning*" (11). As he notes, Soviet architects never defined the term itself, and yet it was omnipresent in their practice. Anderson quotes Soviet art historian and theorist David Arkin's statement at the First Congress of Soviet Architects in 1937 as an example: Arkin: "The First Congress of Soviet Architects did not engage in a scholastic war of words on the relative merits of one architectural style or another, it did not waste time and words trying to find subtle and rhetorical interpretations of the meaning of socialist realism in architecture. Yet still this meaning prevailed in all the work of the Congress, in every multi-day discussion of the creative questions of Soviet architecture" (in Anderson, 10). Richard Anderson, *The Future of History: The Cultural Politics of Soviet Architecture, 1928-41*, Dissertation, Columbia University, 2010.
[60] *Vtoroi vsesoiuznyi s'ezd sovetskikh arkhitektorov*, (Moscow: Gos. izd-vo lit-ry po stroitelstvu i arkhitekture, 1956), 385.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid, 386.
[63] In the documents I collected from the former Kirgiz SSR, for example, an older generation of architects in favor of continuing the blending of national and neoclassical styles faced off against a younger group of specialists who wished

incorporation of both classical and national styles. For many architects working outside Moscow, the abandonment of national form in the compulsory turn towards standardization was inconceivable.

Leaving history behind?

During a pre-congress debate in October 1955 on "The Problem of Innovation and Heritage in Soviet Architecture," members of the Union of Architects discussed the appropriate use of history in design.[64] Pavel Abrosimov, one of the designers of Moscow's skyscrapers, introduced the topic to those attending from the Union and from the Academy's Institute of History and Theory. The errors of architecture, he began, were the result of a departure from the method of socialist realism. A solution to the incorrect "one-sided application of architectural aesthetics" could be found in a new approach characterized by its "logical simplicity"[65] and in the proper consideration of cost and structural requirements. Having alluded gently to the problem of neoclassicism, Abrosimov passed the floor to the two speakers. The first was Georgii Gradov, a younger member of the profession, who did not mince words in his criticism of the neoclassical route architecture had traveled since the 1930s. A rebuttal to Gradov's position was voiced by Baku-based architect Iurii Iaralov. A member of the older generation, Iaralov was a staunch supporter of the value of heritage and the development of national form in architecture.

Gradov began. Musing on the concept of innovation, he argued that while architecture was inherently innovative—even during periods when classical heritage was incorrectly used as the source of creativity—the task of the architect was to "solve problems arising in society at a time when the old system, or form, is an obstacle to further development."[66] "The true meaning of innovation," Gradov stressed, "lies in the fact that at certain stages of development it is necessary to eliminate the discrepancy between architecture's new content and its outdated form."[67] For

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to implement standardized designs. I suspect that similar generational discord could be observed in different locales across the Soviet Union in this period.

[64] This debate also borrows heavily from Stalin's 1950 article on linguistics—particularly the comments made by Georgii Gradov. I'm not sure what to make of this yet, but will continue thinking for future papers about the ways in which the 1950 article made its way into architecture in the post-Stalin period.

[65] "Diskussiia o novatorstve i nasledii v sovetskoi arkhitekture," *Arkhitektura SSSR*, January 1956, 46.

[66] "Diskussiia o novatorstve i nasledii v sovetskoi arkhitekture," *Arkhitektura SSSR*, January 1956, 46.

[67] Ibid.

Gradov, the academic system established in the 1930s was archaic; its reliance on neoclassicism primitive. Calling for the complete rejection of the historical canon, Gradov argued that the forms of the past were in "conflict with the forms of modern life, technology and economics."[68] Worse, he went on, these forms supported the remnants of the past in the minds of the people.

Gradov had confronted the older generation of architects and their devotion to neoclassicism before, at the 1954 Soviet Builders' Conference. At this event, Khrushchev scolded Mordvinov and the Union of Architects for taking "every possible step to prevent Comrade Gradov from speaking at [the] conference."[69] Taking this as evidence that an atmosphere "for free exchange of opinions on creative questions and the development of criticism"[70] had not been created in the Academy of Architecture, Khrushchev's reproach simultaneously made room for critics like Gradov within academic debates while also unleashing a critique so fierce that it spelled the dissolution of the Academy altogether. But Gradov's disparagement of neoclassicism also brought him face to face with another group of architects who had established themselves under Stalin. Proponents of the use of national form in architecture did not fail to notice that Gradov's call for innovation through the rejection of the historical canon also meant the end of their nationally-rooted practice. In October 1955, it was Iaralov who responded to this underlying implication in Gradov's critique of the use of history.

Iaralov began his argument by stating that the standardization of design did not eliminate the task of creating an architecture that was "national in form, socialist in content." National traditions should not be mined simply for forms, Iaralov stated, but for the progressive elements inherent in each culture. Using the logic of historical development, Iaralov asserted that as national cultures matured, some of their characteristics died off while others flourished and progressed. "Under the socialist system," Iaralov argued, "equal conditions of development gradually erase the differences in life and culture of the peoples of the USSR. But on the other hand, the objective conditions of existence (landscape, climate, construction materials) and the uniqueness of the various elements

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[68] "Diskussiia o novatorstve i nasledii v sovetskoi arkhitekture," *Arkhitektura SSSR*, January 1956, 46.
[69] Khrushchev, "On Wide-Scale Introduction of Industrial Methods, Improving the Quality and Reducing the Cost of Construction," 173.
[70] Ibid.

of culture and the arts contribute to the preservation of national peculiarities."[71] At the heart of Iaralov's position was the claim that national form, unlike neoclassicism, was a necessary element of socialist style. When used skillfully by the modern architect, he argued, national heritage could be a powerful means of creating the new Soviet architecture the profession hoped to achieve.

It was Gradov's position that won out, at least temporarily, in Soviet architecture. By the late 1950s, a concrete standardized aesthetic arose on cityscapes across the Soviet Union, often in sharp contrast to Imperial-era city centers and the more recent neoclassical and national architecture of Stalinism. The architectural response to the call for the mass construction of housing was the microdistrict, consisting of evenly-laid blocks of state-owned residential and public service buildings in the outlying regions of Soviet cities. The repetitiveness of the superblock became a cliché of the sixties, as builders replicated identical housing units in recurrent microdistricts around major cities with little attention to the particularities of the diverse contexts across the Soviet Union.

The goal of the revolution in architecture in the post-Stalin period was to train architects to think in the abstract terms of economic efficiency rather than terms of style and symbolism. "Architects, like builders," Khrushchev stressed in 1954, "must make a sharp turn toward problems of construction economy, must study them thoroughly. It must always be remembered that one of the most important is the cost of erecting the building, the cost per square meter of space."[72] Two factories producing reinforced-concrete building parts had opened in 1954, and architects retooled in order to make best use of the new materials and, above all, to adhere to the economic bottom line. They were being asked to think in terms of square meters. An appropriate graphical riposte was drafted in the architectural press with the introduction of the grid.

[71] "Diskussiia o novatorstve i nasledii v sovetskoi arkhitekture," 47.
[72] Khrushchev, "On Wide-Scale Introduction of Industrial Methods, Improving the Quality and Reducing the Cost of Construction," 167-168.

The scientific turn: grids and the new language of architecture

In the 1950s architects adopted a new language with which to assert their newfound scientific expertise. As the technical know-how of engineers was increasingly valued over the state's classically-trained architects, this new language served a function beyond the rapid construction of housing. It enabled architects to shift their practice rhetorically from the weight earlier placed on classical aesthetics to an emphasis on the technical capabilities of their craft. Architects asserted the value of their work by adopting the scientific vocabularies of city planners and engineers, both linguistically and graphically.

At the Second Congress, K.I. Trapeznikov, Editor-in-Chief of *Arkhitektura SSSR*, acknowledged that the architectural press bore "great responsibility for the mistakes that emerged in the split between architectural theory and construction practice."[73] The editing of the journal had "long been unsatisfactory," Trapeznikov stated, adding that the publication was weakest in discussions of "economics and the industrialization of construction."[74] Following the Congress, the pages of *Arkhitektura SSSR* increasingly featured standardized housing plans and articles on the economically-viable use of new materials, such as concrete and pre-fabricated panels. The crane became such an important symbol of the period that it was repeatedly featured in photographs inside the journal from 1955 until it finally made the cover in May 1957 (Fig. 9). By the late 1950s, the architectural press had adopted a planning aesthetic far removed from the neoclassicism of just a few years earlier. Echoing the square-metered refrain of Khrushchev's housing decree, the grid was a mainstay on the pages of *Arkhitektura SSSR* from 1955 onward.

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[73] "Second All-Union Congress of Soviet Architects," *Pravda*, Moscow, No. 337, December 3, 1955, 3.
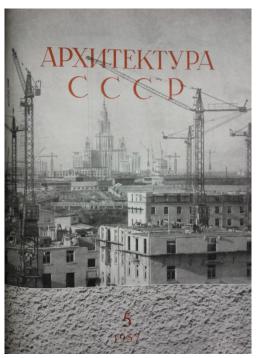[74] Ibid.

Figure 9: *Arkhitektura SSSR*, May 1957

The grid—a ubiquitous pattern in urban planning for centuries—provided Soviet architects of the 1950s with the perfect diagrammatic stance. The grid paid reverence to a rational, technological modernity while at the same time retreating into vague and self-effacing abstraction. With orthogonal precision, the grid introduced square-meter economics to the subscribers of *Arkhitektura SSSR*, downplaying the role of individual architects and promoting rational standardization. Editors of the journal were no longer interested in highlighting the work of star architects with prints of their prize-winning watercolor sketches. Instead, regimented geometric plans filled the journal's pages, proclaiming that the architectural profession had internalized the changes called for in 1955 (Figs 2 and 3). Moscow's neoclassical skyscrapers were nevertheless a permanent feature on the skyline of the capital, but as the cover of May 1957 shows (Fig. 9), their influence receded into the distance as new construction techniques reached ever higher into the foreground of Soviet architecture.

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By 1959, the older generation of architects was passing away. Zholtovskii, Mordvinov, and Alabian, all born before the turn of the century, had had careers that stretched from before

the revolution to the turmoil of the twenties, through socialist realism, ending during the Thaw. A new generation, led by figures like Georgii Gradov, had risen to take their place. Aleksandr Vlasov, also from the older generation of architects, commented in 1959 on the problem of style in architecture. Style, argued Vlasov, with obvious reference to classicism, had too long been thought of as an aesthetic category. "Yet style," he continued, "is unthinkable without reference to technical progress and, what is more important, without reference to the social content of architecture, which is called upon to serve society, the people."[75] By 1959, it was clear to all that architecture had arrived at the island of standardization and industrialization in construction. Its new style of choice was technological modernism. As *khrushcheby* arose on cityscapes across the Soviet Union, the scientific posture of architecture had been struck, and the voyaging architects had at last reached the new shore.

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[75] Aleksandr Vlasov, "The Style of Our Architecture," *Izvestia*, November 25 1959, 2.

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Figure 1: "K novomu beregu." Cartoon signed "G. Shchukin and I. Kadina, 1955."
In *Arkhitektura SSSR*. November 1955, unnumbered final page.

Figure 2: Ivan Zholtovskii, "Moscow State Hippodrome," Sketch of the tower.
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Figure 3: Unattributed.
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Figure 4: Ivan Zholtovskii, "Moscow State Hippodrome," Sketch of the tower.
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Figure 5: Karo Alabian and Vasilii Simbirtsev, "Red Army Theater," ground plan, 1934-40.
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Figure 6: P. A. Aleksandrov and L. N. Pavlov. "Kazan' Palace of Culture." Design competition entry. Circa 1934.
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Figure 7: V. G. Gel'freikh, B. M. Iofan, and V. A. Shchuko, *Palace of Soviets*, 1934.
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Figure 8: "Long Live the Great Stalin, Architect of Communism." Circa 1952.

Figure 9: Cover. *Arkhitektura SSSR*. May 1957.

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