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The Housing Revolution in Petrograd 1917–1920

«Dvorcy – rabočim, podvaly – buržujam!»
Motto of workers' meetings in August 1918[1]

One aspect of the Russian revolutions of 1917 that still has not been investigated is their enormous impact on housing and living conditions in the cities.[2] With the turning upside down of the old social order, the social structure of cities, houses, and even apartments changed as well as did architecture and the housing law. Looting and the arbitrary expropriation of bourgeois and noble property during the revolutions were followed by deliberate and legalized efforts to resettle workers from the industrial outskirts of the cities into the better houses of the urban centers. And while these provisional solutions developed their own social dynamics and live-styles, architects began planning cities and houses for the "new family," trying to transpose social utopias into architectural forms.[3]

Petrograd was a good example of these developments. The old capital of the Russian Empire with its proverbial artificiality was almost an ideal city.[4] It was at the same time industrial city, cultural metropolis, and administrative center. It housed rich and poor, long-time residents and a vast population of peasants newly off the land.

This study outlines housing in Petrograd between 1917 and 1920, the waves of looting and the uncontrolled confiscation of buildings and apartments, the resettlement of workers organized by the Soviets, and the visions of local architects. It also attempts to show how people lived during and after these changes.

Source materials for these topics are varied. Pre-revolutionary living conditions and the architectural aspects are relatively well covered by contemporary medical reports and later Soviet research, and by many art historical studies respectively. The best sources for everyday life during the revolution are certainly memoirs. Unfortunately, there are not many by workers or people of the lower classes and these mostly deal with the changes and the developments in the factories rather than with post-revolutionary living conditions. Apart from laws and the decisions of the several Soviets, there is little evidence about the official resettlement of workers. Neither sufficient statistical data nor published lists of bourgeois houses expropriated and given to workers exist, and there seem to be no descriptions of individual resettlements from the workers' side.[5] This study is therefore an

[1] E. GIMPEL'SON Sovetskij rabočij klass 1918–1920 gg. Social'no-političeskie izmenenija. Moskva 1974, p. 276.

[2] R. STITES Revolutionary Dreams. Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution. New York, Oxford 1989, p. 128.

[3] The "new family" was described in the mid-20's by L. TROTSKY From the Old Family to the New, in: Problems of Everyday Life. New York 1973, pp. 36–43, on housing especially pp. 42–43; A. M. VOGT Russische und französische Revolutionsarchitektur 1917/1789. Zur Einwirkung des Marxismus und des Newtonismus auf die Bauweise. Köln 1974, p. 28–33 shows the close relationship of social and architectural utopia, which, according to VOGT, are the only two "utopias" commonly used in German colloquial language (Sozialutopie, Architekturutopie).

[4] P. SCHEIBERT Lenin an der Macht. Das russische Volk in der Revolution 1918–1922. Weinheim 1984, p. 360 compares Petrograd with New York, calling it an "Inbegriff von Stadt als Anti-Idylle" (perfect example of a city as an anti-idyll). See also I. P. SMIRNOV Peterburgskaja utopija, in: T. B. PRITYKINA (ed.) Anciferovskie čtenija. Materialy i tezisy konferencii. Leningrad 1989, pp. 92–100.

[5] M. N. POTECHIN Pereselenie petrogradskich rabočich v kvartiry buržuazii (oktjabr' 1917–1919

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attempt to combine the available information on the different aspects of the "housing revolution" in Petrograd in order to draw a coherent picture of the impact of the Revolution on housing and living conditions.

1. Pre-revolutionary Housing Conditions in Petrograd

Looking at the events of the February Revolution in Petrograd one can easily get the impression of a civil war being fought out between several districts of a city. At its basis lay a strongly contrastive urban geography.[6] As the capital of the Russian Empire, Petrograd had a magnificent center around the Winter Palace and the Admiralty, which consisted of administrative buildings, palaces and town houses of nobility and bourgeoisie. Relatively close to that center, but on the other side of the Neva and Bol'šaja Neva, were quarters with a mixed population of petty bourgeoisie and workers: Vasil'evskij Ostrov and Petrogradskaja Storona. The industrial outskirts stretched over the areas north and east of the Bol'šaja Nevka and the Neva (Vyborgskaja Storona with Novaja Derevnja, Poljustrovo, and Ochta) as well as south of the Obvodnyj kanal (the pre-revolutionary Nevskaja, Moskovskaja, and Narvskaja districts and Petergofskij subdistrict).[7] These were the industrial districts, where the Bolsheviks had strong support in 1917,[8] where huge factories like Ajvaz and Putilov were located, and where living and housing conditions were the worst.

Without adequate water-supply, sewer systems, electricity, paved roads, or public transportation, the majority of workers lived in relatively expensive and overcrowded lodgings.[9] While the average number of inhabitants per room for the whole city was 2,1 in pre-war Petersburg, there were already by 1900 nearly 50 000 apartments with up to 4 occupants per room, and there were even cases of 20 people living in one room.[10] With

gg.), in: Istorija SSSR (1977) No. 5, pp. 140–144, here p. 144 complains about the lack of sufficient statistical data for that process.

[6] As a general phenomenon, this was aptly described and vehemently criticized by F. ENGELS Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England [original Leipzig 1845], in: K. MARX, F. ENGELS Werke. Vol. 2. Berlin 1959, pp. 229–506, here pp. 259–265; on Petrograd see T. HASEGAWA The February Revolution: Petrograd 1917. Seattle, London 1981, pp. 68–70.

[7] Ibidem p. 68. The administrative boundaries of the city changed in 1917, new parts were incorporated, former subdistricts became districts, but often the old designations were still in use. For that reason and in order not to confuse the reader, geographic names were preferred to administrative ones. On the change of administrative units and its difficulties see: Rajonnye Sovety Petrograda v 1917 godu. Protokoly, rezoljucii, postanovlenija obščich sobranij i zasedanij ispolnitel'nych komitetov. 3 vols. Moskva, Leningrad 1964–1966, here vol. 1, pp. 7–8, and the respective introductions to the several *rajony* chapters; also R. A. WADE The Rajonnye Sovety of Petrograd: The Role of Local Political Bodies in the Russian Revolution, in: Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas 20 (1972) pp. 226–240, here p. 229.

[8] See for example the results of the three elections in 1917 (to District Dumas, Central Duma, and Constituent Assembly) in: D. MANDEL The Petrograd Workers and the Soviet Seizure of Power. From the July Days 1917 to July 1918. New York 1984, pp. 346–347.

[9] A discussion of these infrastructural problems is given in J. H. BATER St Petersburg. Industrialization and Change. Montreal 1976, pp. 326–336, 352–353, and passim. For the problem of providing adequate water-supply and sewer systems in St. Petersburg see M. SPÄTH Wasserleitung und Kanalisation in Großstädten: Ein Beispiel der Organisation technischen Wandels im vorrevolutionären Rußland, in: Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte 25 (1978) pp. 342–360, here pp. 348–352.

[10] N. P. KOZERENKO Žiliščnyj krizis i bor'ba s nim. Moskva, Leningrad 1928, p. 256; M. F. HAMM The Breakdown of Urban Modernization: A Prelude to the Revolutions of 1917, in: M. F. HAMM

progressing industrialization, internal migration, and the influx of refugees during World War I these ratios worsened.[11] That there was a severe shortage of dwelling space can be seen by the fact that Petersburg had become the city with the most overcrowded apartments and the highest rents in Europe. Workers had to spend between 15 and 21 percent of their income for their miserable accommodations.[12]

Of course, there were differences in quality of lodgings. The average worker, married or unmarried, lived in a "corner" (*ugol*), a space of 2–2,5 square meters in a room often in the basement or the attic of a dilapidated apartment.[13] These "corners" were separated from each other by panels, screens, or curtains, allowing a slight degree of privacy. Sometimes they were located even in the kitchen, and sometimes the owner of the apartment lived with his "corner" occupants. According to a police physician, some ten thousand "corner people" supposedly lived in the Narvskij district.[14] But there were still worse ways to dwell: a bunk (*kojka*) was the place to stay for a considerable number of workers, and sometimes it was even shared by two people.[15] Skilled and better paid workers and workers, who were married and had two incomes, were comparatively well-off. They sometimes could afford one room for themselves or even an apartment, which they often partly rented out.[16] Overcrowded, humid, badly ventilated and dark houses had, of course, considerable impact on the health of the workers. In Vyborgskaja Storona, for example, where the municipal garbage dump was located, the death rate of the population was about four times higher than in the central parts of the city.[17]

Many workers lived in barracks, large one-story buildings with large dormitory rooms and common-use kitchens. Others had to find a place outside of town or in distant parts of the city, from which they had to walk long distances to their work every day. A great number of workers of the Putilov factory, for example, lived in villages south of the city.[18]

(ed.) The City in Russian History. Lexington 1976, pp. 182–200, here p. 196; M. I. POKROVSKAJA Po podvalam, čerdakam i uglovym kvartiram Peterburga. S.-Peterburg 1903, p. 3; BATER St Petersburg p. 349 shows the distribution of overcrowded lodgings in the city.

[11] For the large increase in the number of workers, especially during the wartime boom, see S. SMITH Craft Consciousness, Class Consciousness: Petrograd 1917, in: History Workshop 11 (1981) pp. 33–56, here p. 44; on refugees see: Očerk dejatel'nosti Petrogradskoj oblastnoj organizacii Vserossijskago Sojuza Gorodov za pervyj god vojny. Petrograd 1916.

[12] HAMM Breakdown p. 196; S. A. SMITH Red Petrograd. Revolution in the Factories 1917–1918. Cambridge 1983, pp. 44–45; J. H. BATER St. Petersburg and Moscow on the Eve of Revolution, in: D. H. KAISER (ed.) The Workers' Revolution in Russia, 1917. The View from Below. Cambridge 1987, pp. 20–57, here p. 50.

[13] Descriptions as well as statistics on the distribution of the different kinds of dwelling among the Petersburg workers are provided by T. SOSNOVY The Housing Problem in the Soviet Union. New York 1954, pp. 3 and 8; for a photo of a Petersburg worker's family in a "corner" see V. E. BONNELL (ed.) The Russian Worker. Life and Labor under the Tsarist Regime. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1983, p. 58; under the title "Iz žizni peterburgskoj uglovoj kvartiry" M. I. POKROVSKAJA gives a vivid story of sickness, drunkenness, and wife-beating related to life in a "corner" (Po podvalam pp. 55–98).

[14] M. N. POTECHIN Leninskij rajon. Leningrad 1971, p. 162.

[15] As was the case with S. I. Kanatčikov, according to R. E. ZELNIK (ed. and transl.) A Radical Worker in Tsarist Russia. The Autobiography of Semën Ivanovich Kanatchikov. Stanford 1986, p. 86.

[16] Ibidem pp. 85–86.

[17] V. N. BABKIN, K. A. VIŠNJAKOV Sila revoljucionnych tradicij, in: Vyborgskaja storona. Iz istorii bor'by rabočego klassa za pobedu Velikoj Oktjabr'skoj socialističeskoj revoljucii. Sbornik statej i vospominanij. Leningrad 1957, pp. 189–205, here p. 199–200; BATER St Petersburg p. 348.

[18] I. I. GAZA Putilovec na putjach k Oktjabrju. Moskva, Leningrad 1933, p. 72; S. I. Kanatčikov, who lived in the Nevskaja district, had to walk to Vyborgskaja Storona (ZELNIK Kanatchikov p. 86);

Those who found no place at all had to depend on charitable institutions like lodging houses and night shelters. By 1913 about 8 200 beds were available in these *nočležnye doma* for an estimated number of 20 000 homeless people.[19]

With the revolutions of 1917 the possibility of overcoming these problems seemed at hand. While architects thought of creating a "new city," and while the Bolsheviks deliberated emergency measures, anarchists and radical groups of soldiers, sailors, and workers resorted to direct action, looting houses, and expropriating flats for their own use.

2. The Unrestrained Housing Revolution

With the February Revolution of 1917 many houses in Petrograd overnight became symbols of the old regime and its upper classes; others became strategically important in the ongoing street fights.[20] Immediately their interiors and exteriors were redefined: Tsarist signs and state emblems were removed from the walls and thrown into the river, houses were adorned with red flags, and representatives of the hated old regime often were driven out of their apartments and robbed of their property.[21]

In the first days of the revolution, the police stations and the attics of houses where tsarist policemen barricaded themselves were targets of the factory youth led by older workers.[22] Simultaneously soldiers and sailors, often accompanied by students and an undefined crowd of people, took possession of important buildings, like the Hotel Astoria, the military hotel of the city,[23] and the houses and apartments of prominent

according to BATER (St Petersburg pp. 283–284) the poorest workers, who lost out in the competition for housing around the factory, lived far away from work. Still these people had to use a higher percentage of their income for accommodation than their better-off colleagues, which shows the strong demand pressure on the housing market (POKROVSKAJA Po podvalam p. 31).

[19] BATER St Petersburg pp. 337–342, especially p. 342; see also the photo of the interior of a night shelter facing p. 295.

[20] For a discussion of the symbolic character of buildings in the February Revolution see R. STITES Iconoclastic Currents in the Russian Revolution: Destroying and Preserving the Past, in: A. GLEASON, P. KENEZ, R. STITES (eds.) Bolshevik Culture. Experiment and Order in the Russian Revolution. Bloomington 1985, pp. 1–24, here pp. 6–7.

[21] The changes visible on the façades of houses are described by OL'GA PUTJATINA in: G. A. LENSEN (ed. and transl.) War and Revolution. Excerpts from the Letters and Diaries of the Countess Olga Poutiatine. Tallahassee 1974, p. 60; a photo of an apartment looted in February 1917 is given by E. BASCHET La Révolution est là: Russie 1904–1924. Paris 1978, p. 126, and a photo of a crowd burning the tsarist coat of arms in front of the Aničkov palace can be seen in J. L. HOUGHTELING A Diary of the Russian Revolution. New York 1918, facing p. 138; looters with their booty are depicted in HASEGAWA February Revolution, following p. 310.

[22] See GAZA Putilovec p. 53; A. F. ILYIN-GENEVSKY [IL'IN-ŽENEVSKIJ] From the February Revolution to the October Revolution 1917. New York 1931; M. V. ROSLJAKOV Svoim putem k revoljucii, in: Petrograd v dni Velikogo Oktjabrja. Leningrad 1967, pp. 48–51, here p. 50; HASEGAWA February Revolution p. 296; also V. ŠKLOVSKIJ Sentimental'noe putešestvie. Vospominanija 1917–1922. Moskva, Berlin 1923, pp. 20–21; Šklovskij took part in clearing attics of such former policemen in hiding.

[23] After a provocation the hotel was stormed, the wine cellars partly looted, partly destroyed, and a lot of windows were smashed. For colorful descriptions of these events see M. BUCHANAN Petrograd. The City of Trouble, 1914–1918. 2nd ed. London 1919, pp. 102–103; PUTJATINA War and Revolution pp. 53, 60–61; HOUGHTELING (Diary p. 115) noticed that there were still pictures of the tsar and the tsarina hanging on the walls untouched and obviously overlooked by the looters.

figures of the old society. Sadism and cruelty, personal enrichment, political fanaticism, class hatred and vague ideas of social justice were major traits of these raids.[24]

The case of the eighty-two year old Countess Freedericksz, the wife of the Minister of the Imperial Court, was a striking example.[25] She was ill in bed, when her house at Počtamtskaja Street No. 23 (later Ul. Sojuza Svjazi, since 1989 again Počtamtskaja) in the central Admiraltejskaja district was stormed by soldiers on February 28.[26] With the help of a servant she escaped down the backstairs. Meanwhile the looting soldiers set fire to the stables and ordered the horses to be locked inside. A dog that tried to run away also was reported to have been stabbed to death by a soldier. Apparently nothing and nobody, not even an animal, was to survive in this house. It may have been deliberate retaliation: One of the last major attacks of mounted police against street demonstrators had originated two days earlier from another house of Count Freedericksz at Ligovskaja Street No. 10, near Znamenskaja Square (today Pl. Vosstanija).[27] Having had great trouble finding another place to stay, the countess herself died soon after these events.

Other less prominent people, like the Countess Marie Kleinmichel, were luckier. When her house in Sergievskaja Street No. 33 (today Ul. Čajkovskogo) in the Litejnaja district was attacked, she escaped in time with her dinner guests and took refuge in the house of Baron de Pilar across the street. From there she watched the uninvited guests having dinner and emptying her wine cellar. After some days she was able to return to her partially looted house and to live there in two rooms in the company of a group of revolutionary students, who occupied and apparently enjoyed the rest of the house.[28]

Not only was it dangerous at that time to have been closely connected with the tsarist regime, it was also not safe to live in any grand and sumptuous house, or in one located where the insurgent crowds were likely to pass. When these factors combined, as in the case of the house of Vera Naryškina-Witte on Kamennoostrovskij Prospect (today Kirov Pr.), it could lead to multiple searches by all kinds of people, soldiers, sailors, or common criminals.[29] People living on central squares, such as the one near St. Isaac's Cathedral

[24] T. J. ULDRICKS The "Crowd" in the Russian Revolution: Towards Reassessing the Nature of Revolutionary Leadership, in: Politics and Society 4 (1974) pp. 397–413, here p. 405.

[25] The fate of this lady has impressed many writers; see D. BROWN Doomsday 1917. The Destruction of Russia's Ruling Class. London 1975, p. 66; BUCHANAN Petrograd p. 105; V. NARISCHKINE-WITTE A Pétrograd pendant la Révolution: notes et souvenirs. Paris 1925, p. 39; M. KLEINMICHEL Memories of a Shipwrecked World: Being the Memoirs of Countess Kleinmichel. Transl. V. Le Grand. London 1923, pp. 196–197. The destroyed house of a tsarist minister can be seen on a photo in: An Illustrated History of the Russian Revolution. Vol. 1. New York 1928, p. 75.

[26] Addresses and locations are in: Adresnaja kniga goroda S.-Peterburga na 1902 g. col. 387; for lists of streets and places re-named after the Revolution see: Veś Petrograd na 1923 god. Adresnaja i spravočnaja kniga g. Petrograda. Petrograd 1923, part XI, and K. S. GORBAČEVIČ, E. P. CHABLO Počemu tak nazvany? O proischoždenii nazvanij ulic, ploščadej, ostrovov, rek i mostov Leningrada. 3rd ed. Leningrad 1985. For the recent re-introduction of pre-revolutionary street-names in Leningrad see M. TALALAJ Sveršiloś?, in: Avrora (1989) No. 8, p. 160.

[27] N. F. RJABOV Doloj carja!, in: Krušenie carizma. Vospominanija učastnikov revoljucionnogo dviženija v Petrograde (1907 g.–fevral' 1917 g.). Leningrad 1986, pp. 257–276, here p. 271; Adresnaja kniga goroda S.-Peterburga na 1902 g. col. 226.

[28] BROWN Doomsday pp. 64–65; KLEINMICHEL Memories of a Shipwrecked World pp. 224–226, 238; facing p. 176 is a picture of the lavish interiors of Kleinmichel's house; Adresnaja kniga goroda S.-Peterburga na 1902 g. col. 459.

[29] Luckily enough for her, nothing was stolen in four searches within three days; see NARISCHKINE-WITTE A Pétrograd pp. 35–47; BROWN Doomsday p. 67; on the participation of recently freed criminals in the "revolutionary" action see HASEGAWA February Revolution p. 289.

and the Astoria Hotel, could be mistaken for police and shot at while looking at a mass meeting from their windows.[30]

Foreigners were usually left alone by the crowds, but some stores with German names were attacked. An American who was visited in his apartment by a group of soldiers recalled that when he identified himself, his visitors became friendly and left smiling. He in turn took the opportunity to go out with other Americans and search through the rubble and left-overs of looted houses for souvenirs of the revolution they were experiencing.[31]

Servants and house personnel often played a crucial role. In the cases of the Countesses Freedericksz and Kleinmichel they helped their mistresses escape. Elsewhere they were the occasion for a search when they were unmasked as agents of the secret police.[32] There were cases of domestics who sided with the intruders. The seizure of the mansion of the prima ballerina and ex-mistress of the tsar Kšesinskaja at the corner of Bol'šaja Dvorjanskaja Street and Kronverkskij Prospect (today Ul. Kujbyševa and Pr. Maksima Gor'kogo) was an example: while Kšesinskaja had already left the house with her little fox-terrier Džibi and fled on foot to a friend, the revolutionary troops were supposedly welcomed by her housekeeper with open arms and the words: "Come in, come in! The bird has flown!"[33] In many cases, however, the servants themselves left and returned to their native villages, where life was more secure than in the troubled capital.[34]

Uncontrolled expropriation of apartments and houses on a smaller scale went on well into 1918.[35] After the palaces more and more apartments of the simple bourgeoisie were searched or requisitioned, usually at night. This created a new style of living for these people, one characterized by sleepless nights, walking fearfully through the dark rooms fully dressed, always in expectation of a search. Sometimes they simply moved temporarily to the more secure place of a friend.[36] For the victims of such a search it was usually impossible to identify the unpleasant guests. Whether they were anarchists, criminals

[30] This happened to Albert Ponsold, when he was a child. For security reasons he and his mother left their flat immediately and stayed with friends for a while (A. PONSOLD Der Strom war die Newa. Aus dem Leben eines Gerichtsmediziners. St. Michael 1980). According to one source, the last fights with former policemen took place around St. Isaac's Cathedral (A. TYRKOVA-WILLIAMS From Liberty to Brest Litovsk. The First Year of the Russian Revolution. London 1919, p. 194).

[31] HOUGHTELING Diary pp. 109, 111, 116, 151; PUTJATINA War and Revolution p. 53; HASEGAWA February Revolution p. 363.

[32] Vera Naryškina-Witte was quite surprised to learn that her porter worked for the *Ochrana;* he was one of many in Petrograd who spied for the police (NARISCHKINE-WITTE A Pétrograd p. 42); James Houghteling was even surprised that his *dvornik* did not work for the *Ochrana* (HOUGHTELING Diary p. 120); the fact that porters followed orders of the police and turned away people looking for cover in the street fighting of late February made them even more suspicious in the eyes of the insurgents (RJABOV Doloj carja p. 270).

[33] BROWN Doomsday p. 68; M. PALÉOLOGUE La Russie des tsars pendant la Grande Guerre. 3 vols. Paris 1922, here vol. 3, pp. 229–230; a photo of Kšesinskaja with Džibi in her luxurious home can be seen in: Stolica i usad'ba. Žurnal krasivoj žizni (1915) No. 42, p. 17.

[34] E. AMBURGER Deutsche in Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Rußlands. Die Familie Amburger in St. Petersburg 1770–1920. Wiesbaden 1986, p. 174 (= Veröffentlichungen des Osteuropa-Institutes München. Reihe Geschichte, vol. 54); M. D. VRANGEL' Moja žizń v kommunističeskom raju, in: Archiv Russkoj Revoljucii. Vol. 4. Berlin 1922, pp. 198–214, here p. 203.

[35] SCHEIBERT Lenin an der Macht pp. 195–196; H. G. WELLS Russia in the Shadows. New York 1921, p. 44; M. VERSTRAETE Mes Cahiers Russes. L'Ancien Régime, le Gouvernement Provisoire, le Pouvoir des Soviets. Paris 1920, p. 264.

[36] The inability to sleep was especially deplored; see NARISCHKINE-WITTE A Pétrograd p. 38; S. V. POZNER Dela i dni Petrograda 1917–1921. Vospominanija – razmyšlenija. Berlin 1923, p. 44; Z. SHAKHOVSKOI The Russian Revolution as Seen by a Child, in: D. VON MOHRENSCHILDT The Russian

disguised as Red Guards or soldiers, or real Red Guards made little difference. It was easier for the marauders to identify their targets: either someone was known to them as a "class enemy," or they interrogated the house porter (*dvornik*) about the bourgeois inhabitants or about the recipients of bread ration cards of the fourth category, the classification which entitled one to the smallest supply of food; it was reserved for the "bourgeois elements."[37]

Legal remedy was apparently unavailable. In the middle of 1917 the Provisional Government itself seems to have considered enacting a law on the requisition of private houses for governmental and public use.[38] It was not before June 1917, that the Minister of Justice, P. N. Pereverzev, demanded the evacuation of the *dača* of P. P. Durnovo, located at Poljustrovskaja Naberežnaja No. 13 in Vyborgskaja Storona, which had been seized by the anarchists after the February Revolution and had been converted into a meeting place with a reading room and a kindergarten.[39] In the case of the mansion of Kšesinskaja, which was first used for excessive dinner parties by a Georgian student named Agabagov and later made the headquarter of the Bolsheviks, the owner first had to go to court and to win a law suit (May 1917), before she could hope to get her mansion back. But Pereverzev did not dare to enforce the verdict, thereby leaving it in the hands of the Bolsheviks until their eviction in July 1917.[40]

3. The Organized Housing Revolution

By the time of the October Revolution the views of the Bolsheviks concerning the requisitioning of private houses had crystallized. On the one hand, they accepted illegal acquisition as a way to provide accommodations for their own organizations;[41] on the other hand, they decided for the sake of the revolutionary order to protect private houses against the "powers of darkness," i. e. the anarchists.[42] Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks' theoretical preparation with regard to the housing question was rather weak. They had no elaborate theory of what to do after a proletarian revolution except to demand the

Revolution of 1917. Contemporary Accounts. New York, London, Toronto 1971, pp. 100–116, here p. 104; J. MARABINI La vie quotidienne en Russie sous la révolution d'Octobre. [Paris] 1965, p. 166.

[37] M. SMIL'G-BENARIO Na sovetskoj službe, in: Archiv Russkoj Revoljucii. Vol. 3. Berlin 1921, pp. 147–189, here p. 151; VRANGEL' Moja žizń p. 202.

[38] According to the memoirs of the Assistant Minister of Justice: A. DEŃJANOV Moja služba pri Vremennom Pravitel'stve, in: Archiv Russkoj Revoljucii. Vol. 4. Berlin 1922, pp. 55–120, here p. 91; nothing about such a law is mentioned in R. P. BROWDER, A. F. KERENSKY (eds.) The Russian Provisional Government 1917. Documents. 3 vols. Stanford 1961.

[39] P. AVRICH The Russian Anarchists. Princeton 1971, pp. 130–132 gives the story of the *dača* Durnovo; see also IDEM (ed.) The Anarchists in the Russian Revolution. London 1973, pp. 82–83 (with picture of the *dača*); the address is in: Adresnaja kniga goroda S.-Peterburga na 1902 g. col. 382.

[40] The weak position of the Government is shown by the fact that Pereverzev rather foolishly asked the Workers' and Soldiers' Soviet to persuade the Bolsheviks to leave the mansion voluntarily (DEŃJANOV Moja služba p. 93); for the Bolsheviks' use of the mansion of Kšesinskaja cf. also A. E. SUKNOVALOV Petrogradskaja storona. Leningrad 1960, p. 85, and A. RABINOWITCH The Bolsheviks Come to Power. New York, London 1978, p. 9. A description of the interior of the building after the Bolsheviks left is given by NARISCHKINE-WITTE A Pétrograd pp. 152–154.

[41] See the deliberations concerning using a house for a political club in the Bolshevik dominated Petergof Soviet on November 16, in: Rajonnye Sovety Petrograda vol. 2, p. 300.

[42] This decision of the all-city conference of the Red Guards on October 22 is given as Priloženie 6, point 8 in: Vyborgskaja storona. Iz istorii bor'by . . . p. 215; for that conference and the tasks of the Red Guards in general see R. A. WADE Red Guards and Workers' Militias in the Russian Revolution. Stanford 1984, pp. 192, 314–317; on the increasing influence of the anarchists from October onwards see MANDEL The Petrograd Workers pp. 357, 360.

quartering of the poor in the houses of the former exploiters, as had been put forward by ENGELS in his "Zur Wohnungsfrage" (The Housing Question, 1872).[43] LENIN endorsed that policy in "Gosudarstvo i revoljucija" (State and Revolution, 1917), warning that the old bureaucracy would be useless in the implementation of such expropriatory measures. In October 1917 he qualified these measures in "Uderžat li bol'ševiki gosudarstvennuju vlast'?" (Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?), giving his own vision of a "most needy" family being quartered in a bourgeois apartment, in which the former occupants simply should move closer together until good housing for all was built by the engineers of the new state.[44] Common to these policies was a tendency towards bureaucratization, towards the creation of committees and the drafting of decrees, which was to assume greater proportions after the passing of the first laws dealing with the housing problem.[45]

In the *rajon* Soviets, where the Bolsheviks played major roles during 1917, they had gained some practical experience with housing law and the complaints of tenants.[46] But after their revolution, they had nothing more to offer than emergency measures: On October 30 the new Commissariat of the Interior issued two decrees on a temporary moratorium of rent payment for people earning less than 400 rubles a month, and on the right of each municipal self-governing body to regulate the housing question. This included the right to confiscate empty houses for the use of the poor.[47] A week later the Petrograd Soviet passed an order for the requisitioning of warm clothing, which could easily be used as a pretext for searches and consequently as a way to identify the apartments of rich people.[48] On December 19, the *Sovnarkom* initiated a special tax on all immovables under penalty of confiscation. To make things worse for the former bourgeoisie, servants, bathrooms, and even pianos were taxed as well.[49]

All these early decrees seem to have had little effect. Soon the local *rajon* Soviets started to add their own resolutions, which were much more oriented towards a practical solution of the housing question. In Vyborgskaja Storona, for example, it was decided on December 27 to open a housing registration office in order to distribute equally the available dwelling space. All home-owners and house committees were to report vacant apartments to that office within three days. Similar decisions were made in other parts of the city, all of them more or less dictated by the need for a general stock-taking at a time of rapid demographic changes within the city.[50]

[43] J. N. HAZARD Soviet Housing Law. New Haven 1939, p. 2; F. ENGELS Zur Wohnungsfrage [original Leipzig 1872], in: K. MARX, F. ENGELS Werke. Vol. 18. Berlin 1962, pp. 209–287, here especially pp. 226–227.

[44] V. I. LENIN Polnoe sobranie sočinenij. 5th ed. 55 vols., 2 index vols. Moskva 1967–1970, vol. 33, pp. 57–59 and vol. 34, pp. 314–315.

[45] A picturesque example of Bolshevik bureaucratism is given by I. SCHWEZOFF Russian Somersault. New York, London 1936, p. 80, who describes the confiscation of his grandfather's house on Anglijskaja Naberežnaja (today Nab. Krasnogo Flota) in October 1917: Every single teaspoon was put on an inventory list, described and labelled with a number.

[46] Rajonnye Sovety Petrograda vols. 1–3, passim; WADE Rajonnye Sovety p. 231.

[47] HAZARD Soviet Housing Law p. 5; POTECHIN Pereselenie p. 141.

[48] On the decree of November 8 and its outcome see A. V. KRASNIKOVA My novyj mir postroim. Leningrad 1967, pp. 43–44. People in charge with these searches were Red Guards and local party officials according to BROWN Doomsday p. 148.

[49] Ibidem p. 161; STITES Revolutionary Dreams p. 127.

[50] More on these demographic changes below, chapter 5; A. L. FRAJMAN Forpost socialističeskoj revoljucii. Leningrad 1969, pp. 328–329.

The idea of resettling (*pereselenie*) workers into the apartments of the rich was first discussed in a session of the Petrograd Soviet on January 29, 1918. A decree of March 1 established guidelines: dwelling space for the bourgeoisie was restricted to one room per adult and one room for the children. The rest of the apartment with its furniture was to be allocated to the families of Red Army soldiers at the front and to jobless people. Empty houses were to be filled before inhabited ones. The new tenants were to be responsible for the entrusted furniture.[51] Again, this decree was implemented first on the *rajon* level, and Vyborgskaja Storona led the way with about 50 workers' families chosen by the *Fabzavkomy* (factory committees) and resettled in the middle of March.[52] Similarly, the Soviet of Vasil'evskij Ostrov followed a recommendation of the *Fabzavkom* of the Baltijskij factory and handed over two buildings to workers, one on Bol'šoj Prospect (No. 60), the other on Kosaja Linija (No. 23), right next to the factory.[53]

In addition, a new survey of dwelling space was made for the whole city in May and June, and it revealed a total number of 8259 empty apartments of varying size.[54] The house committees seemed not to have been very helpful in this inquiry. Like actual owners, who often filled their apartments temporarily with relatives and friends in order to comply with the restrictions on dwelling space, these committees were not much in favor of the Bolsheviks and often gave erroneous information about their houses.[55] Most of them had come into being after the February Revolution, and they constituted the lowest electoral body of the city self-government. Their tasks were keeping order, defending the house, distributing ration cards, registering tenants, and caring for hygienic conditions in house and court-yard. From September 1918 onwards the Petrograd Bolsheviks started to replace the old house committees with their own so-called "house committees of the poor," thereby placing loyal Bolsheviks and often the former underdogs of the house community in charge of its administration.[56]

Toward the end of 1918 the Bolsheviks resumed their resettlement project with new intensity. After the ratification of the law of August 20, 1918, which abolished private ownership of land in the cities, and of buildings above a certain size (in Petrograd more than five apartments) in cities with a population over 10 000, the legal foundation was laid

[51] The decree is given ibidem p. 329; POTECHIN Pereselenie p. 142; IDEM Pervyj sovet proletarskoj diktatury. Leningrad 1966, p. 170.

[52] This and the following examples are in JU. S. KULYŠEV, V. I. NOSAČ Partijnaja organizacija i rabočie Petrograda v gody graždanskoj vojny (1918–1920 gg.). Leningrad 1971, p. 261.

[53] The last year for which information on the previous householders was available for this study was 1902. Then the house on Bol'šoj Prospect belonged to academician Aleksandr Nikitič Frolov. The house on Kosaja Linija did not exist in that year, and the highest odd number before the street ends at Čekušskaja Naberežnaja is 17. Since there exists also no No. 23 in 1923, KULYŠEV and NOSAČ obviously gave a wrong number (see Adresnaja kniga goroda S.-Peterburga na 1902 g. cols. 34, 258; Veś Petrograd na 1923 god part I, p. 86). They certainly meant No. 13, the only residential building in the street close to the factory's main entrance, which today houses the personnel office of the factory (own observation, H. F. J.).

[54] The exact data given by POTECHIN Pereselenie p. 142.

[55] BROWN Doomsday pp. 175–176; GIMPEL'SON Sovetskij rabočij klass p. 277; POTECHIN Pervyj sovet pp. 170–171; on the difficulty the Bolsheviks had penetrating the Petrograd house committees see SCHEIBERT Lenin an der Macht p. 356.

[56] POTECHIN Pereselenie p. 142. A short description of the house committees' tasks is given by G. F. BARICHNOVSKIJ Rajonnaja duma, in: Vyborgskaja strorona. Iz istorii borʹby . . . pp. 137–153, here p. 149; also TYRKOVA-WILLIAMS From Liberty pp. 429–430; MARABINI La vie quotidienne p. 169. For a famous literary treatment of the new house committees see M. BULGAKOV Heart of a Dog. Transl. M. Ginsburg. New York 1968, esp. pp. 24–27, 75–76, and passim.

for systematic expropriation of the owners of buildings.[57] In September a Central Housing Soviet (*mežrajonnyj žiliščnyj sovet*) was established at the Petrograd Soviet, with an executive committee under the chairmanship of Stepan Matveevič Korčagin.[58] Under its supervision, new housing departments at the *rajon* Soviets were to carry out the resettlement. These departments were formed by representatives of the *Fabzavkomy*, which chose the workers to be resettled.

Despite the law of August 20 and the creation of the new housing Soviets, the Bolsheviks proceeded relatively cautiously and did not start immediately to nationalize private houses systematically or to evict their owners.[59] They first moved workers into confiscated hotels, like the "Severnaja" or the "Evropejskaja", in the latter organizing the first socialist workers' commune; or according to a decree of October 16 they confiscated apartments and furniture of people who had been away for more than two months. In order to know who was in the city and who was not, citizens were obliged to report to the authorities every two weeks.[60]

There were, of course, many practical obstacles to a mass resettlement. Aside from the self-serving obstructionism of the house committees, there were many workers who did not want to move into the city center, worrying about the long distance to their factories and the problem of heating a large house.[61] The very procedure of moving had to be organized as well. In December 1918 the Petrograd Soviet decided to provide either 150–200 rubles per workers' family to help them move, or free transport, that is the horses and carts available from the Central Housing Soviet.[62] It also resolved that public transportation to and from the factories should be free, that the new tenants should be able to buy the furniture of the former inhabitants in installments, and that only houses with central heating should be occupied.[63] It can be estimated that no less than 65 000 workers' families were relocated in Petrograd in the years 1918 and 1919.[64]

[57] SOSNOVY Housing Problem pp. 12–13, 228–229; HAZARD Soviet Housing Law p. 4.

[58] This is the same Korčagin who, as chairman of the Petergofskij rajon Soviet, already figured in discussions on housing issues in 1917 (see Rajonnye Sovety Petrograda vol. 2, pp. 296–298, 312–313, and Petrogradskij voenno-revoljucionnyj komitet. Dokumenty i materialy. 3 vols. Moskva 1966, passim); on the newly established Soviets see KULYŠEV, NOSAČ Partijnaja organizacija pp. 261–262 and POTECHIN Pervyj sovet pp. 171–172.

[59] On the cautiousness of early Bolshevik housing policy see also GIMPEL'SON Sovetskij rabočij klass p. 273; HAZARD Soviet Housing Law p. 5.

[60] According to Barbara Livonius, née Edle von Rennenkampff, whose parents lived in Petrograd during that time (personal information); see also POTECHIN Pereselenie pp. 142–143.

[61] GIMPEL'SON Sovetskij rabočij klass p. 277; POTECHIN Pervyj sovet pp. 168–169.

[62] Ibidem; about 48 horses and carts were in use daily during the winter 1918/1919 (KULYŠEV, NOSAČ Partijnaja organizacija p. 262). It is quite unlikely that in a situation where the state had great difficulties in paying its own officials actual money payments were made. 150 rubles was equivalent to 26 850 calories in 1918, which is the average energy requirement for a 40 year old man doing heavy work for seven days (SCHEIBERT Lenin an der Macht pp. 237–238, 599 [note 76]; Energy and Protein Requirements. Report of a Joint FAO/WHO/UNU Expert Consultation. Genf 1985, pp. 72, 76–78 [= World Health Organisation. Technical Report Series 724]).

[63] The numbers of these houses in the different *rajony* are given in POTECHIN Pereselenie p. 143: 136 houses altogether, out of which 20 were located in Vyborgskaja Storona, 31 in the Litejnyj rajon, 19 in Petrogradskaja Storona, and 13 in Narvskij and Petergofskij rajon; see also POTECHIN Pervyj sovet p. 173.

[64] This number is a calculation of POTECHIN (Pereselenie p. 144), who admits that there is little statistical evidence available. It seems rather high compared to GIMPEL'SON (Sovetskij rabočij klass p. 277), who reports about 30 000 workers relocated in Petrograd between November 1918 and September 1919.

Houses were not only nationalized for the benefit of poor workers or the families of soldiers. Party organizations, unions, and the new state administration were all looking for accommodations and such offices finally occupied 18,5 percent of all expropriated buildings in Petrograd by 1923.[65] There also continued to be fanatical housing officials who, in a mood of "klassovyj sadizm" (*class sadism*), wanted to settle accounts with somebody. So it happened that even members of non-bourgeois groups like the intelligentsia sometimes lost their apartments. In one instance, the chairman of the Soviet in Ochta, who was also the military commissar of that district, requisitioned the local lunatic asylum for the army. The director of that hospital was one of his personal enemies, and this may have been the only reason why he chose this particular building.[66]

In addition to commandeering apartments for the workers and buildings for all kinds of offices, the Bolsheviks began around 1919 to requisition buildings for other purposes. On December 19, 1919, the Dom Iskusstv ("Disk", House of the Arts) opened on the initiative of Maksim Gor'kij in the former house of the Eliseev family on Nevskij Prospect No. 15, between Morskaja Bol'šaja Street and Mojki Reki Naberežnaja.[67] This house soon became the literary center of the city, where many authors lived, including Mandel'štam, Gumilëv, and Chodasevič, where people like Zamjatin and Blok were frequent guests, and where the literary group of the Serapion Brothers came into being.[68] Most of the members of "Disk" were supplied with so-called academic rations, which were provided by the Dom Učënych (House of Scholars, House of Science), located on Dvorcovaja Naberežnaja No. 26 in the former palace of Grand Duke Vladimir. This house offered a wide range of services and, most crucially, food to its 3000 to 4000 academic members.[69]

Palaces like those of the Šeremetevs (Fontanka No. 34), the Šuvalovs (Fontanka No. 21), and the Jusupovs (Mojka No. 94) were converted into *muzei dvorjanskogo byta* (museums of the aristocratic life-style). This meant that they were basically left as they were; their art treasures became accessible to the public and their museum-like character indicated the antiquarian role now assigned to the nobility.[70] As conveniences for workers, the first *doma otdycha* (rest-homes) of Petrograd and of the whole country were opened by

[65] For the accommodation of official institutions a special committee was formed by the *Sovnarkom* on February 18, 1918 (POTECHIN Pervyj sovet p. 169); the data is in KOZERENKO Žiliščnyj krizis p. 259. Offices often moved into other apartments when their former places began to decay (P. SCHEFFER Augenzeuge im Staate Lenins. Ein Korrespondent berichtet aus Moskau 1921–1930. München 1972, p. 106).

[66] On class sadism see A. GUROVIČ Vyšij Sovet Narodnago Chozjajstva, in: Archiv Russkoj Revoljucii. Vol. 6. Berlin 1922, pp. 304–331, here p. 307, and SMIL'G-BENARIO Na sovetskoj službe p. 151; the expulsion of intelligentsia and the example from Ochta are mentioned ibidem pp. 154–155; see also POTECHIN Pervyj sovet p. 172.

[67] Adresnaja kniga goroda S.-Peterburga na 1902 g. col. 318.

[68] More on this house appears in B. SCHERR Notes on Literary Life in Petrograd, 1918–1922: A Tale of Three Houses, in: Slavic Review 36 (1977) pp. 256–267, here pp. 260–265; a short survey of the Serapion Brothers is in J. HOLTHUSEN Russische Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert. München 1978, pp. 113–125; see also H. OULANOFF The Serapion Brothers. Theory and Practice. The Hague, Paris 1966, pp. 10–17, and the introduction by Gary Kern in G. KERN, C. COLLINS (eds.) The Serapion Brothers. A Critical Anthology. Ann Arbor 1975, pp. XI–XXXIV.

[69] H. G. WELLS paid a visit to that house and described it in his Russia in the Shadows p. 49; Viktor Šklovskij tells about his life there in ŠKLOVSKIJ Sentimental'noe putešestvie pp. 324–333; see also SCHERR Notes p. 265.

[70] Veś Petrograd na 1923 god part I, p. 52; C. BENCKENDORFF Half a Life. The Reminiscences of a Russian Gentleman. London 1954, p. 33.

the trade unions on May 20, 1920, on Kamennyj Ostrov.[71] Thirty-two confiscated buildings, approached by an avenue decorated in futurist style, formed the new settlement where workers could be sent to renew themselves and to enjoy beautiful surroundings.

4. The Architectural Utopia

According to Ilya Ehrenburg, architecture was the fundamental art of the new era.[72] With the creation of the new Soviet citizen, and with the redefinition of all societal relations at even the lowest level, the very nature of the family and the municipal community were called into question, and planning of new types of housing in new urban configurations became pressing. It goes without saying that none of the plans of the years 1917–1920 had a chance to be carried out because of severe shortage of labor, material, and money. But since the architects had no opportunity or obligation actually to realize their projects and since the Bolshevik Party did not have a preconceived model of the new city, it was easy to indulge in architectural fantasy during that time.[73]

The Bolshevik assumption that "the city [was] an important element in the economic and intellectual life of the country, a great center of production"[74] gave rise to a massive city planning movement. The wish was expressed "to undress the bourgeois town," in order to restructure it.[75] Western ideas of urbanist and anti-urbanist thinkers were adopted and further developed.[76] The anti-urbanist "garden city," an English concept of the late 19th century, in Soviet hands became a decentralized workers' garden city or garden suburb, with little cottages in a green environment, and public services like schools, communal dining rooms, and recreational areas nearby. In the years of economic shortages, this concept was regarded as more realizable than that of the urbanists, who conceived of cities divided into three zones, industrial, agricultural, and residential, the latter composed of huge communal housing complexes. In these communes the families were to be almost dissolved, the women

[71] On the *doma otdycha* see: Istorija rabočich Leningrada. Vol. 2: 1917–1965. Leningrad 1972, p. 95; SUKNOVALOV Petrogradskaja storona pp. 113–114; WELLS Russia pp. 128–131 (including a photo of workers sitting around tables).

[72] I. ĖRENBURG A vsë-taki ona vertitsja. Moskva, Berlin 1922, p. 89; Ehrenburg was particularly fascinated with New York.

[73] M. BLIZNAKOV Urban Planning in the USSR: Integrative Theories, in: HAMM (ed.) The City in Russian History pp. 243–256, here p. 243 calls this period one of "planning extravagance"; the more pejorative term "revoljucionnyj romantizm" is used in: Očerki istorii Leningrada. Vol. 4. Moskva, Leningrad 1964, p. 426; also STITES Revolutionary Dreams p. 190.

[74] Program of the Planning Department for Cities and Centers of Habitation of September 1918, quoted in A. KOPP Town and Revolution. Soviet Architecture and City Planning 1917–1935. New York 1970, p. 36.

[75] See the quotation of A. Gan in V. Ė. CHAZANOVA Sovetskaja architektura pervych let Oktjabrja 1917–1925 gg. Moskva 1970, p. 61.

[76] The following is mainly based on S. F. STARR The Revival and Schism of Urban Planning in Twentieth-Century Russia, in: HAMM (ed.) The City in Russian History pp. 222–242, on BLIZNAKOV Urban Planning, on CHAZANOVA Sovetskaja architektura p. 53, and on V. QUILICI Città russa e città sovietica. Caratteri della struttura storica. Ideologia e pratica della trasformazione socialista. Milano 1976, pp. 134–144; for a discussion of urbanist and anti-urbanist ideas see A. KOPP Changer la vie, changer la ville. De la vie nouvelle aux problèmes urbains. U.R.S.S. 1917–1932. Paris 1975, pp. 282–306. These ideas were still influential in the late twenties. For examples see H. D. HUDSON, JR. "The Social Condenser of Our Epoch": The Association of Contemporary Architects and the Creation of a New Way of Life in Revolutionary Russia, in: Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas 34 (1986) pp. 557–578, here pp. 567–569.

freed from household work, and the children raised together and apart from their parents.[77]

In Petrograd, most of the architectural proposals between 1918 and 1920 were of the "garden city" type. Especially after 1919 plans for reconstructing the city were developed by the architectural workshop of the economic department of the Petrograd Soviet.[78] The two outstanding features of these plans were the preservation of the old buildings in the center of the city, and the construction of new houses in the cottage (*dačnyj*) style on the islands.[79] The Kamennyj, Aptekarskij, Krestovskij, and Petrovskij islands were chosen for these new buildings, while the Elagin island was to belong to a green "garland" circling the city, consisting of recreational zones and places for water sports. To show the city's close relation to the Baltic sea, parts of Vasil'evskij Ostrov and Petrogradskaja Storona were even projected as seaside garden cities. In order to reconstruct the center of the city, it was decided to restore the beauty of the old buildings by removing later accretions of different styles and by recreating the original historical ensembles. It was thus planned to demolish all the later, non-representative buildings around the Admiralty and around the Engineer's Palace.[80]

The first detailed plans for residential buildings emerged from competitions in 1920. One plan conceived of a show village in Vyborgskaja Storona, which combined urbanist and anti-urbanist ideas, placing small-scale communal houses, single-family houses, and public service buildings in a so called *mikro-rajon*. Another one envisioned the total rebuilding of the area around the Putilov factory; called "The green rustle" (Zelënyj šum), it was to solve the demographic and hygienic problems in that quarter.[81] The first competition for a workers' palace (*dvorec rabočich*) was also announced for the decrepit southwestern area of the city in 1919.[82] This building for social and cultural events, education, sports, and recreation was to be erected in Petergofskij Avenue. The name of the building and its location reveal a good deal of the under-lying self-awareness of its clients: the route out to Peterhof used to be a fashionable area for the summer cottages and palaces of the rich.[83]

But while these different architectural competitions went on, while proposals were submitted for a workers' palace in the form of a medieval Florentine palazzo or for huge public baths on Vatnyj island in the style of the ancient Roman thermae, reflecting the Bolsheviks' high regard for cleanliness, the reality of Petrograd was strikingly different.[84]

[77] This portrait, by the way, resembles much the ideas of TROTSKY From the Old Family to the New p. 42, who saw, however, important economic preconditions for their implementation; on housing communes see KOPP Changer la vie pp. 159–188; STITES Revolutionary Dreams pp. 200–203.

[78] Architekturnaja masterskaja Sovkomchoza under I. A. Fomin (Očerki istorii Leningrada vol. 4, p. 427).

[79] For the following see CHAZANOVA Sovetskaja architektura pp. 90–92.

[80] The plan of the latter is in V. Ė. CHAZANOVA (comp.) Iz istorii Sovetskoj architektury 1917–1925 gg. Dokumenty i materialy. Moskva 1963, p. 69.

[81] Ibidem p. 70.

[82] See CHAZANOVA Sovetskaja architektura pp. 124ff.

[83] For detailed information on the different summer houses and their owners along the road to Peterhof see E. AMBURGER Ingermanland. Eine junge Provinz Rußlands im Wirkungsbereich der Residenz und Weltstadt St. Petersburg – Leningrad. 2 vols. Köln, Wien 1980, here vol. 1, pp. 472–473 and vol. 2, pp. 928–931, tables IV, VII, X, and map 11 (= Beiträge zur Geschichte Osteuropas vol. 13).

[84] CHAZANOVA Sovetskaja architektura pp. 126–127.

5. Post-revolutionary Housing Conditions in Petrograd

In the years after the October Revolution, Petrograd was almost a dying city. Because of hunger and temporary shut-down of its factories 62 percent of the population had left for the villages by 1920, and 17 percent of all residential buildings were totally neglected and in a ruinous state. By 1921 approximately 18000 buildings were unfit for habitation, and the economic damages had risen to a figure of 80 million rubles.[85] The result of *pereselenie* and of flight to the countryside was a decrease in the average number of inhabitants per room to the more civilized number of 1,2. This, however, did not necessarily reflect an increase of the quality of life.[86]

Modes of living had changed considerably. Members of Soviets and the Party now tended to occupy houses or apartments in the better parts of the city.[87] For example S. M. Korčagin, the chairman of the executive committee of the Central Housing Soviet, had moved from one of the worst parts of the city (Petergofskij subdistrict) to an apartment near the Winter Palace on Prospect 25-go Oktjabrja No. 8 (the former and today's Nevskij Prospect).[88] Workers who had been resettled into the city's center often formed self-governing communes in order to survive in their new and, for some, psychologically alien environment. These cooperatives regulated the life of the whole building and tried to organize communal kitchens.[89] In other dwellings, where bourgeois elements still happened to reside, the new house committees of the poor or recently moved-in soldiers or workers often held sway. Without consideration of age, sex, or former status, all inhabitants took turns keeping watch during the night, clearing away the snow, and so on. The saying "čto podval, to i bel'-ėtaž" (the basement is now identical to the second floor) summarizes the new social situation in the houses.[90]

Former upper-class people had, of course, many difficulties in adjusting, especially since they were sometimes deliberately harassed by their new fellow occupants. Sharing an apartment with a few Jews, a former chambermaid, and a Red Army soldier, who used to smoke bad tobacco, run around in his underpants bawling dirty songs, and have company till late at night, was, for example, a harsh experience for the elderly mother of General Wrangel. She fled this situation by moving into a quarter of a room (*četvertuška*) in the outskirts of the city, thereby offering a striking example of the revolutionary changes: an old noble lady who once had lived on fashionable Litejnyj Prospect (No. 24) was now living in a "corner."[91] Others were not hit quite so hard. To move in with friends seems to

[85] G. MEYER Studien zur sozialökonomischen Entwicklung Sowjetrußlands 1921–1923. Köln 1974, pp. 24–25; SMITH Red Petrograd p. 243; HAZARD Soviet Housing Law p. 7; SCHEIBERT Lenin an der Macht p. 371 (and footnotes); G. PUZIS (Kommunal'noe i žiliščnoe chozjajstvo SSSR za 15 let. Moskva 1932, p. 11) reports the estimated damage but does not specify the purchasing power or the exchange rate of the rubles he is using.

[86] Istorija rabočich Leningrada vol. 2, p. 95; the pre-revolutionary average is given above, p. 213.

[87] Ukazatel' adresov členov Petrosoveta, in: Veś Petrograd na 1923 god pp. 328a–328z.

[88] Ibidem p. 328g; this house formerly belonged to the merchant and manufacturer Franz Karlovič San Galli (Adresnaja kniga goroda S.-Peterburga na 1902 g.).

[89] On the influence of communal style of living on later architectural concepts see S. O. CHAN-MAGOMEDOV Pioniere der sowjetischen Architektur. Wien, Berlin 1983, pp. 342–345; also KOPP Changer la vie pp. 159–188; STITES Revolutionary Dreams pp. 213–219.

[90] POZNER Dela i dni pp. 28, 35; BUCHANAN Petrograd p. 225; Baroness Wrangel describes her watch duty from 10 to 1 at night in VRANGEL' Moja žizń p. 201.

[91] VRANGEL' Moja žizń pp. 203–204, 205; Adresnaja kniga goroda S.-Peterburga na 1902 g. p. 193 and col. 1740; it is not clear where exactly the "corner" of Baroness Wrangel was, but a lengthy

have been a minor problem for Count Konstantin Benckendorff, son of the former ambassador to London, whose apartment in Petrograd was destroyed during street fights. What bothered him more, though, was the fact that his friends did not live in Petrograd, but in Moscow, a city where he had never lived before.[92]

Under the new circumstances, privacy had almost become impossible. House committees and devoted proletarians controlled everybody and everything. Not only was it a direct invitation to arrest to sing something like "Bože, carja chrani," the former national anthem, but it was virtually impossible for someone who still had his own private apartment to conceal a new acquisition.[93] The fact, for example, that a certain Cypočkin secretly raised a piglet in his kitchen, was soon known all over the house. When he slaughtered it, he carefully disposed of the bones in the street, but a neighbor, asking for a bit of salt, entered his kitchen, saw the fat soup cooking there, and told everybody about it. Finally the news reached the "Soviet" shoemaker living in the basement, who, with some friends, arrested Cypočkin at once, probably only because he had not shared his soup with the rest of the house.[94]

Coldness was the major characteristic of Petrograd apartments after the October Revolution.[95] The shortage of firewood contributed heavily to the decline of buildings. Without regular heating, water pipes and sewage systems froze and burst, and in springtime foundations of houses often were washed away. In 1919 only 26 percent of the requested wood reached the city, and this was mainly requisitioned for the army, the factories, and administrative buildings.[96] People in residential houses had to improvise. They could either steal wood or burn furniture, wooden fences, or abandoned frame-houses. By 1920, 5509 houses had disappeared in Petrograd, sometimes within two or three nights, most of them as fuel for the now popular small cast-iron stove, called *buržujka*.[97] During the winter, these little stoves with their long pipes normally sticking out of the windows were the social gathering places in the homes. Since electric light was restricted to few hours per day or to certain days in a week and was often not available at all, and since matches and candles became scarcer, people usually stayed at home in their

journey to work at the Aničkov palace on Nevskij Prospect points to a location rather distant from the central part of the city. It is particularly ironic that before the Revolution the baroness was a member of the "Obščestvo dostavlenija dešëvych kvartir i drugich posobij nuždajuščimsja žiteljam Spb.," a charitable organisation concerned with providing cheap housing in the city.

[92] BENCKENDORFF Half a Life p. 195.

[93] TYRKOVA-WILLIAMS From Liberty p. 430; MARABINI La vie quotidienne p. 169; POZNER Dela i dni p. 37.

[94] Ibidem p. 40.

[95] SCHEFFER (Augenzeuge p. 105) notes that Petrograd apartments were usually colder than Moscow ones.

[96] SCHEIBERT Lenin an der Macht p. 367; there seems to have been a better supply in the winter 1920/21, according to WELLS Russia p. 35.

[97] SOSNOVY Housing Problem p. 39; most wooden houses were located in the outskirts of the city, where they accounted for up to 95 percent of all buildings (BATER St Petersburg p. 324; HASEGAWA February Revolution p. 70); the conversion of one into firewood is described in POZNER Dela i dni p. 42 and a picture of the remains of such a house faces the frontispiece of WELLS Russia; on the *buržujka* see MARABINI La vie quotidienne pp. 183–184, and BROWN Doomsday p. 176; the theft of firewood and the use of the cast-iron stove have found literary expression in YE. ZAMYATIN [E. ZAMJATIN] The Cave, in: YE. ZAMYATIN The Dragon. Fifteen Stories. Transl. and ed. M. Ginsburg. New York 1967, pp. 135–145.

dark and cold rooms.[98] When they had to leave the house, they used the *čërnaja lestnica*, the "black" or rear staircase, the former servants' staircase, which was badly illuminated if at all, and often icy and slippery, while the main entrances were mostly without light and not accessible any more.[99] Their former users had gone anyway or had been turned into servants by the new regime; they now found themselves in a position similar to the poor peasants in N. A. NEKRASOV's 1858 poem "Razmyšlenija u paradnogo pod-ezda" (Reflections at the Main Entrance): unwelcomed and driven away.[100]

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The housing situation in Petrograd changed in many ways between 1917 and 1920. While the physical condition of houses deteriorated, new forms of communal living were forcefully or voluntarily developed, and the old social structure of the city was broken up. Large numbers of people left Petrograd, thousands moved within it. Housing, one of the basic human needs, became newly defined, first by physical force, then by bureaucratic actions. Class replaced wealth as the key factor of that definition, but in the end dilapidation and shortage dominated the scene. Except for its beginnings in February 1917 the process of redefinition and redistribution of living and housing proceeded rather slowly. It almost appeared like a revolutionary by-product compared to other more prominent achievements of the Bolsheviks. But for the majority of the inhabitants of "Piter" this by-product was certainly the most tangible and radical experience of that time. The Revolution had come into the living-rooms, and as a result of that visit two groups of people remained: the ones who lost and those who profited from the situation. To the first group belonged those who were deprived of all or a part of their former accommodation and immovable property, like the representatives of the old regime, the bourgeoisie, parts of the intelligentsia, and also workers who were resettled but yearned to return to their old and familiar places. The second group consisted of those who "made" the Revolution. Aside from anarchists, students, and criminals who enjoyed the comforts of looted houses, they were mainly the organized workers, Red sailors and soldiers, and party officials who would improve their living conditions. But following a metaphor of EVGENIJ ZAMJATIN, who once compared the houses of Petrograd with huge ships,[101] both of these groups sat in the same boat. They had exchanged decks, but the boat continued to lurch from side to side, and it began to lose its superstructure.

[98] MARABINI La vie quotidienne pp. 181–182; VRANGEL' Moja žizń p. 202; BUCHANAN Petrograd p. 225.

[99] A. S. IZGOEV Pjat' let v Sovetskoj Rossii, in: Archiv Russkoj Revoljucii. Vol. 10. Berlin 1923, pp. 5–55, here p. 8; SCHEFFER Augenzeuge p. 106; TYRKOVA-WILLIAMS From Liberty p. 438.

[100] N. A. NEKRASOV Razmyšlenija u paradnogo pod-ezda, in: Polnoe sobranie sočinenij v vosmi tomach. Vol. 1. Moskva 1965, pp. 301–304.

[101] In "Mamaj", written in 1920.