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CONSTRUCTION OF PRIVATELY OWNED HOUSES IN USSR

Construction of privately owned houses in the USSR is now being carried out on a large scale.

The decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet USSR of 26 August 1948 "On the right of citizens to purchase and construct individual residential houses," entitles every working person to purchase or build, and personally own within or outside cities, a residential house of one or two stories with up to five rooms.

Employees and workmen, wishing to build a house, receive building lots on a perpetual lease basis, and in case of need are granted state loans. Hundreds of thousands of workmen and employees have already built their own houses during the postwar years.

Since the beginning of the Fifth Five-Year Plan, individual housing construction has been speeded up considerably. The directives of the 19th Party Congress mention the necessity for assisting individual housing construction in cities and workmen's settlements by citizens using their own financial resources and aided by state loans.

Trade unions have to see to it that the enormous amount of credit made available by the state for individual home construction is spent rationally, and that the managements of enterprises render full assistance to their workers who wish to build houses.

Allotment of Ground and Selection of a Design

The decree of the Council of Ministers USSR of 26 August 1948, made the executive committees of the kray, oblast, city, and rayon soviets responsible for allotting plots of land to citizens wishing to build houses. Sizes of plots to be allotted are established by local executive committees within the following limits: from 300 to 600 square meters within the city limits, and from 700 to 1,200 square meters outside city limits. The rent is paid at a rate provided by law.

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It is the duty of trade unions to see to it that the land allotted for individual construction is in locations which have transportation facilities and basic necessities like roads, water supply, electricity, and planted greenery.

To obtain a building lot one has to apply to the Municipal Services Section of the executive committee of the local soviet where there is such an office, otherwise, directly to the Executive Committee of the local soviet. A questionnaire and an application form are to be filled out and submitted together with a reference from the applicant's employers. Should a loan be desired, a permit for it must be attached to the application.

The decree of the Council of Ministers USSR of 26 August 1948 permits individual construction to be carried out in accordance with mass-produced standard designs, or according to individual designs; in the latter case it must be as good as the standard design or better.

The executive committees are given 20 days to act on the application for a lot. The committee's written decision to allot a plot must contain a description of the allotted ground in detail giving its location and indicating rayon, street, and numbers of the block and the lot. Afterwards the lot is actually staked out and transferred to the applicant's name by a special deed, a copy of which is handed to the applicant.

The deed is a signed contract for a perpetual lease of the lot to the applicant for building a privately owned house on it. The attached plan of the lot and building drawings and specifications become parts of the contract.

Construction must be started within one year after the contract has been signed, and completed within 3 years. In case of a delay in the construction or violation of other terms of the contract, the lot may be taken away from the lessee through court action.

Loans

During the postwar years, metallurgical workers have built individual houses with a total living space of one million square meters.

Financing the individual house construction in the cities and workers' settlements is taken care of by the Central Communal Bank, and in rural areas by the Agricultural Bank.

Loans of up to 10,000 rubles are granted for 7 years at an interest rate of 2 percent per annum. Workers and employees apply for a loan through the management of the enterprises which employ them. Those not connected with any enterprise apply directly to the executive committee of the local soviet. Loans are granted after the ground has been allotted and building plans approved.

The director of the enterprise decides upon the size of the loans with the consent of the local trade union. As a rule, the director and FZMK (factory and local committee) make their decision only after a thorough investigation. To receive a loan, the applicant must be in a position to pay at least 30 percent of the construction cost out of his own resources.

The loans are advanced either through the enterprise which employs the applicant or directly, if the applicant is not connected with any enterprise. In cities and workers' settlements it is done by the Communal Bank, and, in the absence of a Communal Bank, by the State Bank. Repayments of the loans are

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made in installments through the same channels. In case the loan is used for some other purpose, the bank has a right to demand immediate repayment of the advanced amount with 12 percent annual interest added.

Usually from 10 to 15 percent of the amount of the loan is advanced first to the builder to pay for the preliminary work on the site and for the materials ordered. Subsequent payments are made by the bank depending on the amount of work completed as certified by a representative of the enterprise, or by representatives of city or rayon executive committees.

The following table is used for determining the cost of work completed:

Cost of Different Elements of the House
in Percent of the Total Cost

<u>Name of Elements</u>	<u>Wooden (log) Houses</u>			
	<u>Wooden Foundation</u>	<u>Stone Foundation</u>	<u>Stone Houses</u>	<u>Frame Houses</u>
Earthwork and foundation	4	11	11	8
Walls	25	23	25	18
Ceilings and partitions	14	12	10	9
Roof and roof trusses	9	9	7	10
Floors	12	10	8	13
Doors, windows, and frames; shutters; plat- bands; and dormers	13	13	11	14
Stove, including foun- dation and chimney	6.5	6	6	5
Interior and outside finish	9	9	17	16
Others (stairs, porch, veranda)	7.5	7	5	7
Total	100	100	100	100

Assistance Rendered to Individual Builders

The trade unions, when signing collective labor contracts, insist on including definite commitments by the management for giving assistance to those workmen who wish to build their own houses. For example, a part of such a contract for 1952, which was signed at the Automobile Plant imeni Molotov, is quoted below:

a. To sell for cash to individual builders 3,050 cubic meters of lumber of local origin, 120,000 pieces of red bricks, 100,000 pieces of fire bricks, 10,000 pieces of cinder blocks, 300 rolls of roofing paper of local manufacture, 50 tons of alabaster, 10 tons of oakum, 125 tons of steel waste and steel packing.

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- b. To manufacture windows and doors.
- c. To make railroad and the enterprise's motor transport available for delivery of construction materials to the sites at special rates based on transportation costs within plant limits.

The Housing and Services Commission of the FZMK organizes a "group to assist individual builders" whose main duties include controlling the expenditure of the state loans, assisting builders in obtaining lots, construction materials, transportation, and also giving technical advice on construction.

When more than ten persons within one enterprise are building individual homes simultaneously, the factory committee organizes an independent commission instead of a group. The commission consists of representatives of the management and factory committee, a construction engineer, and from three to five builders.

The commissions or groups also prepare lists of workmen who wish to receive state loans and submit them for approval to the factory committee and the management.

The executive committee of the oblast soviet makes logging tracks available to the builders of individual houses and the enterprise assists in cutting the timber and transporting it to the building sites.

To increase the output of the building materials needed by the individual builders, the executive committees of the soviets and directors of the industrial enterprises concerned have a right to organize auxiliary production and also to create new enterprises to obtain raw building materials locally. They also plan and carry out cabinet work, and the manufacture of hardware to help the builders.

At present, sales of some construction materials like roofing, slate, sheet iron, nails, lumber and hardware, paints and lacquer, glass, etc. are organized in a number of cities. Management of the enterprises are permitted to sell these materials and tools to the builders at established prices.

It is important that the trade union organizations keep in touch with the problems of the builders and see to it that the areas where the new individual houses are built get power, water, and sewer facilities without delay; they must also see to it that the grounds are planted with greenery, and that sidewalks, streets and approach roads are paved.

Costs of installation of water mains, gas pipes, sewers, and electric wires are paid by the house owners.

The Presidium of the VTsSPS (All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions) recommended that the factory committees and the management of the enterprises which have among their personnel more than ten builders of individual houses organize mixed brigades of construction workers to help the builders. These workers are paid by the house owners according to the usual norms and rate of pay established for various trades.

Good results are achieved at those enterprises where the recommendations of VTsSPS are enforced. For instance, at the Bezhetsk Steel Casting Plant every house builder receives from the plant 15,000 fire bricks at retail price, and broken stones, broken bricks and cinders free of charge. These materials are delivered to the owner's site using the plant's means of transportation. The plant's masons and carpenters build the houses. A planing machine and a circular saw are installed in the settlement for the convenience of the builders. As a result, 120 individual homes have already been built near the plant.

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