

Housing Policies in the Soviet Union

CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	5
Housing after the Revolution	6
Rural Dwellings	8
Urban Housing	9
Period of Contradictions	10
Building in the Public Sector	12
Post-War Reconstruction	13
Utilities and Amenities	16
Public Complaints	18
Average Men and Aristocrats	20
Owners and Tenants	23
Giants and Dwarfs	25
Measurements	28
Bibliographical Sources	29
Quotations from Soviet Sources	30
Statistical Tables	35

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HOUSING POLICIES IN THE SOVIET
UNION

"When the capitalist mode of production is destroyed a solution to the housing problem can be found."

K. Marx—F. Engels: *Collected Works*. Vol. 15, Moscow, 1953.

"The Communist Party realised already towards the end of the First Five-Year Plan the sharp discrepancy between industrial and housing construction."

B. Sokolov, "House Construction in the U.S.S.R.": *Problems of Economics* No. 9, Moscow, 1954.

"Their *mores* are to a large extent determined by their housing conditions."

K. A. Pazhitnov, *The Situation of the Working Class in Russia*: Leningrad, 1924.

February, 1955

INTRODUCTION

In modern times it has become common practice to judge economic developments by the output of coal, steel and other basic materials, on which the manufacture of both producer and consumer goods largely depends. Human well-being and happiness, however, can hardly be measured in such terms. Apart from food, housing is unquestionably one of the best yardsticks by which to gauge the standards of living and civilisation of people in foreign lands. Comparisons, however, are greatly handicapped by lack of data. All that is known in many instances is the average size of dwellings, and this obviously is one of the crudest measurements. The Englishman who maintains that his home is his castle insists upon values that cannot be expressed in statistical units, but only in terms of personal and social standards that resist easy definition.

Since industrialisation and urbanisation have gained momentum throughout the world, the building of houses has become one of the issues foremost in the minds of statesmen and politicians, industrial managers and labour leaders. In short, housing conditions have become a major domestic issue. Political parties have won elections on a housing programme and governments have been swept from office for failure in this field. The work of departments concerned with town and country planning is given high priority by all governments that have the well-being of their peoples at heart. The formulation of laws concerned with property rights, conditions of tenure and rent limitations, claims a large share of parliamentary and legislative activities. Next to the health services, housing has become one of the principal public services of the present day—at any rate in the countries of the West; one cannot be so certain about the other half of the world.

Although the curiosity of Western visitors to the Soviet Union and other countries of Eastern Europe is boundless, little is really known about conditions on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Although the traveller can observe to some extent life in the streets, shops and restaurants, only a few succeed in penetrating the homes of the people. In these circumstances no excuse is needed for a survey of housing as it presents itself to the student of Eastern Europe who has tried to collect and analyse the evidence available.

Let it be said at the outset that this is no easy task. Statistical information is often scanty and rarely reliable. No census of housing in rural areas has ever been taken in Russia, for instance, and the census of urban housing taken in 1926 provides no comprehensive information. The 1936 edition of the Soviet *Statistical Year Book* made no mention of housing. The questionnaire drawn up for the 1939 population census no longer contained questions relating to building. Housing censuses covering the public sector have been taken from time to time and a census of individual housing was carried out in April, 1950, but their results have never been published. In fact since the war no detailed accounts have been made available. Nowadays Soviet statistical records are distinguished by omissions rather than by revelations. The position is hardly better in the other countries of the Soviet orbit, some of which were renowned for their housing records before the war. Plan figures and indices are ample, but their official interpretation is frequently tendentious. Statements in the form of criticism and self-criticism are published in abundance, but they provide only the most disagreeable form of evidence. Public eulogies are equally unsuitable for a factual account, and travellers' tales frequently told after hasty visits to Russia are often too biased to be representative.

Yet an analysis of all these sources combined may well help to fill a gap in the knowledge of the student of Eastern European affairs. In the light of the emphasis given to housing problems during the All-Union Conference of Builders, Architects and Workers of the Building Industries, no excuse is needed for a study of this kind.*

HOUSING AFTER THE REVOLUTION

The housing fund inherited by the revolutionaries in 1917 was inadequate. Before the First World War in Moscow and St. Petersburg, the two largest Russian cities, more than twice as many people inhabited an urban apartment as in Berlin or Vienna, the capitals of Russia's Western neighbours. But although the internationally-recognised sanitary standard established by the German scientist Professor Pettenkofer laid down a minimum of 9 square metres, or 97 square feet, of dwelling space

*A considerable contribution to the knowledge of housing conditions in the Soviet Union has been made by T. Soanov's study *The Housing Problem in the Soviet Union*, New York, 1954, and in the writings of A. Block in *Soviet Studies*, Vol. III Nos. 1 and 3, Vol. V No. 3, and Vol. VI No. 1, Oxford, 1951-54.

(equal to 27 cubic metres or 954 cubic feet of air per person), in Russia the housing fund provided, on average, approximately 7 square metres (75 square feet).^{*} And while space was scarce, ancillaries and amenities were often absent. Only one in five towns had a waterworks in pre-revolutionary Russia and only one in 50 a sewage system.

Of the urban population, the workers had the worst living quarters, far below the sanitary minimum standard. Moscow was notorious for its bunk system, but even in St. Petersburg, where conditions were slightly less disagreeable, two-thirds of all workers had only a bunk or a corner of a room at their disposal, and even among families every second family had less than half a room at its disposal.

In these circumstances, if congestion and dissatisfaction among the supporters of the Revolution were to be avoided, it was clear that the leaders would have to husband the limited dwelling space inherited and to time the industrialisation of the country in accordance with the progress made in building. In reality, the political decisions and legislative acts of the revolutionary organs aggravated the situation. Not unnaturally the Revolution led to a forcible redistribution of dwellings, from which more than one million people benefited in Moscow and Leningrad alone. But in the course of this process much precious housing space was destroyed.

The damage caused after the Civil War, through sheer neglect and destruction, was immeasurably greater. The reports of the early 1920s issued by the *soviets* of the principal towns are most vocal in this respect. For lack of fuel, floors, doors and partition walls were removed and burned, while repairs undertaken by local *soviets* put only a few houses back into pre-war condition.

The redistribution of house property did away with some of the injustices of former times, but the shortage of living space could not be remedied without a programme of large-scale construction. The central authorities did little about this. Immediately after the revolutionaries had gained control in November, 1917, they abolished by decree, without compensation, all private ownership of land in urban as well as rural districts, and turned it into the inalienable property of

^{*} In the Soviet Union the sanitary norm laid down for urban dwellings differs between the various Republics. It is 9 square metres (97 square feet) in the R.S.F.S.R., but 13.65 square metres (147 square feet) in the Ukraine, and 12 square metres (129 square feet) in Georgia, except in Tiflis, Gori, Kutaisi, where it is 10 square metres (108 square feet).

the nation. A year later all land within urban boundaries was placed under the control of the local *soviets*. Thus while all land, irrespective of its location, was nationalised, urban dwellings were mostly "municipalised." This at least applied to most of the large buildings in the large towns.

When the first post-revolutionary census was taken in 1923, one-sixth of the 2.6 million urban residential buildings were recorded as having been nationalised or municipalised: in the main they were larger than those which remained in private ownership. Of the urban population of slightly more than 20 million, almost two-fifths lived in houses under the control of local *soviets*; of the remaining three-fifths roughly half lived in their own houses, the other half being tenants in houses owned privately by other citizens. In Moscow and Leningrad, where large properties prevailed, almost three out of four houses were under the control of town *soviets*, but in the smaller urban communities private property predominated.

RURAL DWELLINGS

Ever since the decree of August, 1918 on the abolition of ownership in urban real estate, the housing fund of the Soviet Union has been divided between public and private sectors. This has remained an integral part of Soviet housing policy. It was reaffirmed as recently as August, 1948, when an Act was passed by the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet on the right of citizens to buy and build individual houses. The right to private ownership of a house was also laid down in the 1936 Constitution, but as time went on the scope left to private initiative was increasingly restricted in this as in other spheres. Least interference has occurred in the rural areas of the Soviet Union, in which at the time of the Revolution at least four in every five Russian families lived and where the largest portion of privately-owned housing space is to be found to this day. When the German armies invaded Russia, the rural population amounted to two-thirds of the total and even now, as the fifth Five-Year Plan of industrialisation draws to a close, it accounts for more than 60 per cent. In any event the change is largely one of proportions. In absolute terms the number of people in the villages has changed only little, from 110 millions at the time of the Revolution to approximately 113 millions at the outbreak of the Second World War, and, in the post-war territory of the Soviet Union, from about 132 millions in 1940 to 130 millions in 1953. Thus, compared with the dramatic increase in urban

population, *i.e.* from approximately 20 millions at the time of the Revolution to 80 millions in 1953, the rural population has remained almost stationary.

In the villages, housing conditions are still much the same as they have always been. Here the public building programme has been concentrated largely on State and communal requirements, *i.e.* on Party offices, schools, administrative quarters and agricultural stores of the collectives. The *kolkhoznik's* cottage has remained almost unaffected by the changes brought about by revolution, industrialisation and collectivisation. Like his ancestors, he lives in his own home, a cabin built of logs in the forest areas of the North, or in a brick or clay-walled house in the farming areas of the South. Usually the cottage houses, often in one single fair-sized room, the whole family and at times also the privately-owned farm animals. More than 25 million Russian families live in this way.

So far as building takes place in the rural areas, it is mostly left to the initiative of the individual. Nevertheless, since during the Second World War almost 40 per cent. of all rural dwellings in the territories occupied by the Germans had been damaged or destroyed, the Central Government undertook to play an active part in the reconstruction programme. It was announced as part of the first post-war Five-Year Plan. But instead of 3.4 million rural houses scheduled to be built and repaired during the plan period from 1946 to 1950, owing to faults in the supply of materials and in the administrative arrangements of building departments and industries, only 2.7 million were in fact constructed or restored. The backlog, it is claimed, has been eliminated in recent years, but the village population is hardly any better housed to-day than it was 25 years ago when collectivisation was supposed to bring great benefit to the rural areas.

URBAN HOUSING

While on the whole the villagers live, as in the past, in privately-owned dwellings, the Soviet authorities have intervened to an increasing extent in the housing of the urban population. Their policy has, however, been far from consistent or coherent. In fact, Soviet urban housing policy has undergone a number of decisive changes since its conception during the Revolution. When the first post-revolutionary census was taken in March, 1923 some 1.5 million residential buildings were counted in the towns of the R.S.F.S.R., the largest of the Republics of the

Soviet Union, comprising 2.4 million dwellings or 4.8 million rooms equal to a total housing space of 79.4 million square metres. Thus, on average, each building consisted of less than two dwellings, and each dwelling had two rooms. The average size of buildings was 53 square metres (570 square feet), that of dwellings 33 square metres (355 square feet) and that of individual rooms was 16.5 square metres (180 square feet). As the urban population of the R.S.F.S.R. totalled approximately 12.2 millions at the time, the living space amounted to 6.5 square metres (70 square feet) per person, or less than three-quarters of the minimum sanitary norm. In other words, every dwelling consisting of two rooms was inhabited by five people; thus between two and three people had to share one and the same room all the time.

Housing conditions in the other republics differed little from those of the R.S.F.S.R. In most towns one-storey dwellings of two rooms built of timber prevailed. Almost nine in ten urban houses were of single storeys and almost two in three were made of timber. Though slightly larger than those in the countryside, they were of the same type and construction. Only in Moscow and Leningrad did the two- and three-storey houses prevail, but even there timber construction predominated. In Moscow about one-third of the population was reported to be living in insanitary conditions.

This situation was so serious that it must have weighed heavily upon the minds of the Soviet leaders. The Revolution had furnished them with supreme authority to tackle the housing problem in a sweeping, all-embracing manner. But, instead of giving it their first attention, they became pre-occupied with other matters of policy. For a generation housing remained the Cinderella of Soviet domestic policy. As might have been expected, in the first years after the Revolution, the main characteristic was lack of decision in housing policy and lack of precision in its execution.

PERIOD OF CONTRADICTIONS

Side by side with the continued requisitioning of urban housing property, town *soviets* relieved the municipal housing funds in the early 1920s by returning unsuitable properties to individual owners. At the same time little was done to increase building in the public sector. For some years the authorities confined themselves to inducing the inhabitants of municipalised houses

to carry out vital repairs. After years of neglect the first constructive effort was made in August, 1924, when a law on housing co-operatives provided for the creation of house-building and leasing co-operatives. After this legislation had come into effect, housing began to recover from many years of stagnation. So far the public housing fund had remained almost unchanged, with building limited almost exclusively to private initiative, but thanks to the activities of the co-operatives, building later developed speedily. In little more than ten years the co-operatives increased their share in the administration of the municipal housing fund from two-thirds to four-fifths. This was the period when private and co-operative efforts were given every encouragement.

With the opening of the plan period, however, the Government's housing policy underwent a new change. Individual initiative was sacrificed in favour of public enterprise. For instance, while tenants earning 6,000 roubles a year during the period of the first Five-Year Plan paid less than 4 per cent. in income tax, house owners receiving the same income had to pay more than 16 per cent. Against this, every encouragement was given to public building, but, even so, construction lagged greatly behind the targets set by the plans. As industrialisation proceeded regardless of the working class accommodation required, so the average housing space available fell continuously. In the 20 years following the Revolution, according to official Soviet claims, approximately 80 million square metres of new living space were built, enough to house 12 million new urban dwellers at the modest standard of 1923, which provided 6.5 square metres (70 square feet) per person. But, in actual fact, in the stormy years of revolution, industrialisation and collectivisation the urban population had swollen at least two-and-a-half times as fast as living space. Consequently, housing became scarcer and poorer.

The first Five-Year Plan had called for an average urban dwelling space of 6.30 square metres (68 square feet), but had achieved less than 5 square metres (54 square feet); by the end of the second Five-Year Plan the average space had fallen to little more than 4 square metres (43 square feet) against a target of 5.35 square metres (58 square feet). The spirit which ruled Soviet housing policy throughout this era is perhaps best summarised in the words of the draft of the first Five-Year Plan:

"Our country is engaged in an unprecedented experiment of huge capital construction at the cost of current accumulation, an austere régime of economy and the repudiation of

satisfying present day needs in the name of a monumental historical purpose.”*

In a society engaged in such a programme there was little room for the requirements of the individual. With the advent of the first Five-Year Plan, State credits to the housing co-operatives had already been severely reduced. But worse was yet to come. In October, 1937, new legislation was introduced under the euphemistic title “On the Preservation of the Housing Fund and the Improvement of Housing in Cities.” Its real purpose was to abolish the house-building and leasing co-operatives and to alter drastically the administrative arrangements which had been in operation for more than ten years.

Until 1937 the urban housing fund had been administered by Ministerial departments, local *soviets*, housing co-operatives and private individuals. Now the State assumed responsibility for the bulk of the public sector. Private initiative was greatly curtailed while the publicly-owned housing fund was mostly subjected, at the expense of the co-operatives and their members, to the control of Central Government departments, local *soviets* and industrial enterprises. Members of co-operatives were reimbursed for their contributions in roubles that had lost most of their former purchasing power. House managers, previously chosen by members of the co-operatives, were replaced by State nominees who, in addition to administrative responsibilities, were charged with police functions. Management by committee was replaced by individual responsibility, and trusted Party members took over from non-political managers. Co-operative housing which, as a commercial venture had made one of the biggest contributions to the New Economic Policy, ceased to exist. And while in the villages co-operatives had given way to State collectives, in industrial areas control by the managerial bureaucracy took the place of co-operative initiative.

BUILDING IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

After 1937 building and housing administration became increasingly the prerogative of the State, and the central authorities have exercised their direction ever since. But, in spite of all discrimination, individual housing has not disappeared, even though its share in the total urban housing fund has declined steadily. Against this, the public fund doubled between 1926 and the outbreak of the Second World War, and its share in

* *The Five-Year Plan for the National Economic Construction of the U.S.S.R.* Vol. 1, Moscow, 1929 (third edition).

total urban dwelling space increased during this period from 50 to 60 per cent. As industrialisation progressed, the share of State-controlled industries in the public housing fund grew steadily. Before the first Five-Year Plan was put into effect, it amounted to roughly two-fifths, but by the end of the second Five-Year Plan, in 1937, it had risen to three-fifths of all new buildings in the public sector. By this time industrial enterprises administered half the public housing fund, the other half being handled by co-operatives and local *soviets*. After the abolition of the co-operatives, the control of the public housing fund fell, at roughly equal rates, to central and local authorities. It was exercised to an increasing extent by Party functionaries.

After the end of the second Five-Year Plan, the Soviet authorities withheld all detailed information on building and housing, but the further advance of State-controlled industries in this, as in other spheres, is beyond question. In the course of this process industrial labour was increasingly tied to its place of work. As early as 1937, it had been laid down by law that tenants of houses belonging to industrial enterprises were liable to eviction without a Court hearing and without alternative accommodation being provided if they ceased to work in the industry in whose property they lived. Only in exceptional cases was this regulation not applied. The tied cottage, opposed so vigorously by working-class movements throughout the Western world, had become an integral part of the housing system in the Soviet Union. Praised as the paradise of the working man, the Soviet Union had in fact, to his cost, become subject to rule by the managers of Party and heavy industry.

When the German armies invaded the Soviet Union, the Russian soldier defending his home and family had a barrack space of about 2 by 2 yards—as much as each member of his family. This was the direct result of a policy governed not by the needs of the civilian population but by the determination of the Soviet leaders to develop heavy industry at the cost of low consumption. Wherever German troops occupied and requisitioned urban dwellings in their drive into Russia, they invariably found four or more people inhabiting one and the same room. The damage and destruction caused during the war made matters worse. It left scars on housing even more ugly than those inflicted on war industries and military installations.

POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION

—When Voznesensky, then still President of the State Planning Commission (*Gosplan*) published his book in 1947 on the war

economy of the U.S.S.R.,* he gave estimates of the destruction and damage caused during the conflict. In his view some 3.5 million or almost 40 per cent. of all rural dwellings situated in districts occupied by the Germans had been wrecked. The destruction wrought on urban dwellings was even more formidable. Of a total of 2.57 million houses situated in urban areas occupied by German forces, Voznesensky estimated 1.21 million or 47 per cent. to have been destroyed. As these houses were, on the whole, of the larger type, the portion of the housing space lost through enemy action in the occupied areas was as large as 51 per cent. Of a total dwelling space in the occupied territories amounting to 118 million square metres some 60 million were reported to have been destroyed, or more than a quarter of the total dwelling space of the Soviet Union.

In the light of later developments there may be some doubt as to the accuracy of Voznesensky's estimates. In particular it is difficult to see how farming could have been carried on if only 2.7 of 3.5 million farm houses were constructed or restored by the end of the first post-war plan period. To the extent to which Voznesensky, under the immediate impact of war destruction, over-estimated the damage caused in rural and urban areas, the post-war record of reconstruction may require some downward correction.

But be that as it may, there can be no doubt that at the end of the war the Soviet Government was faced with a reconstruction task of gigantic dimensions. In the circumstances it is all the more remarkable that it should have adhered for several years to its orthodox methods of building and house management and that it should have encouraged private initiative only reluctantly. In August, 1948, at last, it reaffirmed, through an order of the Council of Ministers, the right of citizens to buy and build individual houses. Although the building industry continued to cater predominantly for the public sector, this gave a great spur to the housing programme. The public sector remained responsible for the bulk of the reconstruction programme, but it, too, benefited from the new opportunity given to private initiative and ingenuity.

Less is known of the most recent past in Soviet housing history than of earlier periods. Like its predecessor, the fourth Five-Year Plan omitted all reference to a target for urban housing space per head. Moreover, although it is known that priority

* N. A. Voznesensky, *The War Economy of the U.S.S.R. in the Period of the Patriotic War*. Moscow, 1947.

was given to rebuilding houses that had been destroyed,* no distinction has been made in either plan targets or results between reconstruction and new building. Most important of all, when it came to announcing plan results, half-way through the first post-war plan period, the unit in which building achievement was recorded was changed from "dwelling space" to "total floor space." This meant that, contrary to traditional practice, from 1948 onwards the space used for utility (kitchen, bathroom, stores) rather than for living was included in Soviet housing records. Thus what appeared to be a considerable overfulfilment of the target set, in fact, when adjusted to the conventional unit of dwelling space,† amounted to failure to fulfil the plan.

Although Soviet post-war housing records require substantial statistical adjustment, the extent of reconstruction ought not to be minimised. In the five years after the war construction and reconstruction provided 65 million square metres of dwelling space in the public and private sectors. Even if allowance is made for the relatively large share of repairs, this compares favourably with the record of approximately 80 million square metres built during the twelve years preceding the Second World War. Since information on reconstruction before the end of the war is incomplete, it is not easy to assess the size of the housing fund at the end of the reconstruction period. It can, however, be estimated that some 20 million square metres of dwelling space were restored before the end of hostilities, so that between 1940 and 1950 the total urban housing fund was enlarged by some 85 million square metres. As war-time losses were estimated by Voznesensky at 60 million square metres, the net gain amounted to 25 million square metres;‡ within the pre-war territory housing space had increased from 242 million square metres in 1940 to 267 million in 1950. When considering Soviet housing within the present boundaries, another 20 to 25 million square metres have to be allowed for the annexed territories, giving a total of close on 300 million square metres or 4 square metres (43 square feet) per head of urban population. Thus, by 1950 the town-dweller had no more accommodation than in 1940. His living space was still less than half the sanitary

* B. Sokolov, "The Development of Housing Construction in the U.S.S.R.," *Questions of Economics*, No. 9, Moscow, 1954.

† According to T. Sosnovy (The Housing Problem in the Soviet Union, New York, 1954) utility space accounts for approximately 35 per cent. of total floor space; thus 100 million square metres total floor space constructed during the fourth Five-Year Plan equals 65 million square metres of dwelling space.

‡ Some authors have claimed that destroyed dwelling space amounted to 70 million square metres. This would leave a net gain of 15 million square metres only. See B. Sokolov, "The Development of Housing Construction in the U.S.S.R.," *Questions of Economics*, No. 9, Moscow, 1954.

norm. Meanwhile the housing programme of the fifth Five-Year Plan has progressed at an annual rate of approximately 27 million square metres, so that at the end of 1953 an average dwelling space of 4.40 square metres (47 square feet) is likely to have been available.*

UTILITIES AND AMENITIES

In the absence of more detailed records study of Soviet housing must be confined largely to *average* conditions. As information is scanty on differences in housing facilities in various geographical regions and in proportions of incomes spent by various wage groups on accommodation and amenities, it is difficult to measure regional and social differentials. Yet in the Soviet Union average conditions exist as little as anywhere else in the world. Even visitors on short trips have not failed to observe obvious inequalities in housing, while travellers biased favourably towards the Soviet Union have recorded the existence of giant "prestige" buildings side by side with slums. John Berger, reporting in *The New Statesman and Nation* on his impressions during a visit to Moscow late in 1953, stated:

"The suburbs are mostly wooden settlements of one- or two-storey houses. Some are ramshackle, crooked affairs of unplanned logs, others are a little smarter, with the wood fashioned and fretworked. A little like English village railway stations: but without the roses, the cosiness."†

In a paper of a different political complexion, Phillip Goodhart, who in the autumn of 1954 accompanied the British Parliamentary delegation to Russia, reported similarly about housing conditions in Moscow:

* This is calculated on the assumption that housing space is now expressed in terms of total floor space. It is not certain whether this is so or not. Post-war housing statistics are more ambiguous than those available before the war. After 1948 several Soviet sources refer to "total floor space" instead of "dwelling space," e.g., the *Large Soviet Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 16, Moscow, 1952. Against this the Election Manifesto published in *Pravda* on February 11, 1954, referred to "dwelling space" of 183 million square metres having been constructed in the post-war years, i.e., between 1946 and 1953. This implies that throughout the post-war period housing space has been recorded consistently in terms of "dwelling space." This does not appear to have been the practice under the first Five-Year Plan. In calculating housing space it is assumed in this study that "total floor space" rather than "dwelling space" has been in use as an official measurement throughout the post-war period. If future evidence should show that this has not always been the case, the housing data would have to be raised by about 50 per cent. for the relevant period.

† *The New Statesman and Nation*, London, December 12, 1953.

"The tall, isolated buildings (skyscrapers) will be an impressive addition to the Moscow scene. But they are architectural islands rising above a sea of slums."*

As recently as December, 1954, the Soviet Minister of Construction, Nikolai Dygai, complained in Moscow that Soviet architects spend too much money on the façades of buildings and too little on interior efficiency and comfort. The principal architectural authorities were attacked for being too much influenced by aesthetic considerations, "art for art's sake," and not sufficiently interested in practicability, low cost and the kind of design that fits in with modern industrial methods.

By all accounts Moscow, seen more frequently by foreign visitors than other Russian cities, is the show piece of the Soviet Union. But in 1939, the last year for which data had become available, according to Veselovski†, even in Moscow not more than one in every six dwellings had a bath, and 15 and 22 per cent, respectively had no running water and no plumbing. It is an invidious task to compare housing space in different countries, but Soviet writers rarely resist the temptation to attack Western housing records when dealing with their own building problems. Most recently, B. Sokolov, in his article on the development of housing construction in the U.S.S.R. (quoted earlier) went out of his way to emphasise overcrowding in Western countries as a means of exploitation and of excessive profits. In reply to such misinterpretations and provocations a comparison seems warranted. Moscow and the area of the London County Council and Metropolitan Boroughs are roughly comparable in population (seven million inhabitants). According to official Soviet statistics, during the period 1945-50, a total of 1.5 million square metres of housing space was built in Moscow.‡ During the same period, more than 3 million square metres were erected in the area of the London County Council and Metropolitan Boroughs, and, if temporary housing ("prefabs") is included, the total exceeded 4 million square metres. Thus London built almost three times as much housing space as Moscow in the first five crucial years after the war.

Outside the Metropolis and the Republican capitals, Soviet building and housing conditions are worse. Non-permanent structures still predominate and account for almost half the urban

* *The Daily Telegraph*, October, 23, 1954.

† B. B. Veselovski, *Course in the Economics and Organisation of Urban Economy*, Moscow, 1951.

‡ U. G. Saushkin, *Mostra*, Moscow, 1953.

dwelling space in the Soviet Union. As reported by T. Sosnovy,* before the German invasion of the Soviet Union, water supply was limited to 460 towns, plumbing to 140 towns and gas installations to six towns. At approximately the same time, in the R.S.F.S.R., the largest of the 16 Soviet Republics, less than two-thirds of all urban dwellings were equipped with water supply and less than half had any plumbing.† Until 1934 it had been permitted under the by-laws to build houses without installing these two essential utilities. In spite of the Russian climate, before the last war only one in six urban dwellings had central heating and only one in 10 a bathroom. On average each city dweller could take at most seven baths a year in one of the municipal bath-houses and only one per cent. of the urban population lived in houses provided with hot water. Since that time there has been some improvement, but even the most essential public utilities are still far from universal in the urban areas.

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS

The Soviet press overflows with accounts of the lack of buildings and housing amenities. A few examples are here chosen at random. On October 2, 1953, *Izvestiya* reported from Sverdlovsk, one of the new industrial communities in the Urals :

"One year after the other the building programme of the town is fulfilled, after many interruptions, only late in the autumn or in the winter As a result houses are handed over in an incomplete condition The Town Committee has to decide the difficult question whether uncompleted houses should be occupied or whether they should remain empty until the spring."

In 1954 building was supposed to be increased and speeded up in Sverdlovsk, but on June 14, *Pravda* saw reason to complain that less than 8 per cent. of the annual programme had been turned over for occupation.

The situation seems no better in outlying districts and the new development areas. From the North Caucasus, *Izvestiya* reported on January 7, 1953 :

"In the town of Georgievsk small concern is shown for municipal service. The population faces serious shortage of

* T. Sosnovy, "The Soviet Urban Housing Problem," *The American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. XII, December, 1952.

† B. B. Veselovski, *Course in the Economics and Organisation of Urban Economy*. Moscow, 1951.

water, the town was virtually without electric light at the approach of winter and the bath-house was working irregularly (In spite of complaints) *Izvestiya* readers report that the situation in Georgievsk has not improved a bit."

From Kazakhstan, *Pravda* reported on May 9, 1953 :

"The Karaganda Building Board had to open 4,000 square metres of housing space. The task was fulfilled by only 8.5 per cent., but the Board showed that the plan had been fulfilled by 135.3 per cent. In the first quarter of 1953 the Board carried out its plan of house-building by 105.2 per cent. — in roubles; but on handing over the houses for use the plan had been fulfilled by only 3.3 per cent."

Most telling of all is a personal story told in *Izvestiya* of December 2, 1953 :

In the Frunze district of Moscow lived a man whose ceiling persistently dripped. One day he went to the housing authorities to complain. It was far from the first time that he had done so, but he was interviewed by an official obviously unfamiliar with the case. After listening to what he had to say, the latter suggested that he should call again in a week's time. At this the visitor exploded: "A week's time! Do you know how long I have been calling in about this matter? For 520 weeks! That is, for nearly ten years . . ." A check of the office files showed the man's claim to be quite true. The earliest document on record was dated 1944, and the latest August 1953.

As long as utilities and amenities remain difficult to obtain, it is small wonder if persons in influential posts abuse their positions. From time to time, when they become too blatant, instances of such abuse are made public. For instance, during the Congress of the Georgian Communist Party early in 1954, its First Secretary, Mzhavanadze, felt obliged to report that more than 3,000 Party members had been dismissed, the overwhelming majority of them for embezzlement, speculation or misappropriation of public funds. Among those to whom the Secretary referred were Party members who had bought houses and other valuables at absurdly low prices. A member of the Central Committee, Zarandiya, and a chairman of a district Executive Committee, Piliya, were criticised.

"There are other people [Mzhavanadze is reported to have said] who in the course of time climb the ladder of officialdom and then cut themselves off from ordinary people and lose all proper feelings of humility: these people start to acquire

property and are prepared to evict three or four families from their apartments so that they can enjoy ample accommodation themselves. They are equally capable, after acquiring such accommodation, of leaving it and putting in one of their own friends. The newspaper *Kommunist* recently published a very good article on this subject, but might very well have given many more names.*

When holders of high Party office become involved in cases of embezzlement, small local officials can hardly be expected to remain honest men. Many instances of pettiness, corruption and bribery on the part of officials are reported throughout the Soviet press. One such case, reported on July 3, 1953, by *Pravda* occurred on the *Arbat*, in the heart of Moscow. There, tenants living in grossly overcrowded conditions, allowed themselves to be bribed into letting their house manager live in the corner of their communal kitchen after he had promised to substitute gas for their paraffin stoves. Be they major or minor, offences of this kind are a reflection on the differences that have developed in Soviet society during the 35 years since the revolutionaries undertook to abolish all privilege. They can only occur in a society in which persons of some official or social status consider themselves privileged and divorced from those to whom they are supposed to give moral, if not political, leadership.

AVERAGE MEN AND ARISTOCRATS

Even at the low living standards still prevailing in the Soviet Union, the citizen may feel reasonably satisfied so long as the burden of a gigantic programme of reconstruction is shared fairly evenly by all. Soviet reality, however, suggests anything but equality in this as in other spheres. For more than 30 years a form of rationing has been in force in the urban housing sector the like of which no other country in the world has experienced. It is commonly considered to be the purpose of rationing to achieve, under conditions of scarcity, as large a measure of equality as possible. But since the beginning of the plan era in 1929 egalitarian tendencies have been denied official support. Any attempts on the part of industrial labour to obtain equality of conditions of work, pay and living have been pool-pooled. Differentiation has been made an integral part of Soviet labour legislation. Similarly the scarcity of housing and the lack of amenities have been used as incentives and rewards throughout Soviet industry. Since the 1930s factory managers have been

* *Zarya Vostoka* (main Russian-language daily paper in the Georgian S.S.R.), February 18, 1954.

officially encouraged to use their workers' cottages for purposes of securing labour. As housing remains scarce, it is allocated so as to attract new and to reward old labour and to maintain discipline among both. If the average dwelling space is small by any standards, the size of accommodation available to unskilled labour is abysmal; its condition is often appalling. In hostels it is limited to "not less than 4.5 square metres" (48 square feet).^{*} Most telling in this respect is the provision of the housing legislation which forbids the settling of families in dormitories which have not been partitioned off into rooms.^{*} However, in exceptional cases, it gives special permission to accommodate two families in one and the same room. In 1950 the accommodation in hostels of a dormitory type of workers and their families was forbidden by the Ministry of Light Industry, but it is not known whether the original regulation has been rescinded throughout Soviet industry.

At the other end of the social ladder there is preferential treatment on a large scale. According to Soviet law (of 1930) supplementary accommodation is made available in the form of a separate room or an addition of 10 or more square metres (108 square feet) for certain professional classes, such as senior officers of the Services, senior officials of Government departments and industrial enterprises, scientists, specialists, artists, doctors, lawyers and heroes of labour. Senior members of the Party are also entitled to supplementary accommodation. In Leningrad, by a decision of the Executive Committee of the local soviet, a special list was drawn up of people occupying living space irrespective of its dimensions; in this list are included generals and admirals of the Soviet Army and Navy, heroes of the Soviet Union and heroes of Socialist labour, doctors of science, professors, Stalin prize laureates, People's artists of the U.S.S.R., People's and meritorious artists of the R.S.F.S.R., meritorious scientific workers and artistic workers, meritorious teachers and surgeons, deputies of the Supreme Soviets of the U.S.S.R. and the R.S.F.S.R., etc. The persons enumerated in this special list may have the occupation in Leningrad of *living space of any dimensions whatsoever*, irrespective of the number of rooms occupied by them in excess of the basic norm.^{*} To provide for their requirements, larger and better houses than are normal are built in all cities, not infrequently in special areas. In Moscow, for instance, the new villas built on the Lenin Hills are earmarked mainly for this social group.

^{*} S. Bomiash, *Regulations for the Utilization of Living Space*, Leningrad, 1953.

No information is published on the amount of living space set aside for the privileged classes. But the secret Plan for 1941, a copy of which fell into German hands during the war and which has now been reproduced by the American Council of Learned Societies*, is revealing in this respect. In one year the plan provided for residential construction on behalf of the Council of People's Commissars and of All-Union Ministries and departments, a dwelling space of more than 50,000 square metres. The plan also disclosed astonishing discrimination between various departments and industries; those regarded as of importance, such as the Council of People's Commissars, the State Bank and the State Planning Commission, were able to allocate to building more than a quarter of their capital investment programme. Against this, domestic trade, light and local industries were entitled to an investment in housing amounting to less than .6 per cent. only of their total capital allocation.

The history of privileges in housing is as old as Soviet society. As far back as 1926 the professional intelligentsia enjoyed a dwelling space of 7.70 square metres (83 square feet) when the average amounted to only 5.85 square metres (63 square feet) per head. At that time three-quarters of all industrial workers and half of all employees had less than the average. After 1928 no data was published on the distribution of dwelling space among different social classes. But it is known that at the end of the first Five-Year Plan the accommodation of miners and workers in the metal industries had fallen more than the national average and that at the end of the second Five-Year Plan more than one-third of all working-class families in Moscow and Leningrad occupied only part of one room or lived in communal barracks. The improvement in the living standards of professionals and officials had been achieved at the expense of the working class. That this trend continued throughout the third Five-Year Plan is borne out by a survey carried out at the end of the war by T. Sosnovy among displaced persons.†

The exact size of the class that enjoys such privileges cannot easily be established, but it is likely to be substantial. According to the population census of 1939, the "intelligentsia" numbered between 11 and 12 millions. In a broadcast from Moscow on September 9, 1953, Academician V. V. Nikolayev spoke of as many as 15 million people now belonging to the new Soviet

* *The 1941 State Plan for the Development of the National Economy of the U.S.S.R.* Moscow, 1941.

† T. Sosnovy, "The Soviet Urban Housing Problem." *The American Slave and East European Review*, Vol. XII, December, 1952.

intelligentsia. Allowing for their families, between one-sixth and one-fifth of the population must be reckoned to belong to this stratum of Soviet society. Not all of them rank automatically among those entitled to special privileges. But their number is far from small, and it is likely to have grown in recent years. It is not difficult to visualise the dismal nature of the accommodation which provides every working man and his family with less than half the dwelling space available to the privileged classes.

OWNERS AND TENANTS

It is as an element of the class structure of Soviet society rather than in any other context that the private sector of housing must be considered. In an attempt to put an end to the privileged position of the urban bourgeoisie of Tsarist times, one of the main assaults of the Revolution was directed against the owners of house property. For reasons of expediency in later years certain concessions were made to the private sector but, as industrialisation gained momentum, private initiative was discouraged and public building was given preferential treatment. After the Second World War, when housing was desperately scarce, the authorities resorted once more to old expedients. By decrees of August, 1943 and May, 1944, individuals and families wishing to build their own homes were granted loans of up to 10,000 roubles repayable in 7 to 10 years. Consolidated in the decree of August, 1948, on the right of citizens to buy and build individual houses, the legislation authorises Soviet citizens to erect or purchase for personal use one or two-storey houses consisting of not more than five rooms on plots not exceeding 600 square metres (0.14 acres) in urban districts or 1,200 square metres (0.3 acres) in rural areas. By the decree the owners are entitled to use the plots in perpetuity and to bequeath their houses, but, in case they leave them, their usufruct title to the land on which they stand ceases. Thus in 1948 more far-reaching concessions were made to the principle of personal property than had previously been considered compatible with Soviet doctrine.

Ever since its promulgation this decree has figured prominently in Soviet publicity. From time to time it has been cited as evidence of a new era of free choice for the individual. Outside the Soviet Union it has been hailed at times as a *Magna Carta* of private property. An analysis of the legislation and its implementation hardly bears out such an interpretation. First of all, more than two-thirds of urban housing remain within the public sector. Only a small proportion of new building

will benefit from the provisions of the new legislation. Its importance can be gauged only in the light of the existing possibilities and costs of private building. As in the past, the industry of building materials is in the hands of the State and caters predominantly, if not exclusively, for the public sector. Consequently, materials for private builders are scarce and expensive. This is all the more so since materials are sold to private builders at retail prices and are consequently burdened with a turnover tax which State organisations do not have to pay. Current price differentials are not known, but, to cite a pre-war example, in 1940 the price of cement fixed for sale to private builders was 450 roubles per ton, or five times as much as that charged to State building organisations.* In these circumstances, only a small *elite* can afford a private house.

Quotations for building costs and house prices are not easily obtainable nowadays in the Soviet Union, but in 1953 ordinary two-roomed bungalows built in provincial towns were known to cost at least 30,000 roubles. As the State loan covers at best one-third of this price, few wage-earners are in a position to own a bungalow. Moreover, the burden of repayment is heavy. Though at 2 per cent, the interest rate is low, in most cases the loan has to be repaid within a period of 7 years. This means that the amount due to be repaid may absorb as much as 20 per cent. of the average annual wage. This is a heavy commitment for wage-earners. What on the face of it might appear like a return to the days of the New Economic Policy is, therefore, in fact a device by which a privileged group of professionals, managers and working-class aristocrats are granted one more favour to separate them from the mass of their fellow countrymen.

Most of the latter live as tenants in flats or houses owned by State organisations, local *soviets* and industrial enterprises. These dwellings are likened at times to the houses built by city councils in the countries of the Western world; and some of them may well sustain such a comparison. However, most of them provide less than minimum standards of space, service and utility. In these circumstances, the official claim that rents in the Soviet Union are lower than elsewhere is rather disingenuous.

Although public housing construction is undertaken at varying cost by several agencies,† by local *soviets* and industrial enterprises, rents are fixed by law rigidly and uniformly throughout the

* N. Jansy, *Soviet Prices of Producer Goods*. Stanford, California, 1952.

† On the national level, as well as in the Republics, the Ministries of Urban and Rural Building set up in the autumn of 1954 now replace the governmental agencies formerly responsible for housing.

country. After having been abolished in 1921, the payment of rents was re-introduced a year later. In June, 1926, it was put on an All-Union basis. In spite of violent price inflations, the basic rent scale of 0.26 to 0.44 roubles per square metre per month, fixed at the time, has remained in force.

According to certain criteria, the basic rent can be raised or reduced by fixed proportions. Increases for such amenities as bathrooms, gas stoves, central heating and hot water supplies must not exceed 10 per cent. of the basic rate. Similar reductions may be made in the absence of these amenities. Dwelling space not exceeding the norm by more than 4.50 square metres (48 square feet) per family is charged at the standard rate; excess dwelling space is usually charged three times as much. The ultimate rate is modified in accordance with the economic and social status of the tenant, ranging from a minimum of 0.55 roubles to a maximum of 1.32 roubles per square metre. Before the war, non-working tenants, however, could be charged up to 300 times the minimum rent for workers; now their rent is calculated in accordance with their material position. Although the current average charge is close to the maximum rate of 1.32 roubles, it cannot be said to be an economic rent. In fact, the whole public housing sector is operated at a loss which has to be met from public revenue. As a result there is a tendency to keep residential buildings in bad repair and to omit the most essential improvements in public utilities.

In these circumstances, the uniformly low rents are really a reflection of uniformly low standards of housing. At current average wage levels, the total outlay for housing, including water, plumbing, heating and lighting, may be estimated at approximately 10 per cent. of personal income. In the higher wage groups it amounts to a similar proportion of total earnings. To the open rent has to be added the contribution from budgetary funds needed to meet the deficit in the housing economy. This is obtained mainly from the turnover tax, which weighs heaviest on the lowest income groups. Thus, while at first glance Soviet rents seem low, in fact they represent a considerable burden upon the town dweller, in his capacity both as tenant and as taxpayer.

GIANTS AND DWARFS

Since Stalin's death, Soviet housing policy has undergone further changes. At the Nineteenth Party Congress in October, 1952, Malenkov expressed his concern with the housing situation when he stated that, despite the great volume of construction,

* S. Bomash, *Regulations for the Utilisation of Living Space*, Leningrad, 1953.

there is an acute housing shortage everywhere."* The lesson drawn from this state of affairs was reflected in the directives of the fifth Five-Year Plan, which laid down that "a broad programme of State housing construction should be provided in the . . . Plan, increasing capital investment for this purpose approximately 100 per cent. as compared with the previous Five-Year Plan."† Stalin's successors promised the Russian citizen that they would give Soviet economic policy a "new look." At first the emphasis was on consumer goods, but recently the need for improved living quarters has been given a great deal of prominence. After some months in which the building industry was much criticised, activities were indeed intensified in the public as well as in the private housing sector. Even if allowance is made for the exaggeration caused by recording new housing in terms of total floor rather than dwelling space, building appears to have been intensified by comparison with the period of the first post-war plan when, in any event, a great deal of building was in the nature of repair rather than new construction. Capital investment in the public housing sector has been stepped up from 16,200 million roubles in 1952 to 25,500 million roubles planned for 1954. At the same time the proportion of total investment earmarked for housing has been raised from 11.3 to 13.7 per cent. Recently it was reported that during the first three years of the current plan, 83 million square metres or 70 per cent. of the current Five-Year Plan target had been completed, and that the building of private houses, which in the past had lagged badly behind, would be increased to 4 million square metres in 1954. Thus the public, as well as the private, sector of building appears to be ahead of schedule.

Although these changes represent marked improvements, they must be seen in their proper perspective. The present Government of the Soviet Union is more flexible in carrying out its economic policy than was the case during the Stalinist era. On the other hand, the changes that have taken place clearly amount to little more than a marginal shift. While total investment during 1954 in the public housing sector stands at 25,500 million roubles, investments in industry and expenditure on armaments are calculated at 90,000 and 100,300 million roubles respectively. Thus the Government's interest in heavy industry and defence still ranks considerably higher than in the civilian requirements of urban dwellers.

* Report to the Nineteenth Party Congress on the Work of the Central Commission of the C.P.S.U. (B.) Moscow, 1952.

† *Directives of the fifth Five-Year Plan.* Moscow, 1952.

In the selection of building targets the emphasis is predominantly on the grandiose. Current plans largely date back to the Stalin era, and none of them seems to have been amended, let alone scrapped, since Stalin's successors took office. The most remarkable of the completed buildings is the State University on the Lenin Hills, covering almost 800 acres. It is reported to be the highest building in Europe, the elevated centre part being 239 metres (784 feet) high. The total size of the building is said to be 2.6 million cubic metres (90 million cubic feet) and it is to be surrounded in the next few years by a huge building complex of 2 million square metres housing space.*

The most monumental building planned is likely to be the Soviet pantheon to be built to the eternal glory of the Soviet Union's heroes and leaders. Its place will also be on the Lenin Hills. According to *Pravda* of July 4, 1954, it is the wish of the Council of Ministers that the pantheon be simple, monumental and imposing. Its built-up area is not to exceed 80,000 cubic metres (2.8 million cubic feet). Tombs are to be placed in such a way that they will easily be seen by the workers marching past. In this way a gigantic centre of the Communist cult will grow on the South-western outskirts of Moscow, flanked by the university and the pantheon on either side. Other giant prestige buildings up to 38 storeys high were planned up to quite recently, but the All-Union Conference of Builders held in December, 1954, seems to have sounded the death-knell for tall buildings.

Beyond the Lenin Hills much of the Metropolis will continue for a long time to consist of simple and often ramshackle working-class houses overcrowded to bursting point. According to a recent geographical publication on Moscow†, almost half the dwelling space built in 1953 was contained in buildings of eight or more storeys. Side by side with these new blocks of flats most of the existing structure is in a state of dilapidation. Outside Moscow, housing conditions may be expected to remain

* It is interesting to compare this with a report in the Tiflis newspaper *Zarya* of February 4, 1954, which complained of the position in "many" student hostels in the city, and spoke of the student settlement, "in which live 2,500 students of the University," in the following terms: "In the corridors there is the heavy smell associated with bad ventilation. The surroundings are dirty and dusty. This unsightly picture is enhanced by the floors, which have not seen water since Heaven knows when, and the broken, rickety furniture. There are no clothes pegs or wardrobes in the rooms. Articles of clothing are hung from the backs of beds, on nails clouted into the walls, or simply from window fasteners. It is cold in the hostels. Some provident students have furnished themselves with oil stoves for heating their rooms. In the 12th block an iron stove has been installed, the chimney of which sticks out through the window. . . The regulations governing living space are not observed. Four people live in a room of 12 square metres."

† U. G. Saushkin, *Moskva*. Moscow, 1953.

worse than in the capital for many years to come. It is not without significance that at a time when 400 new factories for the production of reinforced concrete units are to be set up and the emphasis is on blocks of workers' flats, the programme for the private housing sector envisages 200,000 individual dwellings with a total floor space of 4 million square metres. This means that the average floor space in this new venture will be 20 square metres (218 square feet). Thus the living space of the Russian family is unlikely to increase for the time being. As far as is known, the provision of 1947 under which people living in kitchens, corridors and closets are not to be made statutory tenants has not yet been rescinded. The same seems to be true of the regulation that accommodation in barracks shall not be less than 4 square metres per head.

These legal provisions give an idea of the degree of overcrowding that still exists in the Soviet Union. In housing as in other sectors of Soviet society dwarfs still have to exist in the shadow of giants. To paraphrase George Orwell's famous words — all are equal, but some are more equal than others.

MEASUREMENTS

1 metre	= 1.09 yards	= 3.28 feet
1 square metre	= 1.20 square yards	= 10.76 square feet
1 cubic metre	= 1.35 cubic yards	= 35.31 cubic feet
1 yard	= 3.00 feet	= 0.91 metres
1 square yard	= 9.00 square feet	= 0.84 square metres
1 cubic yard	= 27.00 cubic feet	= 0.76 cubic metres
1 foot	= 0.33 yards	= 0.30 metres
1 square foot	= 0.11 square yards	= 0.09 square metres
1 cubic foot	= 0.40 cubic yards	= 0.03 cubic metres

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QUOTATIONS FROM SOVIET SOURCES

"FOR DECISIVE IMPROVEMENT OF SERVICES OF THE POPULATION"

Extract from a speech by Mikoyan, Former Soviet Minister of Trade

(from *Kommunist and Pravda*, March 12, 1954).

"It is well known to all that our weakest spot remains the provision of houses for the urban population. While in the sphere of improving the feeding of the population, the supply of clothing and footwear, great successes have been achieved, the construction of houses still lags behind the sharply increased requirements of the population.

"It is necessary to bear in mind that during the war no houses were built and a large number were destroyed. At the same time the growth of the urban population, in view of the tempestuous development of industry after the war, is proceeding at gigantic speed. That is why our Government is now laying down particularly higher speeds for the construction of housing compared with industrial and other construction, and is demanding of all economic organisations that the building of houses should have priority.

"The need for houses is so great and so far outstrips our present possibilities, that, despite the rapid growth of housing construction carried out by our State organs, there are not enough houses.

"Therefore, it is also necessary to develop widely individual housing construction and co-operatives for housing construction.

"The development of trade in building materials and finished parts, as well as in standardised houses built by constructional organisations on the orders of citizens and at their expense, as well as credit assistance and the utilisation of the population's savings for housing construction, would facilitate solution of an acute task which is bound up with the well-being of the people. And indeed many citizens have savings and can make savings in order to cover in time the cost both of an individual house and also a flat in a cooperative house."

"LIVING IN LENINGRAD"

(Extracts from S. Bomash, *Regulations for the Utilization of Living Space*. Leningrad, 1953.)

[This book is intended to explain the working of housing laws to the general reader, and, in particular, to those living in Leningrad. The preface to the book states that legislative and instructive material valid and still in force up to April 15, 1952 has been used.]

(i) (On the question of housing disputes among members of a single family.)

"For example : the lessee who together with his wife, daughter and brother occupied two rooms, died. The brother had been occupying this living space some years previous to the death of the lessee and claims that one of the rooms should be assigned to him on the basis of an independent lease contract. The widow and daughter oppose his demand. They regard the brother of the deceased lessee not as a member of the family, but as a tenant who occupied this place on a sub-letting basis without any independent right to using the living space, and demand his eviction from the space occupied by him."

(ii) (Dealing with grounds for the annulment of lease contracts.)

"If the lessee and the members of his family make it impossible by their conduct for other tenants to live jointly with them in the same flat or room, in which case only those people whose actions have made joint habitation impossible are subject to eviction."

(iii) (Circumstances in which living space over and above entitlement is to be taken away.)

(a) "Mother and 11 year-old son occupy two rooms of 25 and 20 sq. metres respectively. There is no surplus to be taken away since, in the event of taking one of the rooms away, mother and son would be forced to live in the same room. If the son were less than ten years old, then it would be possible to take away the room of 25 sq. metres leaving the room of 20 sq. metres which is sufficient for two people, according to the sanitary living norms, for the use of the mother and son.

(b) "Husband, wife, 12 year-old son, and 15 year-old daughter occupy three isolated rooms of 20, 18 and 16 sq. metres respectively. There is no surplus, since it would be impossible compulsorily to put the brother into the sister's room, or the sister into the brother's room, in view of their ages, or to put their parents into different rooms, i.e. mother with the daughter or the father with the son. If in the given case the age of either of the children were less than 10 years, then it would be possible to take away the one room of 18 sq. metres since in that event the child under 10 could live in one room with his parents and the sister or brother could live in the other room; the metric space of the two rooms is sufficient for four people.

(c) "Mother and two daughters occupy two isolated rooms of 27 and 12 sq. metres respectively. The room of 12 sq. metres is subject to being taken away, irrespective of the ages of the daughters."

"GEORGIAN HOUSING"

Extract from statement by V. P. Mzhavanadze, First Secretary of the Georgian Central Committee. (From *Zarya Vostoka*, February 18, 1954.)

There are many shortcomings in the social services, particularly in Tiflis. There is a shortage of public baths and the standard of those in operation is unsatisfactory. The towns of Tiflis and Rustavi still suffer from shortages of drinking water, although it is now eighteen months since the Bulchaursky water system was completed. There is also a drinking water shortage in Kutaisi and Poti, and there is no water supply whatever in Samtredia, Ochamchire, Zugdidi, Gali, Tsulukidze and Gardabani. Urban and rural executive committees are responsible for the fact that so little attention is paid to the repair and maintenance of houses; in Tiflis alone there are 988 houses in a badly dilapidated state, of which 89 should be demolished at once, and there are 1,078 houses which require major repairs. The situation is equally bad in Batumi. In Sukhumi, Samtredia, Khushuri, Borzhomi, Zugdidi and Makharadze the hotels are dirty and unheated; streets, parks and squares are unkempt. In the Saburtalo region of Tiflis practically no streets are properly paved and there is no drainage system. In the last year 174,787 sq. metres of living accommodation has been completed by Ministries and departments under Union-Union and republican, and republican control; this means that only 82.6 per cent. of the plan for construction has been fulfilled, and is the equivalent of a shortage of 26,000 sq. metres, a space large enough to house easily 6,300 people or 12,000 families. The builders of the republic will have to answer for this state of affairs to the Party. Plans for housing were not fulfilled by the Ministry of the Foodstuffs Industry or by the former Ministries of Municipal Economy and Housing and Civil Construction. Primitive methods of construction must be abolished and we must follow the example given us by builders in Moscow, Kiev, Minsk and other towns by using industrial methods. For this it is essential that planning bodies should standardise the main components of

buildings so that the advantages of mass production can be secured. Between 1954 and 1955 the concrete and ferro-concrete products works at Tiflis controlled by the Ministry of Housing and Civil Construction must be put into operation; a number of auxiliary building materials undertakings must be completed in Kutaisi."

"A MATTER OF LOW PRIORITY"

(From *Trud*, Moscow, February 19, 1953.)

"Three times last year, in February, May and October, the Praesidium of the Central Committee of the Trade Union of Building Workers considered the situation in the building industry. In July the same question came before the Plenum of the Central Committee of the union. At that time the Deputy Minister for the Building Industry assured the Central Committee that measures were being introduced to eliminate the backlog and to speed up building.

"The words of the Ministerial heads do not, however, coincide with their deeds, as the results of the housing programme show. It is due to them that workers and employees of the building industry have not received 170,000 square metres of housing space due to them. This means thousands of new dwellings and rooms which working-class families ought to have been able to occupy. The situation is equally unsatisfactory when it comes to the construction of cultural buildings. Nine schools and 56 kindergartens remain uncompleted and the plan for the erection of crèches was not even fulfilled by 20 per cent.

"In Pushkin Street, No. 26, in Kharkov, a block of 96 flats is being built for a boiler factory. At the end of last year it was supposed to be ready for occupation but plans still lie where floor boards should be, window frames have not been fitted and nobody knows when the staircases will be ready. The foreman reports: 'For a week we have been cutting holes into the walls for the heating system, but as to the plan, we are making no progress. This is not a building site, but a museum of antiquities.'

"The fact that the Ministry of Construction Materials Industry leaves the plans for housing systematically unfulfilled was mentioned at the Nineteenth Party Congress. Nevertheless, the heads of the Ministry did not draw the necessary conclusions from this criticism but regarded the relief of the housing shortage for the working man as a matter of low priority."

"IN ONE FLAT"

(From *Pravda*, July 3, 1953.)

"One could hardly doubt the worthy intentions of the tenants of the fifth flat in house number 21 on the *Arbat* in expressing a modest desire to have gas installed in their kitchen. Indeed, was it not humiliating for them to see snow-white gas stoves being installed in all the neighbouring houses whilst here paraffin stoves smoked just as they always had?

"Into the flat one day came the house manager, Zharikov. 'Do you want gas?' he asked. 'Yes,' chorused the tenants very pleased with such a promising start to the conversation. 'You know though,' continued Zharikov, 'that I, your manager, have nowhere to live.'

"This strange turn of events bewildered the tenants. Still, everything was soon quite clear. The manager, as they say, showed his cards. He offered to have gas installed in the flat if they would give him a bit of the kitchen to live in. For technical reasons it was essential to make some constructional changes in the kitchen in order to instal gas. Using this circumstance, Zharikov was trying to drag the tenants into his little plot. They naturally refused to take part in such a dishonest game. After a few days the manager was forced to retreat. Now he agreed to take part of the kitchen only temporarily until he obtained a room in another house. The tenants believed him and agreed to yield him a bit of the kitchen."

"Zharikov kept his word. The long-awaited gas was installed. But, as was to be expected, it brought many unpleasant features. After reconstruction the kitchen was smaller and two families had nowhere to put their tables. The kitchen became very crowded. Time passed. On one not really pleasant day for Zharikov he was dismissed and prosecuted as an embezzler of State funds. 'At last we shall get our kitchen back,' said the tenants. But things did not turn out like that. The new manager took no notice of their resolute protests and installed in the kitchen the porter and his family of five.

"Thus, since 1948, the tenants of this flat have been unable to liberate their kitchen. They tried to defend their lawful rights and appealed to the Kiev District Council for help. Nothing happened, however. In reply to their completely justified claims they received a notice on which was printed in black and white: 'The executive committee would inform you that a check carried out on the spot has established the following: . . . in place of the part of the kitchen taken from you, a shed of approximately the same area was turned into a kitchen. Signed: Deputy Chairman of the Executive Council of Kiev District Council, N. Mokhov.'

"This, to say the least, strange solution of the tenants' pressing problem cannot bear criticism. You see, the fifth flat is on the third floor. Just for a minute imagine the tenants running from the third storey to the transformed shed in the yard and you will agree that the very suggestion is simply a mockery. In any case this was only an offshoot of the idle fantasy of the inspector commissioned to sort out the case. The shed transformed into a kitchen never existed. Five years have now passed and the tenants are still unable to free their kitchen from the uninvited lodgers. When will the Kiev District Council look into this case and cease to get out of it by formal excuses?"

"THE HOUSE WITH THE COCKERELS"

By N. Labkovski and A. Uzlyan. (From *Krokodil*, December 20, 1959.)

"Two households in Kursk had an argument. The tenants in No. 52 Radishchev Street asserted that their house was the worst-built of any in the town, whilst the inhabitants of No. 19 in Lenin Street defended themselves:

"Oh no! Anything else you like, but as regards quality of building we refuse to give up bottom place to anybody."

"The argument threatened to develop into a row. To pacify the disputants, we visited both houses on the footing of impartial observers. It turned out that the dispute was not based on idle trifles. No. 52, Radishchev Street is certainly thoroughly badly built, but No. 19, Lenin Street is still worse. As the saying goes, it could not be worse."

"Let us test how soundproof the walls are," said one member of the commission to another. "I'll go into the next room and give you a shout."

"He went away, and his voice came through the wall."

"Ivan Petrovich, can you hear me?"

"Not only hear you, but I can see you," replied the other.

"We do not insist that this story originated in Kursk, but it is quite possible."

"The doctor who lives on the third floor of the house we are talking about knows when his neighbour on the second floor has a touch of bronchitis, and immediately sends him medicine."

"The scientist on the second floor invariably knows when his neighbour below goes to bed. The neighbour has a habit of smoking before going to sleep. No sooner has smoke begun to come up through the cracks in the floor than the scientist puts away his typewriter. His neighbour is settling down—the noise of the machine might disturb him."

"The girls on the first floor once told their friend from the second floor :
" 'We had guests yesterday. Just then you turned on your radio. So we danced all evening to your music.'

" 'You are wrong,' replied the friend. 'The radio was turned on in the surgeon's room above ours.'

"It is said that last year at the modest ceremony of housewarming, the manager of the Kursk trust of communal building, Kuklinski, welcomed the new tenants in words something like this : 'Dear Comrades! We have built a house of 35 flats for you, equipped with all the latest appliances! In each flat there is, so to speak, a bath . . .'

"In actual fact, in each flat there is—'so to speak'—a bath. The speaker omitted one minor detail. Of 35 only 15 have taps. And a bath without a tap is perhaps useful for the record. Incidentally, the baths are not empty. Making up for a lack of cupboards, which the absent-minded builders forgot to put in, the tenants use them for storage.

"To all other sounds in the house there is added the constant, distant sound of a waterfall. At first the tenants dreamed of storms at sea. Now they are used to it. Their ears are attuned. Sometimes they let fall a curse about the Slavut factory of Glavstoikeramika, which is the 'producer' of these sound effects. The fittings of the cisterns made by the factory withstand the water pressure for not more than two months. Then the cisterns leak. The steam-heating radiators try to compete with them. Heraclitus said once upon a time, 'Everything flows.'

"It is difficult to list all the 'improvements' which the builders have supplied—self-opening doors, which act without any pneumatic arrangements, on a principle of plain drying out; self-opening windows, and finally front-door letter boxes of special construction. In the front door, really good cracks have appeared, through which the postman can easily push letters and newspapers.

"But the greatest technical achievement of the building is an original solution of the problem of artificial climate. The heating system is so arranged that each floor has its own season of the year. On the first floor it is winter. Peter Petrovich Skariato, actor of the Kursk Oblast Dramatic Theatre, who secured a flat on the first floor, never plays the piano except wrapped in a fur coat and a warm muffler. At the same time on the second floor it is high summer. Little Vova Karamonov does his morning exercises dressed only in a pair of shorts. On the third floor it is sub-tropical autumn, with copious deposits of moisture. Some reader, hard-bitten on matters of housing, may imagine that the roof leaks. No! That is completely wrong. The roof is sound, but it is built in such a way that the slightest wind blows the snow in underneath it. Alongside are the hot water pipes. The snow melts. So every morning surgeon Alexander Vasilevich Kholod has to undertake an operation not exactly in his line. Mobilising all available bowls and buckets he saves the carpets and furniture from uninvited streams of water."

SOVIET UNION HOUSING PROGRAMME

Year	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955
1951	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955

STATISTICAL TABLES

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Statistical data on housing are not readily available in the Soviet Union. When figures are published they are not always comparable with those known for earlier periods or of other countries. The figures reproduced in the tables that follow have been derived from a variety of sources, such as statements on plan targets and results, speeches by leading personalities of the Soviet regime and articles on housing published in leading Soviet newspapers.

While it is not possible to eliminate all ambiguities of Soviet statistical accounting, every effort has been made to eliminate errors and distortions. Equally great pains have been taken to avoid any bias in the interpretation of housing data.

Year	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955
1951	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955
1952	1952	1953	1954	1955	
1953	1953	1954	1955		
1954	1954	1955			
1955	1955				

While it is not possible to eliminate all ambiguities of Soviet statistical accounting, every effort has been made to eliminate errors and distortions. Equally great pains have been taken to avoid any bias in the interpretation of housing data.

SOVIET UNION HOUSING PROGRAMME

	1923 -1928	1929 -1932 First FYP	1933 -1937 Second FYP	1938 -1940 Third FYP	1946 -1950 Fourth FYP	1951 -1955 Fifth FYP
	Pre-War Territory			Post-War Territory		
HOUSING CONSTRUCTION						
<i>Public Sector</i>						
Plan (mill. sq. metres)	—	42.4	64.0	21.0	72.4	70.0
Actual (mill. sq. metres)	6.7	23.5	26.8	17.5	61.0	n.a.
Actual (% of Plan)	—	55.4	41.9	83.3	84.2	n.a.
<i>Private Sector</i>						
Plan (mill. sq. metres)	—	20.1	8.5	6.0	12.0	20.0
Actual (mill. sq. metres)	17.4	4.6	2.7	4.0	4.0	n.a.
Actual (% of Plan)	—	22.9	31.8	66.6	33.3	n.a.
<i>Total</i>						
Plan (mill. sq. metres)	—	62.5	72.5	27.0	84.4	90.0
Actual (mill. sq. metres)	24.1	28.1	29.5	21.5	65.0	n.a.
Actual (% of Plan)	—	45.0	40.7	80.0	77.0	n.a.
HOUSING CONSTRUCTION (mill. sq. metres)						
Public Sector	6.7	23.5	26.8	17.5	61.0	n.a.
Private Sector	17.4	4.6	2.7	4.0	4.0	n.a.
Total	24.1	28.1	29.5	21.5	65.0	n.a.
HOUSING CONSTRUCTION (%)						
Public Sector	27.8	83.6	90.9	81.5	93.8	n.a.
Private Sector	72.2	16.4	9.1	18.5	6.2	n.a.
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	n.a.
BUILDING IN PUBLIC SECTOR (% of total)						
Co-operatives	13.7	6.3	4.0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Local Soviets	26.7	14.8	11.2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Industry	42.6	63.0	59.0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Transport	9.7	7.9	17.2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Others	7.3	8.0	8.6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
BUILDING IN PUBLIC SECTOR						
Investment (000 mill. roubles) ..	1.9	4.6	12.6	15.5	42.3	(84.5)
Investment (% of total investment) ..	3.5	6.7	7.5	10.5	10.6	n.a.

n.a. = not available.

NOTE: For the post-war years dwelling space has been expressed throughout in terms of the traditional unit of "dwelling space" and not as "total floor space" which came into use in 1948. One hundred units of total floor space are taken to be equal to 65 units of dwelling space.

Sources: Based on official Soviet statements.

Figures given in brackets are estimates.

SOVIET UNION DWELLING SPACE

	1923	1926	1928	1932	1937	1940	1950	1953
	Pre-War Territory						Post-War Territory	
POPULATION (mill.)								
Urban	21.55	26.30	27.60	39.00	53.00	59.20	74.50	80.00
Rural	111.95	120.70	122.40	117.50	112.00	112.80	125.50	130.00
Total	130.50	147.00	150.00	156.50	165.00	172.00	200.00	210.00
POPULATION (%)								
Urban	16.0	18.0	18.5	25.0	32.0	34.5	37.5	38.0
Rural	84.0	82.0	81.5	75.0	68.0	65.5	62.5	62.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
PER CAPITA DWELLING SPACE (mill. sq. metres)								
Public Sector	69.6	72.2	76.5	100.0	126.8	144.0	184.0	n.a.
Private Sector	69.4	81.6	86.7	91.3	94.0	98.0	112.5	n.a.
Total	139.0	153.8	163.2	191.3	220.8	242.0	296.5	(350.0)
PER CAPITA DWELLING SPACE (%)								
Public Sector	50.0	47.0	47.0	52.5	57.5	59.5	62.0	n.a.
Private Sector	50.0	53.0	53.0	47.5	42.5	40.5	38.0	n.a.
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
PER CAPITA DWELLING SPACE PER HEAD								
(sq. metre)	6.45	5.85	5.90	4.95	4.15	4.10	4.00	4.40
(sq. feet)	69.4	63.0	63.6	53.2	44.9	44.0	42.8	46.9
% of sanitary norm	71.5	65.0	65.5	55.0	46.5	45.5	44.0	47.5

n.a. = not available.

NOTE: For the post-war years dwelling space has been expressed throughout in terms of the additional unit of "dwelling space" and not as "total floor space" which came into use in 1948. One hundred units of total floor space are taken to be equal to 65 units of dwelling space.

Sources: Based on official Soviet statements.

Figures given in brackets are estimates.

SOVIET UNION POST-WAR URBAN AND RURAL HOUSING

	1946 -1950	1951 -1955	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955
URBAN HOUSING CONSTRUCTION IN PUBLIC SECTOR (000 sq. metres)*							
Total	100,000	105,000	27,000	27,500	28,500	n.a.	n.a.
Moscow	n.a.	n.a.	735	782	812	900	(1,000)
RURAL HOUSING							
Construction (000. houses)	2,700	n.a.	400	370	400	(400)	n.a.
BUILDING IN PUBLIC SECTOR (Investment)							
(Million roubles)	42,300	(84,500)	n.a.	17,500	19,400	25,500	n.a.
(% of total investment)	10.6	n.a.	n.a.	12.2	11.3	13.7	n.a.
PRODUCTION OF BUILDING MATERIAL							
Cement (mill. tons)	32.7	n.a.	12.3	14.0	16.0	17.0	(22.7)
Slates (mill. sheets)	1,420.0	n.a.	560.0	706.0	863.0	n.a.	n.a.
Window Glass (mill. sq. metres)	333.0	n.a.	79.0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Bricks (000 mill.)	2,150.0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

* Housing data for the post-war years are given in this table as published and are not converted into dwelling space.

Sources: Based on official Soviet statements.

Figures given in brackets are estimates.

**SOVIET UNION URBAN HOUSING:
UTILITIES AND AMENITIES**

**TYPE OF URBAN CONSTRUCTION 1923
(%)**

Town or Sector	Stone or Brick	Timber	Frame	Other	Total
Moscow	31.1	59.0	9.8	0.1	100.0
Leningrad	43.9	54.6	1.4	0.1	100.0
All Towns of R.S.F.S.R.*	14.8	63.9	3.6	17.7	100.0
Municipalised	38.2	48.5	7.0	6.3	100.0
Privately owned	9.9	67.1	2.9	20.1	100.0
All Buildings of R.S.F.S.R.*	14.8	63.9	3.6	17.7	100.0

Source: *The National Economy of the U.S.S.R. Statistical Handbook*. Moscow, 1932.

**TYPE OF URBAN CONSTRUCTION 1931
(%)**

Housing Sector	Stone or Brick	Timber	Frame	Other	Total
Public Sector					
Local Soviets	61.5	28.0	3.2	7.3	100.0
Departments and Industries	37.6	33.7	24.2	4.5	100.0
Private Sector	4.0	80.6	—	15.4	100.0
Total	36.7	46.9	7.0	9.4	100.0

Source: B. B. Veselovskii, *Economics and Organisation of Urban Economy*. Moscow, 1951.

**USE OF KITCHEN 1926
(%)**

Accommodation	Separate Kitchen		Share of Kitchen	No Kitchen	Unknown
	Kitchen	Kitchen/Living Room			
Part of room	3.6	3.3	60.2	26.5	6.4
One room	17.2	14.1	34.2	28.0	6.5
More than one room	40.0	9.2	32.0	12.1	6.7
Total	23.5	11.2	36.5	22.3	6.5

Source: All-Union Population Census of 1926. Moscow, 1932.

USE OF KITCHEN 1940

(%)

Professions	Separate kitchen used by—families				No kitchen
	one	two	three	four or more	
Specialists	34.8	15.9	3.0	20.3	26.0
Scientific Workers	30.0	16.0	14.0	20.0	20.0
Total	33.0	15.9	7.5	20.1	23.5

Source: T. Sosnovy, *The Housing Problem in the Soviet Union*. New York, 1954.

PUBLIC UTILITIES IN R.S.F.S.R. 1939

(%)

	Running Water	Plumbing	Central Heating	Hot Water	Electric Lighting	Bath
Moscow	83.4	77.5	40.5	7.9	99.5	16.6
Leningrad	85.4	84.5	9.2	20.7	96.5	19.9
All Towns of R.S.F.S.R.*	60.5	43.7	17.5	1.2	93.8	11.7

Source: B. B. Veselovski, *Economics and Organisation of Urban Economy*. Moscow, 1951.

* Including Moscow and Leningrad.

**SOVIET UNION URBAN HOUSING:
DISCRIMINATION
BY CLASSES AND INDUSTRIES
URBAN HOUSING SPACE BY SOCIAL GROUPS, 1923-1928**

Years	Average Housing Space (square metres per head)	Housing Space of Workers		Housing Space of Employees	
		(square metres per head)	(% of urban average)	square metres per head	(% of urban average)
1923	6.45	4.79	74.5	7.41	114.9
1926	5.85	4.91	84.0	6.96	119.0
1928	5.90	4.98	84.5	6.90	116.8

Source: *Labour in the U.S.S.R.*, Economic and Statistical Handbook, Moscow, 1932.

URBAN HOUSING SPACE BY SOCIAL GROUPS, 1926

Towns	Workers (square metres per head)	Employees (square metres per head)	Professionals (square metres per head)	Total	
				(square metres per head)	(square feet per head)
Moscow	4.70	6.79	8.14	5.69	61.25
Leningrad	6.84	11.04	14.81	8.75	93.97
Medium-sized Towns	4.29	5.98	7.04	4.91	52.85
All Towns	4.91	6.96	8.39	5.81	62.97

Source: A. Block, *Soviet Housing*, *Social Studies*, Vol. V, No. 3, Oxford, 1954.

URBAN HOUSING SPACE BY SOCIAL GROUPS, 1926

Social Groups	One room (%)	Two rooms (%)	Three rooms (%)	Four rooms (%)	Total (%)
Specialists	66.6	23.3	10.0	0.0	100.0
Scientific Workers	54.0	31.0	10.0	0.0	100.0
Total	61.3	26.9	10.1	0.0	100.0

Source: H. Somov, *The Housing Problem in the Soviet Union*, New York, 1954.

URBAN HOUSING: INVESTMENT BY INDUSTRIES 1941

Selected Industries	Housing Investment (% of total investment)	Cost (roubles per sq. metre)	Industries	Housing Investment (% of total investment)	Cost (roubles per sq. metre)
Light	5.8	306	Foreign Trade	29.2	1,900
Food	2.3	500	Trade Unions	15.0	1,075
Local	1.6	500	Moscow Soviet	100.0	1,389
Local Fuel	5.1	333	Council of Ministers	26.8	1,967
State farms	0.5	500	State Bank	32.1	2,250
Domestic trade	1.9	300	State Planning Commission	42.9	2,000
Geology Dept.	5.6	333	Total	9.1	665

Source: *The 1941 Plan for the Development of the National Economy*, Moscow, 1941.