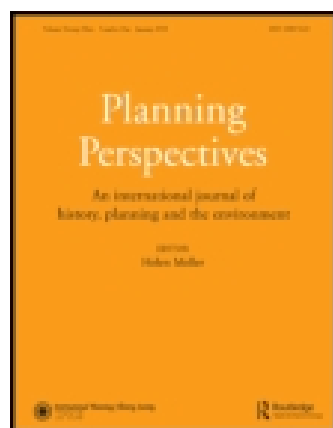


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Hannes Meyer and the General Plan for the Reconstruction of Moscow, 1931–5

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The Swiss communist architect and city planner Hannes Meyer arrived in the Soviet Union in 1930 determined to make a contribution to the new world he felt was being built in the USSR during the First Five Year Plan. He participated in a variety of activities in the country, but one of the most important (if ultimately most frustrating) was his involvement in the competition for the reconstruction of Moscow into the ideal communist city. He and his comrades H. Geimanson and P. Buecking put together an entry for the competition in 1931–2 calling for Moscow's major industrial area to be built as a satellite to the east of the city's centre, as well as for other substantial changes in the city's spatial organization. Their plan was not successful, but Meyer supported the 'Stalin' plan of 1935 wholeheartedly, and he served on a variety of committees, editorial boards and educational planning commissions directed towards fulfilling the aims of the plan. This essay discusses the Meyer plan's development, compares it with the 'Stalin' plan that was adopted as well as with other projects that were rejected, and considers the impact the successful plan had on Meyer's own later work in the USSR and abroad. The essay is based on Meyer's own writings, on Soviet documents of the period, and on recent Soviet and Western archival publications.

Introduction

Probably the greatest architectural and urban planning competition in Europe during the first half of the 1930s was the one held in the USSR for the reconstruction of Moscow. The 800 year old Soviet capital was to be rebuilt into a socialist city as part of the overall transformation of backward Russia into a modern industrial state. With most Western nations mired in the Great Depression, the Moscow project was seen as being the first opportunity to create a genuinely post-revolutionary urban form, one which would mark a clear break with past experience and practice, and one which would provide a model for cities of the future.

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Planners and architects from throughout Europe were attracted to the Soviet Union during the first two Five Year Plans, and a number of them submitted proposals for the rebuilding and future development of Moscow. One of these was the Swiss architect and urban planner Hannes Meyer (1889–1954). The details of Meyer's stay in the Soviet Union are only now becoming well known, and his activities there appreciated [1], but his plan for Moscow was one given considerable attention. Although it was ultimately rejected by the commission created to evaluate all the proposals, at least some of Meyer's suggestions, as well as those of the other competitors, were incorporated into the 'Stalin Plan' of 1935, the one which became the basis for Moscow's reconstruction. This essay will examine the architectural and planning milieu Meyer found himself a part of upon his arrival in the USSR in 1930, the evolution of the competition for the General Plan, Meyer's own proposal, and his response to the plan adopted.

The Soviet urban planning debate

In the summer of 1930 Meyer was removed from his position as head of the Bauhaus by the Dessau city council after considerable controversy over his increasingly Marxist sympathies [2]. That autumn he arrived in the Soviet Union, announcing that he had come to work with people 'who[are] living in that form of society for which we have been fighting . . . under the conditions of capitalism' [3]. Meyer was inspired by the potential for a socialist future that appeared to be manifesting itself in the USSR. The political and financial constraints under which he had operated in the West did not exist in the Soviet Union, he believed. Now that the Weimar Republic's great public housing projects of the 1920s had been discontinued, the USSR was the only place for a leftist like Meyer to turn, and no country in the world seemed to offer such opportunity for a socially-conscious builder as did the new Soviet state. Meyer explained his motivations in a lecture in Berlin in 1931:

'In the Soviet Union architects are worker-builders in the front ranks of the Five-Year Plan – the *Piatiletka*. We have joined this work-battle in the ranks of the worker-builders, as officers of the technical cadres . . . We belong to the working classes as scientists and practical builders, and all of us together contribute to the building of the new socialist economy . . . our architecture has the features of collectivism, combined with American functionalism, Leninistic science, and revolutionary flexibility [4].'

The USSR was the world of the future for Meyer and for many others in Europe and beyond, and Meyer had committed himself to helping build that future.

From the beginning of his stay in Moscow, Meyer was engaged in a variety of town planning and building projects. He worked first in VASI, the Higher Architecture and Building Institute, where his teaching centred on housing construction. He was then appointed chief architect for Giproggor, the City Building Institute, and Giprovts, the Trust for the Building of Higher and Technical Schools. Soon he was also made principal architect for Standardgorproekt, the USSR's city building trust. His primary activities focussed on town planning for the new industrial regions of the country, and he helped put together development schemes for such cities as Kerch, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Chita and Krasnoirsksk.

No single one of these projects was as important in Meyer's eyes as was the plan for Moscow's development, however. In 1931, the Moscow City Soviet (Mossovet) commissioned eight town planning 'brigades' to prepare a draft plan for the expansion and reconstruction of Moscow. Each brigade was to be directed by a prominent Soviet or foreign town planner, and each would work within specific fiscal and growth guidelines. Lazar Kaganovich was selected to head the project, and he made it clear from the beginning that the Moscow plan had a relevance that went considerably beyond the limits of the capital itself: 'By means of the concrete experience in Moscow,' he wrote, 'we shall solve problems of city development for the whole of the Soviet Union [5]. It was a project without parallel, and one whose impact would be long-lasting and fundamental.

This was not the first such commission created for the rational, state-directed growth of Moscow. One plan, dating from 1918, never reached the point of application. Between 1918 and 1923 the studios of I. V. Zholtovsky and A. V. Shchusev drew up a classical plan for the city which did not, however, consider the problems associated with the everyday functioning of a twentieth-century urban complex. Between 1921 and 1925 S. Shestakov had put together his own plan for the suburban development of a 'Greater Moscow'. In 1924 the City Soviet had formed a committee of such well-known modernist architects as L. A. Vesnin, I. Golosov, N. A. Ladovsky and K. Melnikov to prepare yet another plan. It had called for preservation of much of the older part of the city (making it something of a museum-town, critics said), but with considerable redesign and modernization of certain central areas, to be surrounded with a periphery of garden cities. No plan had been accepted, and as the First Five Year Plan progressed, all of them were seen to be inadequate for the demands that would be placed on the capital of a great industrial state [6].

Meyer arrived in Moscow at a time when no decisions had yet been made, at least officially, about the nature of the Marxist city in the new Soviet Union [7]. Marx, himself, in the *Communist Manifesto*, had called for a 'combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries, gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country, by a more equable distribution of the population over the country [8]. Much later, Lenin had warned that a true proletarian culture was possible only by assimilating and refashioning 'everything of value in the more than two thousand years of the development of human thought and culture [9]. Marx appeared to desire a complete break with the bourgeois industrial past, while Lenin was more cautious in rejecting the building and planning experience of the capitalist and industrialist eras. This was a discussion being carried on in many parts of the world, but nowhere was the argument as heated as it was in what was seen as the world's first genuinely Marxist state.

The principal conflict among Soviet modernist urban planners of the 1920s had been between the 'urbanists' and 'disurbanists'. The urbanists called for the dismemberment of existing large towns because they were 'expressions of the capitalist regime' now dead in Russia. Towns would be reassembled and partially 'reurbanized' in agglomerations of about 50 000 people, each 'agglomeration' would be collectivized, and communes of about 4000 people each would share apartment houses and residential compounds. As L. M. Sabsovich, one of the most visible proponents of urbanism, said in 1930, 'soon our biggest cities will be the most backward places to live in the USSR' and all existing cities will be eventually 'swept from the face of the earth' [10].

The disurbanists also desired the establishment of an alternative to the large city, the inevitable product of that capitalism which had been overcome in the Soviet Union. They

hoped to create an urban environment which would generate a sense of community, but in a very different way from that proposed by their opponents. The disurbanists admired the linear city of the Spanish planner Soria y Mata, for example, with its parallel zones of communication, industry, open space, housing, public buildings, parks and agriculture. Their decentralized settlements would house between 100 000 and 200 000 people, and would be developed in a rational manner that would ensure short pedestrian journeys to work across a green buffer separating housing from manufacturing centres.

It was the disurbanists who appeared to have the support of the Party and government, at least initially [11]. Political planners in Moscow believed that the disurbanist solution to the USSR's housing and development problems would accelerate industrial production and encourage the process of collectivization of agriculture. N. A. Miliutin's book *Sotsgorod* (published late in 1930) outlined the principles of a Marxist linear city. Appearing at the height of the discussion about the proper planning, architecture and housing for a socialist state, the book supported a middle path between the urbanists and disurbanists, and appeared to propose an accommodation that combined the best of both approaches. Complicating any consensus was the proliferation of architectural and planning organizations that had sprung up during the years following the revolution, however. From OSA to MAO, VOPRA to ASNOVA [12], nothing seemed decided, and in 1930 there appeared to be a wide variety of potential solutions to the planning problems of the Soviet Union.

The economic strains of the First Five Year Plans meant that the extraordinary utopianism of the architects and urban planners of the 1920s would have to be toned down, nonetheless. The 'radical transformation of the way of life' called for by the urbanists and disurbanists simply could not be accomplished at the same time as the collectivization of agriculture and the industrialization of the entire country. As *Pravda* reported in mid-1930, those 'left-wing militants' who tried to surmount 'in one leap' all the obstacles in the way of the socialist transformation of the way of life of the Soviet people, who wished immediately to reorganize existing cities and to construct new ones, were pursuing a mistaken course. Their ideas, *Pravda* continued, were unsound, semi-fantastical, and harmful to the successful completion of the plans of the Party and the Soviet people [13]. While few believed that a clear-cut choice had been made by the Communist Party with regard to theories of urban planning, it seemed obvious to everyone that immediate realities required standard conventional construction (in many cases, for example, small primitive wooden houses) and the postponing of large-scale planning for housing and public amenities until after the first 'victories' had been achieved on the agricultural and industrial fronts.

Planning did continue, however, and it was re-emphasized that Moscow would remain the focus of attention for what would become the model socialist city, whether it was to be a completely transformed city or only a moderately reworked one. As has been noted, Mossovet's general instructions to the planning brigades of 1931 provided a series of guidelines [14]. The plan should reflect an expansion in population from 2.6 to 4 million inhabitants, for example, but it should be an expansion that would exclude the establishment of new industries within the city's historic centre. The plan should work to overcome such major obstacles to Moscow's growth as the chronic shortage of housing that had long plagued the city, an inadequate transportation system and a potential shortage of drinking water. New solutions were to be found for problems associated with the construction of the new underground railroad, the metro, for the Volga-Moscow River canal, for inner city transport in general, and for the

capital's railroad installations. Heating was to be provided on a district-wide basis, and adequate supplies of natural gas should ensure this. The technical means used in satisfying the material, health and cultural needs of Muscovites, the commission stressed, were to be on a level with the best in the world. Factories were to be decentralized, and such amenities as schools, hospitals, theatres, clubs, shops and restaurants would be spread throughout the city, not concentrated in certain elite areas, as had been the case in the past. Overall, Moscow was to catch up with and surpass the great cities of the world, and the General Plan of Reconstruction was to provide the schema which would make all this possible[15].

Meyer's plan for the new Moscow

In the spring of 1932 the seven brigades presented their projects to Mossovet; three were headed by foreigners (Ernst May, Kurt Meyer and Hannes Meyer), and four by Soviet citizens (G. B. Krasin, N. A. Ladovsky, V. B. Kratiuk and VOPRA). The majority of the plans were fairly traditional. Ladovsky's proposal called for a 'parabolic' plan of development which would transform Moscow's radial layout into a more 'dynamic' plan encouraging the city to grow in a specific direction. Kratiuk's team recommended development in several directions, with varying population densities in each. VOPRA proposed five independent districts, and Kurt Meyer's plan was similar. May had been working on a plan for Moscow while he was still in Frankfurt, and his project called for a series of satellite cities (each with a population of between 100 000 – 150 000), with industrial zones and a rapid electric train connection permitting travel between the satellites and the centre within 30 minutes. Like the other planners, May said he wished to transform the 'feudal capital of Russia' into a 'socialist city', to make it hygienic and healthy, and to bring nature into urban life in the form of parks and open-space preserves. Crowding would be reduced in the older sections of the city by making the centre primarily a governmental zone, with most housing to be located in the satellites[16].

Meyer's plan was not considerably different from May's, but it did offer some interesting alternatives to the other proposals, and deserves to be considered in detail. Meyer's approach reflected the reality of working during the period of general reconstruction accompanying the Five Year Plans. Meyer was aware of the ideological constraints placed on any plan by the Party Plenum of June 1931, which adopted a resolution rehabilitating large cities, and condemning 'utopian' attempts at decentralization. Kaganovich wrote that cities had played an extensive part in the Revolution, and therefore, he explained, 'the nonsense regarding the reduction, or the self-abolition, of the large centers is not worth serious attention'[17]. As Meyer himself said that same year, 'The construction of whole new cities . . . represents the "cake", so to speak. Our "daily bread", however, consists in rebuilding existing cities'[18]. And Meyer was determined to follow what he considered to be the legitimately arrived at general rules specified by Mossovet and by the Party.

In an essay summarizing his overall approach to the problem, Meyer admitted first that rebuilding a city like Moscow could not be done in some 'idealistic' way, but would have to respond to the requirements of the times. The past, he admitted, could not necessarily be a guide ' . . . in the stormy epoch of the First Five Year Plan growth in the Soviet capital was so multifaceted and so dynamic that traditional town planning methods could hardly be used

in a logical way'[19]. Preliminary analysis proved, Meyer found, that despite the highly-publicized construction projects of the 1920s, Moscow remained a city that was typically capitalist in form, an enormous round market-town with the Kremlin at its centre. Moscow, Meyer wrote, 'was a contradictory organism from an urbanist standpoint in that the inner substance of socialist life had broken through the form of its bourgeois past'[20]. The capital of medieval Russia, the city of nineteenth-century merchant-industrialists, of poverty and traditional Orthodox religion, was to be transformed into a modern socialist metropolis. As Meyer discovered, the more he examined the realities of the city, the more complicated the project became:

'A thousand private interests formed the labyrinth of its architectural lay out. Forty times forty churches towered above its jumble of mostly wooden or one and two storey masonry buildings. A village-like impression was not dispelled by tenement blocks built by tsarist speculators. There was an endless jumble of rough alleys and filthy courtyards. In the 'Arbat', the quarter of rich merchants, 16% of all dwellings were connected to the water main; in today's Proletarskii region, in tsarist times a working-class area, 0.6% had running water. Only the two ring-shaped boulevards had the stamp of a big city! This old Moscow, this vast collection of houses typical of disorganized bourgeois Russian society, was to be planned and rebuilt . . . as the organic capital of the world's most powerful workers' state[21].'

It was a daunting task, Meyer admitted, but it was one without parallel in the world, and it was one Meyer was proud to be engaged in.

Meyer and his brigade next examined the housing structure of the city as it existed in 1931. Population density in the inner city, in areas previously inhabited by the relatively wealthy, was approximately 1000 inhabitants per hectare, while in the outer districts, in housing built primarily of wood, the population density was only about 70 inhabitants per hectare. The amount of floor space per inhabitant averaged 7 m³ in the city to 4.6 m³ in the outer *raions*. The values of buildings per hectare varied considerably in the two sections of the urban region: in the centre, where buildings were solidly constructed, and of three to six storeys in height, the value approximated 800 000 roubles per hectare; in the outer districts, the value was one-tenth of that. Finally, and not surprisingly, there were 6000 m³ of floor space per hectare in the centre, and only 300 m³ of floor space per hectare in the periphery. What Meyer concluded from all these findings was, as he expected, that traditional forms of housing, characteristic of capitalist economic and social structures, dominated the city at the time the competition was initiated.

The proposal Meyer presented to Mossovet addressed all the principal problems that had been spelled out in the competition announcement (Fig. 1). Meyer recommended a thorough reworking of the earlier capitalist city, and the expansion of the city through what would be a series of satellite communities not dissimilar in concept from May's. With regard to the historical city centre, Meyer stressed the importance of Moscow's functioning as capital of the USSR, of the Russian Republic and of the economically-important Moscow region. He proposed that all the government ministries (or people's commissariats) should be built along an axis stretching from the Kremlin either to the airport or to the main western railroad station. The national ministries would be located beyond the outer boulevard ring, and the republican commissariats would be placed within the ring. A second axis, stretching east from the Kremlin to the Kursk railroad station, would accommodate industrial and commercial trusts. Again, they would be segregated according to their jurisdiction, reflecting all-union,



Figure 1. Hannes Meyer's proposal for the reconstruction of Moscow.

republican or regional responsibilities. A series of elliptical roadways to be laid out beyond the two historical central circular boulevards would continue the organic growth of the city that had taken place naturally over centuries. International institutions (Meyer had in mind, for example, the Communist International, which had its headquarters in Moscow) and their Soviet branches would be given sites in the centre of the city, opposite the Kremlin. Meyer wrote that he wished to indicate the hierarchy of authority and power within international, national and regional institutions through spatial relationships and location, and his plan

stressed the significance these buildings were to have within the overall scheme for the city's development.

Traffic was becoming a major problem in Moscow as it had elsewhere in the world, and both Mossovet and Meyer recognized the need to develop an efficient means for transporting workers comfortably and conveniently through a city that was now felt to belong to them. Of particular importance was moving masses of people through the city on the holidays of 1st May and 7th November, when a million and a half Muscovites would march across the city's centre. In addition, of course, there were the needs of everyday traffic, and Meyer proposed the expansion of the city's two main circular boulevards. The inner ring (now known as the *Bulvarnoe koltso*, or Boulevard Ring) was to be widened to between 100 and 200 feet, and was to be planted with shrubs and trees, so that the central area of the city would be provided with a 'green corridor' always something that appealed to Meyer in his urban development projects, and a feature that was seen as being especially necessary in a city destined to become increasingly urban in nature. The outer ring (the *Sadovoe koltso*, or Garden Ring), with a diameter of approximately 5 km, would be the city's main thoroughfare, a traffic 'turntable' along which would be located the six principal administrative offices of the Moscow city government.

In terms of transportation within the city and around it, several other changes were to be instituted. The Moscow River would be given a more substantial role to play in the daily life of the central city, for example. Its level would be raised by 3 m, and parks were to be established along the river's edge. South of the Kremlin a large harbour for passenger ships would be constructed, and a substantially expanded area of water made available beneath the hill on which Moscow's old medieval heart was located. In addition, Meyer called for the construction of a new canal between the Volga and Moscow Rivers, to ensure an adequate supply of acceptable drinking water, to be used as an inland shipping thoroughfare, and to provide a much-needed recreation area for the city's growing population. Finally, a circular railroad (with a diameter of 80 km) would be built around the city, and a series of railroad bypasses would make it possible for goods and raw materials to be diverted away from the centre of the city to those sections where the materials were more immediately needed.

An 'agglomeration' of settlements

It was the final part of Meyer's project that was most striking, and which would have made a fundamental change in the nature of the city. Since Moscow was to grow in population, and since housing was to be improved, but without any extensive disruption in the inner city's composition, Moscow would have to expand outwards. Meyer proposed to make an 'agglomeration' of new settlements, 'a system of cities with complete administrative, political, cultural, and economic services' [22]. He envisioned a city surrounded by 19 satellite *raions*, each with a population of between 200 000 and 350 000 inhabitants. The initial satellite towns would be located in the direction from which raw materials were brought into the city: the first two would be built on the east, in the direction of the Urals, and on the south, towards the Don basin, both of which were to be major new industrial development sites as part of the Five Year Plans.

Each of the new cities would be developed in conjunction with an industrial area, and each would have a green zone and a large park devoted to relaxation, sports and communal outdoor activities. Each city would have its own administrative and cultural headquarters, which would function as a *raion* centre as well. In addition, each new satellite would be given one of the nation's cultural or scientific institutes. The national agricultural institute would be located in one, for example, the national winter sports institute in another, the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in a third.

All the new satellite towns would be linked to the capital by fast and efficient electric trams and trains, providing easy access to the old 'Mother City of Moscow', which would nonetheless maintain its character and be clearly delineated from its satellites, which would have their own individual qualities and identities. Ideally, too, inhabitants would live in the communities they worked in, thereby making extensive and counter-productive long-distance commuting unnecessary.

Finally, Meyer stressed, all the amenities that were to be made available to the inhabitants of the new satellite towns were to be guaranteed for those living in Moscow as well, through the rebuilding of the old city. Meyer envisioned not just the construction of new boulevards and grandiose new government buildings in Moscow, but the complete refurbishing of the city's housing and public amenities as well. Moscow was not to be abandoned, but to be made as pleasant a place to live as the new satellite towns were to be.

Other urban planning proposals

Meyer's overall project was not adopted, of course, and while some aspects of what he and his brigade proposed were incorporated in the plan that was accepted, his ideas for Moscow found fuller expression in some of his other city planning projects for the USSR, in particular those for Nizhnii-Kurinsk, the 'Sotsgorod' Gorky, Birobidzhan and Perm[23]. Meyer's approach to those projects was the same as the one he followed with H. Geimanson and P. Buecking, his two principal associates on his Moscow city planning brigade. He analysed the areas' technical and economic elements, their political and cultural context, and the psychological and architectural features influencing the regions' development. He examined first-hand each site, studied the native plants, and made an extensive evaluation of the region's natural landscape[24]. His approach, he said, was scientific; he had demanded it of his Bauhaus students shortly after he arrived in Dessau, and continued to promote it in the Soviet Union. His commitment, he said, was that of all Soviet city planners, to help organize the collective way of life of socialist society through contributing his time and effort by utilizing the most rational and ideologically committed means at his disposal[25].

The new city of Birobidzhan was probably the one on which Meyer was engaged most extensively. His planning brigade first studied the physical site in the Soviet Far East that would be the capital of a new Jewish autonomous region. They examined the area's economic potential, its natural resources, and the capabilities of a population consisting of Soviet and foreign Jews, ethnic Russians, Koreans and Ukrainians. The plan Meyer and his brigade put together called, predictably, for breaking down the old pre-socialist distinction between city and

country. The city would be divided functionally by zone, green spaces would be provided, and limits on building heights (determined by local traditions) would be set. To Meyer, his work on Birobidzhan was representative of the possibilities presented by the Revolution: the combination of an industrialized agriculture with cities orientated towards light industry and 'Leninist nationality policy' made the creation of genuinely new socialist cities possible [26]. To at least a limited degree, the Birobidzhan plan was an attempt to apply some of Meyer's theoretical ideas for Moscow to a new region far from the Soviet capital. And certainly Meyer hoped that his work there would have an influence on subsequent planning decisions in the USSR.

If Meyer's proposal for Moscow's reconstruction was not accepted, neither were any other of the 1931 projects, and in 1933 it was decided to set up a special office charged with studying, once more how the development of Moscow could and should be systematized. Many new suggestions, from Soviet and foreign citizens, were made. Le Corbusier, whose *Tsentrosoiuz* (Central Co-operative Committee) building was being constructed in the eastern part of the old city, recommended razing all of central Moscow, and replacing it by a skyscraper city of the sort he had been suggesting for urban areas in Western Europe. Frank Lloyd Wright visited the Soviet Union, and agreed that all the old city should be taken down, but argued that it should be replaced by a garden city, . . . composed of cottages set on landscaped grounds, surrounded by orchards and meadows, scattered over a vast territory' [27]. Neither of these proposals was treated with much seriousness in the new town-planning institutes being set up by the Soviet government, however. Indeed, the idea of demolishing large areas of central Moscow had been rejected some years before, and nothing had changed that would modify that decision.

The reality was that much was different in the Soviet Union when the final plan for Moscow's reconstruction was adopted in 1935. Planners alone were no longer to be responsible for making planning decisions. Political leaders were to play a vital role as well. Kaganovich, entrusted with overseeing the original competition for the city's restructuring, injected political dogma into questions of design, construction and planning in the USSR. Kaganovich argued that modern functional architecture, for example, was a reflection of bourgeois culture. Efficiency of function (for which Meyer was an enthusiastic spokesman) was less important in Soviet circumstances than was 'expressiveness', and tradition was produced as the basis for future Soviet design. Large cities were not to be seen as anti-proletarian, as they had been in the 1920s, and Kaganovich had said already in June 1931 that the essential 'utopianism' of linear settlements and smaller towns could be recognized by any good Marxist.

By 1932, at a time when the brigades from the initial competition were preparing their reports, even more fundamental changes within Soviet architecture and town planning were taking place. In April all competing architectural organizations were dissolved, and plans were made for the creation of a single Union of Soviet Architects that summer. By the end of the year, even the most outspoken supporters of disurbanism were rejecting their ideas as 'social-fascist' and modernist functionalist architects were beginning to learn how to work within the confines of what was to come to be known as Socialist Realism. Nothing signified better the aesthetic changes taking place in the USSR than did the design competition for the Palace of Soviets. Early in 1932 the results were announced: the top three were historicist in inspiration, and the overall winner was pretentious and bombastic as well. The jury responsible for ranking the proposals explained that those entrants who had embraced the modernist idiom had

failed to comprehend the artistic and ideological mission of architecture, that they had neglected to see that their idealistic-utopian projects had bypassed the natural stages of development of Soviet society and culture, and that they wished to destroy the past at a time when Soviet socialism wanted to preserve the cultural values of earlier times. The modernist movement in architecture, it was felt in Moscow and abroad, had been defeated in the Soviet Union [28].

The ‘Stalin’ plan of 1935

If the Palace of Soviets competition symbolized what was taking place in Soviet architecture, the ‘Stalin’ Plan for the Reconstruction of Moscow in 1935 indicated the fundamental change occurring in the overall direction urban planning and design would take in the country in the future [29]. One thing was emphasized at the outset: no new capital would be built from scratch, and the new socialist Moscow would be a moderate reworking of the city’s existing form. The extremes of complete reconstruction on the one hand, and of changing nothing in the central city on the other, were rejected, and it was stressed that the future city would remain a single unit, without satellite towns or suburban development. The population would be restricted in size, and the journey from home to work would be limited as well, to avoid wasted time. The state would control housing, and an equal distribution of consumer and cultural services throughout the city’s neighbourhoods would be guaranteed. Moscow’s centre was to have a primarily ideological role, and massive open spaces would need to be provided so that enormous public demonstrations could be carried out on national holidays. Moscow’s traditional, historically developed ring-road system was to be maintained, and Le Corbusier’s ‘mistaken’ ideas about the destruction of the old city were rejected absolutely. As Kaganovich explained, there was no need to build an entirely new ‘socialist’ city as a capital, because ‘. . . the cities of the USSR already are socialist cities. Our cities became socialist from the very moment of the October Revolution, when we expropriated the bourgeoisie and socialized the means of production’ [30].

Some of the specifics of the plan for the decade following its adoption in 1935 include the following:

	1935	1946
Population	3 600 000	5 000 000
Area	28 500h	60 000h
Floor space	15 000 000m ²	30 000 000m ²
Heating stations	89 000kw	675 000kw
Road area	3 000 000m ²	10 000 000m ²
Water supply	56 000 000 buckets*	180 000 000 buckets*
Length of tramlines	450km	800km
Number of buses	450	1500
Number of trolley buses	50	1000
Number of taxis	500	2500

*1 bucket = 16 litres [31].

If there were to be no satellite towns, a substantial new housing area was to be constructed in the southwestern part of the city. The project was to comprise 2500 blocks of 6–14 storey buildings, with a total floor space of 15 million m². The pace of construction was to be seen in the fact that in 1938 alone 1.2 million m² of floor space was to be made available to tenants. This southwestern residential area would be constructed on elevated ground, and intermingled with wooded areas as a way to protect the new buildings from prevailing westerly winds. In addition, the entire city was to be surrounded by a forest zone, 10km in width, which would penetrate into urban areas at various points.

Despite the plan's promise to avoid substantial demolition in the central city, considerable destruction was carried out in order to provide wider arterial streets and additional city squares. Red Square would be doubled in size with the destruction of GUM, the state department store. The ring boulevards were to be widened, and in the case of the Garden Ring, this meant the loss of the trees which had given the street its name. Clearing of old buildings made Manezh Square, Revolution Square and Marx Prospect considerably larger. New wide streets were developed, *Leningradskoe Shosse* to the north, *Leninskii Prospekt* to the south, and *Kutuzovskii Prospekt* to the west, with many substantial multi-purpose structures built along them. Tverskaia street was doubled in width and renamed after Maksim Gorky; its east side was completely rebuilt, and where it crossed the inner ring, the old Sukharev tower was demolished because it was 'in the way', and was felt to have no architectural value[32]. The first trolley buses were introduced along *Leningradskoe Shosse* in 1933, and their use soon spread to other main arteries as well. An embankment was constructed along the park of 'culture and rest' that would be named after Gorky, a new river boat station was to be built at Khimki, and new bridges were to be constructed across the Moscow River in central sections of the city[33].

The focus of socialist Moscow was to be the gargantuan Palace of Soviets, of course, and many of the newly reconstructed boulevards would be orientated towards the building site. And as neo-classicism was the style chosen for the Palace, so too was it made the official style of monumental architecture in Moscow and throughout the Soviet Union. By 1936 the Party was advocating the assimilation of the heritage of classical models into Soviet architecture. Already in 1932, *Izvetiia* had written that 'classical (Roman) architecture is closest to us', and Commissar of Enlightenment Lunacharsky had written that 'the proletariat has a right to colonnades'[34]. The grandiose buildings of the new Stalinist Moscow reflected this change. The great Moscow Hotel, originally constructivist in conception, was refashioned into a model of socialist realism, and the Soviet of Ministers building (now Gosplan), the Central Red Army Theatre, the Frunze Military Academy, and the central metro stations all emulated the models presented by the new academicians of proletarian architecture[35].

Meyer's response to the 'Stalin' plan

There is little doubt that Meyer did not see the Stalin Plan of 1935 as the best solution for Moscow's transformation into a modern socialist city. Yet however disappointed he might have been, he probably would have agreed with Frank Lloyd Wright, who said that it was

'... far ahead of any city planning I have seen elsewhere' [36], and he felt as well that many of his earlier ideas on the provision of such amenities such as electricity, running water, kitchens, green space and apartment design based on function had been heeded by his Soviet comrades, despite their insistence on housing people in neo-Renaissance palazzi. Yet even there Meyer was able to support the decision of the Party's Central Committee. In an article in *Arkhitektura SSSR (Architecture USSR)* in 1934, he wrote that it was clear that building in the Soviet Union must now not only be functional but must have architectural values as well, and he found especially pertinent, he said, Kaganovich's comment that 'the proletariat does not want just houses, but houses that are beautiful' [37]. He also defended architectural differentiation: new buildings constructed in older areas of Moscow should fit in with their historic surroundings so that they form an architectural ensemble [38]. They should not be strident assertions of the architect's personality or of some ideological position, but should convey an appreciation of the new socialist society's respect for the achievements of the past.

Meyer's commitment to Soviet communism was complete in the 1930s, even though unpleasant events in the middle of the decade convinced him that he and his family should leave the USSR for the West. He repeatedly defended the Soviet Union from its attackers, whether they criticized Soviet political, social or cultural policies. Meyer said in 1935 that he had been forced to admit after coming to work at Giprovts that much of what he had learned abroad would have to be rejected as irrelevant in the Soviet Union. The tempo of change and development there had superseded the skills and talents he had developed in Western Europe. His personal adoption of a properly Leninist ideological path, he wrote, had assisted him in adjusting his prejudices to Soviet conditions and Soviet reality [39]. Different rules applied in the proletarian Soviet Union, he had come to believe, and above all, he said, he had had to learn not to allow his imagination to be limited by the past, and not to fail to see the creative possibilities of socialism [40]. Meyer dedicated much of his life to the cause of the Revolution in the USSR, and whatever the proletariat or their representatives felt was correct, he agreed with and supported wholeheartedly. Many in the West criticized what appeared to be an official promotion of 'retrograde' cultural and planning policies as the 1930s continued. Meyer's response was that 'every culture must select the best of what has gone before, for its own continuing evolution' [41]. Whether it was the neo-classicism of the Palace of Soviets or a Moscow general plan that did little more than refashion the medieval city of the past, Meyer supported the decisions of the Party and the state. His political consciousness determined his aesthetic and theoretical consciousness.

Conclusions

The ideas Meyer put forward in his plan of 1932 were less influential than they should have been at the time because of a hardening official ideology, a bureaucracy that was unwilling to apply new ideas to the pressing needs of Soviet cities, and to shortages of skills and basic building materials. Meyer himself was committed to his Marxist-Leninist ideology, and did not find it difficult to adapt himself to the tortuous political changes taking place in the country as the Soviet Union moved towards Stalinism. His legacy, upon his departure from

the USSR in 1936, was many years of service to the building of Soviet socialism. Moscow was not becoming the city he had hoped it would be, but Meyer had played a role in encouraging Soviet planners to think about rational, functionalist alternatives in their pursuit of building the ideal socialist city.

Meyer's 'agglomeration' of satellite towns was not looked on favourably in the Soviet Union until the 1950s, when Khrushchev began promoting them as a reasonable solution to the capital's continuing crises of housing and supply. Yet already by 1944, some of Meyer's ideas were having an impact on the basic principles of Soviet city planning adopted by the government. Size and growth of cities were to be limited; construction and servicing of cities planned; differences between city and village eliminated; a community services programme was to be part of the overall urban planning process; each city would be approached on an individual basis, with its history, geography and climate considered in each case; the city was to be seen as a 'living organism'; and finally, in the case of Moscow, because of the prevailing winds, new industrial construction would be carried out on the east side of the city, so that smoke would be carried away from urban areas[42]. These ideas had all been promoted by Meyer during his stay in the USSR, and they became standards by which Soviet urban development was measured in the post-World War II years.

In the era following Stalin's death, Soviet urban planning and architecture became much more a part of the international planning process than they had been previously. At present, the city of Moscow covers a considerably greater area and has a much larger population than was imagined at the time Meyer worked on the city's general plan, but the city as it exists today is, in spirit at least, much more like the one envisioned by Meyer than the one planned by Stalin and Kaganovich. The Stalinist plan is now a page in the history of Moscow's reconstruction. Meyer's ideas continue to contribute to the overall rational expansion and modification of the city of nine million people that exists today.

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