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ACCOMMODATING THE MASSES: HOUSING POLICY AND HABITATION UNDER KHRUSHCHEV

By

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AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

ACCOMMODATING THE MASSES: HOUSING POLICY AND HABITATION UNDER KHRUSHCHEV

By

Charles George Urbany, Jr.

Research to date during the Khrushchev period has focused on many aspects of Soviet life, but housing has been somewhat ignored. The study of housing has traditionally centered much attention on the physical aspects of one's residence and has overlooked the broader social issues that surround it. This investigation will examine the relationship of housing to its broader urban environment, in an exploration of the internal dynamics of urban living during the Khrushchev period.

Previous historiography has discussed the impact of the Soviet housing construction program and has pinpointed certain dimensions of housing which reflect a hypertrophic and atomized state, but has generally underplayed the degree of inventiveness and creativity exercised by residents. An examination of newspapers, films, architectural journals, and novels from the late 1950s and early 1960s, will illustrate that residents had some flexibility in improving the quality of their lives.

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Introduction

Almost any visitor to a Soviet city during the Khrushchev period was immediately struck by this scene—steel mesh awnings extended over the sidewalks, to protect passersby from falling debris from the sides and tops of houses. The dilapidated conditions under which people lived and the explosion of new but substandard construction were images that prevailed then unlike any time in the past. Under Stalin, smoke stacks and factories lined the city skyline, as the regime worked to quickly build industries, promote its cities, and become an industrial power. No definitive housing policy existed at that time and housing was put on a back burner until it became a crisis.

Under Khrushchev, housing concerns took center stage, and the Stalinist images associated with industrialization were replaced by cranes, concrete, cement and scaffolding. Yet the state, in its haste to build enough units, rushed in a frenzy to piece together an assemblage of buildings attended by shortcuts and careless work. The shoddy results became the homes of urban residents, and the neighborhoods that left visitors leaving with shaking heads.

To Western eyes, Soviet housing seemed drab, oppressive and crowded. It is easy to understand why Soviet urban

residents were viewed as hapless pawns of the state, unable to better their living conditions and therefore their lives. But this was not the case. As much as residents endured their living conditions, they searched for ways to improve them. They hoped.

One newly arrived migrant described his first impression, as he passed heaps of brick and steaming tar, piled alongside the streets of Moscow every hundred yards. "Tall cranes, scaffolding and concrete are everywhere," he said. "As I watched the cranes in motion, I began to understand why men and women feel that life will get better."[1]

Research to date during this period has focused on other aspects of Soviet life, while housing has been somewhat overlooked. Yet housing has implications that go beyond the mere bricks and mortar that offer shelter. It reflects and reinforces social relationships and contributes to the structuring of patterns of interaction. Social historians inspired to rewrite history from the "bottom up", have focused their attention on the everyday lives of average citizens. Since housing comprises such a fundamental and major dimension of everyday life, we begin to see its value. This study will examine the relationship of housing with its social environment, in an exploration of the internal dynamics of urban living in the Soviet Union during the Khrushchev period. The traditional tendency to focus simply on the physical

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[1]Edward Sears, "Housing in the USSR," New World Review, vol.29, Feb. 1961, pp. 13.

aspects of one's residence or the field of housing policy limits an examination of the broader issues that surround it. Within its walls, housing is the site of complex processes in society. It offers a window into life at the time, the relationship between employers and workers, the willingness of the state to recognize family needs, and the role of women in society and the home.

The comments of one white-collar worker and father of four serves as one such example. He asked:

> What's all this talk about a housing crisis? Today's man is outside of the home all day. First, he must go to work. After work, there's always a meeting, or entertainment, then a short stroll in the streets, and it's late and time for bed. Housing crisis? It doesn't really affect me. I'm never home anyway.[2]

This study will begin with an investigation of the statistical measurements quantifying the extent of housing shortage in terms of issues such as overcrowding, poor sanitation and the like.[3] But the primary goal is to investigate the link between housing and its social environment.[4]

As historians, sociologists, economists, urban theorists and general observers discuss the impact of the Soviet housing

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[2]H. Kent Geiger, The Family in Soviet Russia (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 210.

[3]See for example Timothy Sosnovy, "Housing in the Workers' State: Undoing the Sins of Neglect," Problems of Communism, vol.6, Nov. 1956, pp. 31-39, Donald Barry, "Housing in the USSR: Cities and Towns," Problems of Communism, vol.18, May 1969, pp. 1-10, and John Alfred Dimaio, Soviet Urban Housing: Problems and Policies. (New York: Praeger Press, 1974).

[4]Jim Kemeny, Housing and Social Theory (London: Routledge Press, 1992), pp. 1-16.

construction program, they have pinpointed certain dimensions of housing which reflect the image of a hypertrophic and atomized state but they have underplayed the degree of inventiveness and creativity exercised by residents. Urban dwellers engaged in a variety of strategies designed to ameliorate their living arrangements and, therefore, were not passive recipients of the changes around them.

Scholarship concerned with Soviet housing is rather limited and has centered on earlier periods. Traditionally, the primary focus has been the numerous housing and town planning programs designed by architectural planners during the experimental years of 1918-1933. The lack of scholarly attention to housing during the Khrushchev period is particularly surprising. The program of the 1950s and early 1960s drastically changed the urban landscape and was arguably the most ambitious governmental housing program in human history. The period from 1956 to 1969 produced over 150 percent more units of housing than all housing constructed from the time of the revolution.[5] Just the five year period from 1956-1960, witnessed the construction of more units of housing than in the entire period from 1918 to 1946. The upsurge in housing construction represented a major triumph of the Khrushchev period.

However, hidden behind these impressive statistics,

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[5]Timothy Sosnovy, "The Soviet Housing Situation Today," Soviet Studies, 11, no.1, July 1959, pp. 13-14 and Kommunist, March 24, 1961, pp. 1-3.

numerous problems plagued the housing industry and affected the quality of life for many Soviet urban residents. Obviously, any massive housing construction correlates with urban growth and it was during this period that the process of urbanization grew at an unprecedented rate. Any discussion of housing conditions in the Soviet Union during the Khrushchev period and the remedies designed to improve the crisis, demands a sensitivity to the effects of this mass urbanization. There is general agreement that the pre-Khrushchev impetus to this growth was the dual program of enforced collectivization of agriculture and enforced industrialization; millions of peasants either fled from their farms to escape the former program or were pushed into the labor force demanded by the latter. As a result, the urban population more than doubled between 1926 and 1939, rising from 26.3 million to 55.9 million.[6] Postwar migration and new territorial acquisitions further raised this figure to an estimated 87 million by April 1956.[7] Thus, it is important to keep in mind that a prime factor in the Soviet housing equation involves the numerous difficulties surrounding this exploding urban growth. Since this paper is concerned with the dynamics of urbanization and its relationship with housing, the focus will center on housing conditions in urban areas,

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[6]T. Sosnovy, The Housing Problem in the Soviet Union, Research Program on the USSR, New York, 1954, p. 102.

[7]T. Sosnovy, "Housing in the Workers' State: Undoing the Sins of Neglect," Problems of Communism, vol.6, Nov. 1956, p. 31.

and, therefore, the daily lives and experiences of urban inhabitants in all their variety. It will also be sensitive to regional variations and examine aspects of rural-urban interaction.

The effects of urban growth extended far beyond an increase in population and the drastic physical changes associated with it. Unprecedented social changes accompanying the process of urbanization were extremely significant. As the "agrarian nexus"[8] began to fade, Soviet society began to change as well. Residents gradually became more educated, and in turn, a new "class" of upwardly mobile professionals crystallized. Social interaction and mobility associated with urbanization, combined with increased levels of education, created a more demanding society. It was precisely during the Khrushchev period that these demands began to develop and to accelerate. The manifestations of the pressures "from below" can be directly attributed to this newly emerging dynamic and demanding society. Despite the image of an unbending and monolithic state typically associated with the Soviet system, citizens had some flexibility to control the way they lived.

The case study here leads us to a broader issue and a subject of an ongoing debate in recent historiography. Much of the debate among recent Soviet scholars these days centers on the validity or usefulness of the totalitarian model. The argument presented here combats the stereotypical image of a

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[8]See Moshe Lewin, The Gorbachev Phenomenon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

rigid and totalitarian state confronting and repressing the Soviet population. The totalitarian model may help to explain the "rigidities" of the communist system, but its extended use tends to distort and blur the intricacies of everyday life in the Soviet Union. The tendency in the past literature to portray Soviet society as a whole as malleable putty in the hands of the state is in need of revision. As the immense social changes which gained momentum during the Khrushchev period accelerated, Soviet citizens increasingly demanded, albeit cautiously, improved accommodations.

I. The Rise of the Khrushcheby

"Housing units are growing in the Soviet Union like mushrooms after a spring rain."[9] This front page headline in Pravda seems to describe accurately the speed with which housing units were constructed during the early 1960s, but this was not indicative of earlier periods in Soviet history. Housing, like all essential needs, had to compete against other officially more favored interests in the Soviet Union. Particularly during the Stalin years, the shortage of housing grew more acute even though some advances were recorded in the fight to provide shelter for all Soviet citizens.[10] For years, the top priority given to industrialization and the consequent rapid increase in the urban population combined to turn the housing shortage into an epidemic crisis. The collectivization campaigns of the 1930s which forced millions of peasant families off the land into already substandard urban housing fueled the problem. In addition, the

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[9]Pravda, January 10, 1964.

[10]See William Richardson, "Architecture, Urban Planning and Housing During the First Five Year Plan," Urban Studies, vol.26, June 1989, pp. 150-168. John Hazard, Soviet Housing Law (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939), pp. 130-141. D.L. Broner, Kurs Zhilishchnogo Khoziaistva (Moscow: Izd-vo Ministerestva Kommunal'nogo Khoziaistva RSFR, 1948, pp. 73-92. and Maurice Frank Parkins, City Planning in Soviet Russia (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1953), pp. 40-53.

devastation of World War II, destroyed all housing in vast expanses of the Soviet heartland, compounding an already appalling situation. By the end of the war, six million buildings were reported destroyed, depriving thirty-five million persons of shelter. By 1950, the per capita average dwelling space dipped to its all time low of 3.98 square meters per person.[11]

During the 1950s, the communist party finally acknowledged the urgency of the housing crisis and in its attempt to solve it, embarked on a series of sweeping programs. Solving the housing "crisis" became a major goal of the Khrushchev regime. The Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 spoke of the urgent need to improve the country's housing situation and, as a result, adopted an extensive program to expand housing construction "with the view of eliminating the country's housing shortage within the next ten years."[12] In 1957 Nikita Khrushchev, then leader of the Soviet state, declared that the "acute shortage of housing is the most important obstacle for the Soviet Union to overcome."[13] The party youth newspaper conducted a poll of Soviet citizens in 1957, asking them to discuss the problems affecting their

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[11]Roy A. Grancher, "Housing Industry in the USSR," U.S. Delegation Report, Economic Commission for Europe, Third Building Industry Seminar and Russian Study Tour, Jan. 1971, prepared for the Office of International Affairs, HUD, Washington, D.C. NTIS Number PB 199418, p. 15.

[12]S. Khotchinskii, "Puti Realizatsii Stroitel'stva," Arkhitektura SSSR, 1956, no.5, pp. 1-4.

[13]Izvestia, November 7, 1957, p. 3.

quality of life. Sixty-five percent of those polled named housing as their chief concern.[14] These passages indicate if there was one subject on which the Soviet leaders and the populace were in full agreement, it was the seriousness of the housing problem.

Prior to 1957 it was difficult even to discern the existence of a housing policy in the Soviet Union. But with the monumental programs of 1957, the state for the first time in its history of central planning began to fulfill its promises. Until the launching of the monumental 1957 program, it was difficult even to discern the existence of a housing policy in the Soviet Union. Truly it was the beginning of a "New Day" in Soviet housing.

According to reports at the twenty-third Congress, about one-half of the country's population moved into new apartments or improved its housing by 1961. American housing experts have generally supported these claims and have calculated that for the years 1956-1958 the USSR produced twice the number of dwelling units produced in the United States.[15] In 1959, Great Britain built 5.4 apartments per one thousand inhabitants; France built 7.2; and the United States constructed 7.9. The USSR reported a record 14.5 units per

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[14]Komsomolskaia Pravda, October 7, 1960.

[15]Allan A. Bates, "Low Cost Housing in the USSR," in Industrialized Housing, (Washington: Government Printing Office,1969), p. 1-21.

thousand.[16] Investment in housing during the fifth (1951-1955) Five Year Plan was, in ruble terms, almost double that of the preceding planning period, and it more than doubled in the next period as well (1956-1960), when it reached 23.5 per cent of total capital investment.[17] In terms of living space, 200 million square meters were built during the period 1946-1950, 241 million square meters in 1951-1955 and an amazing 475 million square meters in 1956-1960.[18] Thus, it can be easily argued that, in statistical terms, the housing construction program was an astounding success.

Hidden behind this impressive array of statistics, however, loomed serious problems which were intensified by the pressures of rapid industrialization and urbanization. One of the most visible problems was the quality of urban dwellings. The negative testimony of Western observers and foreigners on the quality of construction are numerous. The construction industry, forced to acquiesce to overzealous Party demands, made the drive to reduce expenditures and improve efficiency its central concern. As a result, it abandoned concern for design and quality under pressure from Communist party leaders

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[16]S. Kucherenko, "On the State of Urban Development in the USSR and Measures for Improving It," report delivered at the June 1960 Conference on City Planning and Construction, Pravda, June 8, 1960 CDSP, no.23, p. 14.

[17]Gregory D. Andrusz, Housing and Urban Development in the USSR (London: Macmillan Press, 1984), p. 19.

[18]Leon M. Herman, "Urbanization and New Housing Construction in the Soviet Union." American Journal of Economics and Sociology, vol.30, April 1971, p. 205.

to build housing as quickly as possible. The enormous pressure to meet production quotas and schedules meant the range of options in housing was also kept to a bare minimum. It was argued a handful of options would facilitate standardization and thereby advance industrialized construction techniques and increase economic efficiency. The thinking and behavior of the construction organizations amounted to a clamorous policy whose theme was "anything that cost more than the minimum was bad and anything beside the bare essentials was superfluous."[19]

This meant improvements in quality were slow as they took a back seat to the demands to fulfill a plan defined in terms of square meters. Each year construction organizations engaged in an end of the year frenzy to rush assemblage of buildings attended by shortcuts and careless work. The same impulse to produce a good yearly record forced local soviets to pressure state and public inspection agencies to accept faulty or unfinished buildings for occupancy.

While there is no doubt that the quality and durability of the dwellings constructed posed many problems for Soviet citizens, the words of one Soviet housing official adequately described the realities of urban life during this time period. He exclaimed, "When you are trying desperately to clothe

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[19]V. Berezin, "Beauty and Expediency," Pravda Vostokas, April 7, 1960, p. 3 (CDSP, vol.12, no.10: pp. 29-30.

people, you don't worry about sewing all the buttons on!"[20] This individual seemed to recognize that any kind of housing, whatever its condition, was better than the utter lack of housing that had previously existed. Despite problems of quality, Soviet housing alleviated many of the lamentable shortages that prevailed at the time of Stalin's death. One can not dispute the fact that increasing numbers of Soviet citizens had come to live in their own apartments.

An examination of the "missing buttons" of the housing program will illuminate what everyday life was like during this period and set the overall framework for the argument presented here. One of the essential criteria of any housing construction initiative is to determine the amount of living space allotted to each urban resident within the state constructed prefabricated structures. Opinions vary whether the Soviet government failed or succeeded in this respect. According to D. L. Broner, a Soviet economist, urban living space in the Soviet Union amounted to 6.8 square meters per person at the end of 1964.[21] An American expert on Soviet housing calculated slightly lower estimates of 6.31 square meters for 1964 and 6.42 square meters by the end of 1965. These figures represented significant improvement over the

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[20]Ada Louise Huxtable, "Building Soviet Society: Housing and Planning," in The Soviet Union: The Fifty Years, ed. by Harrison E. Salisbury, (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1967), p. 158.

[21]D.L. Broner, Zhilishchnyi vopros i statistika (The Housing Question and Statistics) Moscow, Statistics Publishing House, 1966, p. 8.

1952 average of 4.67 square meters.[22] But many investigators criticize these results as inadequate. They argue that the regime did succeed in reversing the decline in living space, but only brought it back the level which existed in 1932. Many investigators, particularly western observers, were quick to point out that the Soviet Union provided only slightly more than one-half of the space "considered minimally healthful" for its urban inhabitants and dismissed the program as a failure. As one observer commented: "It is worth noting that the present living-space standard leaves the urban citizen substantially worse off than he was over forty years ago under the tsars. Why? Because the sanitary norm has not been met."[23] While the Soviet housing situation in the late 1950s and early 1960s fully deserves criticism, to declare the whole program a failure solely on its failure to achieve a certain minimum standard of living space per inhabitant is very harsh. Western observers' perceptions were obviously value-laden and, consequently, they tended to exaggerate the negative aspects. They often evaluated living conditions in terms of privacy and focused on what they perceived as the moral problem of excessive housing densities. One observer,

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[22]T. Sosnovy, Housing Conditions and Urban Development in the USSR," New Directions in the Soviet Economy, Part II-B, Washington, DC, US Government Printing Office, 1966, p.544; and "The Soviet Housing Situation Today," Soviet Studies, no.1, Vol.XI (Sept. 1959), p. 4.

[23]Alexander Balinky, "Non-Housing Objectives of Soviet Housing Policy," Problems of Communism, vol.10, August 1961, p. 19.

for example, was quick to point out that by the end of the Khrushchev period an average of two and one third persons occupied a room in Soviet urban communities, as compared to 1.4 persons per room achieved in a number of Western countries.[24] This, he declared, was "appalling" and he reasoned that since the average space per inhabitant in the Soviet Union fell far below the "sanitary housing norm" of nine square meters, the housing construction program was a failure.[25]

There are many problems with this line of reasoning. In the first place, evaluating the success of the housing program in square meters is not particularly useful because of the continuing flood of citizens from countryside to town and its tremendous impact on the amount of per capita living space. Between 1940 and 1962 the proportion of the Soviet population living in cities rose from about one third to more than one half. During the 1960s this proportion continued to rise at the rate of one percent per year.[26] Thus, the progress made was often obscured and overlooked because of the enormous impact of urbanization during this period. But real progress, though slow, was clearly evident. The housing space available per inhabitant during the period 1957-1967, increased from 5.2

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[24]T. Sosnovy, "Housing Conditions and Urban Development in the USSR," p. 545.

[25]Ibid., p. 546.

[26]See Narodnoe khoziaistvo v SSR v 1963 godu (The Economy in the USSR in 1963), Moscow, Statistics Publishing House, 1965, p. 8.

square meters to 7.18 square meters an increase of thirty-seven percent. Although the space available at the end of the period was modest, the overall increase was indeed quite impressive.

Secondly, to Western eyes, Soviet housing seemed drab, oppressive, and crowded. Yet the same structures could well create entirely the opposite impression in the minds of recent migrants from the countryside in the early 1950s. The traditional peasant household had only one room, which was shared by the entire family. Reports indicate the crowded urban apartments were not viewed by these residents as critically as by the foreign observer. In addition, many "native" urban residents preferred much less space in a separate apartment to a larger room in a communal apartment.[27] These examples stress the fact that the culture under investigation may have had different levels or standards for defining or measuring a housing crisis.

Certainly life was not easy in these crowded apartments. Yet, the population as a whole retained a sense of hope and patience that living conditions would improve. Following the deprivations of the Stalinist era, many tended to view their situation as a temporary inconvenience. Perhaps one of the legacies of the Stalin period was a sense of pride and participation, shared by many, that weathered through years of hard times. A renewed sense of hope manifested itself through

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[27]N. Narinyani, "A Dispute over the Layout for One-Family Apartments," Izvestia, March 3, 1962.

the latter half of the 1950s. As one woman exclaimed, "Of course it's better now! Look at us. Andrei is a worker, not a peasant. That's better. Besides we also have a room in Moscow with electricity and running water."[28] As the effects of urbanization accelerated, many came to view the urban way of life (with its "modern" connotations) superior to that of the rural.

Despite all the shortcomings, there were visible signs of progress which had enormous cultural ramifications for many Soviet citizens. Wooden shacks were often replaced with buildings made of brick, stone, and concrete. Flat surfaced roads replaced the old rough cobble stone throughways. The multi-storied apartment complexes which practically grew overnight during the Khrushchev period represented clear evidence of "modernization" as concrete replaced wood in the major urban centers. The combination of these new images in addition to the serious efforts by the state to eradicate the housing crisis clearly illustrates why the Khrushchev era is a definitive historical period for scholarly investigation. While the smokestacks of Magnitogorsk were perceived as the symbols of progress during the Stalinist period, it would appear that the crane, cement and scaffolding replaced these images during the Khrushchev period.

All of these examples indicate the varying perceptions of

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[28]Jerome Davis, "Russians Face to Face: A Report on Housing in the USSR." New World Review, vol. 32, Jan. 1964, p 37.

the way individuals may define a "housing crisis." Within the Soviet Union itself, the perceptions began to change as the process of rapid industrialization and urbanization accelerated throughout the Khrushchev period. By the late 1950s, the living conditions of many Soviet citizens had improved and increasing numbers of families had come to live in their own apartments. This in itself was a major success. However, these perceptions of success, were already beginning to change by the early 1960s. The housing initiative was interpreted quite differently by the newly emerging generation of Soviet citizens. The Khrushchevian apartments, which appeared so wondrous to a generation that endured the privations of the Stalin era, no longer satisfied a younger, more educated and urbanized generation. Urbanization, and the social changes and pressures which coincided with this development, affected the way urban residents evaluated their various living arrangements. The Khrushchevian apartments proved to be no longer acceptable to the rising expectations of bourgeoisified workers or upwardly mobile professionals.

Shifting our attention away from the varying perceptions of the housing program to the realities of everyday life within the dwellings, the impact of this construction initiative on the individual Soviet citizen is best conveyed by examining the available options for accommodation. The housing initiative included three basic components respectively, in the sectors of private, cooperative, and state-owned housing. The cooperative form was resurrected

during the Khrushchev period and grew steadily during the period while private housing gradually declined. Private housing, though officially banned in 1962, still proved to be a viable outlet for many residents and perhaps serves as the best example of the way some urban residents resisted the encroachment of the state's concrete multi-storied complexes. State-owned housing was by far the largest sector and, since the majority of citizens were faced with conforming to its procedures and regulations, its role had the most impact on the population. Thus, everyday life within the state-owned structures will receive most of the attention in this study. A discussion of each of these forms of housing tenure will create a sense of what housing conditions were actually like during the Khrushchev period and, further, set the context to examine the ways in which Soviet citizens coped with their environment, articulated their demands for improved accommodation, and expressed their disappointments and frustrations with state authorities.

II. State Housing

The Soviet regime under Khrushchev explored a variety of ideas for state-owned housing placing the most energy and hope in the development of prefabricated industrialized techniques. The monumental decree of June 1957 on the Development of Housing Construction and the Seven Year Plan of 1959-1965 called for a shift to the "progressive" methods of construction which placed heavy emphasis on the development of prefabricated large-panel housing and industrialized housing techniques as an important way to solve the housing crisis.[29] Khrushchev himself became the tireless proponent of the further expansion of the industrialization of construction.

The first expansion began in Leningrad as construction teams transformed the Soviet housing industry forever with their successful completion of several experimental reinforced concrete large panel houses in the city's Shchemilovka district during 1956-58.[30] After Shchemilovka's debut, construction specialists around the Soviet Union, with approval from the Party, worked to perfect and advance large panel construction systems. The impact of this form of

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[29]Pravda, June 14, 1957.

[30]I. Shass, "Kvartal krupnopanel'nykh domov v Leningrade," Arkhitektura SSSR, no.2, 1960, pp.10-12.

housing was substantial because, in the ten years from 1957 to 1967, the proportion of prefabricated buildings in Moscow rose from 7.6 to 82 percent of all new construction. By 1968 the proportion of large panel buildings reached sixty-two percent of all of the available housing in the largest cities of the Soviet Union.[31]

The microdistrict (mikroraion) or superblock, arrived together with the large panel construction methods in the 1950s. In theory, the blocks would serve as totally integrated neighborhoods, with all social and commercial services available to residents within easy walking distance of individual apartments. In actuality, the microdistricts were not well adapted to fit specific local conditions. They lacked adequate roads and other means of transportation and were isolated from the wider urban environment. Although the actual micro-districts fell far short of the images projected by design plans and models, these superblocks became visible features of the urban landscape.[32]

Despite the emergence of these new urban features, the legacy of society's rurality still shaped the feel and character of the urban landscape in many ways. In certain districts of Russian cities, it was still customary to find

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[31]I. Ryaboshapko, "Builders Pool Their Experience," Zhilishchnoe Stroitel'stvo, no. 1, Jan. 1969, pp. 30-31. It is a key point to stress that these statistics apply only to the larger cities of the Soviet Union.

[32]S. Turgenev, "Eksperimental'naia zastroika zhilogo kompleksa," Arkhitektura SSSR, no.1, 1958, pp. 3-14.

garden plots of up to one-third of an acre adjoining the dwellings, and sometimes even livestock. Such "urban districts", with their primitive one and two-story houses, covered larger areas than is commonly thought (especially in small and medium sized urban areas and where erstwhile villages have been incorporated into expanding metropolises). Despite the tendency in recent literature to focus on the development of the high-rise or multi-storied apartment building in the Khrushchev period, by 1969, buildings of four or more stories took up less than ten percent of the overall residential area, and even in major cities such as Gorky and Novosibirsk, the urban area occupied by single-story buildings accounted for between 55 and 75 per cent of the total land area.[33] Overall, one-story housing amounted to as much as 61 per cent of the housing stock (in terms of living space) in 1959 and was still 45 per cent by 1967. The predominance of low-rise housing still was the norm by the end of the Khrushchev period. With up to 70-80 per cent of the area of many large cities occupied by individual houses often lacking the most basic amenities, one could argue that they remained little more than large villages.[34]

The prevalence of Soviet society's rurality is evident when we examine the fate of the microblock design when

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[33]Blair A. Ruble "From Khrushcheby to Korobki," pp. 232-270.

[34]B. Svetlichny, "Nekotorye voprosy perspektivnogo razvitiya gorodov," Voprosy ekonomiki, no.3, 1962, pp. 57-69.

transferred to the country and confronted by unmediated rural values. Although the focus of this study is primarily concerned with what has been traditionally defined as urban housing, it is interesting to note the relationship of the private plot to housing construction in the rural areas and the ability of rural residents to preserve it. The leadership hoped for the transformation of the Soviet village into a type of settlement which would fulfill the Communist ideal of applying an industrial style of working and living to agriculture -a transformation, that is, of the peasant, especially the collectivized peasant, into an agricultural proletarian. The term "agrotown" was assigned to this concept and what Khrushchev specifically had in mind was the construction in rural areas of "well-appointed urban type dwellings with all modern facilities," the creation of "new settlements and economic centers," and the resettlement of persons from "small ill-appointed villages into well-appointed communities."[35] Khrushchev hoped to bring the scattered segments of the rural population together into settlements with multi-storied buildings and as a result the first "agrotown" was completed in the Ukraine in 1958.

It soon became clear, however, that the plans for establishing such large settlements had undergone substantial modification since their initiation in 1958-59. Scholars have

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[35]Luba O. Richter, "Plans to Urbanize the Countryside 1950-1961," in Jane Degras and Alec Nove (eds.), Soviet Planning: Essays in Honor of Naum Jasny, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1964, pp. 32-45.

focused on lack of resources and unorganized planning as the major causes for the failure of the development of the "urban-type settlement centers."[36] However, it would appear that inhabitants' resistance of this form of housing was also an important factor. One journalist described how the majority of rural inhabitants favored "one-story, one family houses with garden plots next to the houses, while other had advocated two-story, two-family houses, likewise with adjoining garden plots."[37] She suggested that the idea of multi-storied apartment complexes was favored by only a small minority of the rural population.[38] It must be borne in mind here that for the great bulk of the Soviet rural population, private agricultural production was one of the advantages of village life which they were unwilling to forego. These opinions were reflected in policy changes in the realm of housing construction. For example, in Uzbekistan a large multi-storied apartment was constructed which one architect exclaimed, "will serve as the model for the transformation of rural life!" One year later the same architect sadly admitted

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[36]See Karl Eugen Wadekin, Rural Reconstruction and the Agrogorod; the Development in Village Planning and Design since the 22nd Party Congress, (Munich: Radio Liberty Committee, 1968), pp. 13-29.

[37]Literaturnaia Gazeta, No.34, 1968, p. 10.

[38]The majority of the rural inhabitants who favored the high rise apartments were young people. The author speculates that young people were enthusiastic about the high-rise apartments because they hoped that they would help to facilitate the "urbanization" or "modernization" of village life.

"this apartment complex never became a model because of popular disappointment in the project." The next year the plans were modified and one-family and two-family houses were built with garden plots of eight hundred square meters each."[39] The fact that the rural population was opposed to restrictions and encumbrances on private cultivation is not enough to suggest that this changed policy. It would be overly simplistic to interpret the regime's shift toward a more moderate line on rural construction solely on the basis of rising popular discontent. However, as the case in Uzbekistan illustrates, "pressure from below" seems to have been an important factor. It is clear that the remnants of Soviet society's rurality combined with individual initiative helped limit the plans of urban planners to expand the micro-block approach in the countryside.

Rural values not only affected the layout of housing environment in rural areas but these values were also transposed to the urban environment. Since the vast majority of the urban population during this period had its origins in the countryside, they had a tremendous impact on the urban landscape. By the end of the 1970s, over one half of the urban residents had been born in the village.[40] These rural roots had a bearing on the type of accommodations many people chose to live in. Thus, what Moshe Lewin refers to as the

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[39]Selskaia Zhizn, October 9, 1967.

[40]Geoffrey Hosking, The Awakening of the Soviet Union (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 3.

"ruralization" of the cities is applicable to a discussion of housing choices and patterns and their influence on the urban environment.[41]

The value system of the former rural environment was transferred to the urban milieu in a variety of ways. One point that needs to be stressed here is the potential significance of rural background as a cultural determinant of housing preferences. The movement from one particular set of social relationships (in the countryside) to another set (in the town) did not change traditions and world outlook of migrants or even some of the social relationships themselves. Rural roots influenced, if not determined, where a particular migrant group lived within the urban system. The newcomers often arrived in a town and relied on village networks to help them. They tended to live with relatives or zemlyaki (individuals from the same region) who provided them with assistance in finding work.[42] The long tradition of peasants' seasonal work, dating back for generations, meant that peasants often knew other villagers in the city. Since many cities and enterprises couldn't house these new residents, the newly arrived found housing on the outskirts of the urban areas. The formation of these homogenous communities clearly illustrates the ability of many residents

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[41]See Moshe Lewin, The Gorbachev Phenomenon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 34-39.

[42]A.V. Topilin, Terriotrial'noe pereraspredelenie trudovykh resurov v SSSR (Moscow, 1975). p. 94.

to have some control over their living situation.[43]

Within the crowded standardized apartment complexes themselves, a variety of strategies were exercised by residents to cope with the daily burdens of everyday living. Since meeting production quotas and schedules mattered most of all, available housing largely ignored the needs of the families that were scheduled to inhabit these new apartments. The limited number of master or standardized housing designs could not adequately cope with the changing nature of the Soviet family. Family arrangements were much more diverse than architects had imagined, and these variations affected the demand for certain types of bath facilities, kitchen appliances, room sizes, and balconies. For example, two separate families, each having four members, would have very different housing needs. One family might have had two adults and two children or one family might consist of parents, an adult son, and an adult daughter. The interior design of the apartment becomes crucial in satisfying the needs of the two different families. In the above case, the family with the young children may have found two bedrooms to be adequate; in the latter, more rooms were highly desired.

As the above examples suggest, the average life course of the family presented intractable dilemmas for an immobile housing market with an inflexible conception of how best to

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[43]See David L. Hoffmann, "Moving to Moscow: Patterns of Peasant In-Migration During the First Five-Year Plan," Slavic Review, 50 (Winter 1991), pp. 852-854.

design standardized apartments. Housing designs were couched in terms of providing an apartment for two parents and one or two children. Although this was a stage through which many families passed, it was only a snapshot of the entire range of household formations. For example, the break up of communal apartments and liberalized divorce laws fostered differences in family composition to which the construction industry could not adequately respond.

The problem of standard designs also affected the cooperative movement and set up one more obstacle blocking a more enthusiastic leap to cooperative forms of housing construction. Cooperative members had little choice in building designs and the size of an apartment. As an article in Izvestia noted, as a rule almost half of the apartments in cooperatives have three rooms. However, the majority of inhabitants did not need three rooms. For example, of the 60,000 families in Biryuleva Borough who wished to join a cooperative apartment house, only three thousand needed three room apartments.[44] Similarly, in the railroad borough of Sverdlosvk, 103 persons wanted to enter the builders' cooperative. Of them, 65 applied for one-room apartments, thirty for two rooms and only eight for three rooms. However, the standardized design offered twenty one room apartments, fifty two-room and twenty three-room apartments.[45]

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[44]Izvestia, Oct. 29, 1985, p. 5.

[45]Izvestia, Dec. 24, 1964, p. 3.

The gap between supply and demand was a major problem and the failure to provide more flexible designs for the cooperatives and state housing created numerous difficulties. The forms of building were largely influenced by economic needs rather than social ones. Sociologists and demographers clamored for the diversification of apartment layouts in order to better accommodate an ever-changing family structure. These cries fell on deaf ears; thus, one of the major flaws of the housing construction initiative was its failure to provide a flexible housing market in which families could move at will and accommodate changing family size. Housing authorities had no means of determining consumer tastes and demands and no incentive for accommodating shifting consumer preferences had they been able to discern them.

Despite these problems, urban residents pursued an array of strategies designed to accommodate changes in family composition. Exchanging apartments was one eagerly sought out alternative. Exchanges were prompted by such motivations as the desire to have a larger or smaller (and cheaper) apartment, the wish to live closer to one's job or relatives, the need to find ground-floor accommodations for reasons of health, etc. Soviet sources give no indication of the volume of apartment-swapping, but other sources suggest that it was probably quite large. For example, bulletins containing advertisements by persons wishing to make an exchange were organized by local agencies and published by the state's housing administration offices. A typical ad read as follows:

> One room, twenty-one square meters, with all conveniences; hot water, seventh floor of an eight floor building, elevator, balcony, incinerator. Kiev district, Kutozovskii Prospekt No. 37, Apartment 233. Mr. Demidov, (in exchange for): two rooms together with all conveniences and larger floor space.[46]

The right of exchange introduced a necessary degree of flexibility into Soviet housing not provided by the construction industry and was a very common method of upgrading or shifting one's available housing options. Uri Trifonov deals in some detail with the realities and difficulties of exchanging apartments in his play The Exchange (1969).[47] Trifonov, in his play informs his readers how an exchange of flats actually took place, and describes the procedures required for it. The play begins with the main character Victor Georgievich Dmietriv who learns that his mother is dying from cancer. Victor's wife Lena proposes that they use this information advantageously, so that after her mother-in-law's death they can gain her apartment and more spacious accommodations. To do this officially is difficult, if not impossible; so, a mixture of endless official and unofficial steps are necessary.

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[46]Biuelleten po obmenu zhiloi ploshchadi (Bulletin for the Exchange of Housing Space); published by the housing administration of the Moscow City Soviet of Workers' Deputies. no.22, May 6, 1962, p. 4, cited in Dimaio, p. 128. It is interesting to note that the individual who placed this ad hoped to emphasize certain features of the apartment to increase its attractiveness. For example, an apartment on the upper levels of the apartment tended to be quieter than other floors and was more advantageous especially with an operating elevator.

[47]Iurii Valentinovich Trifonov, The Exchange (London: HEB, 1990).

The couple's income does not permit them to buy into the new cooperative blocks of the early 1960s. Thus, an improvement in the family's living standard depends on a variety of strategies and manipulations. Interestingly, the characters raise no objections to these procedures based on social or ethical reasons. They do not view these strategies in any way as "cheating" and regard them more or less as a necessary facet of everyday life. The overarching tone of this play portrays life as a jagged series of schemes, manipulations, and quarrels in an endless pursuit of self-advantage. The relentless pursuit to improve one's housing conditions that this play portrays suggests the universality of the practice.

Family and social complications arising from attempts to improve living arrangements form the background of the play. The difficulties of finding or improving housing, which Trifanov alludes to, describes the ways in which housing accelerated tensions within the household. This discussion illustrates the notion that housing is not only a unit of accommodation but also one of contestation, manipulation and negotiation. Marriage and divorce were pursued as strategies to "negotiate" the desired end of a better place to live. The interviews from the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System clearly illustrated this practice and it is worthy to quote this excerpt in its entirety:

> The apartment situation often forced people into marriage that is, girls married men with a suitable room and vice-versa. They could then divorce and claim a part of the

> room they had married. It could often be heard said that someone had married a 20 square meter room. Then after two weeks or a month of marriage, the person concerned would divorce. The room would then remain in the possession of the least scrupulous one with the strongest nerves. He or she would proceed to organize parties every night in his or her section of the room. These parties would usually be very noisy, smoky, and drink-filled. As a final recourse, if his ex-wife had by that time not decided to move out, the man would bring in women. The ex-owner of the room would then attempt to find another with a suitable room and the cycle would begin all over again.[48]

Even in divorce, the resident was still entitled to the rights of the residence.[49] It would appear that some undertook divorces of convenience in order to improve housing rights or access to housing units and that it was a successful strategy to improve one's accommodations.

The lack of variety in standardized apartment houses and the construction industry's failure to grasp an understanding of what was demanded by consumers created a variety of other problems as well. Initially, many architects believed that as few as eight standard apartments could accommodate all possible housing needs.[50] But as one architect from the Uzbek State Design and Planning Institute lamented:

> The net results of this standardized approach are monotony, dullness, lack of color, lack of any

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[48]Cited in H. Kent Geiger, The Family in Soviet Russia, (Cambridge, Mass, 1968), p. 209.

[49]The former spouse continued to exercise the right of living space even if the marriage was declared invalid by the court. See S.M. Korneev and I.M. Konkov, Pravana zhiluiu ploshchadu. (Moscow: Zane, 1968), p. 25.

[50]V. Lebedev, "Pervye shagi proektirovaniia i stroitel'stva domov s malometrazhnymi kvartirami," Arkhitektura SSSR, no.3, 1957, pp.5-12.

> individuality, and little attention to local climatic conditions. Of the almost eight hundred standard designs available to architects and city planners for apartment houses, scarcely 5 percent have ever been used, and even these have been dubbed alike as peas in a pod.[51]

This aesthetic problem was most pronounced when large panel construction methods combined with the microdistrict or super block approach to city planning resulted in a housing environment that was visually bland and lacking in individuation. The 1971 film Irony of Fate deals with this phenomenon. In the film, the narrator sardonically observes that one of the great achievements of the recent Soviet construction has been to make folks feel at ease when traveling to an unknown city. After all, "travelers will feel perfectly home anywhere since every city looks exactly alike, with identical street names and landscapes right down to the local movie house."[52] In the majority of the country's cities during this period, mass media sources such as Pravda indicate the architecture of areas of mass housing construction was monotonous and unattractive.[53]

However, despite the limited opportunities to remodel or landscape in the standardized apartments, residents did engage in a whole range of activities to individualize the home. As one observer noted, "All the apartments look the same on the

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[51]Pravda vostoka, April 7, 1960, p. 3.

[52]Quoted in Blair A. Ruble's, "From Khrushcheby to korobki," in Russian Housing in the Modern Age, ed. William Craft Brumfield and Blair A. Ruble (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 251.

[53]Pravda, June 21, 1963.

outside, but inside the rooms themselves, despite their size, are rather cozy. Each house I had visited furnished their apartment in a most unique and attractive style. The use of a variety of colors, tapestries and paintings, cleverly constructed furnishings such as bookshelves gave each apartment its own independent character."[54] One visitor was struck by the "attractive balconies and floral arrangements in the apartments."[55] Thus, a number of actions relieved the dullness of industrialized construction which did not disrupt the productivity of the work crews. One architect, for example, in a how-to manual, suggested that colors, design elements such as balconies, and the textures of materials could be changed to individualize the apartments.[56] These house beautification "tips" initially raised by the professional press weaved their way into the popular press by the middle of the 1960s.[57] These efforts did not eradicate the bland environments but they seemed to help. Residents complained about the inadequate size of the kitchen, the primitive plumbing units and equipment, the undersized foyer and diminutive rooms. Yet, the measures described above

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[54]Sears, p. 37.

[55]See David and Vera Mace, The Soviet Family (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc. 1963), p. 165.

[56]L. Lopovok, "Nekotorye voprosy estetiki krupopanel'nogo domostroeniia," Arkhitektura SSSR, no.5, 1964, pp. 9-14.

[57]Pravda, November 24, 1961.

provided, as one woman recalled, "a sense of space."[58]

Such measures were often extended beyond the home to the community. Public spaces, in spite of their monotony or shabbiness, tended to be well kept. One foreign observer remarked, "New York City could use the help of the thousands of broom wielding peasant women who are a very common sight cleaning the streets of Moscow."[59] These efforts within and outside of the home suggest that Russian apartment dwellers gained a modicum of control over their immediate surroundings.

This evidence suggests that urban residents were not entirely passive observers of the changes around them. Since many Soviet citizens had some gripe about his or her housing situation, there is an abundance of good newspaper copy for the critics of the much berated builders and housing administrators. One of the leading critics was the satirical magazine Krokodil, which was famous for its exposures of bureaucratic waste and inefficiency. In almost every issue surveyed in the Khrushchev period there were one or more articles railing against the lack of building materials or ridiculing some construction blunder. One of the best examples of this genre is a photograph of a recently built five story residential building in Moscow equipped with a series of balconies which are attached to a solid concrete wall and which have absolutely no means of access. In an

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[58]Pravda, August 30, 1961.

[59]Huxtable, p. 246.

accompanying article, the editors ventured solutions to the "riddle", including the possibility that "the builders had fulfilled their plan for doors but not for balconies." [60]

Many cartoons in Krokodil clearly illustrated the problems of the poor quality of dwellings that plagued the entire nation. One cartoon shows a newly completed apartment building, whose window frames have been set in at the most imaginative angles, whose walls are badly cracked, and whose roof allows a view of the heavens. Plaster and cement have already begun their ungraceful descent. The entire structure has the precarious look of a building ready for demolition. Led by a very satisfied, cigarette-puffing brigade chief, the house construction workers happily march out of the "completed" building. Through the same door, however, march men of the repair organization. When the building has just been completed, it already requires repair.

Soviet families "liberated" from communal dwellings quickly found their abodes to be poorly planned and shabbily constructed and numerous complaints could be heard throughout the entire country. For example, the large prefabricated blocks of flats made from blast furnaces and boilers proved to be excellent conductors of sound. During a Moscow Conference of Architects, a certain academician describes his "quiet life" in his new slab-block house, built with reinforced concrete floors and ceilings.

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[60]Krokodil, No.27, October 20, 1963, p. 2.

> I seldom get to see my neighbors but thanks to the excellent sound-conducting properties of the partitions, ceilings and floors, I know them all by their first names. I know immediately when my right-hand neighbor's baby has a tummyache in the morning. I was imprudent enough to get a dog. The caretaker and neighbors also have dogs. And the moment the caretaker's dog begin to bark my Rex replies and they are soon joined by the neighbor's dog, and within two minutes the whole house seems to be barking.[61]

The mass volume of letters to Izvestia, Pravda and republic newspapers,[62] which criticized the condition of the dwellings, gives us a sense of the vast array of problems which faced urban residents.

The repair crews were not always efficient and punctual. Residents were constantly badgered by problems over repair and grappled with immense difficulties surrounding the incompetencies of these repair organizations. Leafing through the pages of Krokodil, one immediately notices that housing repair, and the problems associated with it, became a notoriously favorite subject. Many of the causes of needed repairs stemmed from faulty construction and unfinished buildings which were opened for occupancy.

These repairs presented a burden for the urban population but many strategies were devised by residents to cope with these and similar problems. One of the major problems of the repair organizations was the incredibly long periods of time

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[61]Semyon Tutuchenko, Housing in the USSR (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960), p. 58-59.

[62]See Pravda, May 4 and 16, 1957, Feb. 12, 1957, Sept. 3, 1957, Apr, 5, 1958, Oct. 2, 1958, Oct. 12, 1960, Sept. 4, 1961, June 14, 1962 and Izvestia, March 29, 1961 and Aug. 30, 1962.

it took to complete repairs. The entire process was complicated by the reluctance of many tenants to be "temporarily" relocated during capital repairs, and/or by the city's lack of relocation quarters. The reason for the reluctance was due to the slowness in completing planned repairs; those who moved out for an expected six months' duration sometimes found that a year, two years, or even three went by before they could leave their "temporary" residences.[63] One editorial in Pravda co-authored by five married women expresses the sense of frustration with the repair organizations. One of these women Nadia Ivanovo, a weaver and mother of two children, tells an all too familiar story:

> By decision of the City Soviet Executive Committee, we had to move out of our apartment into 3 Sosnaskaya Street because of repairs. It's been three years and the repairs have not been completed. We have to put up with many hardships and discomforts in Building No. 137. This building is a dormitory for unmarried women workers and is not suited for families. I would much rather be in our old apartment. It wasn't as crowded and I had a place to store my potatoes and vegetables.[64]

Many tenants reacted to the problems involved with lengthy repairs by engaging in a variety of strategies designed to prevent repair teams from even entering their apartments. One group of tenants, after learning that a repair organization was scheduled to visit their apartment "repaired" the windows by scraping out the decayed window

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[63]Izvestia, Sept. 14, 1962.

[64]Pravda, August 8, 1959.

frames, filling the holes with cork, covering the cork with boards, spackling and painting them." This action led the carpenter who engineered the project to ask, "Can we really call this makeshift plan 'repair'?"[65] The loss of windows seemed to be a preferred option versus gambling with the repair organizations. The fact that tenants were forced to adopt such extreme measures gives us a sense of the problems surrounding the housing program. However, despite these problems, we cannot dismiss the ways in which residents engaged in strategies to improve or at least mitigate the problems surrounding their living arrangements. Residents developed other strategies to cope with similar problems with state-owned structures. Residents circumvented the housing administration by asking or hiring builders who originally built the apartments to come back in and finish their own work on a private basis. Plumbers, electricians, and other repair men of the apartment housing administration were unreliable because they often did not have access to tools and parts for repair. Residents often hired independent contractors who would obtain the necessary parts and perform the repair. One plumber in Leningrad remarked "I'm not only a plumber, but I'm also a supplier."[66] A complex barter system was instituted which proved to be one effective strategy to deal with the

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[65]V. Rudnev, "Is This the Way to Repair Houses?" Pravda, March 18, 1958, p. 4 (CDSP vol.9, no.10: 35).

[66]I. Loginov, "About a Worker's Honor," Izvestia, February 21, 1963 (CDSP vol.14, no.8: p.35).

problems of housing repair. One auto mechanic in Moscow fixed the automobile of one builder in exchange for repairing the plaster on the ceiling.[67] Thus, the attempts to circumvent the inefficient housing administration offices and construction organizations and deal with these problems on an individual basis suggest that residents had some degree of flexibility even within the limited constraints of state-housing.

A. "Volunteer Organizations"

Another effective strategy to overcome the difficulties of urban life involved a broad range of organizations that spread throughout the Soviet state. These organizations helped to improve living conditions within the apartment complexes and the wider community. They included the domkoms, housing construction promotion brigades, and the "raid brigades."

The revival of the domkom or the house committee of tenants is one example. The domkom's membership was comprised of groups of urban residents living in the same building or closely adjacent houses. One member was elected and represented an average of thirty families. They were generally concerned with the buildings and their managements, and with the tenants and their welfare. The domkom was reclaimed from the dustbin of history where it had been more

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[67]Pravda, July 31, 1964.

or less been confined since the late 1930s, was infused with new life, and took an active role in the operation and maintenance of the apartment building. Like its immediate post-revolutionary predecessor, the domkom of the 1950s and 1960s was a committee of tenants with the primary responsibility of managing the building. They mobilized the talents of the inhabitants for whatever jobs had to be done and increased the efficient use of housing. They circumvented the departmental housing bureaucracies and implemented their own programs designed to raise the resident's responsibility for the maintenance of the apartment building.

The Soviet press was filled with proposals to complete the transfer of power from the city or departmental housing offices because it was argued that the local domkoms were substantially more efficient.[68] Urban dwellers frustrated by the bureaucratic nature of the departmental housing offices wrote a number of letters to the editor which appeared quite regularly in the Soviet press. One worker seemed to be invoking images of Lenin's famous exclamation "all power to the soviets" when he called for "all power to the domkoms" as one potential way to help solve the problems of urban living.[69] Between 1957 and Khrushchev's ouster in 1964, this transfer of power, though a slow one, progressed. The

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[68]Izvestia, December 19, 1964.

[69]Izvestia, December 19, 1963.

transfer of power from the central government agencies to local organizations illustrates that pressure from below did affect policy and, further, provides striking evidence of decentralization and questions the assertion that the state was a rigid and unbending totalitarian state. This transfer of power, in itself, is also to some extent a testament to the ability of the domkoms to handle the difficulties of everyday life.

During the 1950s and 1960s there were no centers for managing, planning and surveying operations in the capital repair and modernization of housing. The domkoms helped to fill the gaps left by the negligent department housing offices. The domkom provided a means for residents to attempt to overcome some of the difficulties of everyday life in the modern day apartment complexes. One, for example, produced small booklets which contained reference information for proper upkeep of the apartment. These booklets provided short rules regarding the use of the plumbing system, gas apparatus, refuse chute, advice on how to wash or polish the floors, how to take care of wall surfaces, and so on.[70] These booklets were particularly helpful for many new arrivals from the countryside where knowledge of city amenities were rather limited. They also focused their attention on the building's aesthetic appearance and therefore organized repair teams to fix minor structural damage, paint the walls and ceilings,

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[70]Pravda, July 22, 1962.

etc. One particular domkom in the Ukraine, for example, organized the leisure time of the residents, especially of young children. One of the leisure activities designed for young children involved "placing fresh flowers and colorful drawings in the lobbies and other areas of public space in the apartment buildings" which had a "soothing effect on the inhabitants".[71] The domkoms helped to instruct and organize residents in their obligation to maintain the housing fund, to mobilize the talents of the inhabitants for whatever jobs had to be done, and to increase the efficient use of existing housing.

Why did these institutions disappear for almost twenty years, and then suddenly reappear in the Khrushchev years? Part of the answer lies in Khrushchev's attempts to call for the broad enlistment of the masses in the administration of everyday affairs, including housing. The enthusiasm displayed for the domkoms was indeed engineered and orchestrated by the government. Political sponsorship of the top leadership was crucial to the formation and growth of the domkoms; but, that in itself does not explain their success. Their success must also be partly attributed to the initiative of many urban inhabitants. The domkom's revival at the end of the 1950s and its further institutionalization during the 1960s reveals a conscious effort on the part of urban inhabitants to

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[71]Jerome Davis, "Russians Face to Face: A Report on Housing in the USSR," New World Review, vol.32, Jan.1964, pp. 37.

participate in managing and indeed improving their housing conditions. The domkoms became a symbol, along with a myriad of other social and political organizations, which encouraged the citizen's fullest participation in the affairs of the community. However, it is critical to point out that the portrayals of the domkoms were symbols and represented the ideals and values the state was attempting to foster. Thus, a degree of skepticism is in order to question the spontaneous nature of these organizations. The enthusiasm and success of the domkoms and the other volunteer organizations may be exaggerated but one can not dismiss the fact that the images they espoused (and the intensity in which they were propagated) represented an integral feature of every day life.

Another example which paralleled the spirit of volunteerism of the domkom was the formation of the housing construction promotion brigades. These brigades were organized by the trade union organizations in the factories in the late 1950s and took it upon themselves to perform specific functions designed to help the construction of apartment complexes. According to the press, brigade members volunteered their time and usually fulfilled their duties after working hours. These workers performed specific functions in the area of technical supervision of construction sites and also performed general tasks designed to improve the environment surrounding the new apartment complexes. For example, they helped to pave roads, dig ditches which were

used for water and drainage facilities, and even planted shrubs in open areas.[72]

Another serious problem facing urban inhabitants was serious shortcomings in the registration and allocation of housing. One volunteer organization which dealt with these problems was the "raid brigade". Although their successes are open for debate, these organizations appeared so regularly in the press and gained such widespread recognition, that had to have had some influence in shaping public opinion. In theory, the raid brigade's membership was broad and included workers, newspaper reporters, environmentalists, and local and public officials within its ranks. Their main function involved becoming acquainted with the allocation of housing to correct obvious abuses and to examine the quality of construction work. It is crucial to reiterate that the extent of their power is open for question, but their activism was fairly widespread.[73] However, there were cases where blatant errors and abuses were rectified. Complaints were filed to borough executive committee and usually involved residents who already had good living conditions and changed to a better apartment. The following letter to the editor clearly illustrates the typical complaint of the period:

Ivan Poller, head of the Chelyabinsk Machine-Building

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[72]Pravda, December 13, 1956.

[73]See Pravda, March 7, 1957 for a discussion of the role of the raid brigade in Azerbaidzhan, Izvestia, December 20, 1958 in the Ukraine, and Pravda, April 12, 1958 in Moscow and Khabarovsk.

> Trust's woodworking combine, together with his wife and daughter, recently moved into a large apartment in Building 30 on Tourist Street. It's a very large apartment and his family doesn't even need two of the rooms. The enterprising Poller is growing tomatoes which he sells on the open market in these vacant rooms. He boastfully claims that the central heating helps his produce grow faster. With housing space so limited, why should he be able to grow tomatoes in the apartment[74]

It would appear that this letter was published as a way to diffuse frustration and agitation. However, it is interesting to point out that this letter consciously mirrored the anti-private attitudes of the Khrushchev period linking the "enterprising Poller" as a speculator who deprived others of valuable housing space.

Throughout this essay, numerous complaints about housing conditions have been cited from the Soviet press. Even the most insensitive political antennae could pick up the strong signals which coursed throughout the entire country, as citizens communicated their views by word of mouth, by letters to the press, and by complaints and pleas transmitted through the channels of the party and government hierarchies. These expressions of dissent provide rather striking examples of the ways urban residents used the instrumentalities of the state to make their needs known. This process of communication that could be defined as a rudimentary form of public opinion was one available outlet for many Soviet citizens which they used to articulate their frustrations and disappointments with state agencies and policies.

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[74]"Stop Squandering Housing," editorial in Trud, May 23, 1959 (CDSP vol.11, no.4: 21).

A closer look at the motives of the state and the population as a whole may help to explain the reasons for this exchange. Obviously any effective political mechanism would try to fix blatant problems but the dynamics at work here are much more complex. Most Western scholars who have written about the 1950s and 1960s agree that Khrushchev's emphasis on mass political participation was a Soviet form of populism. Khrushchev attempted to draw the broad masses into the "building of communism" and to create a tacit alliance between himself and the masses at the expense of the bureaucrats.[75] By criticizing the bureaucratic statist component of the Soviet Union, Khrushchev hoped the citizenry would develop a sense of identification with the policies and personnel of the regime and would have greater incentive to become personally involved in the administration of public affairs. Soviet citizens were more than happy to respond and even though their letters were manufactured, once public, they generated an ongoing dynamic.

This was indeed the case for the housing bureaucracies, as many complaints were lodged against them. One could argue that the Party was able to displace attention away from its own faults and deflect criticism on to the lower level construction agencies and housing executive committees. By directing the level of criticism to the ineffectiveness of

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[75]George W. Breslauer, "Khrushchev Reconsidered," in the Soviet Union Since Stalin. ed. Stephen F. Cohen et. al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), pp. 50-70.

lower level functionaries, and using them as convenient scapegoats, the Party could appear to be the loyal protector of its citizens and, consequently, escape unscathed. This statement by one Party official is typical of this approach:

> The major reason for the lag in housing construction is a certain complacency among the economic councils and construction organizations. The Party will make every possible effort to fulfill the housing plan and will keep a watchful eye not only on the lethargic nature of these construction organizations but also the speculators, who for their own private gain, disrupt the tempo of construction for working people.[76]

The intricacies of putting blame on the bureaucrats is strikingly visible in one article titled "No Trifling Matter" in the newspaper Izvestia. This article was written about Maria Maksimovna Eliseyeva, a woman of middle age, who came into the editorial office and laid on the table a packet of yellowed document-orders, directives, resolutions, and appeals to various agencies. The first document dated July 11, 1949 called on the Borough Housing Administration in Sverdlosk to repair the water supply system of Eliseyeva's apartment. As of July 18, 1958, almost a decade later, the apartment was in no better shape than it was at the time of the first document. "Who is at fault here," the article declares as the article describes poor Maria having to haul water on her no longer young shoulders. The article proceeds to state the "Party does not think this is a trifling matter" and ends with this statement:

> Tremble in your boots, bureaucrats! Now you will be held

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[76]Pravda, June 28, 1958.

> strictly accountable for your heartless attitude toward man, for your indifference and formalism! Indeed, this is no trifling matter and for nine years the authorities had called for repairs on Yeliseyeva's apartment and they were ignored. Bureaucrats, you will be held accountable for your disgraceful red tape procedures.[77]

Thus, one plausible explanation is that the state allowed the population to release and channel their frustration, as Eliseyeva's article suggests, against the local bureaucracies. If we take this analysis a step further, it would seem that the upper echelons of the power structure actually encouraged the population to point to unfairness or corruption in housing allocation and conditions in order to curb the power and influence of construction agencies. The state needed complaints as a mechanism of checks and balances to control the local institutions/bureaucracies. Local construction agencies resorted to a variety of stratagems designed to exploit loopholes in order to avoid implementing the policies of Party agencies. For example, builders of apartment complexes that were constructed from state funds were obligated to provide ten per-cent of all housing space to the borough executive committees. Frequently, these apartments, which were funded by the state, suddenly emerged as a "peoples' construction cooperative project."[78] In this way, the construction agencies could avoid payment to executive committees of their percentage.

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[77]Yuri Feofanov, "A Trifling Matter?" Izvestia, September 4, 1958 (CDSP vol.10, no.33: 6-8).

[78]Pravda, January 10, 1962.

This power relationship between the organs of the state and local bureaucracies may help to explain why criticisms of housing were widespread and at times actively encouraged. However, urban inhabitants' criticisms of their living situations cannot be simply attributed to the whims of the state. Urban residents were not lackeys of the state. They had their own agenda and interests which they hoped to solve through letter writing campaigns. Many adopted the tone of anti-bureaucratism in their complaints probably as the most efficient way to gain results. The phrasing of many editorials reflected the anti-bureaucratism espoused by the Party. For example, Pravda tells us "if the Party knew about the ways bureaucrats prevented the working people from good housing I'm sure they would put a stop to it"[79] One writer, expressing his disillusionment with the construction agency in Belgorod province, stated, "the builders in this area are more concerned with architectural ensembles and urban cosmetics than building housing for the working people. If Comrade Khrushchev knew about what was going on, I'm sure he would put a stop to it."[80] The extent to which this writer believed the Party was not responsible for housing blunders is unclear. However, it would appear that this approach could be construed as the most effective way to illicit a response.

The point of this discussion is to point out that many

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[79]Pravda, April 10, 1962.

[80]Pravda, March 17, 1962

urban residents resorted to the press as a strategy to improve their living conditions and influence or change policies which affected their daily lives. As a result, residents often provided a force of stability in the face of overwhelming chaos. Residents, defending their own interests, would bring to public attention unwise decisions by executive committees and local institutions. One enraged citizen in Belgorod pointed to the confusion of local and central authorities and their conflicting policies. In this case, the city executive committee authorized 140,000 rubles for the repair of two-story apartment houses. Two weeks after these complexes were repaired, the local construction agency leveled these apartments in order to construct new apartments.[81]

Other senseless and harmful practices provoked massive letter campaigns which disclosed serious mistakes and evoked a stream of responses. The letter campaigns were not simply used to vent steam and frustration. They represented a means to change policy. In Kostroma, for example, residents organized small rallies and petition drives to prevent the construction of a hospital in a densely populated area.[82] As the above examples attest, narrowing the focus solely to the state to explain the extent of criticism aimed at the housing situation distorts the picture. Thus, it is important to examine how the public participated in the allocation of

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[81]Pravda, March 16, 1963.

[82]Pravda, April 10, 1957.

living space and what forms that participation took.

III. Cooperative Housing

The catalyst for the renewed interest in the cooperative movement can be directly attributed to the pressure and initiative of urban inhabitants. A detailed examination of cooperative housing will help to illustrate the manifestations of public participation and initiative in improving living conditions. A brief historical overview of this form of housing tenure will set the stage for further elaboration. In addition to state housing built by standardized and prefabricated construction techniques, fresh consideration was given to the earlier experiments in cooperative housing construction. The enthusiasm and euphoria of the cooperative movement gained momentum in 1955 with the achievements of the auto workers of the V. Molotov auto plant in Gorky. The workers of this auto plant used their free time between shifts and on holidays to build their own housing and succeeded in constructing twenty apartment buildings, accommodating approximately four hundred families, by the end of 1956.[83] The workers employed a multitude of creative plans to facilitate the construction projects. The auto workers' initiative, creativity and resourcefulness aroused a

[83]Pravda, November 25, 1956.

nationwide response which precipitated an extensive media campaign and placed renewed hopes in the minds of urban inhabitants. In letters to the editor, readers heartily hailed the auto workers' initiative and simultaneously asked for more details about the cooperative.[84]

The creative initiative of the public in housing construction yielded fruitful results. Many interesting and instructive methods of cooperative construction became commonplace in both the rural and urban areas. Workers from tractor stations, chemical plants, machine building plants, the oil industry, and a variety of other industries followed the lead of the Gorky workers and assembled homes with their own hands.[85] Khrushchev was quick to respond to this excitement and ushered in a program in 1957 to officially sponsor the cooperative as an acceptable form of housing tenure. The July 1957 decree proclaiming the intention of eliminating the housing shortage within ten years, and revising the housing construction program upwards, prepared the groundwork for re-establishing the house-building cooperative as a tenure form. This decree stressed the necessity of urgently restoring the cooperative rights by changing the 1937 decree[86] which prohibited the granting of

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[84]Pravda, December 13, 1956.

[85]Pravda, December 16, 1956.

[86]Even before the 1957 program for expanding housing construction, there had been a call to revive the housing construction cooperative, which had some importance in the 1920s and 1930s but which had been eliminated by this 1937

loans to housing construction cooperatives. After twenty years of virtual extinction, the house construction cooperative, like the domkom, was suddenly given a second chance. By the end of the 1950s, the cooperative were increasingly favored and vigorously defended by the state as a respectable way to help solve the Soviet housing problem.[87]

From the viewpoint of the Soviet government, the cooperative mode of house building had three notable advantages. In the first place, it would help to reduce total demand for state-subsidized housing. Secondly, it would serve to absorb substantial amounts of purchasing power in the hands of the high-income groups of the population. Thirdly, cooperative housing also corresponded nicely with Khrushchev's growing concern for communist morality. The cooperative was viewed as a feasible way to uproot the survivals of capitalism in the minds of the people, as the nation moved into the full development of communism. The cooperative seemed ideologically more orthodox than private housing, since it expressed the idea of collective action rather than individual initiative. One of the most stubborn survivals which appeared to hinder the widespread success of the cooperative appears to be that of a private property psychology, most evident in the

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decree prohibiting the granting of loans to the housing cooperative for construction. For a discussion of this see Pravda, Dec. 17, 1956.

[87]A. Ladinsky, "Develop Every Aspect of Housing Construction," Izvestia, December 12, 1956, p. 3 (CDSP vol.8, no.50: 17-19).

private homeowner.[88] During this time, Soviet publicists went to great pains to emphasize the problems and ideological contradictions surrounding private housing. For example, in the law on cooperatives, the authorities carefully avoided using the word "ownership" in the language of contracts. The cooperative shareholder was "granted" an apartment for their "permanent use."[89] After the 1958 resolution which reinstated cooperative housing construction to a respectable position, the pace of actual cooperative construction was very slow. Despite frequent reiteration by government officials of the importance they attached to cooperatives, its annual contribution to the housing stock fell far below expectations. The authorities tried to stimulate this form of construction because they eventually recognized that the 1957 decree, and subsequent programs of housing construction cooperatives, did little else but announce that the cooperative form was no longer in disfavor.

Apparently an important limiting factor was a lack of funding. In June 1962, the government offered long-term credits to stimulate cooperative construction. The cooperative could receive state credits for up to sixty

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[88]K. Ivanov, "Are Such Houses Necessary," Izvestia, July 6, 1961 (CDSP vol.17, no.27: 33-34).

[89]Article 16, "Primernyi ustav zhilishchno-stoitelnogo kooperativa" (Model Rules of a Housing-Building Cooperative), adopted by a decree (No.1143) of the RSFSR Council of Ministers on October 2, 1965. Published in S. Rozantsev, Spravochnik po zhilishchnym voprosam (Handbook on Housing Questions), Moscow Workers' Publishing House, 1966, p. 252.

percent of the estimated cost of construction for a period of ten to fifteen years.[90] This measure did seem to help the pace of cooperative construction. For the RSFSR as a whole, for example, in the first half of the 1963, the plan for the construction of cooperatives was only fulfilled by about thirty-seven percent.[91] Although the 1964 plan was once again underfilled, there was 160 percent more cooperative housing built than in 1963.[92] By 1965, cooperatively owned housing accounted for thirteen per-cent of all new urban apartments built, as compared with three per-cent in 1961.[93] On the whole, however, by 1965, only six to seven percent of all housing construction in the Soviet Union was of the cooperative form.[94]

Many scholars have felt the original anti-materialist goals of the cooperative program were unrealized and argue that the cooperative form of housing was only available to "wealthy" workers and have focused mainly on the inherent inequalities of the cooperative movement. Russian economists and sociologists of the 1950s and 1960s also focused on these inequalities. For example, according to one economist writing in 1965, the typical cooperative member, usually in somewhat

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[90]Dimaio, p. 181.

[91]Izvestia, September 20, 1963, p. 1.

[92]A. Svetlichny, "Improved Housing for the Soviet People," Kommunist, no.6 (April 1965) pp. 41-42.

[93]Pudikov, p. 30.

[94]Dimaio, p. 185.

better circumstances than his average fellow citizen, frequently improved his living conditions and moved from an overcrowded communal apartment into a comfortable apartment in a new building. He reasoned that it was wrong that cooperative housing, for which the state provided credit and material resources and services, was provided to citizens already living in better than average conditions, simply because they had money.[95] Further, since cooperatives were called upon to expedite the elimination of the housing shortage, it was logical, he argued, to grant privileges first to those families living in overcrowded and substandard quarters with few resources.[96] Recent scholarship in evaluating the cooperative movement has echoed similar sentiments.[97]

In overemphasizing the system's inequities, there has been a tendency to underestimate its solid achievements. One cannot deny that inequalities persisted in the realm of housing allocation. While it is true that the typical cooperative member tended to be upwardly mobile professionals including highly skilled workers. But it is problematic to suggest that these residents were "wealthy". Although

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[95]B. Svetlichny, "Improved Housing for the Soviet People," Kommunist, no. 6 (April 1965), p. 43.

[96]Ibid., p. 51.

[97]See Michael Alexeev, "Distribution of Housing Subsidies in the USSR," Journal of Comparative Economic Studies, vol.21, Fall 1990, pp. 138-157, and Gregory D. Andrusz, "The Financing of Housing in the Soviet Union," Soviet Studies, vol.42, July 1990, pp. 556-557.

residents living in cooperatives were generally higher paid than most other workers, they apparently had similar difficulties when it came to finances. Given these apparent financial constraints, how do we account for the fact than many residents in the major urban centers of the Soviet Union came to live in cooperative structures?[98]

The problems were overcome by many tenants who used non financial resources to establish a cooperative. Some workers donated their labor, and in the case of workers who had skills as electricians, carpenters, and masons, used these specialized skills to assist at the construction sites. The Party leadership actively encouraged workers from the same industry to form cooperatives and actually forbade workers of different occupations to organize a cooperative. However, workers from a variety of occupations donated technical machinery or bartered labor to assist each other. For example, in the Dzerzhinksy borough outside of Moscow, tractor factory workers who were engaged in the construction of their

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[98]Not only were there tremendous variations between republics and oblasts in terms of the contribution made by cooperatives to the total of housing construction, but from the statistics available it would appear that cooperatives were to a very considerable degree concentrated in the largest cities; for example in 1965 Moscow and Leningrad accounted for 33.4 percent of all cooperative housing in the RSFSR; Yerevan for 94 percent of cooperatives in Armenia. Clearly, cooperative buildings were concentrated in the larger cities closer to the center of national power. In addition, many were built in the western portions of the country. Only five were built in Azerbaidzhan an only one each in Tadzhikistan and Turkmenistan. Thus, investigators need to be sensitive to regional variations. See Svetlichny, op. cit, p. 11 for these statistics.

cooperative apartment building exchanged tractors on a short term basis to workers of an oil processing plant. In exchange, the workers of the oil processing plant provided hollow pipes which were used to construct drainage and sewage facilities.[99] Similarly, groups of workers from different cooperative construction sites would pool their labor resources and assist each other. Skilled electricians would also assist or barter their labor with other cooperative sites, offering their expertise in exchange for work by others with specialized skills such as carpentry, masonry, and so on.

In addition, the enterprises who hired the workers often provided the necessary support for organizing cooperative projects. Certain factories, for example, had facilities for the production of cinder blocks, standard parts, cabinet fixtures, and other needed materials for housing construction.[100] Waste materials from the plants were often used to make parts. In Gorky, for example, auto plant workers used excess sheet metal used for floorboards and smaller pieces were used to construct nails and screws. One particularly bizarre case which helps to illustrate the creativity and dedication of workers and their employers involves a plastic factory of the Izmailovo area of Moscow.

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[99]Pravda, December 16, 1956. This particular citation was taken from an editorial titled "Support Working Peoples' Initiative in Housing Construction in Every Possible Way."

[100]Pravda, December 17, 1957.

Using the resources of the factory, workers constructed a five-story plastic apartment house. The structural foundations and the floors of this unusual building were made of reinforced concrete, but the internal and external walls were made of honeycomb plastic bonded to sheet plastic to give it rigidity.[101]

Examples of the role of enterprises and the importance attached to the construction of cooperatives pervaded the Soviet press. One enterprise in the Ukraine, for example, during slow times of production allowed workers to spend blocks of time on construction sites during working hours.[102] Enterprises provided necessary parts, tools, and machinery to help workers and were also instrumental in extracting certain resources from the state.

It is difficult to measure the impact of the strategies of these workers in relation to their overall contribution to the housing situation. Since much of the evidence presented here centers on contemporary newspapers and magazines, the enthusiasm and success of the cooperative movement was used by the state to glorify its positive features. Even so, the examples presented here reveals levels of ingenuity and energy that suggest active cooperation and perhaps independent initiative.

In addition to financial problems there were a myriad of

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[101]Pravda, August 2, 1958.

[102]Pravda, April 9, 1960.

other obstacles that stifled the widespread growth of the cooperative movement. The construction of cooperatives was often delayed because of the failure to allocate land in time. Party and state regulations stipulated that within one month of the receipt of applications from cooperatives, local governments needed to provide plots supplied with roads, water mains, sewers, and power lines. Local authorities were slow to assign building sites and the sites that were assigned often required extensive preparation work. For example, in the city of Kazan, cooperative sites were assigned in swampy marshlands, and lacked access to roads.[103] These plots often lacked the features and improvements required by law and were located far from public transportation facilities or from the residents' place of work. The lag in the cooperative building program could also be attributed, as one Soviet critic defined it, to the "scornful attitude" of many local officials toward this form of housing. Since construction organizations had little to gain (because in state sponsored construction projects the local construction agencies were rewarded with a percentage of the new apartments constructed), they tended to look upon the cooperative members as "third-rate customers."[104] In addition, a massive amount of red tape plagued the housing cooperatives. The comment of one Soviet bank official reflects this sense of despair: "A person

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[103]Donald Barry, "Housing in the USSR: Cities and Towns," Problems of Communism, vol.18, May 1969, pp. 10.

[104]Svetlichny, p. 44.

entering a cooperative must present the executive committee with so many documents that merely to list them would take half a page."[105]

The combination of all of these problems dramatically affected the success of the cooperative movement and it is important to be sensitive to these numerous obstacles so as not to underestimate the successes. Despite of all of these obstacles, the resourcefulness, creativity, and ingenuity of this relatively small proportion of urban dwellers who built cooperatives illustrates that amidst all of the anarchy and chaos, some made a conscious, vigorous, and relatively entrepreneurial effort to improve their living standards. It provides, again, another example of the ways in which enterprises and citizens could sometimes evade the rigidities and obstacles of the centralized economy. This is a key, and often ignored, component in an evaluation of the cooperative form of housing tenure.

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[105]D. Dudikov, "Nash zhilishchno-stroitelnyi kooperativ" (Our Housing-Construction Cooperative), Izvestia, Dec. 24, 1963, p. 3.

IV. Private Housing

One of the most visible manifestations of an alternative to state planned structures is in the arena of private housing. The persistence of this kind of accommodation, despite countless limitations, is an indication of a level of control and initiative residents exhibited in their attempts to improve living arrangements. Official hostility aimed at private housing tenure did limit the number of available options for Soviet citizens, but that in itself was not enough to eradicate this form of housing tenure.

A discussion of private housing is probably most confusing because of the shift in attitude by the government toward private construction. For a number of years after World War II, the Soviet government exhibited a tolerant attitude toward the practice of individual home construction. Housing space was extremely scarce in most parts of the country, so any additions made to the housing stock in general, whatever the source, were publicly welcomed by Soviet officialdom. For a time, during the 1950s, the authorities in fact sought to encourage private building by extending credits to the prospective home builders through the state construction bank. Easy payment loans were first offered as an inducement to pioneers to volunteer for service in the new

"virgin" lands of Siberia and the Kazakh Republic. By 1955, the same privileges were extended to other regions.[106] The idea was to encourage individual incentive as one way of solving the chronic housing problem. Workers could cut costs on house building by doing some of the labor in their spare time. The strategy initially succeeded: in the six year period of 1951-1956, twenty-seven per-cent of urban housing space was erected by private individuals.[107]

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, however, private consumption began to lose favor. The leadership objected on the grounds that individual home ownership contradicted the principles and values of socialism by creating a wide variety of opportunities for "enterprising" individuals. The regime maintained that private housing encouraged speculation and promoted "petty bourgeois values" and aggressively pursued a policy to limit its role in solving the housing crisis. Given the built-in bias against private property which pervaded the ranks of Soviet officialdom, Soviet citizens had to be particularly circumspect if they decided to pursue this avenue. The Soviet press, particularly after 1962, contained frequent references to local authorities moving zealously against the private builder for real or alleged breaches of the law. For example, one "enterprising" resident erected a

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[106]David Granick, The Red Executive (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1960), pp. 114.

[107]Irving Levine, Main Street USSR (New York: New American Press, 1960), p. 64.

five room house with a kitchen. A Moscow judge this action defined as "an attempt to reap unearned income" and duly confiscated the property.[108] The animosity felt toward this sector was also expressed by another author who urged his readers, "Do not forget that the acquisition of private homes, with their private plots, gives rise to private property tendencies. These individuals strive to 'expand the auxiliary economy' and they sell produce at speculative prices."[109] Many extraordinary examples of speculation and private landlordism which were reported during the early 1960s in Soviet publications seemed to indicate this fear was justified. This cause for concern led to a variety of measures aimed at reducing individual household construction. On August 6, 1962, under the heading "On Individual and Cooperative Housing Construction" authorities asserted that the time had come to discontinue the allocation of land plots for individual housing construction. These regulations made it increasingly more difficult to obtain building materials and decent municipal services.[110] In 1963, private housing construction was banned in all large cities, while credits for cooperative housing construction were increased.[111] All these measures led to a sharp reduction in individual

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[108]Andrusz, p. 103.

[109]A. Koryagin, "Stroitel'stvo kommunizma i zhilishchnyi vopros," Voprosy Ekonomik, no.6, June 1962, p. 37.

[110]Izvestia, August 6-8, 1962.

[111]Izvestia, September 20, 1963.

construction. Privately built housing, which reached a peak of 27.2 million meters in 1959, declined to 20.9 million in 1962, falling thereafter to 16.2 million in 1964. The retirement of Khrushchev in October 1964 did not seem to affect this trend. However, it is significant to point out that by 1966, despite a twenty percent decrease, private construction still accounted for twenty percent of all new housing.[112]

Although private housing managed to provide one alternative for many urban and rural residents, there were many problems. Even before the anti-private housing policy was formulated in the early 1960s, the obstacles to private construction were burdensome and numerous. The lack of information about the conditions governing construction, the allocation of land, the availability of building materials, and the possibility of credits, for example, indicates the myriad of problems faced by those interested in private construction.[113] Private housing plots were allocated in areas that were far from city centers and usually quite far from the builders' place of employment. Since private construction was isolated from the city, these areas lacked adequate sewage facilities and utility service. Thus, the cooperative movement was plagued by the same problems which affected private housing. Residents interested in cooperative

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[112]D. Pudikov, "Private Housing Re-evaluated," Ekonomicheskaia Gazeta, No. 39, November 1967, p. 29.

[113]Izvestia, December 17, 1957.

housing, however, at least had the luxury of extensive governmental support. Predictably, the anti-private posture of the leadership in the early 1960s only served to accelerate the already existing difficulties.

Given these limitations, the quality of private housing was rarely better and usually much worse than that of state-owned or cooperative housing. Despite this, private housing offered some advantages which the other forms of housing could not provide. For example, inhabitants were able to determine the number and size of various rooms in the home. As N. Tishchenko, a worker at the Gomel factory near Moscow stated:

> I don't have much money and it was difficult to decide whether I wanted two or four bedrooms in my house. My wife and I decided it would be nice to have a porch so we decided to have three rooms and cut the size of these rooms so that we could afford it. The rooms are small but the pleasure of sitting on the porch is worth it.[114]

It would appear that to some residents the advantages of private housing, despite the immense difficulties in acquiring it, made it more attractive than the more modern form of state-housing with all of its amenities.

Private housing was generally viewed as an attractive form of accommodation, especially for those who had recently arrived from the countryside.[115] The migrant who was

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[114]Izvestia, Feb. 7, 1958.

[115]Izvestia, December 12, 1962. In order to be sensitive to regional differences it is important to point out that the share of private housing was most often above average in small cities. Most cities with an extensive private housing sector also had a low level of modern conveniences and cities closest to the centers of state power were generally better than other regions of the USSR during the Khrushchev period. See G.A. Gornostayeva, "Development of Housing Infrastructure in the

normally not highly qualified, and as a result tended to be a low-paid occupation, was interested not just in a roof over his/her head but also in having a garden plot to provide the family with food.[116] For example, the Siberian Department of the USSR Academy of Sciences found that only thirteen percent of a sample of newly arrived migrants from the countryside would be willing to give up their small private plots in order to live in an apartment with all the conveniences.[117] Similarly, surveys conducted in 1962 revealed that migrant workers generally were reluctant to move into urban- type four and five floor apartment houses with tiny entries and kitchens and almost no auxiliary space.[118] They were also more likely to sacrifice modern amenities for larger kitchens.

The state's anti-private property programs may have stymied the growth of private construction but did not completely eradicate this form of housing tenure. An examination of the multitude of court cases dealing with the "unauthorized construction of private buildings" and the implementation of new legal codes on the topic suggests that the practice of private construction was widespread. Despite

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Cities of the Moscow Oblast: 1950-1970," Vestnik moskovskogo universiteta, geografiya, no.6, 1988, pp. 9-19.

[116]B. Svetlichnyi, "Sovetskim lyudyam-blagoustroennye zhilishcha," Kommunist, April 1965, no.6, p. 47.

[117]Barbara Rosenfeld, The Soviet Home prepared for the Soviet and East European Unit, Foreign Information Research Division, (Washington, D.C.: USIA, November 1, 1974), p. 83. The actual survey was conducted in 1966.

[118]Svetlichny, Kommunist, pp. 48-49.

the anti-private attitude of the regime, the number of court cases involving disputes over ownership of private property increased even when the anti-private positions of the government accelerated.[119] Disputes generally involved claims concerned with determination of property rights of co-owners (usually involved with divorce) and co-builders.[120] Private housing, despite the government's attempts to eradicate it, provides another example of the ways in which urban residents sought to improve their accommodations and, at the same time, evade state policies. The cooperative and private forms of housing tenure offered many advantages for certain groups within the urban milieu. The private form provided an outlet for migrants and the cooperative for "elites" and skilled laborers. These forms of housing tenure allowed a degree of flexibility which was eagerly pursued by many urban residents and provided a conceivable alternative to state-owned structures. As a whole, despite all the obstacles, private and cooperative forms of housing still managed to accommodate over twenty-five per-cent of the total population by 1966.

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[119]P.Y. Orlovksy, "Soviet Legislation on Personal Ownership of Housing," Sovetskoye gosudarstvo i pravo, no.7 July 1963, pp. 61, translated in CDSP, vol. 13, no.39, p. 4.

[120]See "Collection of Rulings of the Presidium and Determinations of the Collegium for Civil Cases of the Russian Republic Supreme Court, 1957-1958," edited by A. T. Rubichev, Legal Literature Publishing House, (Moscow, 1960), p. 68.

V. Housing and its Social Dimensions

Much of the focus of this work up to this point has centered on the physical aspects of housing rather than its social dimensions. Aside from the physical aspects of the dwelling, however, it is worth considering how housing affected and interacted with the broader social environment in the areas of employment, communal interaction, and family and gender relations. Housing allocation has often been interpreted as a mechanism used by the state to "control" the population. Many observers point out that housing was and is still used as a means of social control and work discipline by employers. Since most consumer items were hard to come by, the enterprise could "pay" skilled workers or needed technical people with better, highly sought after housing. For many employers, the most prestigious aspect of their offers was flats from their own departmental housing stock and control, the allocation of which they controlled. Economists and sociologists have argued that gross housing shortages and allocations by employers meant that workers worked where they were told, avoided conflict with their superiors, and waited long for the benevolent promise of a dwelling to be fulfilled. The system of housing allocation inhibited flexibility and created numerous problems. Abysmally bad dwelling facilities,

especially in industrial centers, contributed to a high rate of job turnover. Workers would often change jobs in the hope of finding more tolerable living conditions. The links between housing and labor turnover were integral features of Soviet urban life, and according to one Soviet sociologist, employers used housing allocation as "a lever to manipulate power over employees and 'enserf' the worker."[121]

Allocating housing as a reward for socially "useful" work appeared to be the general policy of much of the Soviet Union during the Khrushchev period and provides an example of how housing was used as a way to control workers. The city government of Yerevan, for example, explicitly endorsed it in a 1963 ordinance, which provided that housing would be allocated only to persons with a continuous work record of at least three years, and that anyone not engaged in socially useful work would be denied registration or removed from the waiting list.[122] Similarly, one Party official stated, "We consider it just to provide housing in the first instance to those who do excellent work."[123] Historians and observers have also equated these measures as another form of control by

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[121]O.E. Bessonova, Sovetskaiamodel'zhilishchnykh otnoshenii: sushchnost' i puti perestroiki, (Novosibirsk: IEIOPP, 1988), p.47.

[122]"On the Procedure for Registering, Allocating, and Occupying Dwelling Space in the City of Yerevan," ordinance adopted December 25, 1963, at the third session of the Yerevan City Soviet. Published in Kommunist (of Armenia), Feb. 25, 1964; translated in CDSP May 6, 1964, p. 18.

[123]V. Isaev, "Pravo na order" (Right to Order), Izvestia, June 12, 1963, p. 3.

employers and enterprises over their employees. However, it would seem that workers enthusiastically supported linking the distribution of living quarters to an estimation of the applicant's socially useful work. When Khrushchev pointed to the necessity of making the distribution of apartments dependent on the uninterrupted length of work at the enterprise, letters in Pravda overwhelmingly favored this proposal.[124] Obviously, there is some question as to whether these letters accurately reflected the general consensus of workers or were merely orchestrated by the state to propagate workers' enthusiasm. Workers' enthusiasm must be viewed with a degree of skepticism, but this form of distribution was probably viewed positively because it seemed to be a fair and equitable way to distribute apartments.

While it is difficult to deny that housing was and still is used to attract particularly valuable workers to an enterprise, there is little or no evidence that suggests that workers were entirely "enserfed" or "controlled" by these mechanisms of the state and employer. The cooperation between enterprises and their workers in facilitating the construction of cooperative housing clearly illustrates how enterprises actually "enticed" or "rewarded" skilled workers. Workers often resisted various forms of control and, at times, even extracted certain advantages. For example, many skilled workers attracted by good housing moved into company flats,

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[124]See Pravda, July 18, July 24, August 10, August 19, 1963; lead editorial August 29, 1963.

then left the enterprise after a year or two for other jobs but remained as occupants of company housing. Workers were certainly aware that it was virtually impossible for all but a few Soviet enterprises to evict a tenant from the enterprise-owned housing even after the tenant had left the enterprise.[125] In this case, then, workers were able to work within the system and create some sort of an advantage.

Another visible manifestation of maximizing gain is evident in the ways in which residents made use of existing housing laws and regulations. One of the unique features of Soviet housing law is the great protection it afforded people who were evicted from their apartments through no fault of their own. In sharp contrast to the practices of most other legal systems, Soviet law made it the duty of the owner or lessor of the building from which a tenant was evicted to provide the tenant and those living with him/her another suitable dwelling.[126] Some of the more important enterprises were allowed to evict workers without providing other accommodations, but only if a worker quit his/her job on his/her own initiative, committed a crime, or was found to have breached "labor discipline." This last condition was vague enough to invite abuse, but the extent to which

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[125]I. Szelenyi, Urban Inequalities under State Socialism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 193), pp. 76-77 and I.P. Prokopchenko Zhilishchnoe i zhilishchno-stroitel'no zakondatel'stvo (Moscow: Stroiizdat, 1977, pp. 237-239.

[126]Dimaio, p. 139.

employers resorted to it is not clear.[127] What is clear is that this arrangement created difficulties for the industrial enterprises which administered employee housing, a complaint that was frequently expressed in the Soviet press. The frequency of these complaints suggests that residents were keenly aware of ways to improve living conditions at the expense of a frustrated employer. Once an individual had his or her foot in the door, as one factory worker in Moscow put it, "Legally you can't smoke him out, no matter what kind of gas you use."[128]

Moving to distant regions provided residents another way to improve their living arrangements. Workers moving to Kazakhstan, for example, were granted houses on credit which inhabitants could pay off in installments over a period of ten to fifteen years. These houses were generally of good quality and each had three rooms, plus a porch, a kitchen, steam heat and gas.[129] On the other hand, inadequate housing produced equally predictable, if opposite, responses. In Bratsk, for example, in 1963, nearly three-quarters of the workers who left their jobs at the aluminum factory gave the impossibility of securing an apartment as the principal reason.[130] Perhaps

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[127]See Yuri K. Tolstoi, Sovetskoe zhilishchnoe pravo (Soviet Housing Law), Leningrad: Leningrad University, 1967, pp. 153-220.

[128]Ibid., p. 136.

[129]Izvestia, March 4, 1964.

[130]Ibid., p.2.

it would be more useful to realize that the relationship between the state/employer and the employee was not always exploitative. An example of the symbiotic relationship between the state and the worker was evident in the newly settled "virgin" lands. On the one hand, the government used housing as an incentive for residents to move to these new areas; and workers were granted the right to acquire housing from the enterprise in which they were employed. In the event the enterprise did not insure the worker living space, he/she had the right to break the labor agreement.[131] All of these examples suggest a degree of flexibility in which urban residents could and did maneuver within rigidities of the state system and actively sought and achieved better living accommodations. It also illustrates how housing is not only a unit of accommodation but also one of negotiation and contestation as well.

A.

The movement of the majority of city dwellers from the "communal" flats of the Stalin period into single-family apartments affected communal and social relationships. During the Stalin period, a family found itself in the midst of a crowd of strangers within the communal flats. In these flats, urban residents had to share kitchens, bathrooms, and

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[131]See Tikhon D. Alekseev. Zhilishchnye l'goty grazhdan SSSR (Housing Privileges of Citizens of the USSR) Moscow: Gosiurizdat, 1962.

hallways. The necessary mingling in the halls and shared kitchens did not always bring forth a sense of conflict and often added a dimension of cooperation. It was in the hallways and communal kitchens that tenants heard the latest gossip or discussed the plight of another tenant. One wife of an American worker living in Moscow during the Stalin period noted, "We helped each other out when one experienced hard times or was ill."[132] Against the indisputable disadvantages of cramped quarters, this community togetherness compensated somewhat for the difficult living conditions. One woman described this experience as, "One of the most memorable parts of my life. We lived like sisters then."[133] In A. Raikin's film, the Last Scandal (1960) communal apartment dwellers, who had been living together and fighting for years, sit down to say goodbye, as they move off to separate apartments. They recall the war, they laugh and cry, have a few more fights (scandals) but by the end of the film, display nostalgia for a way of life that for many was passing away.[134]

This sense of communalism changed to some extent during the Khrushchev period. For example, the movement of the majority of city dwellers into single-family apartments did change the concept of "neighbor" in urban life. As various

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[132]Andrew Smith, I was a Soviet Worker (London: Robert Hale and Company, 1937), p. 160.

[133]Piatochok, (the proper citation for this film will be added)

[134]For a discussion of Raikin's work see Faubion Bowers, Entertainment in Russia (Edinburgh, 1960), pp. 173-176.

sources begin to show during this period, people rarely recruited friends from among neighbors and quite often had little contact at all with those who lived next door.[135] One sociologist noted in one survey that the majority of Moscow residents, when asked about their relations with neighbors, declared that they preferred to meet them outside their apartments. In addition, similar social characteristics and status in the selection of friends was a much more important variable than proximity to the place of residence.[136]

Thus, the housing program of the 1950s and 1960s altered or affected communal relations as the single-family apartment replaced communal flats. Ninety-five percent of apartments with an average living space from twenty to twenty-five meters were actually occupied by individual families.[137] But the separate apartment which was designed for one family did not necessarily mean that only one family was contained within its walls. In larger units, with an average living space from forty to forty-five square meters designed to accommodate a family of four, studies conducted by the Research Institute of Housing showed only twenty-percent of these apartments were actually used by individual families. Most of these larger

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[135]Vladimir Shlapentokh, Public and Private Life of the Soviet People: Changing Values in Post-Stalinist Russia (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 179.

[136]Michael B. Frolic, "Soviet Urban Sociology," International Journal of Comparative Sociology, vol.12, (Dec. 1970), p. 238.

[137]Broner, p. 55.

apartments were occupied by several families on a per room basis. In addition, as discussed earlier, rural values and behaviors still preserved and influenced communal interaction.

B.

Gender issues should also be considered as an integral part of any discussion of housing. Housing affects the ways in which domestic labor takes place. Since women's involvement in domestic labor in the Soviet Union was generally greater than the West, the dynamics of gender are crucial to our understanding of housing design and its impact on everyday life in the urban sphere. Typically in the Soviet Union (and in most countries) housing is assumed to be mainly for consumption benefits. But domestic labor involves producing such goods and services as meals, cleaning the home, caring for children, gardening, maintaining the house, planning activities for shared recreation and so on. Virtually all of these activities, however, are women's work and unpaid. If housing were viewed as domestic capital which is economically productive, though its products are usually consumed at home rather than in the market place how resources were expended on housing might change and change dramatically. At least one female architect during the Khrushchev period tried to advance this perspective in a rudimentary way in the following terms:

> Besides being an element of consumption, housing also constitutes one of the determining factors of the development of production. That is why it is so

> important that all workers have at their disposal comfortable housing where they can work, rest, and raise the younger generation in the best conditions possible.[138]

But as only one of a handful of females among a virtually all male profession her view remained atypical. In the pages that follow we will examine how the failure of male architects to recognize the productive functions of the household (and provide space for them) affected the production of domestic goods and services and shaped the lives of women, who are defined more profoundly by their housing environment than men because of their much deeper emersion in domestic labor.

An examination of the division of labor and the uncooperative attitude of men in this realm is a key starting point to illuminate the relationship between housing and women's issues. A study conducted at the end of the Khrushchev period revealed that out of an average of twelve to thirteen hours spent at home each day, the preparation of meals and washing dishes took the average Muscovite woman two hours and thirty minutes. Housework, which involved cleaning the apartment, laundering linen, and putting clothes in order, consumed one and a half hours of the woman's time at home. Caring for children took another hour per child. In all, seven to eight hours out of every twenty-four period were spent working, in the home, leaving the exhausted woman one whole hour of free or study time. The Muscovite husband found

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[138]A. Tomsen, "Zhilishchnyi vopros: vazhania sotsial'naia problema sovremennosti," Voprosy Filosofii, no.12, 1959, pp. 23-24.

himself in a somewhat happier situation, having two hours and forty-five minutes of free time or time to engage in studies, plus an extra forty-five minutes sleeping time each day.[139] As we shall see, gaps between town planning principles and practice were partly responsible for the larger share of time women spent on housework. But prevailing male attitudes toward domestic chores and the limited availability of labor-saving devices for the home also contributed to the burdens on women.

Since child care was and continues to be traditionally associated with "women's" work, a discussion of child rearing will illustrate how housing affected women's daily lives. That housing was grossly undersupplied and overcrowded did not create an environment conducive to high-quality child rearing. As previously discussed, one major flaw of the housing construction initiative was its failure to be sensitive to changes in the composition of Soviet families over time. For example, it was particularly difficult for Soviet families to have more children because they could not move to accommodate the shift in family composition. The regime hoped parents would not have to concern themselves with the space of minors, as it was projected school-aged children would be sent to boarding schools under Khrushchev's educational reform

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[139]Broner, p. 21.

program.[140] A central feature of the reform was the introduction of new institutions for the communal upbringing of children. During the Five Year period from 1956 to 1961, the total number of children six years of age or under enrolled in these institutions rose by over two million, compared to a gain of little over 900,000 during the previous five year period.[141] With crowded housing conditions and high food prices (amounting to seventy percent of the family budget), having a child cared for in an institution had some practical advantages. The mother was free to work or study. There was more space in the apartment and food costs were appreciably reduced.[142] However, because of the government's difficulty funding the program, only four percent of Soviet children were enrolled in institutions at their height in 1962.

Since communal facilities did not adequately provide for the majority of children, how did limited housing space affect birth rates? By the early 1960s, a number of scholars began to examine the configuration and dynamics of Russian family life and the effects of housing on family composition. One

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[140]G. Druzhinina, "Ne zabyvat's glavnoi tseli!" Arkhitektura SSSR, 1957, no.10, p. 30. and William R. Keech, "Group Influence and the Political Process in the Soviet Union." American Political Science Review, 62, 1968, pp. 840-851.

[141]Urie Bronfenbrenner, "The Changing Soviet Family," in The Nuclear Family in Crisis: The Search for an Alternative, ed. Michael Gordon (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 131.

[142]Izvestia, February 28, 1960.

item of particular concern was the declining birth-rate, which in urban centers fell from 30.5 births per thousand in 1940 to 26.0 in 1950, and to a low point of 15.3 in 1968.[143] By 1962, only five percent of married couples in the urban areas of the Soviet Union had more than two children.[144] The two factors commonly cited as responsible for this decline were the estimated loss of fifteen million males in World War II and the increasing number of women restricting family size.[145] Women often cited the lack of housing space as a major reason not to have children. In addition, a variety of studies indicate a positive correlation between lack of space and lower birth rates. For instance, in one survey an improvement in living space was the most frequently cited factor which would induce women to have children.[146] One leading demographer also mentioned housing conditions as the primary cause mentioned by women as inhibiting them from having a second child, and the number of abortions after the first birth was twice as high in families where living space was below average than in families where it was above

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[143]Gregory Andrusz, Housing and Urban Development in the USSR (London: Macmillan Press, 1984), p. 137.

[144]Viktor Ivanovich Perevdentsev, "The Soviet Family Today," Sociology and Social Research Journal, vol.67, no.3, (April 1984), p. 249.

[145]B.T. Urlanis, Problemy dinamiki naseleniya SSSR. (Moscow 1966), p. 254.

[146]I.P. Katkova, Demograficheskoe povedenie molodykh semei. (Moscow, 1964), pp. 4-5.

average.[147]

This exclusive focus on material conditions, however, ignores other factors that almost certainly contributed to the decline in the birth rates such as a conscious desire by parents to provide better care and lavish more attention on fewer children, a development typical of urbanization in a variety of settings. The volume of economic and qualitative children could increase, even when the actual numbers of physical children decreased. The other side of the coin was that as Soviet society became more urbanized, children became more of an economic liability than an asset. Even if the decision to reduce family size reflected crowded and inadequate housing conditions, it is possible parents chose to have smaller families in order to increase the quality of child rearing. A range of variables affected child rearing patterns but, the fact remains, that housing was grossly undersupplied and overcrowded and this did help to create an environment not particularly conducive to high quality child rearing.

Of all the types of housework - including shopping, washing, housekeeping, child care, and repair work - the disparities between the labor of men and women were most evident in the kitchen. By 1965, ninety-eight per-cent of women versus only twenty-one percent of men engaged in kitchen work. Women engaged in the work not only more often than men,

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[147]Ibid., p. 5.

but for longer periods of time. The duration of food preparation and related activities for working women in major cities was nine times greater than that for working men; ten to eleven hours per week as opposed to one hour.[148]

Since women spent so much time in the kitchen, an examination of the structure and size of this room will illustrate the construction industry's lack of concern for women's needs. According to one survey conducted in 1966, the one issue that concerned women most about the layout of the apartment was the size of the kitchen.[149] As one architect explained, "women would be willing to exchange as much space as possible from the bedrooms, common rooms, and bathrooms in exchange for enlarged kitchens."[150]

The space allotted to the kitchen and the auxiliary space contained near it was a regularly debated topic among architects, sociologists, and construction engineers. The Institute of Housing research conducted a variety of surveys on the most used places in the kitchen, the points most often walked between, and how the kitchen and equipment should be planned or arranged to shorten the number of steps around the room. Surveys consistently revealed the desire of women to have larger kitchens, but the end result was to keep the

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[148]L. Gordon and E. Klopov, Man After Work: Social Problems of Daily Life (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), p. 86.

[149]Tutuchenko, p. 108.

[150]Ibid., p. 109.

kitchens as small as possible and the elimination of auxiliary spaces.

In fact, the kitchen itself was often considered "auxiliary" space. Why this was the case and why auxiliary space was reduced is an intriguing question. Part of the answer lies in the attitudes of construction specialists. Engineers concluded early in the development of industrialized construction techniques that design of auxiliary space was too burdensome and wasteful a task. Entry ways and corridors were kept to a minimum so as not to complicate the prefabricated design and block construction methods engineers so adored. The majority of architectural professionals were males. Although women represented a significant contingent of workers at housing construction sites, they represented a small percentage (roughly five percent) of professional architects and designers.[151] The lack of concern for lessening the burdens in women's lives is evident considering men predominantly designed buildings and cities. When one female architect proposed that part of the living room be "cut off" to accommodate other spacial considerations such as a larger kitchen, the response by male architects was not favorable:

> Some propose reducing the size of the living room to increase the size of the kitchen and auxiliary space. Is it possible they are unaware that people do not relax, sleep and work in foyers, corridors and other auxiliary rooms? The construction of this dead space requires

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[151]See Dimaio, p. 174 and Pravda, Jan. 3, 1962.

building materials, and therefore costs money.[152] Auxiliary space which would have helped women in their domestic duties was viewed as "dead" space, and the male centered view espoused here clearly rejected the supposition that housing is a unit of production.

The desire to keep kitchens as small as possible and to eradicate the possibility of extended eating areas within the kitchen area was reinforced by rental policy. Rent averaged about four to five per-cent of the family's income but was dependent on a variety of factors: income, number of dependents, condition and locale of the building, the presence or absence of municipal services and amenities, special privileges, and, of course the size of the living space. Rent was calculated on average at three kopecks per square meter. Interestingly, the area associated with the woman's sphere, the kitchen, was considered "auxiliary" space and was not counted in the calculation of rent unless the kitchen was larger than four and a half square meters.[153] Any "superfluous" kitchen space over the maximum standard of 4.5 square meters was assessed at nine kopecks, or three times the rate per square meter of standard space.[154]

The abandonment of auxiliary space during the Khrushchev

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[152]Izvestia, March 15, 1962. Forty-two architects and engineers (all male) signed this article.

[153]Ibid., p. 94.

[154]Konstantin Zhukov, Housing Construction in the USSR (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), p. 7.

period contributed to serious concerns among urban residents, particularly women. According to one economist, apartment dwellers surveyed vehemently opposed the removal of auxiliary spaces. Ninety-four percent of women did not favor the plan of direct exit from the kitchen to another room. The construction specialists argued that auxiliary spaces between the kitchen and other rooms were not needed because these rooms were intended to be used as dining rooms. Considering that only twelve per-cent of the general rooms were in fact used as dining rooms, and the majority of these "dining" rooms were actually used as bedrooms, it became clear why tenants rejected the kind of planning which reduced auxiliary spaces.[155]

However, this in itself may not be the sole explanation of why women so overwhelmingly rejected the elimination of auxiliary space. Given the strong rural roots of many of these women, where the kitchen was so strongly defined as female space, perhaps one could argue that auxiliary spaces facilitated a clear separation of rooms which may have given women some privacy and a sense of space they wanted to preserve. The architects who designed the building, it would seem, tried to elucidate that female space was not for privacy but rather for work.

The kitchen, as an entity, is an interesting place to focus on because it sheds light on broader issues of gender

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[155]Broner, p. 25.

and reveals the interdependence between the role of women and housing in general. The layout of the kitchen and apartment as a whole tells us much about how women are expected to organize their lives.[156] The evidence suggests that smaller kitchens whether designed to or not, served to perpetuate the subjugation of women by helping maintain them in their assigned domestic duties. Take, for example, this statement by an architect in Moscow: "the kitchen is the one room in the house which does not need to be enlarged. It is one of the few rooms which does not need to change in size even if family size has increased."[157] The implication here seems to be that the kitchen was designed to be used by one person - the wife and mother. Although this may not have been an explicitly stated or even intended goal, this example illustrates how the policies of the state and the construction industry reinforced the role of women as homemakers and mothers.

If the layout of the apartment helped to further subjugate women in the realm of domestic labor, subjugation must be understood against evidence of many Soviet women's attitudes towards housework. Women were burdened with work both outside and inside the home, a circumstance customarily

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[156]See Jos Boys, Women and the Man Made Environment (London: Pluto Press, 1984), pp. 55-81 and Sophie Watson, Accommodating Inequality: Gender and Housing (London: Allen and Unwin, 1988), pp. 138-147.

[157]V.P. Skripko, I.B. Martkovich, P.G. Solov'ev Zhilishchnoe zakondatet'stvo SSSR i RSFSR (Moscow: Stroiizdat, 1965), p. 217.

called the "double shift." Still, many women consciously valued their role of "housewife". For example, in 1964, three hundred working women surveyed at the Marat Candy Factory in Moscow were asked whether men should spend more time on household tasks. Only one expressed the opinion that the "home is not a man's affair" while the rest answered the question affirmatively.[158] Yet, a closer examination of the survey reveals the importance placed in running the household and the importance women attached to their reputation as good housewives. In the survey the opinion was expressed that "a good housewife will always find the time, energy and means to keep the house neat" and that a "good housewife does not need special aid."[159] Similarly, in a survey conducted in Taganrog, the question was phrased: If you had more free time, how would you use it? Almost two-thirds of the women surveyed felt a lack of time for domestic affairs. They mentioned an intention to use this supplementary time for housework much more often than any other desire.[160]

Thus, we are faced with a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the housing industry did not ease the burdens for women in the household and the design of the living space actually helped to reinforce the notion that domestic labor was

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[158]G.A. Slesarev "Women in Industry and in the Family," in Social Problems of Labor and Production: A Soviet and Polish Comparative Study (Warsaw, 1969), p. 432.

[159]Ibid., p. 434.

[160]Gordon and Klopov, p. 95.

primarily "women's" work. The picture is complicated considering the conscious desire of many women to excel in this realm. Soviet women's concern with prestige in the private sphere provides a confusing element to the discussion. Although many probably viewed their domestic responsibilities as a necessary component of everyday life, it complicates our assessment of how to interpret the ways housing reinforced women's roles in the household.

The relationship of housing and gender dimension contained within it should not be confined only to the parameters of the dwelling, but to the broader urban landscape. The practice of locating the existing specialized retail outlets on the ground floor of apartment blocks meant that within any single neighborhood complex, there was a rather dispersed pattern of shop locations. Instead of being able to purchase most items in either a single large retail outlet, or a cluster of shops, several journeys were required. The same general criticisms may also be directed at the provision of other areas of access such as day care facilities and kindergartens.[161]

Just as language contains and perpetuates certain ideas about women, so do buildings and the layout of urban communities, but in a less direct way. Attention to discourse could perhaps illuminate the power/knowledge relations embodied in the planning of housing which so forcefully

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[161]James Bater, The Soviet City: Ideal and Reality (London: Edward and Arnold Publishers, 1980), pp. 143-146.

limited women's lives. Foucault's contention that no relations of power exist without resistance suggests the possibility of women's opposition to the forms of control that they experienced within the Soviet urban system.[162] The ways in which women resisted the construction industry's intention to limit the amount of time spent in the kitchen except for work purposes is one example. The kitchen was more than just a place for meal preparation but also the site of conversation and familial interaction and women eagerly sought to preserve these functions.[163] Housing and issues involving women have been extensively reviewed in the literature, but mainly as separate and distinct subjects. Stereotyped sex roles, reinforced by the design of housing, resulted in women carrying the major burden of domestic work, while invariably working "full time" outside the home as well. The consequences of this were manifested in many ways, not the least of which was the limited amount of discretionary free time available to women. This survey has stressed the interdependence between the role of women and housing policies and has illuminated how sexist assumptions about women's roles and family life were built into the design of dwellings throughout the Soviet urban sphere.

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[162]M. Foucault, The History of Sexuality: An Introduction. vol.1, (New York: Vintage Books, 1980).

[163]David L. Broner, Sovremennye problemy zhilishchnogo khoziaistva, (Moscow: Gosizdat, vysshaia shkola, 1961), p. 21.

Conclusion

Historians have seized on the importance of housing issues and have ignored the wider social structural ones in which housing is embedded. A prevailing theme throughout this discussion has been to consciously reintegrate housing into the broader social context. A shortcoming in the literature on housing studies is the nearly universal narrowing of the focus to the dwelling as a separate or distinct unit and the insufficient emphasis on its relationship with the broader environment. This discussion of housing during the Khrushchev period has tried to illuminate the relationship between residency and the urban community, its local setting, its spatial relationship to other dwellings, the street, the local area, friends and kin, recreational activities, and the wider web of dependencies that determined urban life styles and well-being in the Soviet Union during this period.

Housing influences the manner in which individuals react to the various relationships that constitute their everyday lives. An alternative theoretical approach to examine these relationships has been presented here. Housing has traditionally been defined as a unit of consumption. The theoretical position presented here, by contrast, views housing as "productive", directly related to the production of

domestic sector goods and services. Defining housing as a unit of production offers an alternative approach to examine the ways in which housing and gender issues are intertwined. For example, if housing is grossly under supplied and overcrowded, living conditions may not be conducive to high quality child rearing.

Soviet urban residents during the Khrushchev period exercised a degree of creativity and ingenuity in order to cope with their living arrangements. The coping strategies devised by urban inhabitants discussed in this study encompass a multitude of activities. Spontaneously generated organizations such as the domkoms, raid brigades, the house construction promotion brigades, petition drives, and the numerous editorials which saturated the press provided a vast array of outlets for residents. The private and cooperative forms of housing tenure accommodated twenty-five percent of the population and provided two eagerly sought out alternatives which helped many avoid the daily burdens of state-owned housing. Urban residents also used their traditional networks of kinship, rural background, and the instrumentalities of, and contradictions within, the state to vent their frustrations, articulate their needs, and sometimes even change state policies.

A major underlying current responsible for the manifestations of these changes can be attributed to the emerging social changes that rapidly accelerated during the Khrushchev period. As society became more industrialized and

urbanized, the demands for improved accommodation intensified and were articulated more forcefully. Ironically, the suggestion that Soviet society was too "modern" or too "dynamic" has not at all been entertained as a way to evaluate the success of the housing initiative.

The "modern" connotations associated with Soviet urban life may be slightly misleading. As the discussion of private housing clearly illustrates, the legacy of society's rurality still had a substantial impact on the feel and character of the urban environment. The persistence of private plots and the existence of livestock in "urban" areas are clear examples of the persistence of rural influences. Similarly, the existence of homogenous migrant communities on the outskirts of urban centers suggests the persistence of rural values and the effects of those values on housing choice and the urban environment. It would appear that the lines that separate or demarcate the "rural" and "urban" environments are not very clear. The persistence of vast stretches of "rural" enclaves on the outskirts of "urban" areas inclines us to rethink the impact of social change associated with urbanization. Perhaps the term itself needs to be redefined or renegotiated.

The combination of all of the strategies discussed in this study suggests urban inhabitants were not always passive victims within the so-called "monolithic" and "behemoth" apartment complexes as they are all too often portrayed in the literature. This study has tried to dismantle the standard interpretation which is reflected in the testament of one

observer:

> Soviet citizens live like sheep in small, crowded and private apartments in dreary, mass housing projects where miles and miles of identical buildings have been constructed with industrialized building systems. The individual units are cramped and extremely inconvenient and uncomfortable.[164]

The ways in which Soviet citizens improved and demanded better living accommodations illustrate that the image of a repressed and cowed population shivering from the power and control of the state needs to be altered.

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[164]A. Kopp, "Soviet Architecture since the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU," paper delivered at the Congress of Soviet and East European Studies, Jan. 1973, pp. 12-13.

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