

SOTSGOROD: THE PROBLEM OF BUILDING SOCIALIST CITIES. By *N. A. Miliutin*. Translated from the Russian by *Arthur Sprague*. Prepared for publication by *George R. Collins* and *William Alex*. Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1974. x, 143 pp. Plates. \$25.00.

In accounts of the utopian tradition of city planning, which include the names of Camillo Sitte, Ebenezer Howard, or Le Corbusier, the name of Miliutin is mentioned briefly, alongside his diagram of a "linear city." The book under review deciphers the diagram by presenting Miliutin's 1930 essay on an ideal socialist city to the English speaking reader in its entirety, faithfully reproduced in design, with extensive notes and commentary placing it in the context of contemporary aesthetic and political controversies.

Miliutin's background was that of Bolshevik organizer and administrator, but he also had empathy with the modern movement in architecture which flourished in Russia at the time. His Marxist urban utopia is very much in the tradition of his antecedents and contemporaries. Miliutin states that "the problem of 'overtaking and surpassing' the capitalist countries is one of strengthening the defense capabilities of a proletarian state . . . and of making over both our industry and our agriculture. These problems force us to limit in every way possible those resources that might otherwise be used to satisfy consumer demand." From this he deduces the need for utmost rationality and cost-effectiveness in the development of a production-oriented settlement pattern that will assure a healthy life.

He protests against "senseless centralization" and the "waste of undertaking new construction in old settlements," and argues that his linear settlements, modeled after the factory assembly line, with strict separation of land uses, will minimize the lines of communication and maximize people's exposure to sun, air, and nature. He argues further that collectivizing services, such as kitchens, laundries, and to a large extent child care, will have the double benefit of freeing the female labor force for production, and reducing the dwelling size and hence construction requirements. His Spartan living cells (90 square feet per person), in which double beds are taboo, are grouped in two-story units housing around two hundred families. The complex has separate pavilions for dining, for reading (with an "American" interlibrary loan system), and for children ("to prevent epidemics"). Miliutin argues against fake architectural monumentality and for prefabrication and mass production.

Many of Miliutin's arguments appear naïve and simplistic to us today—linear configurations do not minimize travel requirements unless extreme regimentation is assumed, and the notion of agglomeration economies is unknown to him. His call for greater functionalism and industrialization of construction, however, was heeded in the Soviet Union after 1955.

The translation is good, but not without problems: "nonindustrial construction alone" is translated as "one nonindustrial construction," "right-of-way" as "segregated band," and "building volume" as "cubature."

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