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World Heritage of the 20th Century – Chances for Russia from a Foreign Point of View

“Faster than Moscow itself, you learn to see Berlin from Moscow.” This was the observation that Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) used in retrospect to introduce his comparison of the two cities in his *Moscow Diary*.¹ The expectation that his home city of Berlin would come into a clearer focus when seen from a distant and foreign city than in the more familiar local perspective was probably an important motive for Benjamin’s intensive journeys and city comparisons.

The organisers of the International Heritage Day 2006 in Moscow seem to have similar hopes when they ask me to report from a foreign point of view. Perhaps they thought that what applied to Moscow and Berlin between the two World Wars would also apply in reverse 80 years later: that in 2006 it may be possible to get to know Moscow more quickly when seen from Berlin than from a native perspective. Or perhaps the situation in Moscow today is similar to what has applied to many places since the days of Scripture: “The prophet is not without honour save in his own country”.

Travelling educates

The *Moscow Diary* by Walter Benjamin only touches marginally on the new architecture that arose after the October Revolution. The only building that made a lasting impression on him is “Moscow’s large broadcasting house which looks different from all else that I saw”,² in

other words the grid tower for Shabolovka Radio Station by Vladimir G. Shukhov which went into operation in 1922.³ But Benjamin’s travel diary can be seen as being historically symptomatic of a travel fever which Moscow stimulated in artists and architects at the time. Never before, and probably never since, have architects, urban planners, painters and sculptors from the two capital cities engaged in such a lively personal and professional exchange as in the first Republican decades after the fall of the monarchies in Russia and Germany.

In addition to the special relationship which Berlin had in the west with the metropolitan art and architecture of the city of Paris from the late 19th century, it also had a special relationship with the Russian metropolis in the east after the Russian October Revolution of 1917 and the German November Revolution of 1918. In 1931, when the competition jury was assembled for the Soviet Palace, the world’s capital city of Socialism showed itself as a metropolitan city that was open for the whole world and a meeting point for world-famous architects: “The twelve members of the jury only included three Russians, all of the others were foreigners, including several famous names: Le Corbusier and Perret from France, Gropius, Mendelsohn and Poelzig from Germany. The spirit of the Twenties was still alive, and the Moscow–Berlin–Paris axis was still intact. At the time, Moscow was a sort of Mecca for modern architects ...”⁴

The large Russian colonies and the exciting exhibitions (First Russian Art Exhibition, 1922) were the decisive foundation for the intense interaction between Berlin and Moscow. The most prominent artist was El (Lasar Markowich) Lissitzky (1890–1941), who had spent some time studying and working in Germany before and after the First World War. He also was probably the most productive mediator and the most influential proponent of a cross-border architectural dialogue between the newly created regimes of the Weimar Republic and the Soviet Union.⁵ It seems that in 1920 he imported the Russian term and concept of “Constructivism” to Germany (Düsseldorf), and with his theory of the “Proun” (Proekt dlja utverzdenie novogo = project to strengthen the new) he inspired innumerable debates on art in Germany.

At an early stage there were also west-to-east study and lecture tours from Germany to Russia, or ideas and projects from Berlin which were exported to Moscow or St. Petersburg. Some people associated political hopes of a new society with Soviet Russia, and probably everyone hoped for a personal encounter with the new products and protagonists of a cultural revolution which opposed the tradition and conventions of the monarchy. The collective term or the umbrella term of the “avant-garde” could

¹ Cf. Walter Benjamin, *Moskau*, in: *Walter Benjamin: Städtebilder. Nachwort von Peter Szondi*, Frankfurt am Main 1963, pp. 7–30, p. 7; *Walter Benjamin, Moskau*, in: *Walter Benjamin: Denkbilder*, Frankfurt/M. 1974, pp. 16–48, p. 16; *Walter Benjamin, Moskauer Tagebuch. Mit einem Vorwort von Gershom Scholem*, Frankfurt/M. 1980, pp. 162–163.

² *Walter Benjamin, Moskauer Tagebuch* (see annotation 1), p. 161.

³ Cf. Irina A. Petropolvskaja, *Der Sendeturm für die Radiostation Shabolovka in Moskau*, in: *Rainer Graefe, Murat Gappoev, Ottmar Pertsschi et al. (eds.), Vladimir G. Shukhov 1853–1939. Die Kunst der sparsamen Konstruktion*, Stuttgart 1990, pp. 92ff.

⁴ *Karl Schlögel, Moskau lesen. Die Stadt als Buch*, Berlin 2000, p. 118.

⁵ Cf. El Lissitzky, *Russland. Die Rekonstruktion der Architektur in der Sowjetunion*, Wien 1930 (Reprint: *El Lissitzky, Russland. Architektur für eine Weltrevolution – 1929*, Berlin, Frankfurt/M., Wien 1965).



*Apartment building on Kudrinskaya square, Moscow, 1948–54, arch. M. Posokhin.
View from the roof of Narkomfin Commune House, 1928, arch. M. Ginzburg, I. Milinis in 2005*

be used to cover completely different artistic and architectural movements and styles which had one common element: a radical rejection of the past and a passionate appeal for an aesthetic renewal of art and life.

Architecture for a new social order

1. The avant-garde was more than an aesthetic revolution or a revolution of form and design. The architecture of the avant-garde aimed to create a new architectural programme, to revolutionise the production and the social use of architecture. This applied first of all to the creation and extension of a new technical infrastructure for media, transport and industrial production. Bold engineering structures of steel and concrete were created to serve new building tasks. They included the tower buildings and wide-span roof structures of Vladimir G. Shukhov (1853–1939), his bus and lorry garages designed together with Konstantin S. Melnikov (Intourist garage, 1934–36), the press buildings for “Izvestija” (1925–27, Grigory Borisovich Barkhin and his son Michail) and “Pravda” (1930–35, Panteleimon A. Golosov), the central telegraph office (1925–27, I. I. Rerberg) and the Gostorg Ministry of Trade

(1925–27, B. M. Velikovskiy, A. J. Langman, M. O. Barshch etc.). In this connection, it is also worth mentioning the cubo-futuristic and constructivist architectural visions of Alexander Mikhailovich Rodchenko (1891–1956) and (reminiscent of Sant’Elia) Jakob Chernikhov (1889–1951).

2. Soviet architecture tried out radical new solutions in the area of residential construction and social housing. After all, the solution of housing problems was a central task of social policies. At the same time, it offered a unique opportunity for a new modern design of the city.⁶ Apart from the experiments with new construction materials and building designs,⁷ visitors

⁶ Cf. Anatole Kopp, *Changer la vie, changer la ville. De la vie nouvelle aux problèmes urbains URSS 1917–1932*, Paris 1975; Barbara Kreis, *Moskau 1917–1935. Vom Wohnungsbau zum Städtebau*, München 1985.

⁷ Cf. Anke Zalivako, *Zur Erhaltung der Bauten der 1920er Jahre im Vergleich Bundesrepublik Deutschland – Russische Föderation (Moskau) unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der baukonstruktiven Voraussetzungen: Probleme, Erfahrungen, Perspektiven*, Diss. TU Berlin 2003, especially pp. 30–157.

were especially impressed by the systematic research and the development of new forms of housing. The sophisticated search for minimised floor plan types and rational access variants and the reorganisation of residential functions and housework probably met with the greatest interest in the west. But Moscow probably gained its historical reputation as a capital of the international avant-garde because of a wide range of innovative collective residential building types such as the variable partitionable and combinable “section houses” or “modular houses” (N. Ladovsky, El Lissitzky, etc.), the Narkomfin commune house (1928–30) by Moisei Ginzburg and I. Milinis, the communal students’ hostel (1929–30) by I. Nikolaev or the innovative twin tower of the Melnikov house (1927–29).⁸

3. Community buildings were a particularly effective and symbolic means to change the style of life. Workers’ clubs and cultural palaces were to be social and architectural crystallisation points which would help to create a Socialist culture and style of life (“social power station”, El Lissitzky, 1930).⁹ The clubhouses and cultural palaces can be regarded as prime examples of Russian avant-garde architecture. The list of responsible architects is like a “Who is who” of the Soviet avant-garde and includes Konstantin S. Melnikov (Rusakov club, Frunze club, Stormy petrel club, Rubber workers’ club), Ilia A. Golosov (Zujev club), I. A. Fomin and A. I. Langman (Dynamo club) and the brothers L. A., W. A. and A. A. Vesnin (Cultural Palace of the Proletarsky district).¹⁰ The importance of avant-garde workers’ clubs as an independent Soviet contribution to the development of the European people’s building concept before the Second World War and a precursor to the later houses of culture in the Soviet hemisphere can hardly be overestimated.¹¹
4. And not least, the Soviet Russian avant-garde made an epoch-making contribution to overcoming the commemorative tradition of the 19th century and creating



Kauchuk Workers’ club, Moscow, 1927–29, arch. K. Melnikov, in 2005



Cultural Palace of the Proletarsky district, Moscow, 1931–37; arch. V. Vesnin, A. Vesnin, in 2005

an abstract form of monument art and memorial art in Europe. Instead of the imitative representational monument style of Historicism, the young avant-garde of architects and sculptors drew on the mobilising power of abstract symbols, on form and design, material and workmanship. Their ideas and designs were an important source of inspiration for monument projects all over the world, even though they were only rarely implemented in the Soviet Union itself (Alexy Victorovich Schusev, 1873–1949: Lenin Mausoleum, 1924–30) or were only implemented later as monumental architecture in the Socialist Realism of the Stalin era (Boris Iofan – Vera Mukhina: The Industrial Worker and the Collective Farm Girl, Soviet pavilion in Paris 1937, moved to the grounds of the All Russia Exhibition in Moscow in 1939). Spectacular examples of an ephemeral architecture also attracted great attention and were widely published – temporary buildings which have been passed down to us as exhibition and

⁸ Cf. Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Melnikov House, Moscow (1927–29)* (Historical Building Monograph 7), London 1996.

⁹ El Lissitzky (see annotation 5), pp. 25–27.

¹⁰ Cf. Christiane Post, *Arbeiterklubs als neue Bauaufgabe der sowjetischen Avantgarde*, Berlin 2004.

¹¹ Cf. *Architecture pour le Peuple. Maisons du Peuple (Belgique, Allemagne, Autriche, France, Grande-Bretagne, Italie, Pays-Bas, Suisse)*, Brüssel 1984; Dietrich W. Schmidt, *Der sowjetische Arbeiterclub als Paraphrase des deutschen Volkshauses. Konzeptionelle Verbindungen bei der Entwicklung eines Bautyps für die Arbeiterbildung*, in: *Avantgarde II 1924–1937. Sowjetische Architektur*, Stuttgart 1993, pp. 76–91; Simone Hain, Stephan Stroux, *Die Salons der Sozialisten. Kulturhäuser in der DDR*, Berlin 1996, pp. 110ff.



Lermontov House, Moscow, 1949–53,
arch. A. Dushkin, B. Mezentsev, in 2005

trade fair architecture, stage sets, decorative art¹² or kiosks (Konstantin Melnikov: the USSR pavilion at the Paris International Exhibition of Decorative Arts and Modern Industry in 1925¹³). Some monument designs did not get beyond the model stage or even the stage of “paper architecture” – but nevertheless found their way into the collective image memory of humanity in the 20th century because of their visionary force (Vladimir Tatlin: Monument of the Third International, 1919–20; El Lissitzky: The Cloud Iron, 1924; I. I. Leonidov: Lenin Institute, 1927).¹⁴

Mutual inspiration

The travels and working trips of most architects from central and western Europe before the Second World War focused mainly on Modernist buildings and architects. Many responded to the invitation of the recently founded Soviet Union to help in building new cities. Some hoped for a land of unbounded possibilities in the east. Few architects from Western Europe, especially from Holland, France and German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria and Switzerland), themselves created modernist buildings in Russia. The particularly impressive architectural testimonies to this early cross-border Modernism on the territory of the former Soviet Union include smaller buildings such as the municipal library of Viipuri – Russia by Alvar Aalto (1898–1976) and the large building of the Centrosoiuz in Moscow (1928–35), with which Le Corbusier (1887–1965) and his Soviet colleague Nikolai Jakovlevic Kolli (1894–1966) created a monumental administrative and cultural complex in the Moscow city landscape. The time that Erich Mendelsohn (1887–1935) spent in post-revolutionary Russia was also very fruitful.¹⁵ The Red Flag textile factory (1925–27) in Leningrad from the mid-1920s, which was based on his designs, follows Mendel-

sohn’s formal principle of dynamic functionalism, which was also characteristic of the Russian combination of Expressionism and Suprematism.¹⁶ In 1929 he published his international comparative study as a book: *Russia – Europe – America. An architectural cross section*.¹⁷

Among the countless architects, planners, engineers and artists who flocked to the new Soviet Union in their hundreds or even thousands from Germany, Switzerland, Austria, the rest of Europe and even from other continents around 1930, partly due to the world economic crisis, there were some who already had an international reputation, and others who made their reputation after 1945.¹⁸ They included Ernst May (1896–1970), who was the municipal director of building responsible for the legendary New Frankfurt between 1925 and 1930, and other famous personalities such as Mart Stam from Holland and Hans Schmidt from Switzerland. The Swiss architect Hans Schmidt was a committed socialist and

¹² Cf. <http://www.muor.ru/eng/ve/rogozina/prazdnik/index.htm> (*Life became better, comrades, life became more cheerful. Holiday decoration of Moscow, 1930s. Schusev State Museum of Architecture Moscow – Virtual Exhibition*)

¹³ Cf. Frederick Starr, *K. Melnikov le pavillon soviétique paris 1925*, Paris 1996.

¹⁴ Cf. Schusev State Museum of Architecture Moscow et al. (eds.), *Avantgarde I 1900–1923. Russisch-sowjetische Architektur*, Stuttgart 1991, pp. 180–181, 214ff., 244ff.

¹⁵ Cf. Irina Grigorieva, *Erich Mendelsohns Wirken als Architekt in der Sowjetunion (LMU, Geschichts- und Kunstwissenschaften, Nr. 5)*, Diss. Ludwig-Maximilian Universität München 2003; see http://www.epub.uni-muenchen.de/archive/00000421/01/Grigorieva_Irina.pdf.

¹⁶ Cf. Peter Knoch, *Nieder mit dem Eklektizismus! Industriearchitektur in Leningrad 1917–1939*, in: *Bauwelt* 83, vol. 1992, pp. 106–115; cf. Margarita S. Stiglitz, *Promyschlennaja architektura Petersburga w sferje „industrial’noj archeologii“*, St. Petersburg 2003.

¹⁷ Erich Mendelsohn, *Russland – Europa – Amerika. Ein architektonischer Querschnitt*, Berlin 1929 (Reprint Basel, Berlin, Boston 1989).

¹⁸ Cf. also the special issue of *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Humboldt-Universität Berlin, gesellschafts- und sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe*, vol. XVI/1967, no. 3, focussing on German-Soviet architectural relationship between World War I and World War II, in particular the contributions by Kurt Junghanns, *Die Beziehungen zwischen deutschen und sowjetischen Architekten in den Jahren 1917 bis 1933*, pp. 369–381 and by Hans Schmidt, *Die Tätigkeit deutscher Architekten und Spezialisten des Bauwesens in der Sowjetunion in den Jahren 1930 bis 1937*, pp. 383–399; Christian Schädlich, *Das Bauhaus und die Tradition der Zusammenarbeit zwischen deutschen und sowjetischen Architekten*, in: *Architektur der DDR*, vol. 25 (1976), no. 12, pp. 716–721.

an important polemical advocate of international Modernism. Together with Mart Stam and El Lissitzky (and Emil Roth) he founded the magazine *ABC Contributions to Building*, which was one of the bridges between the Soviet constructivists and the functionalists of the West. Hannes Meyer (1889–1954), who was dismissed as the director of the Bauhaus in Dessau in 1930 for political reasons, also went to Moscow with a group of Bauhaus students and employees.¹⁹ Stalin called on the productive industrial architect Albert Kahn (1869–1942) from the American motor city of Detroit in order to benefit from his experience and success as a pioneer of modern factory architecture in the drastic modernisation of industrial buildings and engineer training (1930–32).²⁰

Architectural monuments of Socialist Realism?²¹

5. The multi-level competition for the Soviet Palace which was mentioned above represented a final and obvious departure from Traditionalism and a breakthrough for the Stalinist doctrine of Socialist Realism in architectural policy. The design for a gigantic tower and monument building which was confirmed in 1934 (Gelfrejch, Vladimir Georgievich Iofan et al.) was not actually built, nor were the subsequent projects for a

central line of tower buildings after the Second World War. Nevertheless, this major project was not without consequences, as you know. A crown of seven high tower buildings from the Stalin era form a star-like ring around the old centre of Moscow. They skillfully occupy the exposed points in the topography of the city and create an impressive skyline to announce the new era. The “Seven Sisters” – as joint successors to the unbuilt Soviet Palace – are similar to each other in the distinctive Stalinist “wedding cake style”. And they were joined by numerous smaller “sisters” all over Moscow, giving the Soviet capital an unmistakable visual character among the world’s metropolitan cities of the 20th century.

6. Another achievement of Soviet engineers and architects was no less impressive and received worldwide acclaim from the 1930s into the 1950s, although it did not affect the city skyline. The Moscow Metro had a lasting and unmistakable effect on the city, but below ground level. Nowhere else in the world has modern society set itself and its metropolitan mass transport system such a magnificent, even extravagant monument as in Moscow. Where else have the glorification of work and the progress of science and technology in the 20th century been celebrated in such architectural and sculptural opulence as in the decorative images and sculptures in the Moscow underground? The Moscow Metro, which was efficiently planned and dramatically designed to plans by Alexy Dushkin, Jakov Lichtenberg, Igor Roshin, D.N. Chechulin, L. Tellizky and others, is a monument to Modernism and a monument to work. However, the modern metropolis of Moscow mainly created the immense splendour of its underground by traditional artistic means. That perhaps partly explains why it is so popular and famous.

Soviet architectural exports?

Some architects and urban planners from Germany survived the murderous Second World War in Russia, some even in Soviet prisons. They returned to Germany as protagonists of the Stalinist architectural doctrine of Socialist Realism. They embodied the early post-war principles of the national tradition in the architecture of the GDR, such as Poelzig’s pupils Kurt Liebknecht²² and Gerhard Kosel,²³ who were to play a central role in architectural policies as presidents of the Building Academy.

Some of the German architects and urban planners who visited the Soviet capital after 1945 became famous and left their mark on German architectural history, for example the delegation from East Germany, or rather the newly founded “German Democratic Republic” GDR), who were sent to visit the Building Exhibition and building sites in Moscow in April/May of 1950 (12 April–25 May). This *Journey to Moscow* was a turning point

¹⁹ Cf. Christian Borngreber, *Ausländische Architekten in der UdSSR: Bruno Taut, die Brigaden Ernst May, Hannes Meyer und Hans Schmidt*, in: *Wem gehört die Welt? Kunst und Gesellschaft in der Weimarer Republik*, (exhibition catalogue) Berlin 1977, pp. 109–137.

²⁰ Cf. Dmitrij Khmelnickii, *The struggle for Soviet architecture. Foreign architects in the USSR during the Stalin era – Der Kampf um die sowjetische Architektur. Ausländische Architekten in der UdSSR der Stalin-Ära*, in: *Ost-Europa*, vol. 55, no. 9. September 2005, pp. 91–105.

²¹ Cf. Anatole Kopp, *Architecture de la période stalinienne*, Grenoble 1978; Boris Groys, *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin. Die gespaltene Kultur in der Sowjetunion*, München/Wien 1988; Peter Noever, *Tyrannie des Schönen. Architektur der Stalin-Zeit*, München 1995; Harald Bodenschatz/Christiane Post (eds.), *Städtebau im Schatten Stalins. Die internationale Suche nach der sozialistischen Stadt in der Sowjetunion 1929–1935, with the cooperation of Uwe Altröck, Susanne Karn, Steffen Ott, Benjamin Braun, Heike Hoffmann und Franziska Träger* (Schriften des Schinkel-Zentrums für Architektur, Stadtforschung und Denkmalpflege der Technischen Universität Berlin, vol. 1), Berlin 2003

²² Cf. Kurt Liebknecht, *Mein bewegtes Leben. Aufgeschrieben von Steffi Knop*, Berlin 1986.

²³ Cf. Gerhard Kosel, *Unternehmen Wissenschaft. Die Wiederentdeckung einer Idee. Erinnerungen*, Berlin 1989.



Warsaw (Poland), Palace of Culture and Science, the former Joseph Stalin Palace (Lev Rudnev, 1952–55)



Shanghai (China), Exhibition Hall, the former Sino-Soviet Friendship Mansion (1955)



Berlin Strausberger Platz, arch. Hermann Henselmann (1952–1955), influenced by Kaluga Gate Square in Moscow (1939–1950)

which led to the urban design and architectural principles of the “national tradition” of the GDR.²⁴

The street which was propagated as the “first Socialist boulevard on German soil”, Stalin-Allee (now Karl-Marx-Allee) in Berlin, was said to be “national in form, socialist (or proletarian) in the content” even years after Stalin’s death (1876–1953).²⁵ The oval open space on Strausberger Platz and the towering gateway buildings (Haus des Kindes, Haus Berlin) which are marking the start of Stalin-Allee were almost inconceivable without Moscow as a model – in particular the buildings at Kaluga Gate (Leninsky Prospekt 30–57; October Square, Gagarin Square) by I. I. Fomin, E. A. Leninson and A. J. Arkin (1930–1950). Equally difficult to imagine were the early designs for a central government tower building (Richard Paulick, 1951/52; Gerhard Kosel etc. 1957/58), which was to take the place of Berlin’s demolished “Stadtschloss” and to be based on reference projects in Moscow such as the Stalin-

²⁴ Cf. Simone Hain, *Reise nach Moskau: wie Deutsche „sozialistisch“ bauen lernten*, in: *Bauwelt* 83 (1992), no. 45, pp. 2 546–2 558; *idem*, „Reise nach Moskau“. *Dokumente zur Erklärung von Motiven, Entscheidungsstrukturen und Umsetzungskonflikten für den ersten städtebaulichen Paradigmenwechsel in der DDR und zum Umfeld des „Aufbaugesetzes“ von 1950*, (REGIO-doc 1/1995, edited by the Institut für Regionalentwicklung und Strukturplanung – IRS), Berlin 1996.

²⁵ Cf. Jörg Haspel, *Stadtbaudenkmal Karl-Marx-Allee*, in: *Die große Magistrale. Perspektiven der städtebaulichen Entwicklung*, edited by Wohnungsbaugesellschaft Friedrichshain, Berlin 1993, pp. 32–35; *idem*, *Zwischen Erhaltung und Erneuerung: die Karl-Marx-Allee in Berlin*, in: ICOMOS Deutsches Nationalkomitee (ed.): *Stalinistische Architektur unter Denkmalschutz? (ICOMOS Hefte des Deutschen Nationalkomitees IX)*, München 1996, pp. 17–25; *idem*, *Denkmalpflegerische Aspekte der Sanierung und Revitalisierung der Karl-Marx-Allee*, in: Helmut Engel/Wolfgang Ribbe (ed.), *Karl-Marx-Allee in Berlin. Die Wandlung der sozialistischen Magistrale zur Hauptstraße des Ostens (Publikationen der Historischen Kommission zu Berlin)* Berlin 1996, pp. 187–203.

ist tower buildings and the demolition of the Church of Christ the Saviour (1883–1931) for a hypertrophic Soviet Palace (competition 1931, building begun in 1937–42 – alterations 1960 for Moscow swimming baths; modified reconstruction of the Church of Christ the Saviour 1994–1997).

After 1945 the Moscow model influenced most member states of the later Warsaw Pact and other associated countries to which the Soviets wished to export not only their social revolution, but also their architectural doctrine for the creation of a new society in traditional architectural forms. The Palace of Culture and Science – “Joseph Stalin Palace” (Lev Rudniev, 1952–55) in Warsaw, which is decorated with attic motifs of the Polish Renaissance, is very similar to the tower buildings of the Stalin era in Moscow. The same applies to the Sino-Soviet exhibition pavilion in Shanghai which was built in 1954–55 as the House of Russian-Chinese Friendship, which would also have looked perfectly in place in a Moscow Park or exhibition centre.

The major system that spread out below the metropolitan city from the 1930s to become a transport network with 150 stations was just as inspiring. Several underground stations which were built after the Second World War in Russia (Leningrad/St. Petersburg, Narvskaya), the Soviet Republics (Kiev, Zoloti-Vorota) and later in other major cities in the Soviet hemisphere could easily be seen as reminiscent of the Moscow Metro. A last weak reflection can be seen, for example, in the only underground system in Central Asia, the Tashkent Metro (Mustaqilik Maidoni station, 1977; Navoiy station, 1984) built by some of the leading architects and artists from Uzbekistan and the Socialist style of the Metro in the capital of North

Korea, (Pyongyang, Yonggwang station) as later successors to the style.

Revolutionary architecture

The German term “Revolutionsarchitektur” or the concept of “revolutionary architecture” shows a link between the political upheaval of the French Revolution of 1789 and the anti-Baroque style of early Classicism (Etienne-Louis Boullée, Claude Nicolas Ledoux, Jean-Jacques Lequeu in France; Adrain Dmitrijevich Sakharov in Russia; Friedrich Weinbrenner and Friedrich Gilly in Germany). In the 1930s Emil Kaufmann, in his book *From Ledoux to Corbusier*²⁶ was the first to create a line of tradition from the early Classicism of the Enlightenment in the 18th century to the protagonists of early Modernism in the 20th century.²⁷ The Swiss art theorist and journalist Adolf Max Vogt took up this idea in the middle of the 1970s under the programmatical title *Russian and French Revolutionary Architecture 1789–1917. The Effect of Marxism and Newtonism on Architecture*.²⁸ What Boullée and Ledoux signified for the French revolutionary years around 1789 was reflected by architects and artists such as El Lissitzky, Tatlin and Chernikhov for the Russian revolutionary years around 1917: their revolutionary designs, and even more their buildings, anticipated the utopia of a coming architecture and a future society.

The epoch-making contributions of French revolutionary architecture are now represented among the UNESCO World Heritage sites. The Royal Saltworks of Arc-et-Senans by Nicolas Ledoux (1736–1806) have even been listed since 1982 as the French contribution on the World Heritage List. But the epoch-making contributions to 20th century world architecture which arose on the soil of the Soviet Union are still not represented. Not a single building appears on the World Heritage List to commemorate the legendary works of the Russian architectural avant garde which made such a worldwide impression between the two World Wars. Up to now, Russian revolutionary architecture is no more than a blind spot on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Architectural schools and architectural associations

Modernism probably had its most famous focal points and its most productive agencies in the institutionalised architectural schools and the self-organised architectural associations. The best-known and most influential network of this kind was almost certainly found in Holland, Germany and Russia. It included the De Stijl Group founded in 1917 by Theo van Doesburg and Piet Mondrian in the Netherlands, with its magazine of the same name (until 1929), which also included the architects Jacobus Johannes Pieter Oud, Gerrit Thomas Rietveld and Jan Wils and,

²⁶ Emil Kaufmann, *Von Ledoux bis Corbusier, Wien 1933; cf. also Emil Kaufmann, Von Ledoux bis Le Corbusier: Ursprung und Entwicklung der Autonomen Architektur, Stuttgart 1985.*

²⁷ Cf. *Revolutionsarchitektur – Boullée, Ledoux, Lequeu*, edited by Gallwitz, Düttmann et al. (exhibition catalogue) Kunsthalle Baden-Baden 1971; Klaus Jan Philipp (ed.), *Revolutionsarchitektur, Braunschweig and Wiesbaden 1990; Philippe Madec, Etienne-Louis Boullée, Basel, Boston, Berlin 1989; Michel Gallet, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux 1736–1806, Stuttgart 1983; Revolutionsarchitektur. Ein Aspekt der europäischen Architektur um 1800*, edited by Winfried Nerdinger, Klaus Jan Philipp and Hans-Peter Schwarz, (exhibition catalogue) München 1990; Hubertus Adam, Kugel, Prisma und Zylinder. *Revolutionsarchitektur als Ferment des Architekturdiskurses*, in: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Jan. 30th, 1999.

²⁸ Adolph Max Vogt, *Russische und französische Revolutions-Architektur 1789–1917. Zur Einwirkung des Marxismus und Newtonismus auf die Bauweise*, Köln 1974; (2nd ed. Braunschweig 1990).

from further afield, El Lissitzky from Russia. In 1920, Mondrian published *Le Néoplasticisme* in Paris as a programme of abstract-geometrical art and demanded that only horizontal and vertical lines and the primary colours of red, yellow and blue and the three non-colours of black, white and grey should be used.

The building style of New Objectivity (“Neue Sachlichkeit”, “Neues Bauen”) of the Weimar Republic received important stimulus from the neighbouring country to the west, and the same applied to the Bauhaus which was founded in 1919 in Weimar (later Dessau, finally Berlin) and headed by Walter Gropius (later Hannes Meyer, finally Mies van der Rohe). This international network to promote new architecture also included, as its most important partner in the east, the architectural school which was founded in 1920 in Moscow as VKHUTEMAS/VKHUTEIN (ВХУТЕМАС, Высшие художественно-технические мастерские = Higher Art and Technical Studios; ВХУТЕИИ, Высший художественно-технический институт = Institute).²⁹ Like the Bauhaus, which the National Socialists dissolved as early as 1933, the Moscow architectural school only lasted a short time and was closed in 1930. In the 1920s, both architectural schools advocated similar aesthetic and educational reforms, both acted as motors and advocates of the Modern Movement and both influenced a new generation of young architects in the spirit of the avant-garde.

The UNESCO World Heritage List includes testimonials and artistic personalities representing De Stijl and Bauhaus. The Bauhaus sites in Weimar and Dessau (1914–1931) have been protected as part of the World Heritage for ten years, and they keep alive the worldwide memory of well-known Bauhaus artists such as Wassily Kandinsky. The Rietveld Schröder House in Utrecht (1924) has been registered since 2000 as an outstanding architectural monument of the De Stijl Group and an important testimonial to Modernism in the Netherlands between the wars. A year later the House Tugendhat in Brno (1929–30, Czech Republic) was also registered; it was designed by Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969), the last director of the Bauhaus in Dessau and Berlin (1930–1933). But anyone who looks for famous buildings representing the Moscow architectural school VKHUTEMAS-VKHUTEIN on the World Heritage List will be disappointed. The masters and pupils of what is now the Architecture Academy – including famous names such as Konstantin S. Melnikov (1890–1974), Nikolai A. Ladovsky (1881–1941), Vladimir F. Krinsky (1890–1971), the brothers Alexander A. (1883–1959), Leonid A. (1880–1933) and Viktor A. Vesnin (1882–1950) or Ivan I. Leonidov (1902–1959) – are not found on the World Heritage List today, nor are the legendary projects which emanated from this art academy and were so enthusiastically received by contemporaries in Europe in the 1920s.

Chances for Russia from a Foreign Point of View?

I have not found any international architectural history of the 20th century which does not deal with the two main trends in Soviet architecture – avant-garde and neo-traditionalism – and recognise their international influence and importance. The *Lexikon der Weltarchitektur* founded by Nikolaus Pevsner, John Fleming and Hugh Honour says of the Soviet architecture of the 20th century “that the most progressive views developed in the 1920s were accepted in Russia for a short time (El Lissitzky, Vesnin, Tatlin, Ladovsky)”.³⁰ And Maria Kiernan, in her multilingual guide to the architecture of the 20th century in Moscow, even concludes: “Constructivism is the only architectural style in the history of Soviet architecture which had a worldwide effect.”³¹

The origins of Constructivism and Suprematism in architecture and urban design were in Russia. After the Russian Revolution, the concept and movement of Constructivism and Suprematism spread from St. Petersburg and Moscow to central and western Europe, and later to the whole world. The works of Stalinist architecture, which were long ridiculed, are today regarded throughout the world as fine sites. They arose as a reaction to the avant-garde: as a continuation of Modernism and an opposite movement to Modernism. Without the architectural monuments of the heroic avant-garde, the monuments of conservative counter-Modernism (or was it an early Postmodernism?) are inconceivable. Nowhere is this connection more convincing in the visual character of a city than in Moscow.

Unique buildings and architects of Modernism (early Modernism, classical Modernism and post-war Modernism) from all over the world, especially Europe, are now represented on the World Heritage List of UNESCO. This is an unspoken invitation to Russia (or even an unspoken demand) to give the best artists and artistic monuments of the Soviet Union the honour that they deserve in the eyes of international experts. Russia has a unique heritage of 20th century monuments. They should no longer be left out of the World Heritage List, and they should be included in the Russian national Tentative List for nomination as World Heritage sites.

²⁹ Selim Chan-Magomedov, *Vhutemas. Moscou 1920–1930, Paris 1990*.

³⁰ Nikolaus Pevsner, John Fleming, Hugh Honour (eds.), *Lexikon der Weltarchitektur, 2 vols., Reinbek bei Hamburg 1976, vol. II, p. 539*

³¹ Maria Kiernan, *Moskau. Ein Führer zur Architektur des 20. Jahrhunderts, Köln and London 1998, pp. 8–9; (idem, Moscow. A guide to Soviet and post-Soviet architecture, 1998).*