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## **DESIGNING UTOPIA. AVANT-GARDE ARCHITECTURE VS. PROCESSES OF MODERNIZATION**

**Abstract:** In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the relations between the social revolution, the processes of modernization, and avant-garde art and architecture were very close. Piotr Juszkiewicz, analyzing the relations between modernism and totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, stated that “totalitarian regimes did not reject a certain form of artistic language by default because they were interested in their utility”. “Fundamental elements of our architecture are conditioned by the social revolution”, wrote El Lissitzky. In the face of such declarations, the relations between avant-garde designers and social or Communist trends should not come as a surprise. Post-revolutionary Russia became a true test site for new movements, whereas modernist and Constructivist artists enthusiastically proceeded to build the new (better) reality. The development of industry (primarily heavy industry) was to become a driving force behind the modernist processes.

Examples of industrial plants built in the 1920s and 1930s in the Soviet Union show the enormous impact exerted by modern construction and urbanism on the formation of the “new man”. Numerous products of avant-garde architecture reflected the image of the “new world” and became the transmitters of the new Soviet ideology. For the inhabitants of Ekaterinburg, Magnitogorsk, or Kharkov, modernist buildings and landscape layout formed a permanent image of the city and its concept. Urban designs, such as the “Linear City” of Ernst May in Magnitogorsk, were utopian modernist dreams executed on an enormous scale. The circumstances of their creation, followed by the times of their greatness and fall, form a portrait of the avant-garde architecture understood as a utopia, the future that never arrived.

**Keywords:** architecture, avant-garde, modernization, Constructivism, utopia, dystopia

The purpose of this article is a general characterization of the relations between the architectural avant-garde of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the processes of modernization taking place during this period in the Soviet Union. The land of the soviets, the workers’ councils, was the arena of the biggest social, political, and economic experiment in history and an unprecedented attempt at realizing utopian ideas – also on the artistic and architectural ground. The fate of the architectural avant-garde is closely connected with the wide-scale activities aimed at modernizing the country; however, they are also a part of the dystopia which Communist Russia most certainly became. Many publications have been dedicated to the topic of the architectural avant-garde and urban planning, which is why this article does not make another attempt at systematizing the legacy of the Russian

Constructivism or describing its most prominent works. It is, instead, supposed to provoke reflection on how the utopian nature of the movement led to the dystopia of the Soviet social engineering.

### Utopia and modernism

The term “utopia” itself derives from the Greek phrases that may be translated as “no place” (*ou-topos*) and “good place” (*eu-topos*).<sup>1</sup> It has come to denote a set of ideas assuming a struggle for an ideal organization of the world despite the impossibility of their implementation and without taking into account objective external obstacles. Karl Manneheim considered that literary (or rather “ideological”) utopias become ideologies the moment they make contact with reality, i.e. the moment an attempt is made to implement them.<sup>2</sup> The example of the Constructivist activities in the first years of the existence of the USSR illustrates this process rather clearly.

Jerzy Szacki distinguished between heroic and escapist utopias, where the latter ones are based on the visions of an ideal world (country, continent), whereas the former ones combine the dream of a better tomorrow with an imperative to act, whose effect would be the construction of an ideal society from scratch. The faith in the possibility of changing the entire society is what differentiates the heroic utopia of politics from the heroic utopia of order which assumes a priori that the entire society cannot be changed, which is why those who “believe” in the change should, to the extent possible, isolate themselves from the “unbelievers”.

In the light of the above premises, can modernism, as a creative avant-garde project, be regarded as a movement of a utopian nature? According to Chad Walsh<sup>3</sup>, utopia assumes that an individual, as a component of society, is good by definition, whereas his/her character and the character of the entire group may be subject to flexible molding. The ideologists of the Communist country in the initial phase of its formation blindly believed in the possibility of creating a new man. Modern architecture and urbanism constituted the tools of social engineering. House-communes erected in the initial years of the USSR can serve as examples of that strategy.<sup>4</sup> Breaking with old habits, uprooting what was understood as “retroactive” laid ground for the arrival of the “new”. Nikolai Kuzmin, in his project of the apartment block-commune for the miners in Anzhero-Sudzhensk (1928 - 29), even designed a “detailed timetable for the inhabitants down to the minute and even (...) regulated their intimate relations.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. Szacki, *Spotkania z utopią*, Iskry, Warszawa 1980.

<sup>2</sup> K. Manneheim, *Ideology and Utopia. An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1954, pp. 87-88.

<sup>3</sup> C. Walsh, *From Utopia to Nightmare*, Godfrey Bles., London 1962, p. 70.

<sup>4</sup> K. Nawratek, *Ideologie w przestrzeni: próby demistyfikacji*, Universitas, Cracow 2005, p. 75.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

Walsh described utopia as an assumption that the goal of all rational beings should be the struggle for general happiness. There are no obstacles impossible to remove in this struggle. This opinion was shared by modernist artists, while le Corbusier himself made a slightly humorous sketch illustrating a fictitious act of the President of France, which was supposed to facilitate the complete reconstruction of Paris.<sup>6</sup> Both he and his followers believed that large-scale actions are fully justified, and that they, the artists, have a moral right to undertake them. They perceived development as a linear process, while the future, through its limited number of possibilities, seemed largely predictable.

The Constructivist movement was the one in which the utopian dream of the new city and new society began to take shape with increasing intensity.<sup>7</sup> On the Russian territory, their roots may be found in the 19<sup>th</sup> century writings of the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin. He believed that society does not need authority and its structure will be created from the bottom by the “communes” which will autonomously determine the production goals of action and needs. His ideas were taken up by Pyotr Kropotkin, who saw the cure-all for the ailments of the modern society in far-reaching decentralization. The embodiments of the idea of common life were Moisei Ginzburg’s or Nikolai Kuzmin’s houses-communes, social residential areas designed in Poland by Helena and Szymon Syrkus, and the le Corbusier’s Unite d’Habitation. The leading theorist of the utopian Communist anarchism died in 1921 and, in his final years, he was able to see how the Soviet utopia was morphing into a dystopia. “No place” which was supposed to become a real utopia, a “good place”, became a “bad place” instead.

At the same time, in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Yevgeny Zamyatin wrote a dystopian novel *We* (Russian: *Мы*) which was a horrific vision of the totalitarian world, where the will of an individual had been trampled by the will of the collective. The protagonists have no names and their only identification consists of a string of letters and digits. The symbol of the totalitarian world is a square, a clear reference to Kazimir Malevich’s *Black Square*.<sup>8</sup> The attention of a Polish reader will be surely drawn by the idea of the “glass houses”, which in Zamyatin’s novel becomes the opposite of Stefan Żeromski’s vision of modern light-filled edifices known from the pages of his *Przedwiośnie* (Early Spring). Here, the glass houses become a dystopian tool of oppression. Thanks to the transparent walls, the Assistance Office can constantly monitor the citizens, converting the country into a huge Panopticon. References to the totalitarian regime of the USSR are quite obvious.

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<sup>6</sup> J. Wujek, *Mity i utopie architektury XX wieku*, Arkady, Warszawa 1986, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> M. Ilczenko, *Opisując architekturę awangardy. Przypadek Jekaterynburga*, „Autoportret” 2016, no 2 (53), p. 77.

<sup>8</sup> F. Miks, *Czerwony kogut Picasso. Ideologia a utopia w sztuce XX wieku. Od czarnego kwadratu Malewicza do gotówka pokoju Picassa*, trans. M. Szymanowski, Wydawnictwo, Cracow 2016, p. 23.

### The avant-garde and the revolution

In the era of dynamic social and political changes, artists also shared the revolutionary spirit. New (better) world that was supposed to appear on the debris of the old order was to be shaped also by painters, sculptors, and architects. "Lenin turned everything upside down, as I do it in my paintings", wrote Marc Chagall enthusiastically<sup>9</sup>, while El Lissitzky shouted emphatically that Malevich supremacism "shall liberate all those who will become a part of an artistic process, all those who are leading the world to perfection".<sup>10</sup> "After the Old Testament, there was the New Testament. After the New Testament – the good news of communism. After communism, there will be Supremacism."<sup>11</sup> Religious rhetoric is combined with the revolutionary elation and quite an ingenuous faith that art will replace politics.

It turned out relatively early that the expectations of the Communist authorities and avant-garde artists were different. Already in the 1920s, those governing the Soviet Union were not unanimously in favor of the The Constructivists who still saw a great opportunity for the realization of their most daring ideas in the new regime. Lenin himself criticized the new trends in art. "I cannot regard the works of Expressionism, Futurism, Cubism, and other isms as the highest expressions of human genius. I do not understand them".<sup>12</sup> It is no surprise that in spite of the social and ideological involvement of the The Constructivists, already in the 1930s their achievements were dubbed an "international bourgeois conspiracy of formalism, functionalism, individualism, and collectivism".<sup>13</sup> Together with the rejection of the avant-garde aesthetics came the negation of its program policies. In 1930 the Central Committee in one of its resolutions explicitly pointed out that "the kind of currently indestructible utopias include the projects focused on the immediate creation, at the expense of the state, of communist residential areas with an entire collectivization of all the areas of life". "Architects must avoid living in the world of fantasy" – it was cautioned.<sup>14</sup>

In the majority of discussions on the history of the architecture in the Soviet Union, there are mentions of the participation of The Constructivists in the first post-revolution stage of the Land of Councils' construction, omitting the part of the avant-garde in the following actions. The analyses of art of the period in question often reject the totalitarian nature of modernism right away, seeking the origin of its cooperation in the ethos of loyalty to art. The most convenient

<sup>9</sup> M. Chagall, *Ma Vie*, for: F. Miks, *Czerwony kogut.*, p.

<sup>10</sup> J. Milner, *Kazimir Malevich and the Art of Geometry*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1996, p. 174.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Ch. Jencks, *Modern Movements in Architecture*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth 1977, pp. 86-87.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>14</sup> J. Wujek, *Mity i utopie...*, pp. 68-69.

argument of the defenders of the purity of the avant-garde artists' intentions would surely be the thesis on the ignorance of the criminal nature of the system. Unfortunately, at least regarding some of them, we cannot have any illusions – Alexander Rodchenko idealized the Soviet system of “resocialization” through work, and his position did not drastically change even when he had an opportunity to visit one of the labor camps.<sup>15</sup>

It is important to remember that Communism, also during the Stalinist era, was a project entirely modernization-oriented. When in the 1930s Stalin ordered the undertaking of a gigantic work of transforming and modernizing Moscow, former The Constructivists sprang into action hand in hand with faithful advocates of Social Realism. Nikolai Ladovsky or Victor Viesnin together with Karo Alabian and Boris Iofan were creating the modern metropolis.<sup>16</sup> This exceptional symbiosis caught the attention of such researchers as Pare, Hudson, and Schlegel. At the same time, Piotr Juszkiewicz, when analyzing political entanglement of the Constructivist avant-garde in the USSR, emphasized that the history of the relation of modernism and the totalitarian country should be “reconstructed with the highest possible level of precision”.<sup>17</sup>

### **New city for the new man**

One of the most significant goals of the Constructivists involved in the construction of the new Communist Russia was the modernization of the backward country. They were not the first to pursue this objective. As mentioned above, the roots of the modernist utopias of the 1920s and 1930s must be sought in several decades-old anarchist concepts. Already at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Kropotkin had called for combining industrialization with the traditional agrarian character of Russia. “The industrial nations are bound to revert to agriculture, they are compelled to find out the best means of combining it with industry and they must do so without loss of time”<sup>18</sup> – he wrote. In spite of leaning generally towards decentralization, Kropotkin admitted that some branches of industry required a well-developed centralization; “co-operation of hundreds, or even thousands, of workers at the same spot is really necessary”.<sup>19</sup> The reality of a totalitarian country

<sup>15</sup> P. Juszkiewicz, *Cień modernizmu*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2013, p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> The situation of modernist architects in the USSR obviously changed, but their contribution to the construction of the totalitarian country was undeniable. P. Juszkiewicz, *Cień modernizmu....*, pp. 15-18.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>18</sup> P. Kropotkin, *Fields, Factories and Workshops, or Industry Combined with Agriculture and Brain Work with Manual Work*, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1901, p. 127.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

was, of course, far from what one of the fathers of anarchism had imagined. However, despite that fact, in case of the USSR we can talk about a certain degree of decentralization consisting in the ascension of peripheral centers to the rank of metropolises through, among others, “the scattering of industries over the country – so as to bring factory amidst the fields, to make agriculture derive all those profits which it finds in being combined with industry”.<sup>20</sup>

Attempts to change the nature of the existing imperfect forms of settlement made the avant-garde architects of the end of the 1920s to begin searching for a new formula for cities. Partially inspired by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century concept of Arturo Soria y Mata’s *Ciudad Linear*, they rejected traditional centric urban layouts in favor of “linear settlements”. Dynamically developing residential areas, city districts, and new cities built near emerging industrial plants were rationally planned complexes of homogenous multifamily residential apartment blocks and buildings with social and administrative functions that came with them.

Designed in the 1930s by Ivan Leonidov and Nikolai Milutin, the new district of Kharkov was closely related to the tractor factory located there. The linear city was divided into sections consisting of repetitive residential blocks and functional buildings, such as schools or kindergartens. Simple building forms with red brick elevations and artistic shapes of public edifices were kept in the convention of functionalism. The design of the city district itself was based on an east-west axis with a perpendicularly situated axis integrating the cultural center, green areas, and, farther away, the tractor factory.

In the context of Kharkov, Ekaterinburg, “the Russian Manchester”, appears to be an entirely Constructivist city. Its avant-garde architecture does not form a closed enclave functioning next to the former center, but it is the heart of the big city structure. The city was renamed Sverdlovsk and designed in a modern manner – its wide streets and vast squares were surrounded by geometrically-shaped residential and public buildings. The speed of its construction was indeed revolutionary – in the late 1920s and early 1930s one new building a week was commissioned.<sup>21</sup> “Machine” aesthetics and the scale and momentum characteristic for the whole trend became the dominant means of expression in the city area. This Constructivist monoculture had an effect on the inhabitants who, in their majority, were peasants who had come to Sverdlovsk. Since that time, the terms “city”, modernity”, and “Constructivism” became equivalent for them.<sup>22</sup>

As much as the Soviet authorities supported avant-garde urban planning of new socialist cities (*socgorods*) and modern aesthetics in their architecture up to a certain moment, they remained skeptical about the new type of buildings proposed by the Constructivists, namely, the houses-communes. Nikolai Ladovsky tried

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>21</sup> M. Ilczenko, *Opisując architekturę...*, p. 75.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

to popularize the idea of a house-commune in the 1920s<sup>23</sup> and his concepts were developed, among others, by Nikolai Kuzmin, the author of the project Housing Commune for a Miners' Settlement in Anzhero-Sudzhensk (1928-1929). Within the scope of a modernist residential district, he proposed to split the traditional (therefore bourgeois) family and divide the inhabitants by age (separately children, youth, adults, and elderly people). The majority of functions were moved to the common areas, while the apartments were practically reduced to sleeping cabins.<sup>24</sup> Political decision makers put an end to such experiments quite quickly, probably considering them "the manifestation of dangerous utopian ideas".<sup>25</sup>

### Monuments to industrialization

It is worth noting that Communism, even during the Stalinist era, was a thoroughly modernist project. None other than Joseph Stalin himself wrote in 1929: "We are becoming a country of metal, a country of automobilization, a country of tractorization".<sup>26</sup> The Futurists and the Constructivists, fascinated by the possibilities of modern technology, would have surely identified themselves with these words.

One of the prominent constructions of the time was a residential district in Magnitogorsk designed by Ernst May. The contest announced in the 1920s did not deliver satisfactory results; however, it did bring the first conceptions of de-urbanization propounded by Moisei Ginzburg, among others. They assumed urban development combining the characteristics of the countryside and the city and elimination of their contrasts.<sup>27</sup> With time, those conceptions were abandoned, whereas the city became a "grandiose factory for remaking people", a place where "yesterday's peasant... becomes a genuine proletarian"<sup>28</sup>. Ernst May, famous as the designer of social residential areas in Frankfurt am Main, arrived in the USSR in 1929 at the invitation of the Soviet authorities. In 1931 he presented the concept of a residential district that would accommodate 150 000 inhabitants. The linear layout of the residential area was complemented with green areas and public buildings with repetitive forms ("Magnitogorsk" type schools, municipal institutions designed by Margarete Schutte-Lihotzky).

The project rejected any representation of the city "contrary to its socialist nature".<sup>29</sup> Central and cultural center was to be established in the result of the con-

<sup>23</sup> Z. i T. Tołoczko, *W kręgu architektury konstruktywistycznej, neokonstruktywistycznej i dekonstruktywistycznej*, Wydawnictwo Oddziału PAN, Cracow 1999, p. 37.

<sup>24</sup> S. Jacoby, *Drawing Architecture and the Urban*, Wiley, West Sussex 2016, p. 180.

<sup>25</sup> K. Nawratek, *Ideologie w przestrzeni...*, p. 76.

<sup>26</sup> A. Leszczyński, *Skok w nowoczesność: polityka wzrostu w krajach peryferyjnych 1943-1980*, Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Warsaw 2013, p. 209.

<sup>27</sup> P. Trzeciak, *Przygody architektury XX wieku*, Nasza Księgarnia, Warsaw 1974, p. 129.

<sup>28</sup> S. Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain. Stalinism as a Civilization*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1995, p. 72.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

centration of buildings with a specific nature and exceptional scale. Graduation of altitude was also reserved for houses-communes planned around the concentration point of traffic towards the factory.<sup>30</sup> Magnitogorsk grew at the speed worthy of the homeland of the revolution. Work on the construction of the conglomerate began in the mid-1930s, but two years later the city already had 230 000 inhabitants.<sup>31</sup> During the final stage of the construction, known only from the article published in 1932 and a fragment of the plan, May decided to distinguish the public buildings located around the station.<sup>32</sup> It is difficult to clearly assess if this “centralization” was the result of the general intellectual climate in the USSR and the coming Socialist Realism.

In the case of new city districts built near old city centers, the “central” functions were moved to the old center. Designing the residential district Kostino for 25 000 inhabitants, which was never built, Nikolai Ladovsky did not have a representational center in mind. Nikolai Milutin and Ivan Leonidov did the same in Kharkov, where the most important public buildings were located in the very center of the city, far from the new district. The most important building in the “city of tractors” – the Palace of Industry (Derzhprom in Ukrainian, Gosprom in Russian) was built between 1927 and 1929, to a design by Sergei Serafimov, Samuel Kravets and Mark Felger.<sup>33</sup> The fragmented form of a huge scale and incredible constructional complexity is almost a manifestation of the utopian vision of Constructivist cities. Located in a vast square, the building used to be surrounded by other modern projects which after World War II were transformed in the spirit of the Stalinist neoclassicism. Derzhprom maintained its original character and we can admire the soaring tower with the lightness achieved thanks to a great amount of glazed surfaces and reinforced concrete passages measuring 26 meters, which connect different parts of the building at a considerable altitude over the ground. When it was created, the edifice must have caused admiration thanks to its size and momentum. It was a statute of modernity, the forecast of the direction undertaken by the Soviet Union. Did its language, however, speak to the society in a clear and express way, as its creators would have wanted? In spite of its seemingly egalitarian inclusive nature, the modern culture of the post-revolution Russia created by the Constructivists was alien to the agrarian society. It became a utopian dream of the narrow group of intellectuals, partly supported by the government. Zdzisława Tołłoczko did not exaggerate much when she said that Constructivism was a “great intellectual adventure and fascination of the Moscow's and St. Petersburg's (Leningrad's) intelligentsia.”<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 73-74.

<sup>31</sup> A. Leszczyński, *Ideologie w przestrzeni...*, p. 171.

<sup>32</sup> T. Flierl, “Być może największe zadanie, jakie kiedykolwiek postawiono architektowi. Ernst May w Związku Radzieckim (1930-1933), in: *Ernst May 1886-1970*, ed. C. Quiring, W. Voigt, P.C. Schmal, E. Herrel, Muzeum Architektury we Wrocławiu, Wrocław 2012, p. 85.

<sup>33</sup> P. Trzeciak, *Przygody architektury...*, p. 131.

<sup>34</sup> Z. i T. Tołłoczko, *W kręgu architektury...*, p. 11.

## The Polish contexts

The Constructivist avant-garde had a huge impact on the architectural concepts in Europe, including Poland. The Soviet experiences seem extremely interesting in the context of the projects of social residential districts in interwar Poland. Jakub Wujek wrote that “in the stable state structures, [Constructivism’s] broad perspectives had shrunk”.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, if we take a look at the workers’ residential districts in Łódź designed in the 1920s and 1930s, their scale does not resemble that of the Constructivist cities in the USSR. Although they did share the same basic ideas on particular projects, while the local authorities emphasized that “satisfying the housing demand is one of the most urgent and important tasks of the local government”<sup>36</sup>, they had massive differences in the area of social, political, and economical premises and the resulting investment scale. In spite of that, the links between the undertakings of Ernest May or Nikolai Lodovsky and the concept of the Romuald Gutt’s residential project in Nowe Rokicie (1928) in Łódź seem very strong. Simple linear layout was filled with repetitive outline of the apartment blocks. It looks as if the authors wanted to embody the words of Siegfried Giedion who in the same year wrote in “Bauen in Frankreich” that an architect attempts to achieve an anonymous and collective form at the same time.<sup>37</sup>

It seems symptomatic that one of the most interesting visions of the “new world” emerged in Poland right after World War II. “Functionalized Łódź”, the matter in question, remained, however, an unrealized utopian vision of W. Strzeziński who, following the steps of Russian Constructivists, planned the creation of a better living environment “ex nihilo”. The idea of the *functionalized Łódź* itself was based on the ideas of pre-war modernists and constituted an opposition to the 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial city. Large densely populated tenement houses with offices were replaced by functionalist apartment blocks in a linear layout. In place of small and dirty internal yards Strzeziński designed vast green areas providing adequate exposure to sun and ventilation.<sup>38</sup> The artist was convinced that the enormous scope of the necessary transformations of the existing construction in Łódź made it unviable. Instead, he proposed the construction of an entirely new center located along the existing railway tracks to Zgierz. In time, Strzeziński supposed, the “old” Łódź would lose its population in favor of the “new” one. Several decades before, Moisei Ginzburg spoke in a similar manner: “We know the modern city is fatally ill, but we do not wish to treat it. On the contrary, we prefer to destroy it and replace it with new socialist forms of settlement”.<sup>39</sup> These words,

<sup>35</sup> J. Wujek, *Mity i utopie...*, p. 124.

<sup>36</sup> E. Rosset, *Samorząd łódzki w walce z głodem mieszkaniowym*, Drukarnia Polska, Łódź 1930, p. 20.

<sup>37</sup> S. Giedion, *Bauen in Frankreich*, Klinkhardt & Biermann, Leipzig & Berlin 1928, p. 10, for: J.L. Cohen, *Mechanizacja przejmuję władzę*, “Autoportret” 2015, no. 3 (50), p. 22.

<sup>38</sup> W. Strzeziński, *Łódź sfunkcjonalizowana*, „Myśl współczesna” 1947(XI), no. 11(18), pp. 446-447.

<sup>39</sup> J. Wujek, *Mity i utopie...*, p. 38.

found in a letter to Corbusier, were written right before the Famine in Ukraine, the Stalinist purges, and the fight against the avant-garde, whose victims included also Ginzburg himself. Strzeminski's concept emerged on the eve of the darkest times of the Stalinist terror in Poland. In both cases, the avant-garde utopia was replaced by the dystopia of the totalitarian country.

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## **PROJEKTOWANIE UTOPII. AWANGARDOWA ARCHITEKTURA A PROCESY MODERNIZACYJNE (streszczenie)**

W pierwszej połowie XX wieku związki pomiędzy rewolucją społeczną i procesami modernizacyjnymi, a awangardową sztuką i architekturą były bardzo silne. Piotr Juszkiewicz, analizując relacje pomiędzy modernizmem, a ustrojami o charakterze totalitarnym i autorytarnym dowodził, że „reżimy totalitarne nie odrzucały z góry jakiejś formuły języka artystycznego, bo interesowała je ich użyteczność”. „Zasadnicze elementy naszej architektury uwarunkowane są rewolucją społeczną” – pisał El Lissitzky. W obliczu takich deklaracji nie powinny dziwić związki awangardowych projektantów z prądami o charakterze socjalistycznym czy komunistycznym. Porewolucyjna Rosja stała się prawdziwym poligonem doświadczalnym dla nowych ruchów, a twórcy o modernistycznej i konstruktywistycznej proweniencji ochoczo przystąpili do budowy nowej (lepiej) rzeczywistości. Kołem zamachowym procesów modernizacyjnych miał być rozwój przemysłu (przede wszystkim ciężkiego).

Przykłady ośrodków przemysłowych realizowanych w latach 20. i 30. XX wieku na terenie ZSRR pozwalają ocenić ogromny wpływ, jaki nowoczesne budownictwo i urbanistyka wywarły na proces kształtowania „nowego człowieka”. Liczne obiekty awangardowej architektury niosły ze sobą obraz „nowego świata” i stawały się przekaźnikami nowej ideologii radzieckiej. Dla mieszkańców Jekaterynburga, Magnitogorska czy Charkowa, modernistyczne budynki i sposób urządzenia przestrzeni kształtowały trwałe wyobrażenie o mieście i jego idei. Osiedla, takie jak charkowskie „Miasto Linio-we” czy realizacja Ernsta Maya w Magnitogorsku, były realizowanymi w ogromnej skali utopijnymi marzeniami modernistów. Losy ich powstawania, a następnie czasów świetności i upadku, tworzą portret architektury awangardy pojmowanej jako utopia - przyszłość, która nie nadeszła.

**Słowa kluczowe:** architektura, awangarda, modernizacja, konstruktywizm, utopia, dystonia.



1. Residential block in the linear city of Magnitogorsk - (photo Aleksandr Zykov, Wikimedia Commons)



2. Residential block in the linear city of Kharkov (photo Błażej Ciarkowski)



3. Elementary school in the linear city of Kharkov (photo Błażej Ciarkowski)



4. House of State Industry (Derzhprom) in Kharkov (photo Błażej Ciarkowski)