

zeal for fulfilling the building needs of a new society through a new structural and materials technology. Not only is the work a classic in architectural and planning theory, but it constitutes an important document in social and intellectual history.

The present English edition contains an appendix of excerpted writings by Lissitzky's contemporaries—M. J. Ginzburg, P. Martell, Bruno Taut, Ernst May, M. Ilyin, Wilm Stein, Martin Wagner, Hannes Meyer, Hans Schmidt, and others—all of whom illumine the architecture and planning of Europe and Russia during the 1920s. Over a hundred plates and drawings reinforce the text. Lissitzky's wonderfully new world did not materialize—at least not then. For more than twenty years a state-promoted classical eclecticism tolerated no competitor.

Lissitzky's and the Constructivists' ideas nonetheless persisted, and their creativity is reflected in *The Ideal Communist City*, whose authors once again seek an architecture that "responds organically to the social and economic functions of the new urban life" (p. 1). Their principal conclusion is that "the chaotic growth of cities will be replaced by a dynamic system of urban settlement [and] this system will evolve out of an integrated and self-sufficient nucleus," the New Unit of Settlement (p. 100). Recalling the debates between urbanists and deurbanists in Lissitzky's day, the NUS is the authors' answer to the crowded and unplanned industrial city. Such a unit would fulfill *all* the social needs of an individual in conformity with the ideals of a socialist society. These ideas, meritorious for nonsocialist planners as well, suffer in the presentation here. The usual jargon and simplistic observations diminish the reader's enjoyment and deflect his attention from the substance which is important. Because today's planners have drawn on the Constructivist generation, these two works are significant in the evolution of Soviet taste and accomplishment in architecture and city planning.

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L'ARCHITETTURA DEL COSTRUTTIVISMO. Edited by *Vieri Quilici*.
Biblioteca di cultura moderna, 675. Bari: Editori Laterza, 1969. 582 pp.

Quilici's text on Soviet Constructivist architecture fills nearly one-third of this large volume, with the remainder containing essays and documents from the first fifteen years after the Revolution. The book begins by immediately conveying the embattled nature of this avant-garde movement, attacked throughout the twenties and thirties for remaining at once too obsessed with engineering and "production" and yet too optimistic of the imminent coming of the ideal society. The second chapter deals with the varied attitudes the Constructivists displayed in countering these criticisms. Constructivism emerged not as the monolithic concept one often finds in studies of this kind, but as an idea encompassing views ranging from Formalism to Productivism. These views, which often influenced one another through a rather nebulous process Quilici calls "osmosis," all subscribed to the fundamental principle of *zhiznostroenie*, the formation of a new way of life by means of art and architecture. Succeeding chapters focus on the relationship of Constructivism to Suprematism, the debate on the nature and role of proletarian art, the movement "toward a new architectural pedagogy," and the conflict of the urbanist versus deurbanist concepts of city planning. Quilici's comments then conclude with brief remarks on the Vesnin brothers, Melnikov, Ginzburg, and Leonidov.

L'architettura del costruttivismo analyzes many of the same issues examined by

Anatole Kopp in *Town and Revolution: Soviet Architecture and City Planning, 1917–1935* (New York, 1970), but the differences in approach are striking. One major theme in Quilici's work appears to be a refutation of Kopp's contention that "modern Soviet architecture of the twenties owed nothing to the prerevolutionary period." In fact Quilici points out such ties not only to the period just before 1917 but also to the overall Russian national tradition. Constructivism shared much with prewar Futurism, Rayonnism, and Suprematism; the first postrevolutionary art and architecture schools were modeled closely on organizations in operation before the Revolution; and figures such as the Vesnin brothers, Melnikov, and Ginzburg betrayed marked neoclassical characteristics throughout their careers. But even more incisive are Quilici's observations on the truly Russian nature of Constructivist architectural design. For example, Ginzburg's emphasis on the importance of rural areas in the planning of new cities is characteristically Russian, since "the countryside and nature constitute the eternal reserve, spiritual and material, of Russia." Moreover, these new urban concepts share the typically Russian concern for the significant role of empty spaces continuous within the urban complex. In Russia, "architecture appears as an object uncovered, isolated, surrounded by empty space, creating a 'plein-air' effect" (p. 122). Even the enthusiasm shared by these visionary architects can be likened to "a typically Russian sense of devotion to the cause."

This book also reveals several basic shifts from Quilici's *Architettura Sovietica Contemporanea* (1965). His former reliance on economic evidence to explain the development of Soviet architecture, in a manner analogous to Kopp's Marxist approach, has mellowed into a recognition of the complexity of this subject. For example, Quilici earlier attributed the "rapid exhaustion" of the avant-garde of the thirties both to dissension within the movement and to political pressures generated by a new economic structuring of society. In his new book he maintains that the vigor and vitality of Constructivism lasted into the thirties but with a significant change in the Constructivists' general "state of mind" toward a greater willingness to look into the past for inspiration and away from the intense, enthusiastic fervor of the twenties. El Lissitzky's *Russland, Die Rekonstruktion der Architektur in der Sowjetunion* (1930) represents this change. For Lissitzky, as Quilici points out, the architect is no longer the creative, inventive figure, the *zhiznostroitel*, but rather merely the bearer of ideas already present in the conscience of the masses.

L'architettura del costruttivismo certainly has a number of weaknesses. The discussion of the relative merits of the Bauhaus and the Vkhutemas school in the formation of the modern movement becomes pointless given the continuing interaction between the Soviet and Western avant-garde; Quilici's treatment of Ginzburg's work is particularly sketchy; we are uncertain of cuts in the anthology of articles and documents; and the choice and arrangement of the illustrations appear fortuitous. But Quilici succeeds in challenging some basic notions about Russian Constructivism in the twenties and thirties. And merely the republication of so many texts from this period, including Gan's *Constructivism* (1923), which Quilici credits with providing Constructivism its first theoretical and critical foundation, renders the book a valuable addition to the growing literature on Soviet architecture.

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