

placed on Marxist-Leninist philosophers because they start from the assumption that information exists objectively and therefore information processes occur independently of consciousness.

According to the author, the task of Marxist-Leninist philosophers in adapting information theory is to develop definitions of information and interpretations of the propositions and concepts of cybernetics which conform to the relatively rigid (although insufficiently clarified) ideological framework of dialectical materialism. This is achieved by interpreting information as a structural property of material things and processes and by interpreting it in terms of the Leninist doctrine of reflection, which attempts to explain knowledge as an image of material reality. Kirschenmann argues that this approach leads them merely to repeat cybernetics propositions in the inexact terms of the doctrine of reflection.

Kirschenmann explicitly indicates that his principal interest in current Soviet interpretations of reflection theory lies in the philosophical aspects of the adaptation of information theory rather than the sociological aspects of the subject and with the conceptual framework Marxist-Leninist philosophers share rather than the differences among them. He might alternatively have adopted a model which stressed the relationship between cybernetics and historical materialism (i.e., the sociological aspects of the problem) as well as differences in approach and interpretation by Marxist-Leninist philosophers. This would have led him to ask different questions and incorporate into his study information relating to the potential transforming or erosive effects that the adaptation of information theory might have on Marxist-Leninist thought. Instead, starting from his exclusive concern with philosophical questions and his monistic model, he concludes that "the Marxist-Leninist discussion of 'information' has tackled little that is new in the line of fundamental philosophical problems. It has rather led back to the traditional difficulties of Marxist-Leninist philosophy."

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RUSSIA: AN ARCHITECTURE FOR WORLD REVOLUTION. By *El Lissitzky*. Translated by *Eric Dluhosch*. Original title (Vienna, 1930): *Russland, Die Rekonstruktion der Architektur in der Sowjetunion*. 2nd ed. (1965): *Russland: Architektur für eine Weltrevolution*. Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1970. 239 pp. \$10.00.

THE IDEAL COMMUNIST CITY. By *Alexei Gutnov, A. Baburov, G. Djumenton, S. Kharitonova, I. Lezava, and S. Sadovskij*. Translated from the Italian by *Renee Neu Watkins*. New York: George Braziller, 1970. 166 pp. \$6.95, cloth. \$2.95, paper.

That these two works should appear for review together seems most appropriate. Despite the nearly three decades that separated their writing, they possess a continuity of ideas. El Lissitzky, with Tatlin, Malevich, Melnikov, the brothers Vesnin, and others, charted during the 1920s a revolutionary architecture for the new Soviet Russia. Their experimentation—which placed them in the European context with the Bauhaus in Germany, the de Stijl coterie in the Netherlands, and the Esprit Nouveau in France and earned for them the label "Constructivists"—ceased in April 1932, when socialist realism prevailed. As for Lissitzky, though he was wonderfully cosmopolitan, he was Russian above all. This volume displays his

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