Beyond The Limits: The Concept Of Space In Russian History And Culture

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Contents

Jeremy Smith
Introduction .................................................................................. 7

Sergei Medvedev
A General Theory of Russian Space: A Gay Science and
a Rigorous Science ........................................................................ 15

Elena Hellberg-Hirn
Ambivalent Space: Expressions of Russian Identity .................. 49

Chister Pursiainen
Space, Time, and the Russian Idea ............................................. 71

Paul Fryer
Heaven, Hell, or ... Something in Between? Contrasting
Russian Images of Siberia ............................................................ 95

Katerina Gerasimova
The Soviet Communal Apartment .............................................. 107

Anna Rotkirch
Traveling Maidens and Men with Parallel Lives – Journeys as
Private Space during Late Socialism ............................................. 131

Pentti Stranius
Space in Russian (Soviet) Cinema: The Aesthetics of Censorship
and the Case of 'The Mirror' ......................................................... 151

Timo Vihavainen
From Globalism in Confinement to Egocentrism Unbound:
the Spheres of the Russian Intelligentsia ................................. 167
Russia is big. Very big indeed. Stretching half way around the northern hemisphere, from the Polish border in the west to the Bering sea in the east, at the height of Soviet power, the USSR occupied 22,402,200 square kilometres – one sixth of the world’s total land surface, and more that twice the size of the next biggest countries, Canada and China. Even after the break-up of the USSR, the Russian Federation remains by some way the largest country in the world. Nor is this the end of the story. Unlike China or Canada, Russia’s length is far greater than its width – the distance from Kaliningrad to the Bering Strait exceeds 9,000 kilometres. At no time in history has any other state had to deal with anything like such vast distances.

The central role of the extent of Russia’s physical space has long been apparent to historians. Nicholas Riasanovsky’s classic history of Russia opens with the following quotation from the 19th century Russian historian Mikhail P. Pogodin:

Russia! what a marvellous phenomenon on the world scene! Russia – a distance of ten thousand versts in length on a straight line from the virtually central European river, across all of Asia and the Eastern Ocean, down to the remote American lands! A distance of five thousand versts in width from Persia, one of the southern Asiatic states, to the end of the inhabited world – to the North Pole. What state can equal it? Its half? How many states can match its twentieth, its fiftieth part?... Russia – a state which contains all types of soil, from the warmest to the coldest, from the burning environs of Erivan to icy Lapland; which abounds in all the products required for the needs, comforts, and pleasures of life, in accordance with its present state of development – a whole world, self-sufficient, independent, absolute.¹

impose frozen prison, cornucopia of natural wealth or a terrestrial
heaven, Siberia will always invoke strong emotions in Russian
society, not least a profound respect for the powers of this still greatly
unknown giant. Several troubling and contradictory questions do
arise. One is faced with the fact that Russians continue to both fear
and hold Siberia sacred and yet, if accepting this premise, how can
one reconcile this to the region’s ruthless exploitation? This has been
the negative consequence of the Siberian image — the mythologising
of Siberia’s endless landscapes and never-ending resources has led to
reckless exploitation and desecration of the territory, leading to some
of the most severe environmental problems facing the current Russian
government, and the beginnings of organised opposition in bodies
such as the Siberian Accord. It is this indiscriminate development of
Siberia that Siberians themselves, such as Rasputin and Aipin,37 have
decried in their writings, attempting to enlighten their fellow citizens
with a more realistic image of their Siberian ‘home’. The very fact
that these mental images, perceptions and preconceived notions about
the region are contradictory and convoluted and are able to elicit such
churning emotions in individuals indicate Siberia’s vital ‘space’ in the
Russian cultural landscape. This vast array of Siberian contrasts does
suggest that the historic attempts to control information and
independent thinking by both the tsarist and Soviet regimes have
resulted in a social environment of mistrust and rumour, a major
contributor to heavily-romanticised images. But it is, surely, time to
escape the confines of the restrictive ‘Heaven-Hell’ dichotomy. The
author Leonid Borodin has written that in Siberia, ‘I shall discover for
myself the essence of what is called the meaning of life’.38 The
opportunity now for Russians to deconstruct for themselves the
images of Siberia is improving with the gradual opening up of post-
Soviet society, though with this greater accessibility and knowledge
the ‘exotica’ that once was Siberia begins to fade into the past.
Though the love that Borodin, Rasputin and others have for this vast
region will perhaps still echo in the hearts of their fellow compatriots
for many years to come.

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part of the project of M.A. Vinokhmovakaya “The old and the new
Leningradians”. The informants are people who lived in Leningrad in the 1920s
and 1930s, natives as well as migrants. The author of the project “Assimilation of
the nobles in a city (1917–1941)” S.A. Tchuikina has kindly provided the family
stories used in this article.
The documents and publications of the pre-war period, interviews and memoirs
are used as the main sources.
2 For surveys of the theory of stratification, see A. Giddens The Class Structure of
the Advanced Societies (London, 1981); J. Scott Stratification and Power.
3 N. Elias Die Hoheitsgesellschaft: Untersuchungen zur Soziologie des

37 See, for example, Rasputin’s ‘Proshchanie s Materoi’ in Pozvesti (Moscow, 1986),
pp.155–326 and ‘Sibir’ Sibir’;, op. cit. or Aipin’s ‘Not by Oil Alone’ IWGIA
Newsletter, 1989, No.57 (May), pp.136–143.
of study is the work of P. Bourdieu about the *kabyle* house. This work serves as an empirical basis for the conception *habitus* and the logic of practice. From ethnographic material Bourdieu has shown how the *habitus* (the predisposition to act in a certain way in certain situations) is formed through the structure of habitat (dwelling). The incorporation of the body into the space of the house, and the semiotic of this space brings about acquired habits of thinking and actions, which reproduce fundamental schemes of culture. So, the *kabyle* house is organised on the principle of division into light and dark, masculine and feminine, open and secret and the whole world, according to *kabyle* notions, has the same structure. And because of this the *kabyles* act in the outer world under the guidance of the models of behaviour appropriate to certain parts of the house.

The structure of your dwelling and relations between a person, between his body and his house are very important components of the organisation of daily occurrences. For every person the habituation is a category of vital importance which is linked with many relations and practices, from the education of children to interrelations with neighbours. A house is that space where everyday life takes place with all its problems, joys, tricks and compromises. The association of house and private life was formed in the consciousness of European peoples during the last five centuries. 'Privatisation' of the house is a part of the general process of 'privatisation' of life. This process took place in West European states during the XV-XIX centuries and meant the growing separation of the individual firstly from the state, then from society, considered as social solidarity, and more later from the family. A house, associated with privacy, is outside of State power (the inviolability of the home) and the public sphere (in the words of E. Goffman, the house is a backstage.) But it does not mean that the house is outside of the process of creating and reproducing the social order. Habitation is a significant space where the rules of life are established in a certain society.

In the Soviet Union the housing problem was always one of the most important. The strategies of life of many soviet people depended on the so-called housing question. Soviet people went to work in the northern and arctic regions in order to receive an apartment without waiting their turn, they contracted bogus marriages to acquire the right of residence, they gave birth to children in order to be included on the lists of persons who needed improvements in their living conditions. Townspeople lived for many years in family hostels and communal apartments. The subject of this article is the communal apartments of Petrograd—Leningrad—Saint Petersburg. Today 13.7% of apartments in St Petersburg are communal and 23.8% of St. Petersburg's inhabitants live in these apartments. A communal apartment is an apartment in a house which belongs to the state housing fund of St. Petersburg or to the municipal housing fund...and in which some tenants live.' This is the definition given in the law 'On the allocation of vacant dwelling space in communal apartments in St Petersburg' adopted by the Legislative Assembly of Saint Petersburg on 12th February 1997. But the communal apartment means more that just a juridical notion. It is a form of living together with strangers, and this form of living is unknown in other countries, it poses many problems for the present municipal power, and it is the most unprestigious housing, it is a part of the history of soviet daily life. In this article two questions are discussed. How did communal apartments appear in Leningrad? And what was the role of this type of dwelling in the creation and reproduction of the social order, incarnated in soviet daily life?

THE PROJECTS OF THE 1920S: 'THE REDISTRIBUTION OF HOUSING' AND HOUSE-COMMUNES

When the Bolsheviks came to power they abolished private property and all available housing became municipal property. The state, through the local Soviets, for the first time in history obtained the...

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7 Chas pob 1997, 7th February.
8 Smena, 1997, 11th March.
9 ' Dekret VTVHK ob otmena prava chastoi sobstvennosti na nedvizhimosti v gorodakh ' in *Zhilishchnoe zakonodatelstvo* (Moscow, 1924), pp.3–5.
possibility of determining who has the right to build housing, what housing, when and where, and who, where and with whom one may live. The period from October 1917 until 1920 is characterised as 'an epoch of housing distribution according to class affiliation'.\textsuperscript{10} All the enthusiasm for the 'redistribution of housing' is expressed in the slogan 'Palaces to the workers!' According to Engels' project on the obligatory expropriation of the apartments of the exploiters after the attainment of political power, the owners of two wealthy apartments, under the threat of confiscation of property, had to vacate one of them 'for the needs of poor inhabitants'.\textsuperscript{11} A wealthy apartment was considered 'every apartment in which the number of rooms is the same or more than the number of permanent residents of this apartment.'\textsuperscript{12} This started the process of samouplotenie (the voluntary giving up of a part of rich men's dwelling space) and the formation of communal apartments. In March of 1918 there began the uplotenie (reduction of living space) of the 'bourgeois' (meaning persons living on the profits from capital or owners of commercial or industrial enterprises with hired labour) by 'proletarian elements'.

The provision of living space at that time became the main index of living conditions, i.e. the number of square metres per person. The notion of living space had appeared in tsarist Russia, and in Soviet Russia it became not only an indicator of the quality of living conditions, but it also became the basis for fixing the rate of dwelling space. The setting of quotas of living space authorised for adult persons was a good way out of a difficult situation in which the authorities found themselves after the rejection of market relations. In the past one had a habitation for which one could pay rent. But now it was necessary to find a criterion of housing distribution independent of economic status. The biological needs of human beings for a certain amount of space, air volume, cleanliness, dryness etc. made up this criterion. The norms of these needs were fixed by experts in social sanitation and hygiene. For example 'hygiene has determined that the minimal volume of air has to be 20 m\(^2\) per one adult person, and overpopulation leads to 'higher mortality, morbidity' etc.'\textsuperscript{13} In 1919 Narkomzdrav (the People's Commissariat of Public Health = Ministry of Public Health) approved medical norms of dwelling space, which is equal to 18 square arshin (Russian archaic linear measure = 71 cm.) per person. Social-structural factors are taken away, and all persons are equalised as biological creatures. On this basis there began the creation of a new system of privileges and advantages in housing distribution. This system reflected the formation of a new social structure.

House-communes were considered an ideal variant of housing. The ideas of the socialist Owen and the English engineer Howard about 'phalanstery' (prototypes of house-communes) integrated very well into Bolshevist ideology. House-communes appeared in 1918–1919. There were 51 house-communes in Petrograd in 1922. These house-communes ought to have been islands of Utopia realised, 'socialism in one building'\textsuperscript{14}. It was supposed that these house-communes would be exemplary houses for working people, schools of collectivism, in these houses women would be free of slave housekeeping labour, houses should train people in self-government, should favour the withering away of the family and the reorganisation of modes of life. These houses were imagined as buildings for 5000 persons, with a system of rooms, with a common kitchen on each floor, a library, theatre hall, laundry etc.\textsuperscript{15}

At the end of the twenties the question 'What sort of houses should working people have' was discussed again. Most architects, engineers and sociologists defended the idea of new house-communes for workers The arguments were as follows: 1) It is impossible to renovate the modes of life in old houses 'we have to organise a new mode of life in old houses. All habitations inherited from the old tsarist regime are soaked throughout with mossy old ideas because all houses in old times were built with the purpose of isolating completely all families and households.'\textsuperscript{16} And so it is necessary to

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{10} V. Stepanov, 'Perenaseleishnost' k vartii' in Zhilishche dolo 1924, no.2, pp.17–18.
  \item \textsuperscript{11} This description was coined by Richard S. Inhouse-communes. see his Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Visions and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution (Oxford, 1989).
  \item \textsuperscript{12} 'Obratovyye doma' in Kraamina gazeta, 1919, 3rd June, p.3.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} P. Kozhanyi 'Zhilishchne stroitel'sto n novyi byt' in Zhilishchne kooperatsia, 1924, no.5, p.4.
\end{itemize}
build houses of a new type for the collectivisation of life. 2) The economic point of view: collective houses are cheaper. The Economic Council in 1927 resolved to ‘turn the attention of building departments of the RSFSR...to the expediency of the realisation of building new types of houses with collective use of auxiliary rooms (kitchens, dining-rooms, bathrooms, laundries etc.).’

Economic demands coincided with ideological declarations: the socialist town has to overcome the opposition between town and countryside, it should berationally organised, orientated towards industry, and the main idea is that it should resist capitalist influence and consequently it is impossible to orient an apartment towards a family. Ideas of socialist towns inspired architects, many of whom were under the influence of constructivism, to make Utopian projects and prognosticate the downfall of the family because according to these ideas the existence of the family contradicts the socialist way of life. The main characteristics of houses-communes became ‘moving the functions of daily meals, child upbringing and laundering away from an apartment’ and the demand that ‘everybody has to live on principles of the most strict regulations and are subordinate to the regulations of a house.’

Life in house-communes should be run under the strict control of neighbour-friends, and this control did not allow one to lead a reprehensible double life: ‘one face in a factory or in an enterprise, with communist phraseology on the tip of your tongue, and another face, the face of vulgar Philistinism, at home, in the family.’ Vertical control (through the warden of the hostel and different commissions) and horizontal control (through neighbour-friends) made it possible to unmask the difference between a ‘public’ and a ‘home’ Self. By means of measures of social pressures a person should be only a ‘public’ person, open for constant control and observations.

PROJECTS OF THE 1930S: HIERARCHY OF SPACES AND ISOLATED APARTMENTS

There were many projects for buildings house-communes, but only an insignificant portion of them was realised because of the shortage of investment. The attempts to realise the ideas of ‘collective life’ failed in practice: the construction of house-communes was very expensive, common dining-rooms were empty, there were month-long laundry-queues and the phenomenon of the family obstinately refused to disappear. A house-manager of one house-commune wrote that ‘we have not enough education for collective life, in each of the house-communes there are interminable squabbles over the use of kitchens, laundries etc.’ In magazines the desires of workers to build isolated two or three-room apartments with all conveniences and kitchens were published. In 1931 ideologists had to admit that ‘it is impossible to ignore the fact of the existence of the family in modern forms as habitual units of people in everyday life.’

Although the liquidation of private housekeeping and the family remained among the projects of the construction of communism, it was put off for an indeterminate time, and at the present time it was necessary to built habitations ‘of a transitional period’ where ‘the forms of collectivisation of life can be realised only voluntarily.

At that time the change of trends in architecture took place, and architects turned from constructivism to ‘Stalinist classicism’. The thirties were the time of the strengthening of a new hierarchy of ‘spaces and men’. The stratified system of soviet society and the structure of some social groups changed. First of all is the question of new social configurations of intellectuals and workers. A new elite and middle class became firmly established in the social hierarchy through the capturing of values which were inaccessible for the main part of the population. High levels of soviet society ‘became

17 ‘Postanovlenie EKOSS RSFSR o regulirovani zbilischnogo stratile’sva... Bulletin’ finansovogo i khoziaistvennogo zakonodatel’sta (hereafter BFKhZ) 1927, no.15, p.540.
18 Zhilishchne tovarishchestvo 1927, no.29, pp.5-6.
19 ‘Partinnaia rabota v ZhAKTakh’ in Zhilishchne delo 1928, no.3, p.4.
20 Zhilishchne delo 1923, no.3, p.9.
21 Voprosy kommunal’nogo i zbilischnogo khoziaistva 1931, no.6, p.7.
22 Za sozialisticheskuiu rekonomistkiu gorodov 1933, no.4, pp.15-21.
23 An analysis of these two parallel processes is given in V. Papernyi, ‘Kultura Dva’ in Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie 1996, pp.100-143.
bourgeois’ and wanted to lead a ‘cultural mode of life’. In the conception of culture the main values were the family, a classical education, classical art, a good taste. A comfortable life, consumption, social protocol and proprieties were important for the new elite. The frontier between the public and private spheres changed. In the twenties all displays of privacy and personality were condemned as counter-revolutionary remnants of the ‘old life’, ‘Philistinism’, ‘petty bourgeoisie’. In the thirties privacy was not disapproved of as it was in earlier soviet times, but personal life (lichnaia zhizn’ – the family, individual consumption) was very actively propagated. These social processes were reflected in housing ideology and in the practice of housing construction.

The common norms of housing projects adopted in 1931 divided all dwelling houses into four categories where the first category includes the building of avenues and squares of the capital city, and the fourth category includes provisional dwelling, mainly barracks. Although there was a permanent shortage of money for building, the Chief Directorate of Communal Building ordered: ‘The main type of building for construction in 1931 is a dwelling house with individual apartments’. This decree was explained by ‘the changed cultural and everyday necessities of the working masses.’ In 1934 the Presidium of the Leningrad Soviet inserted into ‘The Addenda to the common norms of planning’ the theses that the main element of the internal lay-out of a dwelling house is an individual apartment for families with different numbers of members. The 1st and 2nd All-Union Congresses of Architects (1937, 1938) also issued directives to build small apartments.

In the thirties the isolated apartment became a kind of reward for great services to the country. The heroes of the Stalin epoch were the Stakhanovites and they were rewarded with apartments. 100 Stakhanovites of the Stalin automobile factory were rewarded with apartments as early as October 1935 (the Stakhanovite movement began in August). Beginning from 1932 special houses for the specialists were built. One of these houses was the House of Narkomkhоз (Ministry of the Economy) designed by the architect Gal’perin in 1937. This design for a model demonstration of a house of a ‘higher type’ was completely contrary to the projects of the epoch of ‘the collectivisation of life’. The ideal house at the end of the twenties was a house for workers with a corridor system, without individual kitchens and bathrooms, with a common laundry, a day nursery, a Lenin’s hall. The project of Gal’perin was earmarked for the elite specialists, and every apartment had a kitchen, bathroom, a room for washing clothes, a dryer, storeroom, one room for domestic servants and two entrances. They planned to place in the lavatory a bidet, a toilet table, a sofa and a little cupboard for toilet articles. The door-keepers at the main entrances had to observe the coming and going of the tenants and their guests, and this especially indicated the high status of the inhabitants and the exceptional status of the house.

Housing policy, oriented to the building of isolated apartments, expressed the changes of the principles of stratification and the strengthening of the new social structure (workers as a privileged group in the twenties – elite specialists with great services to their country in the thirties), ideas about the role of private life (proclamation and negation of collectivism in the twenties – the family idyll under the control of the state and the public in the thirties), about the most important demands of habitations (economy and rationality, according to the norms in the twenties – comfort and culture in the thirties). The ideological orientation changed. The idea of the commune which was dominant in the twenties, was changed to the idea of an apartment for one family in the thirties. This change reflected the process of the privatisation of life and the strengthening of a new elite. But this process was reflected only at a ‘high’ level: in resolutions, ordinances, norm regulations, leading articles etc. If we look
through some court cases, letters to the magazines, helpful advice, instructions of NKVD (Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennih Del – People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs) etc. we can see that ‘the protagonist’ of the twenties as well as of the thirties was the same communal apartment with all its conflicts, regulations, partitions, space reduction, plenipotentiaries, hooliganism, common WCs, common kitchens etc.

In 1932 the desurbanist Ginzburg noted the stratification of housing when the elite had isolated apartments and the bulk of the population lived in communal apartments. He wrote: ‘We know that only a very small strata of society are able to live in 3-room apartments. It is the highly paid section of specialists and workers. The majority of the population has only one room and a 3-room apartment becomes a kind of family hell because no less than 3 families live there.' In the end of the thirties only 25 % of workers had isolated apartments, although the working class in the USSR was, ideologically, the privileged class. How did the communal apartments which were no longer part of an ideological project and were considered as a provisional evil become the most widespread type of housing in pre-war Leningrad?

THE ORIGINS OF THE COMMUNAL APARTMENT

According to the ideological project the quantitative and qualitative redistribution of space should occur. But nobody hurried to realise these decrees of Soviet power. In March 1918 a newspaper wrote that ‘the bourgeoisie cheat us in all ways. They invent non-existing tenants, register their relatives and familiars to defend their habitation from the invasion of ‘working riffraff’’. In their memoirs many intellectuals of that time wrote about the fear of the commissions for the reduction of dwelling space. People known as ‘former persons’ tried to defend their houses and their private lives, and if the reduction

of dwelling space was inevitable, they chose as neighbours representatives of their social environment.

The workers did not hurry to move to a new place as well. The communist representatives organised meetings where they tried to convince the workers to use their right to occupy new apartments ‘in the name of health and the happiness of their children.’ But for some reason the workers did not carry this out. The reasons were 1) economic reasons: moving to enormous manor-apartments demanded great charges for firewood and the transportation of property was excessively expensive. 2) Removal provoked psychological discomfort because of the unaccustomed great space, the abundance of unknown things and equipment, living together with ‘the former’ i.e. the shortening of physical distance, while at the same time keeping a social distance. Very often workers chose servants’ rooms for living, and maybe not only for economic reasons: a small room without luxurious modelling on the ceiling was more usual for them. 3) the centre of the city was not convenient for the workers because their working places were very far away, in the suburbs. Many workers had their domestic cattle and kitchen-gardens, which it was impossible to imagine in the centre of the city.

By April 1919 the Petrograd Housing Commission had lodged about 36 000 workers and their family members. They decided to evacuate ‘the formers’ from the centrally heated houses and to lodge workers there to economize on firewood during the fuel crisis which took place in the winter of 1919–1920. Evacuated ‘formers’ and tenants had to look for new ‘bourgeois’ apartments to reduce space per person in living accommodation with the purpose of economising in fuel. If the evacuated bourgeois family has superfluous rooms they lodge other bourgeois families there. In Petrograd in October 1920 regional troikas (special three-member commissions) for the reduction of dwelling space were organised. The tasks of these troikas were to reduce space per person in living accommodation as much as possible on the one hand and to keep sanitary norms on the other hand. They gave the apartment owners 2 weeks to ‘look for cohabitants’, the so called ‘right of voluntary giving up of a part of a

33 'Protiv fal'sifikatorov i vul'garizatorov' in Soregor 1932, no.1, pp.25–27.
34 'O prave kazhogo na samopotrenee' in Vechernii Peterburg 1997, 1st August.
35 'Kvartirni spassat' ot bezdomnykh' in Kraesnaya gazeta 1918, 6th March, p.3.
36 See the examples in N. Lebina, 'Kommunal'nyi, Kommunal'nyi, kommunal'nyi mir...' in Rodina 1997, no.1, pp.16–21
37 'Doma-rabochim' in Kraesnaya gazeta 1918, 28th August.
38 P. Starozhilov, 'Cherepashii khod' in Kraesnaya gazeta 1919, 4th April.
39 'Perselenie v burzhuaznii doma' in Kraesnaya gazeta 1919, 15th September.
40 A. Bolotin, 'Perselenie v burzhuaznii doma' in Kraesnaya gazeta 1919, 11th September.
41 'O nacional'nykh troikakh po uplotneniu' in Izvestia Petrosovetov 1920, 20th October.
dwellingspace’, and if they did not use this right, superfluous rooms were occupied by force. This meant that the social structure of certain apartments could remain homogeneous in such cases but there were the cases of ‘social misalliance’ when the former rich owner of the apartment lived together with lodged proletarians.

At the time of the 1923 census one family living in one apartment was considered the norm, but in practice only 48.4% of apartments were occupied by one family. Most such apartments were in workers’ regions because the apartments there were small. In 1926 only 23.81% of families lived in isolated apartments. But a very small part of the remaining 76% lived in ‘ communal apartments’ per se. The fact is that in the time of NEP many apartments were given for personal rent and for life ownership to their former owners or to persons who bought it at auction. The existence of the institution of apartment owners gave the local Soviets the possibility of saving the available housing stock from destruction and receiving rents regularly in spite of low levels of receipts from the inhabitants. The landlords lived in one or in some rooms and rented out the rest of the rooms. The landlords chose the tenants on the principles of personal sympathy. In this case they took into account the rate of rent, fixed for different categories. According to these rates landlords paid a sum to the house management, and the difference between the rent received and the sum paid gave the landlord rather good profits. Some landlords not only paid their own rent at the expense of tenants but lived on this money. This system functioned in the same way as the system of lucrative housing in pre-revolutionary St. Petersburg. In 1926 about a half of the Leningrad population had such relations with landlords.

The houses which were under municipal ownership and were at the disposal of Kommunotdels (Department of Communal Economy of local Soviets), and were nor rented, were called communal houses. It was possible to receive a room which belonged to the Trust of Communal Houses through local Soviets only, and there was a queue to receive dwelling space. The chief of a communal house was a specially appointed manager. It is most likely that the notion of ‘ communal apartment’ came from the name of ‘ communal house’. In 1927 the Trust of Communal Houses was the owner of 301 buildings where 47,000 inhabitants lived. At that time the ‘ communal dwelling space’ was considered to be the worst kind of dwelling. Permanent quarrels between neighbours, dirt, damaged equipment, ‘the odour of the WC changes the odour of pie’, ‘the house-manager leads the inhabitants to the WC’ – such are the descriptions of these apartments. The state of communal apartments is defined as ‘unsatisfactory’, and the conclusion was that ‘the experience of communal apartments showed the absolute ineffectiveness of keeping them in further use’.

In the middle of the twenties the term ‘ communal apartment’ was used in Leningrad periodicals in the more broad sense, as a definition of apartments without landlords; i.e. apartments without an owner or individual apartment leaseholder who had the right to lease rooms as he thought best and who paid the house management according to the rent, fixed for different categories of tenants according to their social status. An especially appointed or elected plenipotentiary of the Housing Association had to observe general order in the apartment. In 1926–1928 a discussion took place about the necessity of keeping landlordism. Landlordism was opposed to the interests of Housing Associations which were the main form of house management in the twenties. This institution was an obstacle to the realisation of the policy of dwelling distribution, which was to the advantage of the authorities, and violated ‘the class principle’ of dealing with housing. At the time of the removal of NEP the institution of landlordism came to be considered as ‘preserving capitalist elements’ which did not conform to the political course and the question arose of converting all ‘ landlords’ apartments into communal ones. A description of this process is given in the article ‘Mistress of the apartment’. An employee of the Russian Museum, a certain Mitropskaya, living in Hertsen (now Bolshaya Morskaya) was the landlord of a 233 m² apartment. She occupied 34 m², and the rest she rented to other tenants. ‘The ‘landlord’ used free rooms as her own without paying

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42 Materialy po statistike Leningrada i Leningradskoi gubernii. Vip. 6 (Leningrad, 1925), p.110.
43 V. Bishko, ‘Dom i kvartiry Leningrada i Leningradskoi oblasti po perespe 17 dekabria 1926 goda’ in Blatients Leningradskogo Oblastnye Obshchestva, 1929, no.22, p.57.
44 On 1st January 1927 the number of Leningrad inhabitants was 1,618,600. According to the data there were 197,318 apartment tenants and 668,990 room inhabitants. XV let diktatury proletariat: Ekonomo-statisticheskii sbornik po gor. Leningradu i Leningradskoi oblasti (Leningrad, 1932), p.97; Zhitishchne delo 1926, nos. 14–15, p.8.
45 Zhitishchne delo 1927, no.14, p.39.
47 Zhitishchne delo 1926, no.7, pp.22–24.
attention to the interests of the house management and the members of ZhAKT' (zhilishchno-arendnoe kooperativnoe tovarischestvo – housing rent co-operative association). One Room became free in the apartment, and the house management wanted to give it to one of its members. But Mitropol'skaya registered her sister as the tenant of this room and then rented it to 'an outside tenant'. The house management brought an action against Mitropol'skaya. The court deprived Mitropol'skaya of her ownership rights and declared the apartment 'communal'. In 1929 all free apartments were occupied for the sole disposition of house managements. The landlords were changed by the plenipotentiaries, or by appointed tenants, and the apartments became communal. It was reported in an interview about the origin of a Leningrad communal apartment: 'The owners of this apartment in Pioneer street [a street in the centre of Leningrad - E.G.] lived there many years ago, but later on, when they began to separate, my brother......came in 1926, to take this room on lease. Probably, when the landlords were no more there, apartments became communal. Previously they rented these apartments and received money. And later they....became communal.' (The informant is a woman, born in 1914, who came to Leningrad in 1931, from a working-class family).

The reduction of sanitary norms of square metres per person promoted the creation of new communal apartments and the reduction of living space in existing apartments. The sanitary norm for living space in 1926 in Leningrad was 13.5 m² per person, but it was reduced to 10 m² per person in 1928, and to 9 m² per person in 1931. This meant that it was necessary to 'reduce the living space according to the norms', or to move to a smaller room, or to register somebody in the room, or to change the lay-out of the apartment. The house management registered new rooms as 'above the norms'. So, the living conditions of inhabitants of Leningrad were becoming worse and worse, and new tenants were being lodged in the communal apartments.

Analysing the housing situation in the 1920s and 1930s it is possible to come to the conclusion that the Bolshevik project for solving the housing problem was unrealised. Everything stood against its realisation: the people, the structure of the city, and the buildings.

This example shows how ideological projects were transformed in practice, how the strategy of the authorities was perceived and changed in everyday life. Although the variant of some families living together in one apartment was envisaged by the authorities, it was not considered appropriate as the ideological model or as the main type of habitation. The origins of communal apartments depended on many factors existing at the same time which had unforeseen results. We shall name the most important of these factors: 1) there were houses with large apartments of many rooms in the centre of the city; 2) the priorities of State policy (development of industry, militarisation) allowed no possibility of assigning enough money for housing construction; 3) large-scale migration to the city created housing problems and led to the reduction of living space; 4) the opposition of socialism to capitalism should mean that the mode of dwelling in the USSR differs essentially from the capitalist mode, and that led to the nationalisation of available housing and the right to distribute it; 5) the conception of living space made it possible to distribute apartments irrespective of family and the social status of tenants and apartment configuration, and to lodge aliens in one apartment.

If the notion of communal apartment includes such characteristics as several tenants living in one apartment, state ownership of living space, the impossibility of choosing neighbours, heterogeneous background of tenants, distribution of living space according to sanitary norms, rules of living imposed from outside, horizontal and vertical control, so this 'classic' communal apartment became the most widespread type of housing in Leningrad in the 1930s. The communal apartments did not correspond to the idea of the 'socialist city'. Its existence did not correspond to the 'permanent improvement of the material and cultural level of the working people', 'proclaimed collectivism', or 'the socialist way of life'. But the spontaneous origin of communal apartments did not mean that the authorities would not use the existence of communal apartments to achieve their own political goals. Stephen Kotkin, who researched the living conditions in Magnitogorsk, noted that housing was a very important field in the process of creating new regulations, in which the interrelations of the state and the individual were being defined, while the substance of everyday life and the new micro-order were being created.

48 Zhilishchnoe delo 1928, no.1, p.39.
49 'Prawa o obizannosti s'emushchika' in Zhilishchnoe delo 1929, no.14, p.15.
50 In this case it is very interesting that this woman from a working-class family whose brother came to Leningrad from the provinces is talking about 'separating' but not about 'the reduction of living space', and it demonstrates the difference of perception of the same fact by people from different social levels.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONTROL

Social and political control were introduced to the lodging of strange persons in one space, and the interrelation of these persons was regulated from outside. The status of senior pleni potency was established for it, who was responsible for maintaining the rules of registration and the sanitary rules of apartment maintenance. Usually the NKVD approved the "rules of internal order in houses and apartments", and the relations in the apartment were regulated by these rules. 52 The Presidium of the Leningrad Soviet approved the rules of order in communal apartments in Leningrad. To control the realisation of these rules, besides the senior pleni potency, observer commissions were established in communal houses. 53 After the adoption of these rules the personal responsibility for abiding by these rules by all tenants of the apartment was introduced. Vertical control was added to the horizontal control (neighbour on neighbour), and observation became asymmetric (both parties see one another but one of them has more rights). The pleni potency is responsible to the house management and administratively bodies. There was a point in the rules of internal order which obliged the tenants "to give to the pleni potency true and exact information about their status and salary as well as about all changes in this respect." 54

In 1933 one-man management by the house-manager was established in houses in order to struggle against the absence of personal responsibility, and "in order to establish real personal responsibility for the condition of apartments and places of common use". The institution of responsible tenants which had to watch over the rules of internal order was also established. 55 The house management appointed the responsible tenants and made written contracts with them. All tenants after a certain time had to give certain commitments to the responsible tenant, and they undertook "to obey the orders of the responsible tenant in respect of rules of internal order, care of equipment, repairs" etc. The responsible tenants had the right to summon the tenants to the comrades' court, and to demand through the People's Court expulsion of tenants if they damaged equipment in the apartment or did not obey the rules of internal order. These pleni potency were given preference for the occupation of free rooms in the apartment, and once every three years they could repair their own rooms at the expense of the house management.

Thus the basis was created for informing, which occurred on a mass scale after the assassination of Kirov in 1934. The possibility of improving living conditions encouraged voluntary informing and participation in the "unmasking" of people's enemies. One woman, who lived in Leningrad before the war, talked about her woman neighbour, the former owner of the apartment, the director of a musical school. When she was asked "Have the neighbours informed in order to improve their living conditions?" the interviewee woman (who was a responsible party worker at that time) answered: "I think they have. Because housing was a very difficult problem. And that forced people. Ekaterina Pavlovna (the former apartment owner) was very afraid of it - they lodged me there and who was I, what was I? She was very afraid that I would inform. When they appointed her director I gave a positive testimonial (...) I remember that they invited me to the regional Committee several times (the director of the school was still one of 'the formers') and I always testified positively" (the informant M.I., born in 1908, came to Leningrad in 1927, with a secondary education). In this situation it was quite possible to slander a person out of envy, to take vengeance upon 'the former' because she looked down on her neighbours, or upon a neighbour because of quarrels in the kitchen. These calls to the regional Committee encouraged people to inform, giving them the chance to increase their living space.

NEIGHBOURLINESS

During the period of NEP and the redistribution of dwellings 'the formers' and 'the presents' tried to keep themselves spatially segregated. When at the end of the 1920s almost everybody was lodged in communal apartments, it then became very important, especially for 'the formers', to maintain a symbolic distance. In the communal apartments where people from different social levels lived it was a daily task to preserve the boundaries between them. A story of a noble family shows how this symbolic distance between 'the

52 Zhilishchnoe delo 1927, no.3, p.13.
54 "Postanovenia i rasporiazhenia Lensoveta i ego osdelov 1933," Vyp. 26, pp.1-10.
55 "O merakh po uluchsheniu upravleniia domami v g. Leningrade" Postanovenia i rasporiazhenia Lensoveta i ego osdelov 1933, Vyp. 26, pp.1-10.
formers' and 'the worker' tenants was maintained if it was impossible to keep a physical distance. The style of life and the organisation of everyday life of the noble sisters reproduced the old social structure, preserving social distance. Even when living in the communal apartment the noble sisters tried not to do any of the 'menial labour' which the servant women living in this apartment did, the sisters wore peignoirs, made their 'ablutions with cucumber water or with rosepetal water', and created 'personal comfort' in the kitchen. 'The sisters began their day very late, at about 12. Then for half of the day they took coffee. In Soviet times this order of life made a strange impression. Sometimes N.A. took her coffee in the communal kitchen. At one end of the communal table a white serviette was placed. Cups, a little plate, butter, sugar etc. were placed on the serviette.'

In interviews people sometimes told about cases of social segregation in one apartment. In one case, where there were two social environments, 'ordinary' and 'intellectual', the female informant from 'the ordinary' environment did not know anything about her neighbours (her neighbours were professors). She knew only their names and professions, and she had never been in 'their part of the apartment'. Elsewhere, when 'the formers' and 'the presents' coexisted they made a symbolic exchange - 'the news' gave to 'the formers' a kind of political defence (positive testimony in the party Committee) and helped them to do everyday work, and 'the formers' with their cultural capital educated 'the workers' who needed it for their successful Soviet careers.

This is a citation from the previous interview: 'Ekaterina Pavlovna was a very educated and a very good person. She was very nice to me. And I helped her with her everyday work. She was not able to do anything; servants had done everything for her all her life. So she could not even cook a dinner...So, she was unpractical. It seems that she was this way by birth...I imitated many of her ways, much of her nobility' (female informant M.I., born in 1908, came to Leningrad in 1928, from a family of handicraftsmen, she made a good party career in the 1930s).

Industrialisation and collectivisation led to growing migration to the cities during the years of the first five-year plan. 3.5 million new inhabitants appeared in Moscow and Leningrad during the years of the first five-year plan. The migrants brought with them 'the rules of internal order', i.e. class solidarity, representation of the individual through the family, the absence of privacy. Moshe Lewin refers to this as communal order. Only 18.3% of all migrants arriving in Leningrad came from the towns. They were settled in the centre of the city. While in 1926 21.5% of workers lived in the centre, in 1932 it was 60%. Yesterday's peasants came to the communal apartments, the social structure of whose inhabitants was heterogeneous. On the one hand communal life with its mutual responsibilities, feebly marked distinctions between the private and the public, and the representation of the individual through one member of the family should have been congenial to 'the new Leningradians'. On the other hand, the communal apartment did not constitute a commune, it was a part of the urban society. 'The villagers' learned city life in the communal apartments. The communal apartments served as a kind of institute for the socialisation of young peasant girls employed as servants, for young people who studied in the FZU (factory and workshop professional school), for young workers who rented rooms or even a part of a room.

**DISCIPLINE OF EVERYDAY LIFE**

From the documents of the 1920s we get an impression that life in communal apartments was full of conflicts. Such a point of view on the communal apartments is reflected in the literature of the 1920s. I shall cite a description of a Moscow communal apartment from the novel 'Comrade Kislakov' by Panteleimon Romanov. There were 27 tenants in the apartment. Two thirds of the families were intellectuals and one third were 'proletarians'. 'As far as relations between the inhabitants goes, it was not an apartment but a powder-magazine. Not a day passed without a powder explosion because everybody kept their powder dry...pretexts for explosions arose at every step. First of all it was the lavatory. In the morning a long queue of citizens

hurrying to get to work lined up there. Some of them were particularly impatient. And it was not possible for someone at the front of the queue to go into the lavatory and shut the door before a dozen fists began to bang on the door reminding him that he was not in his own sitting-room... the next point of discord was the kitchen where, from the early morning, just as at a great factory, six primus stoves were blazing at the same time. Fights began in the kitchen almost every minute because of the dishes, slops etc... But the main source of discord was always the dirt in the apartment because nobody wanted to clean it up, and the places of common use which were left unrepaired. If it was not known who had scattered rubbish, it remained in the apartment. There was not a single day without pillaging. In the end they came up with a way of dealing with the dirt: taking turns to clean the apartment."61

In this fragment the author has noted some important aspects of the organisation of life in the communal apartment. The necessity of living in one space and using the same things demanded the establishment of a roster of duties, so that there was a special regime of time in the communal apartment, and this type of regime is more common to public space but not to home life. A 'living' queue deprives an individual even of corporeal autonomy. A person should be ready to defend a 'friendly person' and his rights, and at the same time to watch the behaviour of the others to 'catch them at the scene of the crime.' An woman interviewee told that her female neighbour, a former apartment owner, kept an eye on the cleanliness of the W.C. pan after the 'settled tenants' visited it. And if it was dirty, the woman would proclaim publicly her inclination to untidy the tenant's face. 'Everybody knew that she kept control, and so everybody tried to keep it clean...'

A period of conflicts and the joint elaboration of rules of communal life was inevitable in the making of such a social organisation as the communal apartment. People who had never lived together learned from their mistakes to organize the order of their everyday lives. There were plenty of housing cases in the courts of Leningrad and a special section had to be organized for it – the Chamber of Housing. In 1928 35% of cases in the Chamber of Housing concerned expulsion from the apartment because of the impossibility of communal living in one apartment, 31% concerned

expulsion from the apartment because of non-payment of rent, and 34% were mixed. In 1927 a special compromise-conflict commission was organised to solve small conflicts.62

In 1932 'everyday life discipline' appeared side by side with 'work discipline', 'self-discipline', and 'party discipline'. This kind of discipline regulated the order of everyday life.63 It included the rules which are now habitual in every communal apartment, and is aimed at keeping order in several senses, such as sequence (cooking, roster duties, use of the places of common use); interactional order (interrelations between the neighbours); sanitation and hygiene (everyday cleaning, floor washing every 5-6 days, keeping order in the kitchen); administrative order (rules of registration), regimes (make no noise between midnight and 8 a.m.), equity (the sharing of repair expenses, payment for electricity according to the number of lamps); the structural order (responsible tenants, family representatives). The adoption of rules was only the codification of worked-out practices, and made it possible not only to take public measures against those who infringed the rules but also to take administrative measures as far as expulsion from the apartment.

In the 1930s the atmosphere in the communal apartments became calmer. And, what is more, the inhabitants of communal apartments of that time said that the relations between neighbours were quite normal and sometimes even friendly or 'familiar'.

PRIVACY IN THE COMMUNAL APARTMENTS

In the communal apartments the physical boundary between private space and public space is the door of the room, and the symbolic boundaries are secrets and intrigues. Bad sound-proofing (the partitions were made as cheaply as possible), the possibility of intrusion, vigilant neighbours watching visits by guests, often the lack of 'your own part of the room' because of a large family living there,

61 P. Romanov, 'Tovarishch Ksiajakov' in Svetlie sny (Moscow, 1990), pp.302-3.

62 'Postanovlenie VTsIK i SNK RSFSR ob organizatsii primotel'no-konfliktnykh komissii po zhilishchnym delam' BFK/IZ 1927, no.16, pp.567-8.

63 'Obiaza tel'nye pravila uktoda za zhilishchem i vnurenem rasporadika v kvartirsakh' in Zhilishchennia kooperativsia 1932, nos.21-24, pp.44-7.
made these borders very unstable and made rather an illusion of privacy.\textsuperscript{64}

In a fragment of her memoirs a noble-woman describes the life of her family in the 1930s. 'All of us lived in communal apartments. It was very difficult. This is without speaking about the neighbours, who were all sorts of people, sometimes there were good persons, but more often they were strange and even alien to us, everyone had his own idea of what is good and what is bad. But even without neighbours it is very difficult to live with a large family in one room. Practically it means that the son-in-law is forced to take off his trousers in front of the mother-in-law, the children listen to everything they should not hear and do their homework accompanied by the conversations of their grandmother with neighbours or relatives. The middle generation is in an awkward situation too. It is impossible to say something sweet or to reproach, everybody hears everything...\textsuperscript{65} The way out of this situation was to divide the room by wardrobes or curtains into separate sections: 'dining-room' 'bed-room', 'children's room'. One woman told that she and her brother lived in one room, and when her brother got married, she spent a few nights in the room of a neighbour to leave the newly-weds alone. This model of privacy realised in the communal apartments can be called 'public private life'. In this case the characteristic of a house-commune where there is 'public private life' and the idea of isolated apartments for private family life are combined. In 1928 the author of the article 'Problem of a house' described the symptoms of a further 'great deviation' from the ideals of collectivism and the tendency to 'bourgeois life' in the communal apartments: 'And now, in the 12th year of the greatest revolution in the world we are building new houses (apparently at the demand of the working masses)...and are settling individual families in them, but very often 2 or 3 families live in one apartment because of the great demand for housing and the growing housing crisis. Bear in mind that elsewhere unauthorised and unorganised settlement has taken place... There is a private life in 100 separate apartments, bourgeois life is being renewed there, they acquire geraniums and muslin curtains, they are laundering clothes there and the housewife is chained to her stove...\textsuperscript{66} This shows the possibility of combining personal and communal life. On the one hand there is family life, where people 'consume in a civilized manner', and create comfort, and on the other hand private life is controlled through the rules of internal order and the need to live together with other people.

CONCLUSION

In the middle of the 1930s the communal apartment was not considered 'the worst kind of dwelling' as it was in the middle of the 1920s but it was recognised as being in some ways advantageous and was adapted for living in. When everybody lives in communal apartments these conditions of living are considered the norm. Old residents say that the communal apartments were spoiled after the war when the inflow of a new labour force for the reconstruction of Leningrad was so great that the culture of the city could not resist this pressure and assimilate the migrants.\textsuperscript{67} The communal apartment became 'quite horrible' in the 1960s when everybody (not only the elite) was able to obtain a separate apartment.

It was mostly single people, workers from poor enterprises which could not build their own houses, state employees who were on a waiting list of 10-15 years who did not obtain separate apartments. The social structure of the communal apartments was made up of 'limitchiki' (a type of worker mostly in Moscow and Leningrad with limited rights of abode and working in these cities). The communal apartment was a temporary form of housing for many of them because they usually worked in a sphere of the economy (construction, industry and municipal services) where they had the chance of obtaining an apartment very soon. This changed the atmosphere of communal apartments and lowered the symbolic status of communal apartments. But many people, moving to the 'Khrushchevka' (cheap and rapidly-built houses of the Khrushchev era), sensed a feeling of loss and uncertainty because now they had no interlocutors who they could talk to about their joys and sorrows, none of the pleasant feeling 'that somebody is always at home' and 'they will always help'. This feeling is especially characteristic of people who have grown up in communal apartments or of older people. For them the communal apartment is a part of their life, of their youth, of their family and of their conceptions of the world.

\textsuperscript{65} N.F. Zvorkina, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{66} V. Izmailov, 'Problema doma' in Zhiltshchne delo 1928, no.22, p.8.
Life in the communal apartments has changed after the collapse of the Soviet system. There is no more political control, no sanctions of the Communist Party to meddle in the life of neighbours, the district militia officers do not visit the apartments, and the responsible tenants have to pay general bills, nobody awards the title of ‘an apartment of model maintenance and way of life.’ But the coexistence of different families in communal apartments, which is not only a part of the old system of housing, but also of the need to reproduce some of the forms of everyday life of the Soviet society, continues to be an important element of the social structure of modern cities.

Soviet citizens moved and traveled a great deal after the biggest social upheavals of the first three decades of Bolshevik power. The waves of migration to the big cities continued in the 1950s as well as smaller movements back to the countryside for holidays or to take care of sick relatives; or else elderly parents were moving to their children in the cities; adults moved around the country as work required; young men spent several years away from home while serving in the army; and with the growing living standards of the 1960s and 1970s holiday trips and leisure travel increased.

Some journeys were motivated by a need for private space. This need was both physical and psychological – everyday urban life was circumscribed by social conventions as much as by the crowded living spaces. On the basis of autobiographical accounts of ‘ordinary’ St. Petersburg citizens, this article looks at sexual experiences as part of Soviet domestic tourism. The two most frequently mentioned types of journeys are vacations to the South and ‘komandirovka’s’ or Soviet business trips. While both sexes made both kind of trips, the vacations figure in my material as an ambivalent symbol of women’s sexual autonomy and dangerous (mis)adventures, while work related travel emerged as a typical male way of arranging a life style with parallel relationships. This chapter describes two cultural configurations – the traveling maiden and the man with parallel lives – typical for late Soviet society, which in this context refers to urban life in the 1960s-early 1980s.