

Front to Rear: Architecture and Planning during World War II

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1 East 78th Street, NYC

Marina Dmitrieva-Einhorn, PhD, Researcher, Centre of History and Culture of Central and Eastern Europe (GWZO) in Leipzig, Germany

War as a Challenge to Architecture. Andrei Burov's Civic Designs at the Time of World War II

The development of wartime technologies had a stimulating effect on architecture in Europe and the United States. The war left its traces not just in the shape of heavy edifices such as bunkers, or fortifications like the Atlantic Wall or monuments like the Line of Glory on the frontiers of the Reich, but its legacy also stimulated experiments in temporary and civil architecture. This was particularly visible in the use of new materials and lightweight constructions, which were implemented not only in military construction, such as Pier Luigi Nervi's hangars, but also in residential housing, ranging from barracks, to communal housing, and single family homes.

Focusing on the impact of the war on the style of Soviet civic architecture, I shall analyse the wartime projects of the Soviet architect Andrei Konstantinovich Burov (1900-1957). A graduate of Vkhutemas, Burov began his career as a constructivist. He produced modernist set designs for the theatre and the cinema (among others, for Eisenstein's film "The old and the new"/"General line"). But in the history of Soviet architecture he is best known as the architect of classical Stalinist residential houses in Moscow rather than as a modernist. In fact, in the 1930s he preached down the constructivist school and promoted the classical tradition in architecture.

During the war, however, Burov turned his attention to much more innovative projects, uniting the contradictory directions of his earlier career. His wartime designs were based on new materials applied to future dwellings, originally inspired by wartime technologies, which embodied a utopian dream of a new architecture healing the world. This new turn in his work was reflected in his extravagant project of a reconstruction of the Black Sea resort of Yalta, which was damaged during the war. Burov invented and developed the so-called "anisotropic" technologies for prefabricated architecture, which were equally suited for residential housing, such as his designs of typified small storey houses for the Southern regions of Russia, and for large buildings of museums and exhibition halls, as exemplified in his projects for the War Monuments in Stalingrad. However, none of Burov's wartime projects was realized.

In analyzing Burov's visions and theoretical concepts of architecture, this paper seeks to show a discrepancy between technological achievements, pragmatic needs and ideological tasks, which was characteristic for the architecture of the late Stalinism. In doing so, it encourages viewing Soviet architecture of the post-war period in a more differentiated manner. Soviet architects, the paper argues, found a variety of answers to the new challenge posed by wartime architecture. As such it required a response both on the level of technology and in the

ideological interpretation of the role of architecture in Soviet society--a response that, however, mostly remained a unrealised project.

Marina Dmitrieva-Einhorn, PhD, Art Historian. Since 1996 she has been working as a researcher at the Centre of History and Culture of Central and Eastern Europe (GWZO) in Leipzig, Germany. Before joining the Centre, she was teaching at the Academy of Theatre in Moscow, was a researcher at the Institute of Art History of the Academy of Sciences in Moscow and was a lecturer at the universities of Freiburg i. Br., Basel, Hamburg and Bremen in Germany.

Recent publications (a short selection): "A Dream of Skyscraper. Urban Imaginations in the Socialist Capital Cities," in: *Urban Imaginations. Conception, Reflection and Fiction of the City in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. by Arnold Bartetzky, Marina Dmitrieva and Alfrun Kliems (Berlin 2009); *Italy in Sarmatia. Cultural transfers in Eastern Europe at the time of the Renaissance* (Stuttgart 2008); "Reinventing the Periphery: The Central East European Contribution to an Art Geographical Discourse," in: *ARS*, 2 (2007); "Moscow Architecture between Stalinism and Modernism," in: *Eastern Drama. Capitals of Eastern Europe in the 20th Century. International Review of Sociology*, ed. by Göran Therborn, vol. 16, no. 2 (2006).

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