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Bater, James H. *The Soviet City: Ideal and Reality. Explorations in Urban Analysis.* Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980. xii, 196 pp. Tables, figures, maps. \$8.95 (U.S.)

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for he is a stellar figure in the field. Hitchcock and Philip Johnson had helped to import modernism to the United States through their 1932 book, *The International Style*.

Like other guidebooks, this one would have benefitted from a juxtaposition of original and current photographs or, at least, a citation of the dates and auspices of the photographs reproduced in the volume. A few are "publicity shots." Information about illustrations would have done more than satisfy curiosity. It would have allayed surprise when users of the guide compared photographs with the current status of buildings. Gems and their settings appear differently in a polished catalogue than they do through physical contact. While the book concentrates on major structures, it is important to mention that the guide is not at all snobbish; it includes modest domestic dwellings, street-scapes, and ethnic neighbourhoods. An essay on Buffalo parks designed by Frederick Law Olmsted reminds us of his breadth of activity and genius, as well as the willingness of urban governments in later eras to sacrifice their green spaces for expressways and other non-recreational purposes.

The contributors certainly have achieved their primary objective of making "it impossible, ever again, for anyone who cares about architecture to say, 'we drove through Buffalo on the Thruway, but decided not to stop because there's nothing there to look at – is there?'" Buffalo deserves to be known for past aesthetic achievements and not just as the home of Millard Fillmore, Coffee Rich, the Buffalo Sabres, and the site of William McKinley's assassination. The absence of economic pressures on the CBD seems to have enabled Buffalo to survive as a living museum of architecture as practised before "the Crash." Of course, there is more to the city's architectural situation than this generally sound observation on survival allows. The Buffalo story of preservation is a complex one. Buffalo has lost a number of noteworthy structures and these are described in the chapter "Lost Buffalo." On the other hand, several buildings – Shea's Theatre and the Guaranty Building – have been saved and restored by civic-spirited action. Perhaps the guidebook will make future preservation a more popular cause; perhaps, too, the book is one of several recent but unconvincing signs that (in the lyrics of a new booster jingle) "Buffalo is walking proud, walking proud." So much of every quality of American material, cultural, and social life has a Buffalo association that it is tempting to see this city as metaphor. *Sic transit gloria mundi?*

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James Bater has accomplished a skilful and much-needed job in assembling and interpreting the available literature on the Soviet city, in both English and Russian, into a coherent portrait. This literature is considerable, but, as Bater points out, spotty. Particular shortages exist in the areas of intraurban studies, either of integrated character or with a geographic emphasis. Urban historical work, particularly on cities other than the largest, is also in limited supply. In spite of such gaps, Bater has produced a readable survey of the Soviet urban condition which should be of value both as background for the serious researcher and as instructive reading for university students.

The book is organized around an assessment of the level of successful translation of Soviet planning ideals and principles into tangible reality. Within this broad perspective, five themes are selected for examination: (1) the importance of continuity and historical momentum in urban development; (2) the framework for, and process of, decision-making as it affects town planning; (3) the tempo and pattern of city growth at the national scale; (4) the spatial organization of the Soviet city; and (5) the Soviet city as a place to live.

These themes are reflected in the chapter organization, with some modification. The first theme is subsumed in a chapter titled "Ideology in the City," while a concluding chapter is titled "The Soviet City: Ideal and Reality." The chapters are of a reasonable and digestible length, while the maps which illustrate the text are, for the most part, of fair quality and intelligibility, though some suffer from excessively small lettering and others from poor reproduction.

Bater tackles some of the fundamental issues which confront any student of Soviet cities. Among these are the degree of continuity or change from pre-Soviet times to the present; the similarities and differences between Soviet and Western cities, that is, between the city of the planned economy and society and the more market-oriented west; and the levels of correspondence between planning ideal and built and functioning reality. This last issue runs throughout the book.

Chapter Two, "Ideology and the City," provides background on the state of the city, and of urban planning, in the nineteenth century. The rapid growth of urban populations through in-migration and the intolerable burden this put upon city management is rapidly chronicled, as are early town planning principles. Particularly interesting is the influence of European models, particularly Ebenezer Howard's garden city, upon Russian planning philosophy. Although Soviet planners charted a distinctive development course for the city, Bater draws a number of parallels between pre- and post-Soviet situations. Among the most striking of these is the notion that planned urbanization of both eras demanded tight control

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of population movement and occupations. Bater summarizes early debates on town planning principles in Soviet time, culminating in those incorporated into the 1935 Moscow plan, which included such key points as limited city size, state control of housing, limited journey to work, stringent land-use zoning, spatial equality in the distribution of items of collective consumption, and integration of town and national planning. Problems which surfaced early included that of planning rational and efficient land use in an urban environment in which basic inputs like land had no readily defined price, a problem which still defies full solution.

Chapter Three on decision-making examines the evolution and organization of Soviet town government and planning, the parameters of local decision-making, and problems of financial planning. The respective roles of, and crucial tensions between, local governmental bodies and task-oriented ministries are reviewed. Through most of Soviet time, resolutions of these conflicts have favoured the latter, and local authority has only recently, and still far from fully, become master in its own house. Unsurprisingly, urban functioning in the Soviet Union, as is often true elsewhere, is dependent on continuous *ad hoc* adjustments to circumstances. In the Soviet case decision-making authority is still far from clear-cut.

The chapter on patterns of city growth provides a truly excellent capsule summary of urban population dynamics since the late-nineteenth century, and is generally well illustrated with maps of population change by region for various periods. Two maps deserve some criticism. Map 12 of the annual growth rates of cities of over 100,000 population in 1970-77 suffers from its small scale, confusing and overlapping city symbols, and lack of at least a few city names. Map 13 of urban agglomerations uses graduated circles which are insufficiently variable in size and are shaded according to a thoroughly confusing key which attempts to express both fixed and changing density states as a single continuum.

Chapter Five on the spatial organization of the Soviet city concentrates on the five topics of industrial location and land use zoning, allocation and organization of housing, transport and the journey to work, consumer and cultural services, and the role of the city centre. These facets are reviewed in both general terms and through case studies focusing on Moscow, Leningrad, Tashkent, Vladimir, Pskov, Bratsk and Ust-Ilimsk, which represent an admittedly imperfect cross-section of size, ethnicity, chronological age, and economic base. Bater discusses problems in the enforcement of industrial zoning as well as the long-standing housing crisis and the valiant and partly-successful efforts of the past two decades to ameliorate it, such that in some cities at least, the sanitary minimum of nine square metres per person, first developed in 1922, has finally been achieved (relatively little is said about housing quality). Journeys to work tend to be long and seem to be lengthening as cities grow larger and

people choose the best housing available in a restricted menu in preference to convenience, a decision reinforced by flat and subsidized transport fares. In the realm of consumer services, the long-recognized lag of these behind housing is explored. Finally, the more limited role of the Soviet city centre (when compared to Western cities) is explained, that is, centres which serve cultural, mass-demonstration, residential, and limited administrative purposes but only limited commercial ones, and which possess few high-rise structures.

In his chapter on life in the Soviet city, Bater provides a valuable insight into the character of these cities on a personal level. Studies of patterns of daily life point up many problems, including the inequality of the sexes, with women enjoying substantially less free time than men; the severe problem of inadequate and badly arranged shopping services (shops are dispersed among the ground floors of apartment blocks, necessitating tedious and wide-ranging pedestrian journeys in a severe winter climate – inconveniences this reviewer has himself suffered in his time!); housing pressure and its social costs, such as divorce; the distribution of criminality; and the Soviet experience with environmental pollution. At the same time, Bater is at pains to point out and substantiate that the "... quality of the Soviet urban environment has increased measurably over the last decade" (page 162).

In his final chapter, "The Soviet City: Ideal and Reality," Bater points out that while the Soviet urban experience has scored its successes and its failures, it clearly has brought socialist ideals in line with reality to a degree. The quality of urban life has improved in recent decades, and there has been a conspicuous levelling of the social condition, particularly in the area of housing. The various stumbling blocks which stand in the way of further realization of Soviet ideals are indicated, and potential strategies which may be adopted to overcome them are suggested.

This reviewer found the book solid, useful, and interesting. Criticisms are minor and some reflect personal preference. These would include the somewhat shallow historical perspective, except in the chapter on patterns of city growth. However, in a book of restricted length it is probable that something had to be sacrificed. Lapses into jargon or minor stylistic errors do occur but are fortunately very rare. The practice of reference footnoting within the text is distracting from the author's and reader's train of thought. But these flaws are insignificant. Bater's book is a first-class piece of work and should enjoy a wide readership.

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