COMMUNISM on Tomorrow Street

MASS HOUSING AND EVERYDAY LIFE AFTER STALIN

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Chapter 1

The Soviet Path to Minimum Living Space and the Single-Family Apartment

In a letter to the Third All-Union Congress of Architects in 1961, three faculty members of the Polytechnic Institute in Gor'kii lamented the shrinking dimensions of mass housing. "The existing standardized models of small-sized apartments can't in any way satisfy people in the present, let alone the future," the men huffed. "It isn't normal when you can't put a coat closet in an entranceway, when people have to drag in their furniture through the balcony and, we're sorry to say, carry out a coffin almost vertically, when a member of the family who's just bathed has to run out of the tub so another in dire need can use the space for another purpose." Such compact spaces did more than inconvenience those eager to use the toilet, bury the dead, or furnish their apartment. It even threatened class privileges. Small apartments lacked the extra workspace needed by writers and artists—"that is, those who fulfill, think over, and form the greater part of their creative work at home." For members of the Soviet intelligentsia, to whom the Bolsheviks had provided extra living space soon after the Russian Revolution, Khrushchev's separate apartment must have seemed like a cruel joke. Citizens of other social backgrounds, who were busy accumulating furniture and new consumer items, also found the separate apartment's small dimensions to be a major drawback. Upon moving to the separate apartment, many residents asked the same question: Why did apartments have to be so small?

The minimalist dimensions of the "small-sized apartment" (malometrazhnaja kwartira) were indelible features of Khrushchev's mass housing campaign. The khrushchevka had low ceilings, narrow corri-
doors and doorways, a compact kitchen, and one to three small rooms. Spaces common in the prerevolutionary apartments of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy had been erased. These included the service entrance to the kitchen, the back stairwell, the vestibule between the inner and outer entrance doors, and the adjoining, larger foyer. The toilet and bath, which had occupied separate units in the past, were combined in the same space; and kitchens were condensed. Upon entering a khrushchevka, a resident stepped not into an entranceway but immediately into the corridor that led to the kitchen, rooms, and bathroom. In some apartments, residents had to walk through a pass-through room to access another room that lacked access to the corridor. Rooms served two or three functions instead of one. A main room was a dining and sitting room during the day, but someone's bedroom at night. A new line of minimalist furniture lacking all ornamentation was designed to conform to these spaces. Small tables, chairs, stools, sinks, stoves, and cabinets were squeezed into the compact kitchen; couches folded out into beds, and bookcases featured foldout desks. The separate apartment not only shrunk space but also the objects that went in it. According to one post-Soviet joke, the khrushchevka was so small that a toddler's portable potty had its handle on the inside rather than the outside.3

Scholars have provided several explanations for the khrushchevka's small size and why it mattered. Echoing Khrushchev's exhortations to architects and constructors, some have argued that the separate apartment's minimalist dimensions were a function of cost. The leadership committed unprecedented, but not limitless, resources to mass housing. Industrial and military needs remained greater priorities that were never eclipsed by housing and consumer needs. Separate apartments had to be cheap if the regime's ambitious goal of fully resolving the housing question in ten to twelve years after 1957 was to be met. Operating under such budget and time constraints, the regime chose prefabricated panel housing based on a few standardized models. Lowering ceilings, simplifying layouts, slashing an apartment's floor space, and reducing the number of rooms were key elements of keeping costs down. Khrushchev's personal involvement in architectural affairs and his previous experience in managing housing construction played no small role in shaping housing policies toward cheaper and more efficient construction.4

Other scholars have argued that ideology played a critical role in making apartments smaller and more efficient. Inspired by the construc-

ivist aesthetics of the 1920s, architects and furniture designers under Khrushchev remade the Soviet home into a scientifically and rationally organized space to complete the transformation of all residents into the New Soviet Man and New Soviet Woman. Throughout the new apartment, unnecessary ornamentation and excess spaces were purged in the name of scientific management and efficiency. Nowhere was this better seen than the kitchen, which architects designed as a laboratory of industrial efficiency and rational organization. The kitchen was even a site of Cold War ideological conflict in which the Soviet housewife's mastery of rational living and restrained consumerism would prove the superiority of socialism over the grotesque excesses of irrational capitalist consumption. The "austere consumerism" that characterized separate apartments and consumer items under Khrushchev were not simply a matter of necessity dictated by budget constraints or, pace János Kornai, by the inevitable shortages of a planned economy.5 Such austerity was instead an ideologically inspired choice made primarily by members of the cultural intelligentsia. In designing the khrushchevka and telling residents how to use it, architects, furniture designers, and taste arbiters revitalized the Russian intelligentsia's historical and self-appointed struggle (from both its prerevolutionary and early Soviet past) to rid society of lowbrow, petit bourgeois values and define the proper tastes and consumer behaviors of a modern, socialist society.6

To be sure, not all architects were excited by the design aesthetic of new housing. In explaining why smaller apartments and lower cost went hand in hand, some scholars have examined what this meant for architects working in the supposedly more liberal atmosphere of Khrushchev's thaw. The architectural principle that embodied the regime's obsession with low costs and small apartments was known as tipove proektirovanie, or "standard-design construction from prefabricated parts." As Stephen Bittner argues, Khrushchev's regime imposed tipove proektirovanie on an architectural profession that was initially skeptical if not resistant to the limitations it placed on architects' creative work. It effectively banned their previous tendency, nurtured under Stalin, to design costly individual works frequently based on a neoclassical style and full of ornamentation. In the early years of the mass housing campaign, architects' role was subordinated to that of construction firms that produced reinforced concrete panels and assembled them on site in identical five-story buildings. Tipove proektirovanie limited rather than
expanded many architects' impact on mass housing architecture and, by extension, millions of Soviet citizens' everyday lives.7

Taken together, these factors provide an incomplete and sometimes contradictory explanation for the khrushchevka's design origins. Because tipovoe proektirovanie could have been applied to larger apartments, its adoption alone does not explain why apartments had to be so small and how their internal layouts were planned. Cost constraints required cheaper building methods and standardization, but their effect on an apartment's internal layout was less clear because, as we shall see below, apartments with less living space were actually more expensive to construct. The role of ideology is similarly less certain. Cost constraints and tipovoe proektirovanie imposed conditions on architects that an ideology of "austere consumerism" seemed to justify rather than guide. Scholars are right in arguing that the design elements of mass housing under Khrushchev were rooted in the ideological and aesthetic visions of the Soviet home that constructivist architects had promoted in the 1920s. The problem, as this chapter and the next show, is that the work architects did under Stalin in the 1930s, when constructivism was officially banned, ultimately had a greater impact on the khrushchevka's design.

In the first two chapters of this book, I present an alternative explanation for the design origins of the khrushchevka that focuses on the intersection of housing design and distribution. In this chapter, I lay the groundwork for this explanation by showing how the Soviet Union developed from 1917 through the late 1930s two critical pillars of the khrushchevka's design: minimum living space norms and the principle of single-family occupancy. In explaining why the khrushchevka was so small, scholars have largely overlooked how these two attributes were related and ultimately conflicted with one another.4 Understanding when and how the Soviet Union developed these two pillars is critical to comprehending the difficulties that Soviet architects faced in designing a separate apartment for the general population. The main challenge, as this chapter demonstrates, was that minimum living space norms shaped the distribution of housing in such a way that made single-family occupancy almost impossible to achieve in practice. Architects' solutions and how they embedded them in the design of the khrushchevka will be the subject of chapter 2.

In explaining the Soviet Union's path to minimum living space and single-family occupancy, I situate the khrushchevka's design origins in the broader pan-European history of the "housing question" and the search for the minimum dwelling unit. This chapter is the first to trace the origins of the khrushchevka's design from the pan-European history of housing reform through the Russian Revolution and Stalin period. By demonstrating how the Soviet Union borrowed and transformed pan-European ideas on minimum living space and single-family occupancy, I show that the khrushchevka had a shared past with Western approaches to resolving the housing question and building mass housing, but with certain significant divergences. There were, as I argue in these first two chapters, different paths to mass housing in the twentieth century.

The key to understanding where the khrushchevka's design was situated in relation to Western approaches to mass housing was nineteenth-century European reformers' search for minimum living standards— including food, wages, and housing—which served as the basis for the Bolsheviks' own approach to determining their citizens' minimum needs.9 Once adopted in the Soviet context, however, these ideas on minimum living standards operated in ways that had not been intended by their reformist authors and early Bolshevik proponents, but that served the needs of the Soviet state as it struggled to deal with massive housing shortages, especially under Stalin. The Stalinist regime's decision to simultaneously embrace single-family occupancy, after earlier attempts to let the family wither away in collectivist housing, further complicated the design picture and was a critical step in the direction of the khrushchevka. To begin unpacking its design origins, we first turn to the evolution of the pan-European housing question out of which the Soviet Union carved its own path to minimum living space.

The International Housing Question

European social reformers in the nineteenth century, including those in Tsarist Russia, identified the housing question as a major part of the overall "social question" of industrializing societies. They legitimized, but failed to expand as desired, the state's role in improving the living conditions of the urban working poor. Despite having what they believed to be the necessary scientific and architectural knowledge to fully resolve the housing question, advocates of reform were constantly deprived of the machinery of the modern state. Even World War I,
which served as a powerful catalyst for state intervention in society, left
the pillars of private building and free market relations intact in most
countries and did not lead to long-lasting housing programs that would
place construction, distribution, and maintenance in the hands of the
state. The Bolsheviks, in contrast, were determined not to suffer such
shortcomings in housing reform and went well beyond the limited role
that European governments and Tsarist Russia had afforded the state
in resolving the housing question.

The major European housing reform movements of the nineteenth
century developed in England, France, and Germany. Social reformers
in Tsarist Russia and the United States also worked on the housing
question and drew upon the ideas and experiences of their Western
European counterparts. Similar to efforts aimed at resolving the social
question, the answers proposed to the housing question developed
within an international community of reformers.10 International meet-
ings became a mainstay of the movement after the first international
congress on inexpensive dwellings held in Paris in 1889.11 The scale of
state intervention was a contentious question of housing reform raised
at such meetings.12 Social reformers generally sought greater state
intervention, ranging from building codes and rent control to financial
incentives for private builders and municipalities to build working-
class housing. In opposition to this agenda stood private builders and
landowners, who advocated market solutions to the housing crisis and
limited government involvement.13 Housing policies, where they ex-
isted, were implemented exclusively within individual states. This
disjuncture between the international origins of the housing question and
the national implementation of reform became more pronounced when
World War I elevated housing to one of many national concerns upon
which a state’s survival depended.14 After the war, housing policies
remained national in scope, while their ideas continued to develop in an
international context.

Most housing reformers were middle-class professionals such as hy-
gienists, public health advocates, economists, architects, urban plan-
ners, and engineers, who saw the deficiencies of the built environment
as the main culprits behind poor living conditions and social ills. Their
strategy called for a scientific approach applied universally by the state
through a regulatory regime of building standards, health codes, and
sanitation inspections. For these reformers, accumulating data on hous-
ing conditions was a prerequisite for state intervention. In England,
the secretary of the Poor Law Commissioners, Edwin Chadwick, pro-
duced the 1842 “Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring
Population,” which was an early government examination of poor
housing’s impact on the health of urban and rural dwellers.15 Social
reformers outside government conducted their own studies. In 1901,
Dutch socialists in the Amsterdam Labor League published an account
of poor housing conditions, which they hoped would convince public
opinion of the need for state involvement.16 Government censuses provided an additional source of data. In
Moscow, censuses in 1882 and 1912 produced a wealth of information,
including density, types of housing structures, categories of ownership,
household structure, and amenities. Russia’s first national census in
1897 provided additional information on such issues as density and
household structure.17 To transform such data into tangible policies,
reformers lobbied for legislation creating regulatory regimes. In France,
from 1850 to 1902 the government used the Melun Law to allow health
inspections of housing by state bodies such as the Commissions on
Unhealthful Dwellings.18 In England, the Common Lodging Housing
Acts (1851–53) similarly established a regulatory regime whereby
“lodging-houses were now required to be registered and inspected; mini-
imum standards of space, cleanliness and ventilation were laid down,
basement bedrooms forbidden and unmarrieds of the opposite sex
separated.”19

Despite such legislation, reformers were frustrated with the small
scale of state intervention, which failed to match their scientific recom-
endations. In Germany, one such reformer among health profession-
als was Max von Pettenkofer (1818–1901). Based in Munich, Petten-
kofer pioneered hygiene as an academic discipline and public policy
tool. His work on cholera identified poor housing as one of the factors
spreading such diseases. As we shall see below, his suggestions for
minimum space norms to prevent disease shaped housing reform in
nineteenth-century Europe and even the Soviet state’s approach. In
his lifetime, however, he was frustrated by the state’s inability or un-
willingness to do all that it could. He lamented this situation in an 1873
lecture to the Verein für Volksbildung (Society for Public Education)
of Munich: “The civil power or police authority is, as a rule, well dis-
posed and perfectly willing to carry out whatever medical science
places conveniently into its hands for execution, but in regard to police
regulations on housing we still have a long way to go.”20
Although Pettenkofer's theories on cholera were ultimately shown to be wrong, public health advocates still admired him in the mid-twentieth century for having helped legitimize their work in a sphere that included state intervention. In his glowing assessment of Pettenkofer's impact on hygiene and public health, Henry Sigerist wrote in the United States in 1941 that "this new science called for new men, for a new type of men, equally well trained in medicine and science, conscious of social problems, well versed in questions of public administration, indefatigable crusaders for health who at times must proceed with the smoothness of the diplomat and at times with the ruthlessness of the dictator." Such comments reflected the frustration that reformers had long felt when facing the intransigence of free market advocates and the reluctance of governments to intervene in housing.

Pettenkofer's impact reached far beyond Munich and into Tsarist Russia, illustrating again the international context in which the housing question evolved. One of his students was Friedrich Erißmann, who was originally from Switzerland and advanced the cause of public health in Russia, where he served as Moscow University's chair of hygiene. Russian physicians produced their own studies on public health conditions and worked through the zemstva (locally elected government councils) to promote reform. Advocates of housing reform in Russia published studies that compared their housing conditions and policies with those in the West. Russian architects learned about housing design and construction techniques in the United States through their trade publications Zodchii (Architect) and Nedelia stroitel'na (Builder's Weekly). The enormous scale and construction technology of American architecture struck Russian architects as positive developments. They also read about American advancements in prefabricated architecture and standardized parts. As these examples indicate, Russian hygienists, social reformers, and architects were active participants in the international community of housing reform well before 1917, and their work contributed to an international body of knowledge about the housing question upon which the Bolsheviks later drew in devising their own set of answers.

Although many social reformers focused on fixing the built environment of the working classes, others concentrated on fixing the morals and behaviors of inhabitants through housing. A leader in this camp was Frédéric Le Play in France, whose movement sought to transform working-class tenants through the inculcation of bourgeois norms and values. For reformers like Le Play, regulating health conditions or providing salubrious and less crowded housing was not enough. He believed that workers should live in housing that also improved them as members of society. The model he advocated was the single-family home with its own garden located outside the city center. In addition to benefits to physical health, the individual home would provide a stable family life and privacy to protect its inhabitants from crime and the temptations of the city. The obligation of paying off a mortgage would encourage thrift among workers, who would now have a long-term stake in the economic well-being of the country.

As Ann-Louise Shapiro argues, reformers hoped this transformative project would effect social reconciliation between the propertied and working classes: "Through home ownership, the worker reentered the mainstream of social life, transformed from an uprooted nomad into a settled petty proprietor. The social question was to be solved, then, by causing the working class to disappear into the bourgeoise." Reformers like Le Play used housing to transform people's morals and behaviors, alongside approaches that focused more narrowly on fixing the built environment to prevent diseases. But as historians have argued, even recommendations based purely on disease prevention could impose normative values upon working-class tenants. As we shall see in this chapter and later ones, the Soviet Union combined both approaches in its strategy on housing.

Lacking the power of the future Soviet state, nineteenth-century social reformers worked through the institutions of civil society, such as charitable organizations, model building societies, and scientific associations. They used such associations to sway public opinion in favor of greater state involvement in the housing question. In late-nineteenth-century Germany, the Verein für öffentliche Gesundheitspflege (Society for Public Hygiene)—whose members included architects, doctors, sanitation specialists, and local government officials—helped secure regulatory restrictions on the number of people concentrated in a single area. In England, charitable organizations, such as the Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes, built housing for workers that served as models of salubrious dwellings. Philanthropic groups and industrialists worked along similar lines as Le Play to build housing for needy workers with an eye toward changing their behaviors and sense of self. In France, the industrialist Jean Dollfus constructed a cité ouvrière (factory housing settlement) in 1853 for his
workers at Mulhouse, which provided garden homes financed through fifteen-year mortgages. His project became a model for social reformers who wished to use housing as a tool to inculcate in working-class individuals the bourgeois ideals of strong family life, temperance, and thriftiness. In England, factory housing dated as far back as the 1830s. Industrialists saw it as a way to maintain a healthy workforce and encourage social conciliation, thereby overcoming the conflicts in modern life between labor and capital, and man and machine. Like Le Play, English industrialists saw factory housing, examples of which were based on the designs of middle-class homes, as new habitats to engender healthy bourgeois morals and behaviors among workers.

To what degree did nineteenth-century social reform succeed at drawing the state into a more active role in resolving the housing question? In several countries, social reformers much to raise public awareness of housing deficiencies, define minimum standards of housing for the urban working classes, secure government regulation through building standards and health inspections, and even encourage the state to assist in the financing and construction of some housing. By the end of the nineteenth century, France and England began moving toward comprehensive nationwide policies to regulate housing and build more dwellings specifically for workers. In England, the government made its first tangible steps in the direction of council housing (i.e., housing built and maintained by local municipalities) through the Housing of the Working Classes Acts of 1890 and 1900. In 1894, France instituted legislation designed to stimulate the construction of inexpensive housing for workers through various financial incentives for private builders. In 1902, it replaced the Melun Law of 1850 with a nationwide regulatory regime that expanded the powers of municipal authorities, instituted universal health standards, and subjected everyone's housing to its oversight. In the same year, the Netherlands issued a Housing Act, which was the country's first nationwide legislation making available state assistance for housing construction by local government and independent housing societies.

Although the housing reform movement succeeded in raising awareness and establishing regulatory legislation, the amount of new housing built specifically for workers by private builders, charitable groups, and local government was negligible before World War I. The regulatory regimes raised health standards and reformed building codes, but had the unintended consequence of making new housing construction more expensive, which hindered growth. Social reformers' calls for expanding the state's role in resolving the housing question repeatedly ran up against opposition from private builders and those who advocated a free market path to meeting housing needs. In Germany, additional opposition to national legislation came from municipal governments and the German states, which saw in reforms encroachments on their autonomy. Until World War I, states generally stayed out of constructing, distributing, and maintaining urban housing, preferring a limited involvement through building regulations, health inspections, and attracting more capital to the construction industry.

The housing reform movement of the nineteenth century was not without its critics. In late-nineteenth-century England, a government study found that workers took the tenements built by model societies to be "a sort of prison: They look upon themselves as being watched." In France, some social reformers and socialists criticized the cité ouvrière for making workers dependent upon their employers, thereby putting them at a disadvantage in labor negotiations. Meanwhile, socialists rejected reformers' goals of social reconciliation and highlighted instead the class tensions that pitted working-class tenants against bourgeois landlords. Socialists still seeking accommodation with the existing order sought greater state intervention in ways that were meant to punish landlords and reward tenants, such as rent control and expropriating private property, as well as state-built housing.

More radical socialists, following Friedrich Engels's scathing critique of housing reform in The Housing Question (1872), saw all efforts, bourgeois or socialist, to resolve the housing crisis within the existing order as futile at best or buttressing capitalism at worst. Like all subsets of the overall social question, Marxists believed that the housing question could only be resolved after the social revolution. Engels's essay and his earlier book, The Condition of the Working Class in England (1844), powerfully shaped the body of knowledge and assumptions that the Bolsheviks had about urban housing in industrializing countries and the deficiencies of reform. Public health officials and architects in late Tsarist Russia also left the Bolsheviks with substantial knowledge about the housing question in Russia and the West. What made Engels's essay different, of course, was the Marxist framework in which he interpreted the same data on urban housing.

In their earliest statements on housing, the Bolsheviks combined the knowledge of social reformers and Marxist ideology to frame their ap-
The Soviet Path to Minimum Living Space

approach. Their first party program, issued at the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party in 1903 (where the party split into its Bolshevik and Menshevik factions), called for local authorities to join with workers in overseeing the sanitary conditions of factory housing, as well as its regulation and payment of rent. Echoing social reformers' critiques of the cité ouvrière, the party program declared the goal of its proposals to be "the protection of hired workers from entrepreneurs' interference in their lives and activities as private persons and citizens." Such proposals were not ends in themselves, as was true for some social reformers. Instead, they were set within the program's broader goals of shielding "the working class from physical and moral degeneration" and furthering "its ability to wage the struggle for liberation." The program called for the "inviolability of the person and dwelling," which would appear to call for securing a person's privacy from the prying eyes of the state or moralizing employers. Yet this, too, was not an end in itself, but part of the Bolsheviks' Marxist vision for overthrowing the Tsarist regime and advancing Russia's capitalist development with a democratic republic and Constitution, all in anticipation of the eventual social revolution.  

In State and Revolution (1917), Lenin further interpreted Engels's The Housing Question to explain what the Bolsheviks were supposed to do with housing in the midst of revolution. As stated previously, Engels argued that socialist and bourgeois reformers were mistaken to believe that they could resolve the social question by solving the housing question first. In the long run, the social revolution would create the circumstances for the complete resolution of the housing question. Engels pointed out that one such circumstance was "abolishing the antithesis between town and country," one of the main divisions in the human condition that only got worse under capitalism and could only be solved under socialism. In the initial stages of the social revolution, the proletariat would take short-term measures to address the housing crisis "by expropriating a part of the luxury dwellings belonging to the propertied classes and by quartering workers in the remaining part." Lenin concurred and emphasized that the proletarian state would undertake such expropriations and the redistribution of housing. Engels predicted that after the revolution, the proletariat would most likely continue to collect some form of rent on housing, "at least in a transitional period." Lenin saw in this another responsibility for the proletarian state. He added, however, that the complete elimination of rent would coincide with the "withering away of the state."  

The Bolsheviks' social revolution and approach to housing set them apart from social reformers eager to work within the established order. Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks' reliance on the state, albeit a proletarian one, to produce their desired ends owed much to what nineteenth-century social reform had done to legitimize the state's role in solving social questions. According to Marxism, the expansion of state control over the economy and society was supposed to happen as capitalism approached its final death throes. Such an expansion occurred in part because of social reformers' efforts to enlist the state in achieving their goals. To the Bolsheviks, social reformers' failure to resolve the housing question did not mean that the expansion of state control over housing had been wrong, but that it had simply not gone far enough and only served to bolster the established order and the interests of the ruling classes.

The Impact of World War I

State involvement in the housing question changed dramatically during and after World War I in European states where the housing reform movement had been active. In recent years, historians have broadened our understanding of the war beyond its military and diplomatic aspects to address its profound impact on life in the twentieth century, from the home front to artistic and popular culture. States mobilized their societies' human, material, cultural, and financial resources to pursue total war and also resolve domestic social problems on an unprecedented scale. As a result, World War I was an enormous advancement in the development of the twentieth century's welfare state. Along similar lines, scholars of Russia have moved beyond debates about the war's role in causing the Revolution to examine how it led to the fundamental transformations of states and societies that marked the true beginning of the twentieth century. For some historians, greater state intervention was part of "an unwritten social contract," whereby governments compensated their citizens for participation in the war with welfare measures and social reform. Others emphasize the state's role in coordinating efforts by
employers, labor organizations, and professionals (including urban planners and architects) to secure social conciliation within the established order, resolve social problems that impeded the war effort, undertake postwar reconstruction, and advance a country's ability to succeed in the postwar global economy. 34 States were less concerned with compensating their citizens, according to this line of argument, than using the opportunities created by the war to expand, as Stephen Kotkin describes it, "a field of social activity for the state." 35 The combatant states of World War I were more willing to pursue social engineering to accomplish domestic aims as they would the organization of armies to pursue a war. In Kotkin's analysis of Magnitogorsk under Stalin, housing was one of many fields the Soviet state entered in order to transform society on a scale never attempted by other combatant states after World War I.

Although no state went as far as the Soviet Union, some initially pursued notable interventions in their housing sectors. Whether it was a matter of expanding social welfare, compensating citizens for service, boosting economic competitiveness, social engineering, or a combination of all of these agendas, combatant states intervened during and after World War I on an unprecedented scale in their housing sectors to face the economic and social demands of total war. Rent restrictions, the construction of state housing, and the extension of regulatory standards were among the most prevalent forms of state involvement in housing, whose supporters spanned the political spectrum. Austria, for example, instituted rent restrictions during the war in 1917. Social Democrats, who came to power in the city of Vienna in 1919, expanded upon this by controlling rents, carrying out housing requisitions, and mounting a municipal housing construction program specifically geared toward the city's working-class housing. 36 In Russia, the Tsarist regime instituted rent control measures during the war as well. The Provisional Government, which came to power after the February Revolution of 1917, advanced state intervention in municipal affairs with a June 1917 decree whereby city governments were to assume greater responsibilities in urban planning, municipal management, and improving basic city services. 37

The unintended consequence of rent control measures that outlasted the war in countries like England and France was to draw the state even further into the housing question. Rent control gave private builders even less incentive to build cheaper housing for workers, thereby putting more pressure on governments to build and manage such housing themselves. 38 Council housing—one of the pillars of England's twentieth-century welfare state—saw its first serious expansion after World War I, when the government massively expanded funding for local governments to build housing and financial incentives for private builders to construct dwellings for low-income residents. Overall, from 1919 to 1939, municipalities built 1.1 million dwellings, while private builders constructed 2.4 million houses independently and an additional 430,000 with state aid. 39 Germany similarly entered into public housing construction, which the state had largely avoided before World War I. 40 State housing construction in Berlin counted for 61 percent of new housing from 1924 to 1928, while private builders constructed 35 percent, and individual property owners 4 percent. 41 In Amsterdam, the City Council authorized its first housing construction project in 1914. Over the course of the war and until 1922, the city and housing societies using state resources built most of Amsterdam's new housing. 42

Beyond housing construction, states presided over the creation of institutions and initiatives that brought together government bureaucracies, employers, labor organizations, and urban planning experts. These public-private relationships in housing and urban planning constituted a chief pillar in the expansion of what some historians term a "parastatal complex." According to this model, states during the war extended their control over spheres such as housing by drawing private associations and individuals into "professionalized, institutionalized domains or publics" focused on particular matters of public welfare. 43

In France, the government sought to coordinate public and private efforts in urban planning soon after the war by creating the Commission supérieure d'aménagement, d'embellissement et d'extension des villes (High Commission for the Planning, Beautification, and Growth of Cities) in 1919. Members of this government commission included urban specialists drawn from private associations geared toward resolving public problems such as the Société française des architectes-urbanistes (French Society of Architects and Urban Planners) and the Conseil supérieure des beaux arts (High Council of the Fine Arts). In the 1920s in the United States, the Department of Commerce received suggestions on urban planning devised by the American Institute of Planners and the National Association of Real Estate Developers. The Better Homes for America Movement and the Architects' Small House Bureau produced model designs, while the Building Code Committee
of the Commerce Department established minimum space standards in coordination with private builders.  

Resistance to having governments assume greater responsibility in housing stunted or rolled back efforts to mount comprehensive state building programs that would have encompassed the construction, distribution, and maintenance of housing. The same "parastatal complex" that allowed states to extend their influence over housing also supported private property and free market relations in housing. One of the underlying assumptions informing state intervention in several countries was that such efforts would allow the free market to predominate once more after the war in the construction, allocation, and maintenance of urban housing. The U.S. government was perhaps the most eager to extricate itself from the nation's housing construction picture. Federal efforts to construct public housing during the war for workers in war services industries produced only 16,000 homes throughout the country. Soon after the war, Congress abandoned calls to expand this into a broader program for federal public housing.

In sum, state intervention in housing during and after World War I increased in most combatant states in ways that left the fundamental pillars of private property and civil society intact. States expanded upon the nineteenth century's regulatory regimes in the areas of minimum living standards, the adoption of standardized models and construction materials, and the promotion of modern building technologies such as prefabricated housing. Governments even built some state housing to increase the urban housing stock for low-income residents but did not supplant the private building sector. To Marxist theoreticians and Bolshevik revolutionaries, these policies were half-measures that would never fully resolve the housing question and only delay the social revolution.

Bolshevik Approaches to Housing

War, revolution, and Bolshevik ideology combined in Russia to produce long-term outcomes in state formation and control over housing that were different from those of other European countries. Historians who examine the impact of World War I on the formation of the Soviet state have shown how the Bolsheviks adopted and took to extreme ends certain state practices—terror, surveillance, the requisitioning of food, and the expropriation of private property—that were initially developed under the Tsarist regime and the Provisional Government, and employed in other combatant states to meet the demands of total war. Although most states curtailed these practices after the war, the Bolshevics pursued them after 1917 and through the Civil War, and made them into fundamental features of the Soviet system. As the writer Denis de Rougemont succinctly put it in 1951, "Out of total war emerged the first totalitarian régime—Lenin's—which soon served as an inspiration to Mussolini and to Hitler. Their régimes gave us totalitarianism as a specific and clearly definable phenomenon, which is the establishment of the idea of a permanent state of war in the human mind and in international relations. This is the vicious circle in which twentieth-century Europe has been locked up."

The Bolshevics' approach to housing is a revealing example of World War I's impact on the Soviet state's formation and intervention in social life. Yet historians who have examined Soviet state formation in the pan-European context of World War I and across the 1917 divide have overlooked the housing question in this story. On matters of everyday material life, food requisitions feature much more prominently in their studies. In contrast, scholars of Soviet housing typically begin their story in 1917 and pay little attention to the broader pan-European context, World War I, and late Tsarist policies to explain the Bolshevik approach to the housing question that included the abolishment of private property, mass expropriations of private apartments, state ownership of the housing stock, the creation of the communal apartment, the rationing of living space in square meters, and the use of housing as a mechanism of social control. Whereas most scholars argue that these outcomes were uniquely Soviet, the present analysis locates their origins in the pan-European housing reform movement and how World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution transformed its underlying principles into a Soviet answer to the housing question.

Housing reform in Tsarist Russia had followed similar trends in Europe and the United States up to World War I, which spurred the Tsarist regime and Provisional Government to extend state control over housing and social life as in other combatant states. The war also contributed to worsening conditions in urban housing in Russia and elsewhere. Although the war had similar effects on housing and state intervention in Russia and other countries, the Russian revolutions of 1917 introduced a qualitatively different element beginning with mass expropriations and the redistribution of private property. With com-
paratively minor exceptions, such requisitions did not occur in other combatant states. In Russia, the first expropriations were carried out after the February Revolution of 1917, as crowds destroyed buildings and symbols of the Old Regime and expropriated the housing of Tsarist elites and officials. After the October Revolution, urban workers and local revolutionary authorities continued expropriations and targeted the apartments of the middle classes. Revolution in Russia breached the walls of private property on a scale unseen elsewhere. The Bolsheviks—who were driven by Marxist ideology to eliminate private property, resolve the housing question, and create a classless society—sought to make this breach permanent. Their main strategy for achieving these ends, however, had roots in both the history of the pan-European housing reform movement and the expansion of states’ social interventions during World War I.

Upon taking power, the Bolsheviks wasted no time dismantling institutions of private property and extending state control over housing. Their famous “Decree on Land,” issued on their second day in power, abolished and redistributed private property in land. They followed with a moratorium on rent that continued efforts begun by the Tsarist regime and mirrored similar decrees in other combatant states for temporarily assisting those in need and those whom the state needed to fight the war. Illustrating how the Bolsheviks picked up where the Provisional Government left off on this issue, the decree used a law of August 5, 1917, as the basis for determining the level of rents that still had to be paid. Soon thereafter, the Bolsheviks issued a decree allowing municipal authorities to confiscate unused housing, relocate people in need of space, and begin establishing a regime of control over the housing stock that far outstripped what other combatant states were doing. In August 1918, the Bolsheviks extended their attack on private property with their decree, “On the Abolition of the Right to Immovable Private Property in Cities,” which allowed local authorities in cities with 10,000 or more people to expropriate all buildings as they saw fit. Through these measures, the Bolsheviks created a legal regime sanctioning the nationalization of the country’s urban housing stock. World War I had not even ended for most combatant states, and the Bolsheviks had already outstripped them by extending the formal trappings of state control over housing.

In pursuing these measures, the Bolsheviks were also attempting to rein in a chaotic situation. They sought to end spontaneous expropria-

tions by revolutionary mobs and local authorities, and halt further destruction of the housing stock in the face of mass deurbanization and the collapse of municipal government. Like other combatant states, the Bolsheviks were responding to circumstances. This did not signal a retreat from the revolutionary project in housing; nor did it shake the Bolsheviks’ conviction that private property had to be wiped out. Some historians have argued that Bolshevik ideology on housing was “rather weak” and suggested few details apart from the forcible relocation of urban workers into the housing of the ruling classes. With no apparent plan, according to this view, the Bolsheviks and their local authorities spent more time responding to circumstances than implementing ideas. Others have argued that circumstances arising from war and revolution were always overshadowed by the Bolsheviks’ intention to extend control over housing as a means of social control and labor discipline, but devoid of any larger vision of creating a new society. Both interpretations miss the larger point: Bolshevik ideology played a crucial role in shaping their response to circumstances, created in no small part by a Marxist inspired assault on private property, and in laying the groundwork for a total transformation of housing and society that extended far beyond the narrow goal of social control.

Historians of the Soviet Union’s earliest housing policies have neglected to consider how the Bolsheviks’ worldview on housing—from recognizing that there was a “housing question” to the state’s role in resolving it—crystallized in war and revolution as the most extreme version of nineteenth-century pan-European housing reform. Far from impeding reform ideas or reducing them to the aim of social control, war and revolution opened a space for the Bolsheviks to pursue what many social reformers in the nineteenth century had desired: a total resolution of the housing question. In articulating this goal, the Bolsheviks were not providing a cynical justification for ending private property and using housing to control people for its own sake. They acted on what their own ideology told them: that they alone could accomplish the goal of definitively resolving the housing question, which would serve as a major pillar of the new social order.

Rather than being “weak,” Bolshevik ideology on housing would be better described as revolutionary, infinitely expansive, and ultimately tied to the broader project of creating a new society. The Second Program of the Communist Party, issued in March 1919, reflected how the Bolsheviks’ approach to housing had evolved through war and revolu-
tion since their first party program. Nikolai Bukharin and Evgenii Preobrazhenskii's popular explanation of the new Party Program in *The ABC of Communism* divided their chapter titled "The Communists' Program on the Housing Question" into a section on "The Housing Question in Capitalist Society" and another on "The Housing Question in the Proletarian State."

This separation of the world into two camps illustrated a fundamental assumption made by the Bolsheviks that shaped their answers to the housing question and Khrushchev's mass housing campaign forty years later. The October Revolution had created a rupture in historical time between the capitalist society of the past and the future socialist society. As a building block of that future society, the Soviet answer to the housing question would be fundamentally different from the half-measures seen under capitalism.

Bukharin and Preobrazhenskii drew heavily upon the knowledge of the prerevolutionary housing reform movement, as refracted through a Marxist lens. Their footnotes dutifully cited Engels's *The Housing Question* and four other works on housing, including *The Housing Question in the West and in Russia* by V. Sviatlovskii, the author of other studies on Russian housing at the turn of the century. The Bolshevik authors explained that housing under capitalism was a source of exploitation and class difference. Poor housing conditions in England, Brussels, and Budapest led to lower life expectancy for workers as compared with the bourgeoisie. Workers paid rent to "capitalist house owners" at levels that represented a substantially greater percentage of their wages than what bourgeois tenants paid. Whereas workers inhabited overcrowded housing on the outskirts of town, the bourgeoisie enjoyed spacious dwellings in garden districts with clean streets. Bukharin and Preobrazhenskii concluded, "Nowhere are the privileges of the bourgeoisie more evident than in housing."

The housing question in the proletarian state, they explained, was being resolved in a radically different way by nationalizing the bourgeoisie's apartments, relocating workers to these dwellings, and placing a moratorium on rent. The Communist Party's main task now was to establish a viable "housing economy" that protected nationalized housing from deterioration. As the authors admitted, local authorities' excessive measures led to the expropriation of small houses, which nobody could maintain and thus fell into disrepair. Without new construction, local soviets had begun to fulfill what became one of their chief functions: the fair distribution of all citizens in all houses. Directly handling housing distribution was a major endeavor that other

European states had avoided, but which the Bolsheviks eagerly undertook to start answering the housing question. Local soviets redistributed empty apartments according to a "definite plan." They determined the number of houses that remained in large cities and their "capacity" for housing people. They forced people who had "a number of rooms that exceeds the norm" to take on more residents. During the next three decades, these mechanisms evolved into permanent features of the Soviet housing system: distribution according to a plan; gathering statistical data on housing and its density; and using norms to redistribute space.

The Bolsheviks were not interested in nationalizing private property and redistributing housing just for the sake of social control. According to the new Party Program, they intended to use these tools of "soviet power" to fulfill what amounted to the goals of nineteenth-century housing reform: "the improvement of the housing conditions of the toiling masses; the elimination of overcrowding and the unsanitary state of old districts; the elimination of unfit housing and the reconstruction of old housing." To be sure, the Bolsheviks sought to go beyond these goals by building new housing for the new society of the communist future. The best form of housing for this society was still unclear, but Bukharin and Preobrazhenskii suggested two categories: "fully equipped large houses with gardens, common dining facilities and so on, or well-appointed small workers' houses." Different options were on the table, and it was the new proletarian state's responsibility to figure out which ones would be built for the future communist society. Far from being "weak," the Bolshevik approach sanctioned an infinite expansion of state responsibilities from fixing the problems of today to building the housing of tomorrow. Allocating housing was one of the most important of these responsibilities and, as I argue in this chapter and the next, it would shape in unexpected ways the design of mass housing under Khrushchev. Let us now consider in greater detail how Soviet housing allocation evolved in the context of the housing question we have established thus far.

The Quest for Minimal Living Space

The Soviet system of distributing housing was significantly different from a free market or social market approach. But its basic concepts, such as living space (zhitaila ploschad') and the sanitary norm (sanitar-
naia norma), originated in ideas about minimum living standards in the nineteenth-century housing reform movement. The circuitous path these ideas took from pan-European housing reform through their early Soviet adaptation to shaping the khruschevka's design starts with a smelly French jail in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1843, the historian Dana Simmons explains, France's Interior Ministry tasked its scientists to discover the minimum amount of airflow a prisoner would need to avoid asphyxiating on the smell of his own excrement. They suggested that a prisoner needed a minimum of 10 cubic meters of airflow hourly, which in the summer would be elevated to 12 cubic meters. Such recommendations shaped the work of public health experts, who set about finding minimum living standards for the laboring classes but soon switched from minimum amounts of airflow to minimum amounts of space. By 1848, the prefect of Paris decreed that inexpensive apartments rented by workers, the so-called garnis, had to provide a minimum of 14 cubic meters of space per person. His counterparts in London had already established similar regulations that entitled an adult to a minimum of 8.5 cubic meters and a child to 4.2 cubic meters.87

The search for smaller spaces was motivated by several factors, starting with cost. In the prison, government officials wanted to give inmates just enough air to live. But their wish to isolate prisoners individually spoke to a broader concern for social control. As Simmons explains, the prison "offered both hermetic protection from outside influences and a perfectly regulated environment."88 Outside the prison and in the city, particularly after the Revolution of 1848, public health professionals and municipal officials hoped to stem overcrowding, which they believed led to infectious diseases, immoral behavior, and social disorder among urban workers.89 In late Imperial Russia, health professionals and reformers adopted a similar approach, which included studies on the existing dimensions and densities of housing, their social effects, and recommendations for minimum standards. Their studies drew extensively upon the work and policies of their Western European counterparts.90

Max von Pettenkofer, whose role in shaping the housing question we have already seen, was particularly influential. Echoing French prison reformers, Pettenkofer developed minimum standards of cubic space based on the airflow one individual required while asleep.91 As we saw above, Pettenkofer was among those nineteenth-century hygienists and medical professionals in Russia and Europe who were frustrated by governments and private property interests unwilling to allow them free rein in housing. Regulating public spaces like prisons and boulevards was one thing, but dictating the living standards of rental properties proved more difficult. The Parisian authorities in 1848 and again in 1883 were simply unable to translate the prefect's 14-cubic-meter minimum into reality for the city's workers.92 In England, however, the Public Health Act of 1891 instituted minimum norms for rental housing. A room, which could double as a bedroom, had to have at least 400 cubic feet of space for each adult in it, whereas a bedroom had to have a minimum of 300 cubic feet per adult; half these amounts were deemed sufficient for children.93 In addition to cubic space, reformers developed other minimum standards and sought to regulate the use of space along gender and generational lines. The proposed Prussian Housing Bill of 1904 featured minimum norms for kitchens and toilets and mandated "the provision of separate rooms for children over the age of ten or unmarried lodgers of different sexes."94

The Bolshevik regime appropriated and surged ahead of these earlier policies with its own version of minimum living space soon after the October Revolution. Thus far, I have used the term "living space" without further qualification to mean housing in general. A more precise definition is now required to clarify to which parts of housing the term pertained in Soviet usage. The term "living space" (zhilaiia ploschad) represented only the floor space in an apartment's rooms. The floor space in kitchens, corridors, bathrooms, toilets, and other auxiliary units fell into a separate category known as "auxiliary space" (vspomogatel'naiia or podsoobnaiia ploschad). The sum of the two categories—living and auxiliary space—was known as "overall space" or "useful space" (obshchaita or poleznaiia ploschad).95 Census takers and local Soviet authorities throughout the Soviet period used the amount of square meters of living space per person to assess one's quality of housing, determine needs, and allocate space. Their definition and application of the spatial category "living space" evolved from the nineteenth-century pan-European housing reform movement into a fundamental pillar of the Soviet answer to the housing question in the twentieth century. Throughout this book, it is important to keep in mind the particular spatial categories to which our sources refer in order to understand what was being reported in statistics (e.g., overall space or living space) and what parts of an apartment architects and residents were discussing.
In July 1919, the People’s Commissariat of Health established a minimum norm of 8.25 square meters of living space per person in temporary housing regulations. Reflecting the outlook of nineteenth-century European hygienists, the norm functioned originally as a minimum in three dimensions. "The height of living quarters must be no less than 2.50 meters (3.5 arshina) and the floor space no less than 8.25 square meters (1.8 square sazheni) per person." Echoing England’s late-nineteenth-century regulations, adults were to have a minimum of 30 cubic meters, while children under 14 were entitled to a minimum of 20 cubic meters. Together, the square meter minimum and cubic meter minimum constituted norms that were "minimal and fundamental from the sanitary-hygienic point of view." The regulations included other "minimal requirements" in housing, reflecting similar attempts by European governments to legislate minimum standards in amenities. A dwelling had to have at least one room and a kitchen. Living quarters had to be dry, enjoy sufficient natural light, have access to fresh air, and come with toilets. Where residents of more than one apartment shared the same toilets, a minimum of one "seat" (ochko) for every 10 to 15 people was mandatory, as well as separate toilets for men and women. No mention was made of bathrooms for washing, presumably on the assumption that people went to public baths.

Among the Commissariat of Health’s "minimal requirements," the two-dimensional measure of living space was the only one that provided a common basis for assessing needs. It soon became apparent that height, auxiliary spaces, and amenities were simply too varied to incorporate into a standard measure for distribution. In defining needs, the Soviet state soon abandoned a measure based on six dimensions and several "minimal requirements," and settled instead on only living space in square meters. In May 1920, the Soviet of Ministers ordered local authorities to use the Health Commissariat’s July 1919 regulations as their guide in devising "living space norms." In June 1921, it set 8.25 square meters per person as the only universal minimum norm to resettle space from expropriated private apartments. The norm eventually became known as the "housing-sanitary norm" (zhilishchno-sanitarnai norma), the "sanitary norm" (sanitarnai norma), or simply the "housing norm" (zhilishchnai norma).

Extreme shortages further transformed the Soviet implementation of minimum living space by reducing what people actually had to levels far below 8.25 square meters. The average amount of living space per person in cities throughout the Soviet Union was measured at 6.45 square meters in 1923 and fell to 4.09 by 1940. Although the 8.25-square-meter norm was originally intended as a minimum, it immediately functioned in practice as a maximum. A family with more than 8.25 square meters had the extra space (izlishki) taken away and redistributed to others. National legislation referred to the maximum limit as "established norms," thereby acknowledging that no universal standard existed and that maximum norms were locally defined. Local authorities were allowed and even expected to distribute housing well under the sanitary norm according to the average amount of space per individual in their locality. Consequently, though the sanitary norm provided the maximum limit, the actual amount of space one received corresponded to locally determined norms of living space per person. Despite the extreme shortages that undermined the original intention of the sanitary norm, the state kept it as the fundamental measure of housing needs over the entire course of Soviet history. The norm retained its original meaning as a universal, minimum living standard only in the ideal sense of a level to which the state would raise all citizens. In the Russian Republic, it was raised only twice: to 9 square meters in 1929, and to 12 square meters in 1983.

Although Pettenkofer and other nineteenth-century hygienists may have approved of the Bolshevik state’s involvement in public health, they would not have recognized what became of their concept of minimum living standards. As the Soviet hygienist Aleksandr Marzeev readily illustrated in explaining the provenance of the sanitary norm, what Soviet citizens got in 1919 was a simplified version of Pettenkofer’s calculations, which had focused primarily on air quality as the criterion for housing sanitation and on cubic space for his recommendations. Marzeev used these calculations to demonstrate how Pettenkofer had first concluded that one person needed 75 cubic meters of space. If the air was properly ventilated, however, Pettenkofer recommended that a person would only need 25 to 30 cubic meters of space. Marzeev added to Pettenkofer’s minimum level of cubic space a ceiling height of 3 meters. The result, Marzeev explained, was that "hygienic living space for one person must be equal to 8.25 to 9 square meters." According to Marzeev, this was how the Soviet Union had developed the sanitary norm, or what he called the "minimal hygienic norm of living space."

Marzeev thus implied that policymakers in 1919 had looked directly at Pettenkofer’s calculations as a guide for formulating the sanitary
national body, the International Congress for Modern Architecture (CIAM), was devoted to “Housing for a Subsistence Minimum.” CIAM’s attempt to establish a universal minimum by soliciting data on housing from conference participants fell flat but was pursued again by Karel Teige in his monumental treatise The Minimum Dwelling (1932). Teige urged architects to develop an entirely new and technologically advanced minimal dwelling out of the real-life conditions of urban workers whose housing, however presently awful, had already negated the family and presaged collectivist living alternatives. He argued against basing minimum living standards on purely physiological criteria that produced not a new kind of housing but just a shrunken version of the bourgeois family apartment. This was precisely the problem associated with Le Corbusier’s own quest for the minimal dwelling. In 1933, Le Corbusier proposed a model for minimal housing called “The Biological Unit: The Cell of 14 m2 per Occupant.” He claimed to draw his norm from past municipal regulations and, echoing his Soviet counterparts, he reduced nineteenth-century minimum standards from three dimensions to simply two. But the “Biological Unit” itself was actually a section of his 1929 salon d’automne design for a family apartment. As Simmons argues, modernist architects’ search for the minimal dwelling relied more heavily on the past than their ideology of breaking from it would suggest.112

Soviet practice exhibited a similar tendency to shrink the traditional, family apartment through minimum standards instead of creating something entirely new, as Teige hoped. Nevertheless, Soviet minimum norms still shaped distribution and the categories of domestic space in novel ways. From 1919 to the end of the Soviet period, residents received state housing in square meters of living space per individual, irrespective of auxiliary spaces and their amenities. This fragmented domestic space into living space (zhilata ploschad’) and auxiliary space (vsyomogatel’naia or podsoobnaia ploschad’). The rental agreement extended to citizens “the right to use living quarters [zhiloe pomeschzenie]” and “the right to use living space,” but not the right to a kitchen, bathroom, toilet, or corridor. These were explicitly excluded from the rental agreement.113 A citizen paid rent only on living space without regard to auxiliary spaces.114 Article 44 of the Soviet Constitution of 1977 did finally grant Soviet citizens “a right to housing [zhilishche].” Yet it only further defined this as “well-built housing,” while living space remained the only unit guaranteed by distribution.115 In measur-
ing needs and distributing housing in square meters of living space, the Soviet Union set itself apart from Western practices, for which “apartments” and “rooms” still mattered in determining needs and allocating housing. As one of the first scholars of Soviet housing, Timothy Sosnovy, noted in 1959, “The USSR is the only country in the world where housing is measured in square meters of living space per person rather than in terms of apartments or number of occupants per room.”

In the Soviet context, living space and the sanitary norm were radically reinterpreted and transformed to serve other ends never before conceived by European social reformers. In the 1920s and 1930s, the quantitative measure of living space became intertwined with the ideological program of replacing the family through the socialization of everyday life and the collective, which informed early Bolshevik ideas on recreating society. Counting and distributing housing in square meters of living space denied the very spatial units—the apartment and its rooms—through which a single family and its social practices were represented spatially. By reducing housing to the quantitative category of living space, the state imposed the collectivist values of equality, economy, and mutual responsibility upon each individual who had the same amount of space. This was especially true in localities like Magnitogorsk, where collectivist ideology and extreme shortages gave living space such meanings.

In reality, the practice of basing housing on living space fell far short of collectivist ideals. Communal apartments, barracks, and dormitories were overcrowded, and their material conditions deteriorated. Such housing devolved into spaces of mutual antagonism and distrust. When the state sought to bolster the family in the 1930s, a reasonable outcome of this ideological reversal would have been a return to thinking about housing in terms of apartments and rooms. Yet the Stalinist state did not relinquish the concept of living space, for three main reasons. First, a quantitative measure allowed for maximum use of available space under extreme shortages at a time when industrialization took priority over new housing construction. Second, by ensuring communal distribution, living space helped turn the home into a site of social surveillance, a central concern of the Stalinist state. Third, once local soviets and factory managers controlled housing through the mechanism of living space, they were unlikely to give it up. In sum, measuring housing in square meters of living space facilitated the transformation of a minimum norm into a state mechanism for expropriating and distributing housing.

By the 1930s, the Soviet application of living space and the sanitary norm produced results that nineteenth-century social reformers had hardly intended. The Soviet state’s use of these tools made sense as long as most housing remained communal but would pose major problems in design if the government ever decided that apartments intended for single-family occupancy were preferable. This was, of course, precisely what Khrushchev’s regime did in the mass housing campaign. But before we can get to the khrushchevka to see our long-awaited Soviet answer to the nineteenth century’s housing question, we must first consider more closely how the Soviet Union rejected single-family apartments in the 1920s only to fall in love with them all over again under Stalin. The separate apartments built under Stalin, though few and far between, are a critical link in our story that ties nineteenth-century housing reform and minimum living space standards to the khrushchevka.

The Death and Resurrection of the Single-Family Apartment

On ideological grounds alone, the separate apartment was a strange fit for a socialist country on its way to communism. Housing that privileged privacy, the family, traditional gender roles, and the accumulation of new consumer goods was not the intended outcome of the October Revolution in the home. After 1917, the Bolsheviks declared war on these bastions of the bourgeoisie social order with the intent of solving the housing question for the laboring classes that languished in basements and tenement buildings. For the propertied classes, the immediate result of the Revolution was the transformation of their homes into communal apartments. Workers expropriated and moved into the single-family apartments of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy under the banner of class war in an often violent and traumatic process for the previous inhabitants who stayed.

The communal apartment was a shock to different inhabitants for different reasons. For the prerevolutionary bourgeoisie and aristocracy, it represented a loss of property, an invasion of privacy, and a leveling of social differences. Living communally in cramped quarters with un-
invited strangers from the lower orders was indeed a new experience for the affluent urban classes of Tsarist Russia. The revolution in the propertied classes' homes extended into the 1920s as local authorities and Soviet law took over from revolutionary mobs in redistributing their apartments to other people. Former owners tried to beat local officials to the punch by bringing in friends and relatives to live with them. They sought on their own terms the "condensing" (uplojenie) of their apartments into communal apartments. For the laboring classes, living communally was not so new. Their prerevolutionary barracks and tenement buildings had given them a taste of cramped living conditions. What was new for them was living with former members of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy, and using the unfamiliar amenities of their opulently designed homes.

In the long run, redistributing existing apartments was not enough for Bolshevik revolutionaries and their fellow travelers intent on creating a new way of life. New forms of housing would need to be built in order to truly remake society and create a New Soviet Man and Woman. Unfortunately, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels had given little indication about the form housing would take under communism. Engels himself had eschewed responsibility for mapping out a complete solution in his 1872 treatise The Housing Question: "To speculate as to how a future society would organise the distribution of food and dwellings leads directly to utopia" (emphasis in the original). In the Marxist worldview, only those who lived after the overthrow of capitalism could make such decisions. Under communism, people would no longer be forced to accept whatever housing capitalism produced as tools of class oppression, but would instead create housing out of their own ideas as people finally in control of their social organization. In revolutionary Russia, this task fell primarily to visionary architects and other members of the radical intelligentsia, for whom the total transformation of everyday life had been a central goal before 1917 and which the Bolshevik Revolution had now made possible.

Revolutionary activists took the lead during the heady days of "war communism" in the Civil War (1918–21) by creating "house communes" (doma-kommuny) out of prerevolutionary dwellings. In the 1920s, architects and urban planners improved upon these early experiments with designs for new "house communes." The Union of Contemporary Architects (Ob"edinenie Sovremennykh Arkhitektov, OSA) was the epicenter of collectivist living designs, where visionaries such as Mikhail Barshch and Moisei Ginzburg planned the cities and housing of the future. In house communes, residents would have small rooms primarily for sleeping, while cooking, eating, child rearing, and leisure would be socialized in rationally designed communal spaces such as dining facilities, nurseries, and clubs. The "housing question" and the "women question" intersected in these designs. Women would be the chief beneficiaries of collectivist housing, which would free them from household labor and childrearing so they could join the workforce in constructing socialism. Activists in the Communist Party's Zhenotdel (Women's Department) likewise pressed for these radical improvements in women's living and working conditions. Calls for the communalization of domestic work and the enhancement of women's everyday lives fell under the rubric of "the socialization of everyday life." Whether in theory (the dom-kommuna) or in practice (the communal apartment), all roads appeared to be heading toward collectivist housing of one form or another in the 1920s.

Rapid industrialization during the First Five-Year Plan (1928–32) significantly altered the context in which architects and others sought to resolve the housing question. The construction of new dwellings fell far behind the demands of urbanization as resources were poured into industrialization. The industrialization drive reinforced the communalization of the housing stock and the construction of communal housing such as barracks and dormitories. In industrializing towns like Magnitogorsk, communal housing was declared to be socialist; it was concrete evidence that the Revolution continued not only in the factory but also in the home. The resemblance of such conditions to prerevolutionary workers' housing and the fact that barracks and dormitories hardly lived up to the rational designs of the dom-kommuna mattered very little. In Magnitogorsk, barracks and dormitories were socialist by virtue of being represented as such and existing in a socialist state.

The work of avant-garde architects and urban planners culminated during the broader "cultural revolution" of the late 1920s and early 1930s when leftist Communists and radical visionaries claimed the banner of class war to storm the barricades of the bourgeois intelligentsia in the name of creating a truly proletarian culture. Debates raged between "urbanists," who foresaw new, rationally planned socialist cities, and "disurbanists," who wanted to resolve the urban/rural divide by dismantling cities and evenly redistributing their human and mate-
rual resources. With its focus on meeting the needs of rapid industrialization, the Stalinist state lost patience with avant-garde architects and urban planners, whose designs were either too expensive or too impractical. Along with other radical Communists and visionaries, the architects of the dom-kommuna and their allies in the Zhenotdel were marginalized as the Stalinist party-state brought the "cultural revolution" to an end in the early 1930s. The Zhenotdel was abolished in January 1930. Its duties were dispersed among other Communist Party organizations, and its focus on the "socialization of everyday life" was abandoned in favor of elevating women individually. The party next turned its attention to radical architects and urban planning theorists. In May 1930, the party's Central Committee issued the decree "Concerning Work on the Reconstruction of Everyday Life," which rejected projects for collectivist living and revolutionary town planning. The decree also initiated the Stalinization of the architectural profession, which eventually brought all architectural groups under central state control in the early 1930s.

Although the Communist Party cited costs and lack of resources in its May 1930 decree as reasons for rejecting the visionaries' plans, it also worried about the political risks of indulging the purveyors of a cultural revolution run amok. In planning the complete communalization of everyday life—including "eating, housing, and the upbringing of children, while separating them from their parents, obliterating everyday family relations, preventing the individual preparation of food by administrative fiat"—architects and urban visionaries had gotten ahead of themselves and created instead "harmful, utopian undertakings." The antifamily collectivism that informed utopian scheming risked "severely discrediting the very idea of the socialist reconstruction of everyday life." The party condemned such excesses as vain attempts to leap directly into socialism before industrialization had created the requisite material foundations. It still declared its support for the reconstruction of everyday life, as well as communal facilities such as cafeterias, public baths, and laundries. But for now, the party announced a more tempered approach to reconstructing the everyday without specifying what it would look like.

In May 1930, the party said little about what kind of housing was preferable other than the promise to build "separate residential houses for toilers." The family's withering away seemed off the table, but exactly what would these houses look like? The answer became clearer in the next few years as the single-family apartment reemerged in the architectural void left vacant by the party's condemnation of collectivist housing. Central and local government policies soon mandated the construction of single-family apartments in which the kitchen, bathroom, and toilet were reintegrated with rooms to form a single living unit. The shift to single-family occupancy reflected the Stalinist state's broader rehabilitation of the family in rhetoric and policies such as the banning of abortion and limits on divorce. These changes did not mean that Stalin's regime intended to make separate apartments available to all citizens. For most people, new housing came in the form of barracks and dormitories, and also apartments intended for communal distribution. Only those lucky enough to be in the elite—party-state officials, specialists, and elites in the cultural intelligentsia—had a chance to receive the few spacious separate apartments that architects built under Stalin. Even in Magnitogorsk, specialists and elite officials lived in single-family homes previously inhabited by foreign engineers.

In addition to being a reward for elites, the Stalin-era separate apartment served a broader social function: buttressing the regime's attempts to talk about and justify social differences under socialism. The separate apartment emerged in Stalinist discourse as an ideal domestic setting not yet attainable by all, in which a person acquired kul'turnost', the process of becoming a more cultured individual in taste, behavior, and personal hygiene. In the postwar years, the separate apartment remained an item of extreme shortage and privilege where the Stalinist elite could cultivate its "middle-class" values.

In their journals and meetings of the 1930s, architects dutifully advocated single-family apartments and repudiated collectivist designs. The architect Roman Khiger, a member of the now-defunct OSA, explained that architects had previously reduced or eliminated the kitchen, bathroom, and toilet in a crude attempt to lay the foundations for "the socialist reconstruction of everyday life." These spaces were now heading back into apartments. The task of the architect was "to provide each living unit with the possibility of having the maximum comforts in everyday conditions, and the more these comforts will be individualized in the sense of their use, the higher will be the quality of socialist housing." Interpreting the Communist Party's "unmask[ing] of the theory of 'deurbanization' and the 'socialization of everyday life,'" the architect P. Blokhin explained, "from this moment, the sepa-
rate apartment with a kitchen, bath or shower, and all the necessary amenities holds a firm place in design.  

Single-family apartments were now safely "socialist"; it was the architect's job to make them the cutting-edge of housing design.

Many architects seized the moment by designing elite single-family apartments in expensive and ornately decorated buildings that embodied the neoclassical and neo-Renaissance style of Stalinist architecture. To provide an architectural form for the privileges of the new elite, architects referenced nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century bourgeois and aristocratic homes in prerevolutionary Russia and the West. Domestic space in elite apartments was organized into public, private, and service spheres, which had been typical of European bourgeois apartments in the late nineteenth century. The architect G. Simonov explained in 1936, "The apartment is meant for the family; from this we must consider the apartment not as the sum of separate, isolated rooms but proceed from the specialization of spaces, with a separation into important spaces and second-tier spaces." Simonov drew on the English cottage as a model. "In the English cottage, a small room, connected to the kitchen, is usually placed downstairs; on the second floor are the bedrooms, bathroom and toilet. Recently we've generally used the same principle but combined on one plane." Split-level apartments were rare but not unheard of in elite 1930s housing as illustrated by I. Zholtovskii's apartment house on Mokhovaya Street in Moscow.

The architect A. Mikhailov justified the newfound reliance on "the Renaissance and classical heritage" by arguing that these styles "clearly reflect the diversity of a person's relationship to society and nature." In this context, "diversity" was coded language for class differences. Mikhailov's model domestic setting was a "typical noble country estate." He admired how its public and intimate spaces were spatially interconnected. "Buildings of 'public' [obshchestvennoe] use are always at the center of [an estate's] composition. Of course, these aren't like the public buildings we have now, like a club and other buildings. But, in any event you see where the guests congregated in the center of a hall. Buildings with intimate spaces were adjoined to these halls and all this was done so that rooms were closely integrated with one another."

Relating his observations to contemporary apartments, Mikhailov addressed "the relationship between outward-facing architecture and that of the intimate sphere." He explained that "the country estate always appears before a visitor with its front side." Transposed to a present-day apartment under socialism, this space became the room for receiving members of elite Soviet society, "If there's a Komsomol member in the family, they'll need a room designated and designed for his meetings with comrades." The function Mikhailov assigned to this sitting room echoed its place in the nineteenth-century bourgeois home where, as Jürgen Habermas tells us, "the line between private and public sphere extended right through the home" and "the family room became a reception room in which private people gather to form a public." Similar to the nineteenth-century bourgeois, the Soviet public for which Mikhailov wanted his colleagues to build was not all of society but an elite minority that included engineering-technical personnel and Stakhanovites. As for the intimate sphere, the country estate included it as an organic space closely related to nature, where "you'll see a terrace, a flight of stairs with vegetation, water, and fountains nearby. This is where the second part, the intimate one, already stands out."

As Mikhailov readily acknowledged, this spatial division between public and private spaces was rooted in the country estate of an aristocrat. Adopting such a model and referencing its source would have been anathema to the Bolsheviks and radical architects in the wake of the Revolution, when their solution to the housing question entailed expropriations of private property and making a clean break from the past. How times had changed. The recreation of a family-oriented, spatially differentiated model for apartments was now thoroughly socialist. Mikhailov explained that "socialist culture" was evolving in such a way that people's demands, family relations, and relationship to nature were becoming more diverse. Architects would need to design the built environment to meet these changes and "recognize the diverse and growing demands that the person of socialist society now asks of our socialist architecture."

Even the spaces that connected the public, service, and intimate spheres of the elite Soviet home were growing increasingly complex. According to one architect, the front entrance should lead to the living room, while an inner corridor should connect the largest room with a bedroom and yet another corridor should connect the kitchen to the dining room. The architect P. Blokhin praised recent designs that included a "service corridor, uniting the kitchen, sanitary unit [i.e., combined bathroom and toilet] and pantry." The front part of the apartment was designed as an entrance space with direct access only to rooms.
Karo Alabian, an architect who pursued the Stalinization of the profession and its turn toward traditional styles, included the studied division of public and private spaces in a three-room apartment (figure 1.1).\textsuperscript{161} The front of the apartment included its main service area, the kitchen, as well as its public spaces for receiving guests, the drawing room and a dining niche. The conspicuous grand piano in the drawing room marked this apartment as the home of a cultured member of the creative intelligentsia. Its public portion was accessed through its main entrance and its adjoining foyer, which served as a transitional buffer space announcing the intimate sphere, which began with a small corridor, off which were located two bedrooms and a combined bathroom and toilet.\textsuperscript{161}

The division of domestic space into public and private spaces was upheld as late as 1954 in the collection Interior of a Residential House. Its authors noted that “the bathroom and toilet adjoining the bedrooms belong to the back of the apartment and form with them its ‘intimate’ part, which is not directly connected to its front entrance-way.”\textsuperscript{161} This arrangement required two separate plumbing systems, a luxury that would not survive Khrushchev’s mass housing campaign.

In addition to promoting a division of public, private, and service spaces in the apartment, architects included spaces with singular functions that echoed the prerevolutionary apartments of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy. In his praise of I. Zholtsvskii’s apartment house on Mokhovaia Street in Moscow, an architect noted that he “proceeded from the fundamental prerequisite that one family will occupy every apartment and that each room will have a special designation: a bedroom, a dining room, an office and so on.”\textsuperscript{161} Having trained and practiced as an architect before the Russian Revolution, Zholotsvskii was a direct link to prerevolutionary architectural practices.\textsuperscript{164} Other architects advocated similar spaces that harked back to the prerevolutionary era. Simonov advocated bay windows and elaborate open-air balconies. He saw a dining room and an office as distinct spaces, separated by a removable divider, curtains, or double doors so the two could become one larger room.\textsuperscript{165}

Without a hint of irony, architects also included space for a domestic in the elite apartments of the world’s first workers’ state. Zholotsvskii’s building on Mokhovaia Street contained spaces meant for servants.\textsuperscript{166} In 1934, the architect of a new apartment building for engineering-technical personnel in Moscow was chastised for leaving out servants’

Figure 1.1. Plan for a three-room apartment (architect, K. Alabian). The units of the apartment are listed below the blueprint: (1) entranceway, 3.95 square meters; (2) foyer, 5.45 square meters; (3) living room, 20.5 square meters; (4) dining niche, 6 square meters; (5) kitchen, 4.9 square meters; (6) bedroom, 16.25 square meters; (7) corridor, 5.45 square meters; (8) bathroom and toilet, 4 square meters; (9) bedroom, 16.25 square meters.

1. Трехкомнатная квартира
1—передня—3,95 м\(^2\) 2—фойе—5,45 м\(^2\)
3—жилая комната—20,5 м\(^2\) 4—столовая-ниша—6,0 м\(^2\) 5—кухня—4,9 м\(^2\) 6—спальня—16,25 м\(^2\) 7—коридор—5,45 м\(^2\)
8—ванная уборная—4,9 м\(^2\) 9—спальня—16,25 м\(^2\)

quarters. In a novel application of minimum living standards harking back to concerns about air flow in our cramped French prison cell in 1843, the architect P. Aleshin argued that servants were entitled to even more space than the sanitary norm: "The maximum size of a room for a domestic is set at 9 square meters. That's nonsense. If there aren't any cracks or ventilation in such a room, the domestic will suffocate, and in a 6-meter room all the more. There's a limit for a residential room, 12 square meters, below which it's not permitted to go."

According to Aleshin, bigger apartments were better and smaller apartments were a big mistake. He mocked the minimalist designs of the disgraced avant-garde with an epithet usually reserved for remnants of the prerevolutionary past: "Apartments with few rooms are a holdover from the past [perezhitok]." In contrast, larger apartments were in demand. "Take the latest law on abortion," he explained. "We find a lot of demand for apartments intended for four to five children." For this architect, the state's profamily policies and decision to make abortion illegal served as convenient justifications for larger apartments. Never mind that the state had no intention or means to make spacious apartments available to all.

In addition to their own quarters, servants required service entrances and back stairwells to access the kitchen, separating them from family members' movement in and out of the apartment (figure 1.2). Simonov explained that a back stairwell was justified as a safety feature in case of fires, but feared its expense. Aleshin advocated a compromise whereby the back stairwell would be eliminated and the back entrance would be moved to the main stairwell as a separate entrance to the apartment's housekeeping spaces. His proposal preserved the division of space between the intimate sphere and service spaces with a particular emphasis on motion: "If we have one staircase, then it's necessary to draw all movement related to servicing the apartment to this staircase, isolating it from the entrance hall. Movement related to servicing the apartment must have an independent exit but not through the front entrance area."

To justify such features, architects only had to look to contemporary European designs as a model. Drawing upon what they saw on a tour of European cities in 1936, a team of twelve Leningrad housing construction and municipal officials asserted that the back entrance and stairwell had fallen out of favor in contemporary European housing and that Soviet apartments should adopt the new model with both the main entrance and the service entrance leading into an apartment from the same stairwell. The Leningraders' tour took them through several European cities—including Stockholm, Paris, Lille, London, and Leeds—to research Western urban planning and housing construction. (When they stopped in Berlin, the Nazi authorities denied them the opportunity to see much of the city and its housing.) In their report to Lazar' Kaganovich, the Politburo member who played a pivotal role in the Stalinization of architecture and its embrace of monumentalism, the Leningraders made several other recommendations for elite apartments.

These recommendations included technological gadgets such as automatic doors in a building's main entrance and automatic lights in
common spaces. Apartments should also include such modern amenities as bathtubs and showers, as well as built-in closets. The Leningrad officials were particularly fond of the two- to three-room apartments they had seen in Sweden, which included kitchens and baths, as well as sufficiently tall ceilings of 2.7 to 2.8 meters. Although Sweden built both residential and nonresidential buildings equally well, England and France invested too much in the latter and skimped on housing, which "they build cheaply and badly in pursuit of cutting costs." This was a reference to the austere designs of modernist architecture that the Stalinist regime had only recently condemned at home. Commenting on a set of nine-story apartment buildings (whose location was not noted), the Leningraders lamented that the "architecture recalls ours of the period 1926-30. That means mainly four- to five-story buildings based on a rectangular plan." The smooth surfaces of the buildings' facades and their balconies' solid appearance were further evidence of their close resemblance to the architecture of the avant-garde. But whereas a building's outer architecture could no longer hint at such aesthetics, the interior design of apartments allowed for more flexibility and borrowing from modernist designs.

As always, the kitchen was the site of modern domestic innovation and Stalin's elites could not do without one. After having been threatened with near extinction by some dom-kommuNA architects, the single-family kitchen was back. The Leningrad officials' recommendations suggested that they had seen models inspired by the compact and technologically advanced designs of the legendary Frankfurt Kitchen. They called for a kitchen with "the maximum comforts (a washing area, electrical or gas stove, electrical refrigerator, kitchen table, and wall cupboards for various necessities) so that all of a kitchen's equipment becomes an integral part of an apartment, and not the resident's property." This last point reflected the kitchen's compact and rational design, but may have also provided ideological cover. A Soviet elite's apartment might be based on Western capitalist designs, but it would not engender residents with the proprietary habits of their Western bourgeois counterparts. Like other attributes of Stalinist architecture and urban planning, such as monumentalism and neoclassicism, the kitchen and the single-family apartment were socialist because of their presence in a socialist country that had already deposed capitalism through the Russian Revolution.

By this logic, whatever was designed or built in the Soviet Union was automatically socialist, regardless of its historical origins, and whatever existed in the West was hopelessly capitalist. Foreshadowing the rhetorical claims of Cold War duels over domestic space and standards of living, the Leningrad officials dutifully reported to Kaganovich that European cities devoted their resources to improving the bourgeoisie's central neighborhoods, while the working class languished in substandard housing on the periphery. The European worker typically inhabited "a house made out of plywood with a paltry amount of living space, overcrowded with poor inhabitants." The touring officials even took pleasure in pointing out the irony in the names of certain districts such as "Belle Ville" in Paris, where workers lived in squalor. Perhaps Kaganovich recognized the greater irony that these officials might as well have been describing the living conditions of Soviet workers in contrast to those of Stalin's new elite. Perhaps not. After all, according to the cultural logic of Stalinist architecture, there was nothing bourgeois about separate apartments and neoclassicism once they were adopted in the Soviet Union.

Another characteristic of prerevolutionary and Western housing that was magically cleansed of its bourgeois connotations was the architect's attention to an individual client's needs. Architects building for Stalin's new elite advocated a closer relationship between design and residents. Apartments should reflect tenants' social differences and meet the needs of different social groups. The architect O. Vutke explained in 1936 that under present conditions, whereby people received goods as a reward for their labor, some housing was specifically designed for specialists, while Stakhonovites and other "decorated persons" received priority in distribution. Vutke associated attempts to reduce the number of apartment designs and "search for a single, principal planning resolution" with misguided efforts at social leveling. Differences in design would continue under communism, he argued, because people would have different needs. Blokhin repeated much the same in 1937, explaining that better-quality housing was reserved for certain social groups: "In reality, houses of a better type are intended to be settled by the distinguished people of our country, Stakhonovites, great scientists, persons standing out in the arts, and other citizens, for whom Soviet power displays special care regarding the arrangement of their everyday lives."
Such architects were concerned that modern design techniques—standardization and quantitative space measurements—made it impossible for architects to know and meet tenants' needs. Simonov identified "ignorance of the person, for whom we build," as the main cause of "the defects of our modern living unit." Mikhailov argued that "in the quest for residential architecture, it's always necessary to consider which kind of housing is needed for satisfying the needs of, let's say, engineering-technical personnel, Stakhanovites, and so on." The architect I. Vainshtein explained that "in planning a residential building we have no idea who will live in the future apartments and for whom we build. We only plan abstract "units." According to Vainshtein, the solution—to have architects become acquainted with future tenants—was a chief example of their "care for the person." Through "contact with future residents," architects would tailor apartments to tenants' professional needs. "Why must we make all apartments in a new building the same height?" Vainshtein wondered. "Why, for example, must an artist live in the same apartment as the commercial director of a factory? Indeed an artist needs to draw his paintings, he needs more light, a room of greater height. Why, let's say, must the violinist Oistrakh live in the same apartment as the pilot Vodop'ianov?" Such calls for diversity in apartment designs illustrate again how closely the rehabilitation of single-family occupancy and separate apartments in the 1930s was related (and restricted) to the rise of a new elite under Stalin and the justifications that made their privileges palatable.

Conclusion

As the immediate discussion above has shown, the resurrection of the single-family apartment in the 1930s reflected the social and cultural values of Stalinism. In place of the egalitarianism and collectivist lifestyle that informed the dom-kommuna housing projects of the 1920s, the Stalin-era separate apartment embraced the family and class differences, now euphemistically known as "diversity" in a socialist society. Having been marked for extinction in Marxist theory and the early days of the Russian Revolution as a vestige of the bourgeois order, the single-family apartment returned on the heels of political transformations in the late 1920s and early 1930s. As Stalin's regime poured resources into industrialization, it rejected the avant-garde and Zhenotdel's projects for the immediate transformation of social life as premature, politically risky, and too costly. Stepping into the void, the single-family apartment provided the ideal domestic setting for a slower path to social transformation and the propaganda of kul'turnost'. Though only available to Stalin's new elite, the single-family apartment and the civilized lifestyle it represented were ideals to which all could aspire and eventually acquire under communism.

The single-family apartment's return was not only inspired by internal transformations specific to Stalinism. Like the norms for minimum living space that the Bolsheviks had earlier adopted and adapted from the pan-European housing reform movement, the single-family occupancy of apartments was an international standard, albeit of modern urban bourgeois life, that Stalin's regime was eager to borrow and harness for its own purposes as it looked forward to building a socialist version of modernity. Soviet housing experts were sent abroad to figure out how best to design and build such apartments, while architects at home turned to housing layouts and architectural styles from the European and Russian past for aesthetic inspiration in designing facades and balancing the public, private, and service spaces of elite urban apartments. Stalin's regime broke many economic and cultural ties with the West, including links to the international style in architecture, as it embarked upon its autarkic version of industrialization. Yet as historian Yves Cohen reminds us, severing such ties did not prevent the regime from continuing to borrow ideas and objects from the West, retooling them to fit Soviet conditions, and repackaging them as socialist. Norms for minimum living space and the modernist aesthetics of CIAM were not the only architectural trends the West had to offer. The single-family bourgeois apartment was another.

As this chapter has shown, the Soviet Union obtained and retooled two elements—norms for minimum living space and single-family occupancy—into two critical pillars of its housing system at two very different times in its prewar history. Whereas the Bolsheviks adopted the first in the wake of the October Revolution and through the 1920s, Stalin's regime rehabilitated the second in the 1930s. Both elements had their origins in different aspects of the pan-European housing reform movement. Public hygiene specialists such as Max von Pettenkofer developed minimum living space norms to improve the health and housing conditions of the urban working poor. Single-family occupancy was the requisite living arrangement that reformers such as Frédéric Le
Play promoted to transmit proper bourgeois values and behaviors to workers and their families. Once inside the Soviet Union, both elements were adapted to Soviet conditions and acquired new functions to serve Soviet goals. Minimum living space norms and single-family occupancy also interacted in ways that neither nineteenth-century housing reformers nor Soviet policymakers intended, namely, by putting the distribution of housing in tension with design. We now turn to this issue in the next chapter and to the problems it posed for architects committed to extending the separate apartment to the general population. Explaining how architects solved the unforeseen tensions between minimum living space norms and single-family occupancy will help us answer the question that began this chapter and frustrated so many ordinary urban dwellers: Why did the khrushchevka have to be so small?

Chapter 2

Khrushchevka: The Soviet Answer to the Housing Question

At first glance, the distribution of housing had little influence on design because it followed rather than preceded the architect’s job. But in the case of the khrushchevka, the process was in a certain sense reversed. The basic problem had to do with the inherent contradiction between design and distribution, the outline of which we began to see in chapter 1. In theory, a separate apartment by design was supposed to be settled by an individual family. In practice, under the rules of housing distribution, an apartment was parcelled out to individuals (not families) in square meters of living space, which only included the floor space of rooms but not auxiliary spaces such as kitchens and corridors. If it had too much living space, any apartment could be settled communally regardless of its architect’s intent. In chapter 1, we saw how architects who embraced single-family occupancy under Stalin designed separate apartments for elites. In this chapter, I examine how a different set of architects, who were mainly from the marginalized avant-garde of the 1920s, resolved the unintended communal distribution of apartments. In doing so, these architects skillfully leveraged the conditions of socialist housing distribution to pursue their enduring dream of creating a minimal dwelling unit for the mass urban resident in an era when their constructivist aesthetics and the international style were officially banned. Their design formula became the template for the khrushchevka but left future architects in the 1950s and 1960s with an ambiguous legacy of architectural choices and limitations.

The architects’ solution to the communalization of separate apartments was the drastic reduction in living space to such a level that local
of life of separate groups of the population that allow for one or another increase in these norms." A. Sysin et al., Sanitarnoe zakonodatel'stvo: Sbornik vashnetishikh zakonov i rasporyazhenii po povosan sanitaro-profilakticheskogo dela (Moscow, 1920), 77.

3. I thank Alexander Vlasov for this illustrative joke.


8. An exception in the scholarship is Geoffrey Barraclough, who notes how distribution norms shaped design and the dimensions of rooms in his study of mass housing under Khrushchev and through the Gorbachev era. His analysis, however, does not trace the origins of this relationship between distribution and design further back than the Khrushchev era. Geoffrey Barraclough, "Late Socialist Housing: Prefabricated Housing in Leningrad from Khrushchev to Gorbachev" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1997), 188–205.

9. In relating the khrushchevka to the pan-European history of minimum living standards, this chapter and the next draw in particular on the study by Dana Simmons, "Minimal Frenchmen: Science and Standards of Living, 1840–1960" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2004).


12. The 1897 congress, attended by a delegation from Russia, featured state intervention as its first question. Actes du Congrès international, v, xxv. The question was also featured at the congress in 1900. Compte rendu et documents du Congrès international, 6.


15. Burnett, Social History, 41.


18. Shapiro, Housing the Poor, 17–32.


24. M. Dikanskii, Kvarirnyi vopros i sosial'nye opyty ego reshenii (Saint Petersburg, 1908); J.A. Littauer and N. Topolov, Rabochii shchishchnyi vopros (Astrakhan, 1909).


27. Ibid., 490–91. See her extended discussion of Le Play and other like-minded reformers in Housing the Poor, 84–110.


29. Bullock and Read, Movement for Housing Reform, 52, 79.


33. Ibid., 180–82.

34. Shapiro, “Housing Reform,” 496.

35. Shapiro, Housing the Poor, 147–53.


37. Bullock and Read, Movement for Housing Reform, 273–75; Burnett, Social History, 175, 181.

38. Shapiro, “Housing Reform,” 497.


40. Ibid.; Burnett, Social History, 175.

41. This is as discussed and quoted by Burnett, Social History, 175.

42. Shapiro, “Housing Reform,” 498.

43. Ibid., 494–96; Sieber, Housing Design and Society, 23–25.

44. Friedrich Engels, The Housing Question (Moscow: Cooperative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR, 1935).


47. Vladimir Lenin, Gosudarstvo i revoliutsiya (Moscow: Politizdat, 1975), 58.

48. Engels, Housing Question, 98.

49. Lenin, Gosudarstvo i revoliutsiya, 59.


54. Lebas, Magri, and Topolov, Reconstruction.


59. Burnett, Social History, 221–43.

60. Bullock and Read, Movement for Housing Reform, 263–72.


64. Lebas, Magri, and Topolov, Reconstruction, 255, 262.
65. Ibid., 257.
68. Holquist, Making War.
72. Hardy and Kuczynski, Housing Program, 46-47.
75. "Dekret o zemle," October 26, 1917, Sobranie vznakonnenii i rasporazhenii rabochago i krest'ianskago pravitel'stv a (hereafter, SU), no. 1 (1917): 4-5.
76. The decree released from rent families with members fighting in the war and persons with a monthly income of less than 400 rubles; the moratorium would last until three months after the war's end. "O zhilishchnom moratorii," October 28, 1917, SU, no. 1 (1917): 14-15.
77. See points 6-8 of the decree's regulations in "O zhilishchnom moratorii.
78. In accordance with whatever "rules and norms" they devised, local authorities could relocate people in need of housing into the confiscated dwellings. In addition, they were given the power to establish "housing inspection," "commitees," and "housing courts." The decree, published October 30, 1917, left it up to local authorities to define what exactly these bodies would do. "O peredachii zhilishch v vedenie gorodov," SU, no. 1 (1917): 15.
81. Moervich, Biografii professii.
82. Nikolai Bukharin and Eugene Preobrazhenskii, Azbuka kommuniza: Popularynoe ob 'izmenenie programmy rass冰冷koi komunisticheskoi parti i bol'shevikov (Goneli: Gosudarstvemnoe izdatel'stvo, 1921), 273-76, 295, 315-16.
83. V. Sviatlovskii, Kvarтирnyi vopros (Saint Petersburg: M. M. Stasilevich, 1899).
84. Bukharin and Preobrazhenskii, Azbuka komuniza, 273-75.
85. Ibid., 275-76.
86. Ibid., 276, 315-16.
88. Ibid., 233-39.
89. Shapiro, Housing the Poor.
92. Ibid., 248-54.
95. For a standard definition of an apartment's spatial units, see Narodnoe khoziaistvo SSSR v 1959 godu (Moscow: Gosstatizdat TsSU SSSR, 1960), 843. "Podobnye pomeshchenia" was used in addition to "podsobnaia ploshchad" to describe auxiliary spaces. E.g., see L. Burnazhnyi and A. Zalt'ram, "Perspektivnye tipy zhilnykh domov i kvartir," Arkhitekturnaia SSR, no. 1 (1959): 2-9.
96. The figures in parentheses were prerevolutionary units of measurement and appear in the original text.
99. Clause 1 of "Instruktsia o merakh uluchsheniia zhilishchnych uslovii rabochikh," issued by the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, the Central Commission on Improving Workers' Daily Lives, and the Commissariat of Health on June 4, 1921, in Sbornik dekretov i vaznisekhikh rasporazhenii po zhilishchnomu voprosu: Vypusk vtoroi. Za period s oktobra 1920 g. po oktobra 1921 g. (Moscow, 1921), 17-20. These regulations listed the minimum norm only in the prerevolutionary unit of measurement as "1.8 square sazheh per person." As noted above, its equivalent in the metric system was 3.25 square meters.
101. Aleksandr Mazzeev, Kommunal'naia gigiena (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo meditsinskoi literatury, 1951), 422.
102. Broner, Kurs zhilishchnogo khoziaistva, 90.
104. Regulations issued by the People's Commissariat of the Municipal Economy and the People's Commissariat of Justice (Russian Republic) from 1924 invoked the "housing-sanitary norm" to define what constituted "extra space": amounts above 9 square meters of living space per person and any legally obtained additional space. Regulations issued by the People's Commissariat of the Munic-
pal Economy from 1947 similarly defined extra space explicitly as amounts exceeding the sanitary norm of nine square meters. Alekseev, Zhilishchnye zakony, 323, 326, 355. On the norm’s increase to 9 square meters, see the explanation below.

105. The 1922 Civil Code defined the maximum limit as “the established norms.” See clause 173 of Grazhdanskiy kodeks RSFSR (Leningrad: Izdatel’stvo “Rabochii Sdru,” 1925), 41. An important 1937 housing decree defined it as “the established housing norms.” See clause 27 of “O sokhraneni zhilishchnogo fonda i uluchshenii zhilishchnogo khoziaistva v gorodakh,” Sobranie zakonov i rasporяденii raboche-krestianskogo pravitel’stva SSSR (hereafter, SZ), no. 69 (1937).

106. For regulations that expected such distribution, see the 1921 regulations cited above, “Instruktsiya o merakh uluchshenii zhilishchnyh usloviy rabochikh.” For regulations that allowed it, see the 1934 regulations of the People’s Commissariat of the Municipal Economy and People’s Commissariat of Justice, cited above.

107. This was still stated as a matter of fact in 1965 by Izrail Markovich et al., Zhilishchnoe zonodatel’stvo v SSR i RSFSR (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo literatury po stroitel’stvu, 1965), 94–95.

108. Whereas the sanitary norm applied to state housing, cooperatives and individual housing had different limits. In the cooperatives of the 1920s and 1930s, limits on space were pegged to the space norms of their localities established for state housing. “O zhilishchnoi kooperatsii,” August 19, 1924, SZ, no. 5 (1924): 65–72. Cooperatives of the 1950s were bound by a cap of 60 square meters of living space. See clause 16 of “Ob individual’nom i kooperativnom zhilishchnom stroitel’stve v RSFSR,” October 5, 1962, Sobranie postanovlenii pravitel’stva Rossisoi Sovetskoj Federativnoi Sotsialisticheskoj Respubliki (hereafter, SP RSFSR), no. 21 (1962): 386–97. The maximum amount of living space in individually constructed houses was set at 60 square meters in 1958. Markovich et al., Zhilishchnoe zonodatel’stvo, 25.

109. On the increase to 9 square meters in 1929, see Marzeev, Komunal’naiya gigiena, 422. Another source dates this increase to 1926. David Broner, Zhilishchnoe stroitel’stvo i demograficheskoi protsessy (Moscow: “Statistika,” 1980), 23. The Housing Code of 1983 set the norm at 12 square meters. Zhilishchnyi kodeks RSFSR (Moscow: “Iuridicheskaya literatura,” 1985), 16. No union-wide norm existed. Each Soviet republic set its norm at or below the Russian Republic’s with the exception of Ukraine where the norm was 13.65 square meters since before World War II. Valerii’ Likhvin, Zhilishchnoe zonodatel’stvo: Spravochnoe posobie (Moscow: Profizdat, 1988), 40; Broner, Kurs zhilishchnogo khoziaistva, 90.


113. The term “the right to use living quarters” is from clause 24 of the 1937 housing law, “O sokhraneni zhilishchnogo fonda.” The 1964 Civil Code employs “the right to use living space” in clause 302 and specifies the exclusion of auxiliary spaces in the rental agreement in clause 300. Grazhdanskiy kodeks RSFSR (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo “Iuridicheskaya literatura,” 1968), 82. For further explanation, see Markovich et al., Zhilishchnoe zonodatel’stvo, 100–104.

114. Izrail Markovich and Vitalii Skripko, Kvartrina pla (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo literatury po stroitel’stvu, 1965), 5, 11.


124. On the laboring classes’ pre-revolutionary experience with communal forms of housing, see Lebina, Povedemennia zhit’i sovetskogo goroda, 160, and Ruble, Vserossiyskaia metropol’ia, 267–72.


128. For a study of Soviet everyday life, including the communal apartment, that emphasizes its origins in the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia’s obsessions with transforming the everyday, see Svetlana Boym, Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994).


152. V. Blokhin, "Otdelka i detali," Arkhitektura SSSR, no. 6 (1934): 25. Whether this was the same Blokhin cited above is unclear. This article is the only one I am aware of that identifies the author's first name with the initial "V."


154. Ibid., 62-63.


156. Voprosy zhilschchnoi arkhitektury, 63.

157. Ibid., 63.

158. Ibid., 25, 27.

159. Blokhin, "Trudiaschchiesia poluchili novye zhilishcha," 34.


162. S. Aleksseev et al., Inter'eri zhilogo doma (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo literatury po stroitel'stvu i arkhitekture, 1954), 10.


164. Zholtovskii received his architectural training in Saint Petersburg from 1887 to 1898. In his pre-1917 work, he had preferred the Renaissance style and designed at least one private residence in Moscow. Bol'shaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya, 3rd ed. (Moscow: Izdatel'vto "Sovetskaia entsiklopediia," 1972), 5:231.


169. Ibid., 59-61.

170. Ibid., 19.

171. Ibid., 59-60.


173. Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii; hereafter, RGASPI), f. 81, op. 3, d. 192, l. 57-60, 70, 130. See also Otchet gruppy rabotnikov, komandirovannykh Len. gorkomom VKP(b) dlia oznakomleniya s zhilischno-kommunal'nym khozisstvom gorodov zapadnoi Evropy. This unpublished and undated version of their report, preserved in the National Library in Saint Petersburg, concentrates mostly on technical aspects of housing construction.

174. RGASPI, f. 81, op. 3, d. 192, II. 132-33.

175. Otchet gruppy rabotnikov, 2-3.

176. Designed by Grete Schütte-Lihotzky in the mid-1920s, the Frankfurter Kitchen was a formative model in modernist architecture for a compact, rationally designed kitchen. Nicholas Bullock, "First the Kitchen—then the Façade," Journal of Design History 1, nos. 3-4 (1988): 177-92.

177. RGASPI, f. 81, op. 3, d. 192, II. 57-60, 68, 70, 130-31.

Chapter 2


6. The fact that some elites lived in communal apartments suggests their homes had undergone communalization. See Sheila Fitzpatrick, Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times—Soviet Russia in the 1920s (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 98-99. Because the quantitative data cited below on the communalization of new apartments do not indicate their residents’ social status, it is not possible to determine how many apartments inhabited by elites became communal.


