Divided we Stand: Cities, Social Unity and Post-War Reconstruction in Soviet Russia, 1945–1953

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Abstract

This article explores the divisions created by the Great Patriotic War, its aftermath and the reconstruction of Russian cities in the late 1940s and early 1950s. It examines the conflicts created by rebuilding housing, infrastructure, restoring communities and allocating resources in cities where war's painful legacy continued to be felt. The war's impact varied enormously between cities on the frontlines and in the rear. Contrary to official propaganda rebuilding was a protracted process, which created divisions rather than unity.

In the summer of 1945, and for the next decade, the effects of the Great Patriotic War could be felt in almost every aspect of Soviet life. Victory came at a terrible cost. Vast swathes of territory, including some of the Soviet Union's most urbanised and economically advanced regions, lay in ruins.[1] In many cities the basic infrastructure which underpinned urban life stood on the verge of collapse. The total urban housing stock in 1945 was approximately 200 million square metres, compared to 270 million square metres in 1940, a loss of approximately a quarter of living space, enough

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[1] On the war's impact see: Susan J. Linz, ed., *The Impact of World War II on the Soviet Union* (Totawa, NJ.: Rowman & Allanheld, 1985); Elena Zubkova, *Russia After the War: Hopes, Illusions and Disappointments, 1945–1957*, ed. and trans by Hugh Ragsdale (Armonk, NY.: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), idem., *Poslevoennoe sovetskoe obshchestvo: politika i povsednevnost' 1945–1953* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2000); Juliane Fürst, ed., *Late Stalinist Russia: Society Between Reconstruction and Reinvention* (London: Routledge, 2006); Stephen Lovell, *The Shadow of War: Russia and the USSR, 1941 to the Present* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

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space to house approximately 25 million people.[2] According to the Russian Ministry of Housing and Municipal Services the average per capita living space in housing controlled by City Soviets in January 1945 was just 4.85 square metres, compared to a theoretical norm of 8.25 square metres.[3] Although overcrowded and unsanitary conditions were standard, the situation in the former warzone, where only a fraction of housing remained, was worse. More traumatic still was the death of approximately twenty-seven million Soviet citizens, a demographic void that took decades to fill. From empty stomachs to fears of crime, housing shortages to the creation of two and a half million disabled veterans, the grief of millions of widows and the generation of children brought up without fathers, war cast a long shadow over Soviet society. It was never far from people's minds, not least because war recalibrated how people thought, behaved and interacted.

Post-war Soviet, and wider European, history has often been written as an attempt to re-establish normality amidst war's economic and social wreckage. In the Soviet Union, however, the war's aftermath did not bring about a release from wartime obligations and constraints, but rather new demands and objectives: remobilisation rather than demobilisation.[4] Wartime destruction did not simply prompt a desire to return to 'normality', it induced more positive transformations of the social and political landscape. The war, and the myths that it generated, helped relaunch the Soviet project and reinvigorate official ideology, offering new opportunities for the transformation of society. Victory became the new foundational myth for Soviet society, eclipsing even the October Revolution.[5] The war effort was frequently presented, not least by the party-state itself, as the product of exceptional collective endeavour and national unity. Wartime crises supposedly fostered a sense of solidarity, patriotism and shared citizenship amongst Russians.[6] Many later recalled the war positively, as a period of individual freedom, responsibility and agency.[7] As Amir Weiner argues, 'victimization and fatalism gave way to the celebration of activity and continuity; the traumas of collectivization, famine and terror gave way to the triumphant war; collaboration to common suffering; and civil war to unification of the national family'.[8] These powerful collective myths of national redemption were

[2] Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism: Labour and the Restoration of the Stalinist System After World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 92.

[3] Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (hereafter GARF) f. A-314, op.2, d.189, l.45.

[4] See Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann, eds., *Life After Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe During the 1940s and 1950s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'Postwar Soviet Society: The Return to Normalcy", 1945–1953', in Linz, ed., *The Impact of World War II*, 129–56.

[5] Amir Weiner, 'The Making of a Dominant Myth: The Second World War and the Construction of Political Identities within the Soviet Polity', *Russian Review*, 55, 4 (1996), 638–60; idem., *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[6] Geoffrey Hosking, 'The Second World War and Russian National Consciousness', *Past & Present*, 175 (May 2002), 162–87.

[7] On the positive emotions awakened by war see, E. S. Seniavskaia, *Frontovoe pokolenie 1941–1945: Istoriko-psikhologicheskoe issledovanie* (Moscow, IRI-RAN, 1995).

[8] Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 384.

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pervasive and proved far more useful than divisive narratives of pain, suffering and trauma.[9] In reality, the war generated its own and exacerbated pre-existing social tensions. Conflicts, divisions and fractures created by war and the challenges of reconstruction were never far below the surface of post-war Soviet society.

This article seeks to challenge the myth of post-war social unity and argues against a collective experience of urban reconstruction across Soviet Russia by highlighting the remarkable diversity of war's impact on cities and the diversity of local responses to rebuilding. The history of Soviet post-war reconstruction has often been written from the perspective of the band of territory laid waste by war. Several accomplished histories of post-war reconstruction focus on heavily damaged cities in this zone.[10] The dramatic stories of cities like Stalingrad, Voronezh and Smolensk, which lost over three-quarters of their housing, and where inhabitants survived in dugouts amidst the ruins, naturally dominate the historical imagination. Yet, even within the warzone there was great variation in the extent of damage and the speed of reconstruction. The Great Patriotic War's impact on urban life, however, was felt far across Soviet Russia and could not be measured purely in terms of war damage. As Donald Filtzer and Mark B. Smith remind us, war placed cities far behind the frontlines under enormous strain. Cities earmarked as evacuation centres, particularly eastern industrial areas, experienced rapid wartime industrialisation and sudden population influxes but without corresponding increases in housing or budgets. Chronic under-investment during and after the war, while the state directed its resources to waging war and repairing the worst damage, left these cities severely overcrowded unable to maintain dilapidated buildings or build sufficient new housing.[11] Although the war's impact was less immediate in these cities, it was nevertheless profound.

This article, therefore, seeks to disaggregate and disentangle the experience of severely war-damaged cities from neglected industrial cities in the rear. It seeks to move beyond post-war plans for the redevelopment of Moscow and Leningrad, the most developed and intensively studied Soviet cities, to focus on regional cities – not least because the two capitals experienced their own particular forms of urban development often at odds with wider trends.[12] It concentrates in particular on

[9] Catherine Merridale, 'The Collective Mind: Trauma and Shell-shock in Twentieth-century Russia', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 35, 1 (2000), 39–55.

[10] Karl D. Qualls, *From Ruins to Reconstruction: Urban Identity in Soviet Sevastopol After World War II* (Ithaca, NY. and London: Cornell University Press, 2009); Jeff Jones, *Everyday Life and the 'Reconstruction' of Soviet Russia During and After the Great Patriotic War, 1943–1948* (Bloomington, IN.: Slavica, 2008).

[11] Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism: Labour and the Restoration of the Stalinist System After World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 93; idem., *The Hazards of Urban Life in Late Stalinist Russia: Health, Hygiene, and Living Standards, 1943–1953* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 11–13; Mark B. Smith, *Property of Communists: The Urban Housing Program from Stalin to Khrushchev* (DeKalb, IL.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 27.

[12] Timothy J. Colton, *Moscow: Governing the Socialist Metropolis* (Cambridge, MA.; London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995); Blair A. Ruble, *Leningrad: Shaping a Soviet City* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990; David T. Cattell, *Leningrad: A Case Study of Soviet Urban Government* (New York, Washington and London: Praeger, 1968) and Steven Maddox, *Saving Stalin's Imperial City: Historic Preservation in Leningrad, 1930–1953* (Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press, 2015).

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Stalingrad, the most iconic and badly damaged of Soviet frontline cities, as well as industrial cities used as evacuation centres, including Kuibyshev, Cheliabinsk and Magnitogorsk. Although the focus is on major cities, rather than the hinterland industrial regions examined by Filtzer, it shares his approach of exploring the disparities between cities, and the different physical, social, economic and political problems created by reconstruction.[13] Far from being rapidly rebuilt, as official propaganda frequently asserted, this article argues that the progress of Soviet urban reconstruction was more uneven and more protracted than aggregate reconstruction figures indicated. The post-war Five-Year Plan (1946–1950) produced a remarkable surge in construction, but the decisions taken and methods employed in the course of reconstruction often failed to have the impact claimed. The result was an extended period during which the tensions and divisions created by the war and the challenges of reconstruction bubbled under the surface of Soviet society. Rebuilding cities in a period of great financial and material hardship presented enormous logistical, social and economic challenges, which frequently prompted divisions, disappointments and dissatisfaction. Reconstruction necessitated the constant balancing of competing demands for the repair of basic urban infrastructure (such as sewerage disposal, water and electricity supply), transport networks, industrial enterprises, public buildings, open spaces and housing. As elsewhere, decisions about what, when, where and how to build prompted heated debates and bitter disputes amongst architects, planners, decision makers and ordinary residents.[14] Although planning and architectural debates about the shape of reconstructed urban space and the nature of the post-war socialist city form an important background to what follows, much of the evidence examined here concentrates upon the practicalities of housing reconstruction. After 1945 the housing crisis was amongst the most serious problems facing Soviet society, central to urban, social, economic and political history, and a key component in how citizens experienced urban space. Housing had always been an important arena in which the relationship between individuals and the state was negotiated, but it assumed an added resonance in the wake of wartime destruction.[15] As Rebecca Manley argues, 'housing emerges as a contested terrain in which individuals and groups fought not only over scare material resources, but over who won the war, and the extent to which the war would determine the postwar order'.[16] The article, therefore, draws upon a wide variety of source materials concerning Russian cities preserved in central Moscow archives, much of which is cited here for the first time. These sources include, amongst others, official statistics, city budgets, reports on the progress of reconstruction, requests from municipal authorities for additional finance, discussions

[13] Filtzer, *The Hazards of Urban Life*, 11–13.

[14] Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, 'Introduction: New Perspectives on a Rebuilt Europe', in Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, ed., *Rebuilding Europe's Bombed Cities* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), 1–15.

[15] Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1995), 160.

[16] Rebecca Manley, '"Where should we settle the comrades next?" The adjudication of housing claims and the construction of the post-war order', in Fürst, ed., *Late Stalinist Russia*, 233–46 (234).

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amongst architects about the challenges of reconstruction and letters of complaint from individual citizens.

The Soviet Union, of course, was not alone in experiencing the extreme destructiveness of the Second World War. Hundreds of cities across Europe were partially or completed devastated by bombing and shelling. Warsaw and Dresden, for example, suffered damage comparable with the worst affected Soviet cities. While the challenges of reconstruction (shortages of finance, skilled labour and building materials) were often broadly similar, different societies responded in different ways with varying outcomes. Although widespread urban destruction was a disaster for residents, urban elites sometimes saw silver linings. Planners, architects and political authorities often viewed ruined cities, 'as an unprecedented opportunity to introduce radically modernising changes in the urban fabric on a scale that had been almost impossible in existing, built-up cities'.[17] For much of Europe reconstruction was about more than recovering from war damage, it implied a measure of social, economic and political reform and a vision for a better society. The completeness of Germany's economic, political, social and moral devastation, for example, combined with the shock of violence, mass death and urban destruction, compelled a wholesale restructuring of society.[18] In Britain, meanwhile, urban planning during and after the war offered the prospect of better, cleaner, healthier, more rational and more comfortable urban spaces. New visions of the urban future in the form of public housing, New Towns and garden suburbs meshed well with political goals of post-war social and welfare reform.[19] In Poland, which suffered extensive urban damage, the new city of Nowa Huta was envisaged as Poland's first socialist city, which would become 'the great building site of socialism', forging 'new men' through the act of construction as much as purpose built socialist spaces.[20]

Reconstruction, however, took a different form and assumed different meanings in Soviet Russia. Unlike almost every other European combatant the Soviet Union avoided significant post-war political and economic change, emerging from the war victorious, with the same leader and with its political system intact.[21] Soviet urban reconstruction was not supported by wholescale economic, political or ideological reform. This is not to say that planners, architects and politicians ceased to envisage the reconstruction of Soviet cities as an opportunity to build socialist cities, create Stalinist civilisation and articulate new visions of urban life. Just as in the 1920s and 1930s cities continued to be ideological spaces in which the New Soviet person could be forged and socialist values inculcated. The ideological functions of socialist cities,

[17] Diefendorf, ' Introduction: New Perspectives on a Rebuilt Europe', 5.

[18] Richard Bessel, *Germany 1945: From War to Peace* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2009), 385–401.

[19] David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain 1945–51* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007) 28–34, 159–63; David Edgerton, 'War, Reconstruction, and the Nationalization of Britain, 1939–1952', *Past and Present*, Supplement 6 (2011), 29–46.

[20] Katherine Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia: Nowa Huta, Stalinism, and Polish Society, 1949–56* (Ithaca, NY. and London: Cornell University Press, 2013).

[21] Mark Harrison, 'The Soviet Union after 1945: Economic Recovery and Political Repression', *Past & Present*, 210, Supplement 6 (2011), 107.

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as radiant and edifying places that served as ideological prompts, continued to inspire visions of the Soviet urban future after 1945.[22] Realising architectural visions and urban plans, however, proved exceptionally difficulty amidst the social, economic and political fallout of war. The immediate pressures of rebuilding the physical infrastructure of cities, and reconstituting 'normal' urban life, often prevented a consistent implementation of ideological goals.

Stalingrad, the site of the war's most famous and lethal battle, was almost completely destroyed by fighting. When the battle ended just 12.1 per cent of the city's housing was standing.[23] According to one historian 41,895 buildings lay in ruins. Water, electricity supply, communications infrastructure and almost all public buildings were totally destroyed. Seventy theatres, 110 schools, 120 nurseries, seventy-five clubs, fifteen hospitals, sixty-eight polyclinics, two museums and almost all of the city's libraries and their 800,000 books had disappeared.[24] By June 1945 328,612 mines and 1,169,443 artillery shells were cleared from the ruins. And already by June 1943 the bodies of tens of thousands of soldiers had been cleared from the rubble.[25] When the battle ended the secret police recorded just 7,655 surviving residents.[26] Before the battle the city's population had stood at approximately 400,000, and perhaps as many as 560,000 once evacuees were included.[27] So little of the city survived, and so few of its residents remained, that some people questioned whether it might be better to rebuild the city elsewhere and leave the ruins as a monument.[28]

Stalingrad, although far from typical, provides a fascinating case study of the complexities and painfully slow progress of reconstruction. It was, as a group of foreign journalists on an organised visit to Stalingrad in mid-April 1947 were told, a priority for reconstruction. The extent of destruction, its status as the decisive battle of the war and the fact it bore Stalin's name ensured that Stalingrad was privileged ahead of other cities.[29] Indeed, Stalingrad's reconstruction was so important that *Glavstalingradstoi*, the construction trust established to rebuild the city, reported directly to the Council of People's Deputies in Moscow. Despite enormous challenges, Soviet planners, architects and ordinary citizens initially set about the task with great enthusiasm. In the face of extreme shortages of food, clothing and shelter, and restrictions on returning to the city, Stalingrad's population grew rapidly. By 10 July 1943 there were approximately 148,000 civilians in the city, rising to nearly 210,000

[22] Catherine Cooke, 'Beauty as a Route to "the Radiant Future": Responses of Soviet Architecture', *Journal of Design History*, 10, 2 (1997), 137–60.

[23] GARF, f.R-8131, op.37, d.2445, ll.72–3.

[24] B. S. Abalikhin, 'Vozrozhdenie', in *Volgograd: Chetyre Veka istorii* (Volgograd: Nizhne-Volzhskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1989), 267.

[25] Abalikhin, 'Vozrozhdenie', 270.

[26] *Stalingradskai epopeia* (Moscow: Zvonnitsa MG, 2000), 393–407 (404).

[27] Jochen Hellbeck, *Stalingrad: The City That Defeated the Third Reich* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 92.

[28] The journalist Alexander Werth, for example, recalled meeting a Russian soldier who described how there was nothing left of Stalingrad, and that it would 'save a lot of trouble' to rebuild Stalingrad elsewhere. Alexander Werth, *Russia at War, 1941–1945* (London: Pan, 1965), 554.

[29] RGASPI, f.17, op.125. d.509, ll.133–62 (l.137).

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by early September 1943 and 260,000 by mid-June 1945.[30] These people were often determined to rebuild the city despite the obvious hardships. Stalingrad, according to propaganda narratives and grandiose architectural plans, was to rise phoenix-like from the Volga. Indeed, over 200 million roubles was allocated for Stalingrad's reconstruction in 1943, a sum which tripled in 1944.[31] The architects commissioned to draw up plans for Stalingrad's reconstruction saw the city's wreckage as a blank slate which gave them considerable freedom, rather than a source of problems. Karo Alabian, head of the USSR academy of architecture, whose team's blueprints for Stalingrad's general plan were approved by the government in February 1944, was enthused by the opportunity to create a new city on an almost empty site. Architects' vision for post-war Stalingrad remained one of a modern, rational, well ordered and pleasant socialist city, 'whose appearance would be so magnificent as to convince visitors and residents of the power and historically progressive nature of the Soviet project'.[32]

Well before the war's end plans for rebuilding war-torn cities began to take shape. The State Committee on Architectural Affairs, established in September 1943, commissioned leading national architects to draw reconstruction plans for war-damaged cities, and chief architects were appointed in dozens of cities to supervise the implementation of these plans.[33] Indeed as the historian Andrew Day writes, 'not since the era of the First Five Year Plan (1929–32) had architects, planners and their politician patrons shown such enthusiasm for the idea that the way to make cities socialist was to build them from the ground up'.[34]

Despite the architectural impulse and initial political will to exploit the opportunities created by wartime destruction to create 'socialist cities', rebuilding destroyed cities and fractured urban communities proved a protracted process. The rapid construction of new industrial cities in the 1930s, such as Magnitogorsk, gave Soviet decision makers, architects, planners and workers experience of construction at breakneck speed, but rapid post-war reconstruction proved exceptionally difficult.[35] In mid-June 1945 it was calculated that the city would need to build 820,000 square metres of permanent housing by the end of 1947 to house its expanding population, and a further 100,000 square metres of barracks for construction workers.[36] Meeting this target proved hopelessly over-ambitious. At the beginning of January 1947 nearly four years after the end of fighting, approximately 330,000 people were living in Stalingrad's 733,841 square metres of available space, with a per capita average of just 2.2 square metres. In the city centre tens of thousands were living in basements, the

[30] Abalikhin, 'Vozrozhdenie', 269; GARF, f.A–315, op.6, d.131, l.37.

[31] P. Bezdenezhnykh, *Kak vosstanavlivaetsia khoziaistvo v raionakh, osvobozhdennykh ot nemetskoi okkupatsii* (Moscow, Voennoe Izdatel'stvo Narodnogo-komissiarta oborony, 1945), 16–17.

[32] Andrew Day, 'The Rise and Fall of Stalinist Architecture' in James Cracraft and Daniel Rowland, eds., *Architecture of Russian Identity: 1500 to the Present* (Ithaca, NY. and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 172–90 (173–4). On Stalingrad's general plan see also GARF, f.A-259, op.6, d.107, ll.1–3.

[33] Day, 'The Rise and Fall of Stalinist Architecture', 176–7; GARF f.A-359, op.6, d.104, ll.1–3.

[34] Day, 'The Rise and Fall of Stalinist Architecture', 174.

[35] Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*.

[36] GARF, f.A–359, op.6, d.131, l.38.

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stairwells of destroyed buildings or in bunk beds in makeshift dormitories.[37] Foreign observers, like John Strohm and John Steinbeck, who both visited Stalingrad in 1947, were fascinated by the expanse of ruins and the people who made their homes in dugouts beneath the rubble. Both left eloquent descriptions of the challenge of carving out an existence in this wasteland.[38]

While many of Stalingrad's residents languished in abysmal conditions, plans for the reconstruction of the city floundered. Although Stalingrad's reconstruction was a high profile project designed to symbolise national recovery and Soviet power, on which some of the Soviet Union's best architectural minds worked, a final plan for the city centre's composition was not approved until 1949. Architects, planners and local and national officials became mired in disagreements about how best to realise politico-symbolic goals through the city centre's reconstruction. Balancing the celebration of the Soviet political order and commemorating the war in urban form proved a particular source of controversy. In the interim, as blueprints were revised and architects lobbied for their urban visions, reconstruction work continued, especially in outlying industrial districts, often in a piecemeal and uncoordinated fashion. Here reconstruction was frequently controlled by industrial ministries, whose priorities differed from those of architects and planners. Stalingrad was, of course, not the only city where a protracted planning process and disagreements about what form rebuilt urban centres should take hampered reconstruction. 'In various other cities, planners completed centre-ensemble blueprints in relatively short order, but these ended up being ignored, either because they were too general to be of use, or because local officials lacked the tools to implement them.'[39] In an economy dominated by extreme shortages of finance, skilled labour and building materials, grand architectural visions usually remained on paper.[40] In practice, reconstruction was often a pragmatic response to an emergency situation in which architects' urban visions were subordinated to the necessity of ensuring the basic functioning of cities. The cities that took shape in the wake of war often seemed 'unplanned'. In this they had much in common with Magnitogorsk or Nowa Huta. Uncoordinated reconstruction began before general plans were completed or approved, with many more radical aspects of planners' urban visions abandoned in the face of competing demands.[41] 'Soviet town planning', as Stephen Kotkin writes, often 'turned out to resemble after-the-fact "bootstrapping" as much as the coordinated realization of a prior vision of the eventual form and function of a city'.[42]

[37] Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (hereafter RGASPI) f.17, op.121, d.582, l.1.

[38] John Ernst Steinbeck, *A Russian Journal* (London: William Heinemann, 1949), 118–25; John L. Strohm, *'Just Tell the Truth'. The Uncensored Story of How the Common People Live Behind the Iron Curtain* (New York, London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), 66–8.

[39] Day, 'The Rise and Fall of Stalinist Architecture', 185.

[40] Vladimir Papernyi, *Architecture in the Age of Stalin: Culture Two, trans. by John Hill and Roann Barris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[41] Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia*, 9, 40–3.

[42] Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 107.

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In theory the years 1947–1948 marked a critical turning point in the Soviet Union's post-war recovery, signalling the end of the most difficult period of transition from war to peace. By 1948 the regime had survived the 1946/47 famine, rationing had ended, a currency reform had been implemented and demobilisation and the re-evacuation of civilians was largely complete. According to Yoram Gorlizki and Oleg Khlevniuk, 'economic indicators for 1948 provided firm evidence that the immediate destruction of the war had been overcome and that the main targets of postwar reconstruction had been achieved'.[43] Although average per capita incomes approached pre-war levels as early as 1948, the notion of a dynamic economic recovery is somewhat misleading. Rapid economic recovery, as Mark Harrison has argued, was in part explained by the extent of the accumulated economic backlog and by missed economic opportunities, created by previous disasters. As the post-war Soviet economy made up lost ground, an impression of rapid growth and economic resilience was created.[44] Far from improving living standards or creating prosperity for ordinary citizens, this was a moment of 'attenuated recovery', with the results of reconstruction unevenly distributed across society.[45]

While the whole economy achieved parity with pre-war economic indicators, the rebuilding of war-damaged cities, as the high-profile example of Stalingrad demonstrates, lagged behind overall reconstruction. By 1948 the total urban housing stock approached pre-war levels, but these figures masked enormous shifts and flux in urban society and variations in housing distribution. Despite the deprivations and difficulties of Soviet urban life cities continued to grow, as rural populations deserted the village in favour of urban industrial employment.[46] A significant proportion of urban construction and population growth, as we shall see, occurred in industrial cities far behind the frontlines, rather than in war-damaged cities in western Russia. The post-war Five-Year Plan (1946–1950) set ambitious, and frequently unrealistic, targets for urban growth and housing construction, which should have compensated for wartime losses. The pace of reconstruction, however, repeatedly fell behind these plans.[47] By the end of 1948, for example, just 33.8 per cent of the Russian Republican (RSFSR) housing construction plan had been completed.[48] Shortages of building materials and skilled labour, particularly in the first post-war years, meant that construction projects repeatedly overran and overspent. It was not until the early 1950s that significant progress in urban reconstruction was made, and even then a comprehensive solution to the Soviet

[43] Yoram Gorlizki and Oleg Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace: Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945–1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 69.
[44] Harrison, 'The Soviet Union after 1945', 103–20.
[45] The phrase 'attenuated recovery' is borrowed from Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism*, 77–116.
[46] Lewis N. Siegelbaum and Leslie Page Moch, *Broad in My Native Land: Repertoires and Regimes of Migration in Russia's Twentieth Century* (Ithaca, NY. and London: Cornell University Press, 2014), 124–5.
[47] Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism*, 99.
[48] Smith, *Property of Communists*, 36, 52.

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housing programme had to wait till Khrushchev's mass housing campaign in the mid-1950s.[49]

Coordinated reconstruction plans for sixteen severely damaged Russian cities, controlled and monitored in Moscow, were only drawn up several months after the war's end. On 22 August 1945 the Soviet Government passed a resolution 'On measures for the reconstruction of Stalingrad', followed on 1 November 1945 by 'On measures for the reconstruction of RSFSR cities destroyed by the German occupiers', a resolution which outlined reconstruction plans, allocated funding and material resources for the rebuilding of Rostov-on-Don, Voronezh, Smolensk, Kalinin, Orel, Briansk, Kursk, Velikie Luki, Pskov, Novgorod, Sevastopol, Novorossiisk, Viaz'ma, Murmansk and Krasnodar. These cities were privileged ahead of hundreds of smaller towns and cities, which did not receive targeted assistance. Yet, even these plans, as periodic assessment of their progress reveals, largely failed to bring about a rapid revival in their fortunes.

According to a report compiled by the State Planning Commission (Gosplan) of the Soviet Union's Russian Republic (RSFSR), sent to the Council of Ministers (RSFSR) on 19 January 1953, reconstruction of the most important aspects of urban infrastructure in these sixteen cities had been achieved by the end of 1952, much slower than official myths of reconstruction claimed. The total area of living space in these cities had reached 99 per cent of its pre-war level. Housing controlled by Ministries and other administrative bodies had reached 95 per cent, the stock of local Soviets 75 per cent, and housing controlled by private individuals stood at 105 per cent of their pre-war level. These figures reflected national shifts in the ownership of housing, prompted by a campaign to encourage individual housing construction, and the tendency for construction to fall upon employers. Aggregate figures, however, masked a varied and complicated picture. More than seven years after the initiation of post-war reconstruction plans, eleven cities still had less housing than in 1940. Some cities were on the brink of reaching this mark (Stalingrad – 99 per cent, Briansk – 98 per cent, Orel – 96 per cent, Velikii Luki – 96 per cent and Sevastopol – 90 per cent). Others lagged much further behind in their targets for replacing destroyed housing (Viaz'ma – 50 per cent, Smolensk – 62 per cent, Novorossiisk – 64 per cent, Novgorod – 70 per cent, Pskov – 77 per cent and Voronezh – 85 per cent).[50] Reconstruction did not follow a steady path in any of these cities, only gathering genuine impetus in the late 1940s. A similar report dated 19 April 1949, which evaluated reconstruction in the same cities, demonstrated that in the first post-war years reconstruction lagged even further behind plan. In 1946 just 34 per cent of the planned housing construction had been completed, the equivalent figure for 1947 was 42 per cent and in 1948 71 per cent. In 1949 just two cities had achieved 1940 housing levels, most had even more catching up to do.[51]

[49] Smith, *Property of Communists*; Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism*, 99; Zubkova, *Poslevoennoe Sovetskoe obshchestvo*, 56.

[50] GARF, f.A-259, op.7, d.899, l.1.

[51] Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv ekonomiki (RGAE), f.1562, op.41, d.6, ll.101–3, reprinted in E. Iu. Zubkova, ed., *Sovetskaia zhizn', 1945–1953* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2003), 162–4.

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'On measures for the reconstruction of Stalingrad' proved an important stimulus for reconstruction, pumping funds into the city at a time when architectural plans continued to be disputed. In total the resolution allocated 587,450,000 roubles in 1945–1947 for rebuilding housing, communal and cultural facilities, as well as regenerating the local building materials industry. But capital investment did not bring immediate results: Stalingrad's rebirth was a slow and painful affair. In early 1946 D. Pigalev, Chairman of the Stalingrad City Soviet, forwarded a report to the RSFSR Council of People's Deputies which revealed the slow pace of urban reconstruction in the second half of 1945. Only 41 per cent of the housing construction plan, 63 per cent of the reconstruction plan for communal and cultural facilities and just 8 per cent of the building materials production plan had been realised. The city's gigantic industrial enterprises, which built housing for their employers and families, made equally disappointing progress. The Stalingrad tractor factory, and the Red October and Barrikada plants achieved just 42 per cent of their housing construction targets (40,000 square metres instead of 95,000 square metres). At the root of these failures were shortages of basic building materials, including timber and glass, qualified technical specialists and manual labourers. Stalingrad's architectural-planning department, for example, needed an additional one hundred architects, engineers and technicians, but recruited just four. Similarly, in late November and early December 1945 a labour battalion of 11,650 workers arrived in Stalingrad, three months later than planned. When they finally arrived approximately 80 per cent were unable to work because they had not been supplied with winter clothes or shoes.[52] That housing construction fell behind plan was hardly surprising. The failure to build sufficient housing on time and to adequate standards was characteristic of the entire Stalinist period. Indeed, during the First Five-Year plan (1928–1932) fulfilment of house building narrowly exceeded 50 per cent, and fell short of even this modest target in the Second Five-Year Plan (1933–1937).[53] However, in the face of the post-war housing crisis, such poor performance could not be tolerated.

Early reconstruction failures were explored in a meeting convened in Stalingrad on 2 March 1946, between V. P. Pronin, the deputy chairman of the RSFSR Council of Peoples' Deputies, who closely monitored Stalingrad's reconstruction, and local leaders. Although ostensibly a meeting to discuss draft budgets, Pronin castigated Stalingraders for the slow pace of reconstruction and launched an attack on local leaders. Amongst the most contentious issues was the extreme shortage of building materials. Local production of building materials was still operating at 1944 levels and needed to be doubled for construction plans to be met. Brick factories had fulfilled just 16 per cent of the plan. Pronin was especially angry that not a single brick factory had a functioning water supply, despite the Volga's proximity. He predicted a scandal about building materials, especially as prefabricated buildings would not be provided to the city after June 1946. Pronin highlighted an additional reason for the slow pace of reconstruction, namely the city's finance department's failure to control its

[52] GARF, f.A-259, op.6. d.2837, ll.60–71; GARF, f.A-259, op.6, d.138, ll.3–30b.
[53] Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 162.

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expenditure. As he phrased it, 'we have become used to not considering anything with less than five zeros on the end as (serious) money, but before we shot criminals over 8,000 to 10,000 (roubles)'. Pronin's threats were intended to remind Stalingraders that allowances would no longer be made for the city, despite its symbolic importance and Stalin's personal interest in it. Stalingrad's reconstruction in Pronin's words was still 'rickety' (*khlipko*); the city simply had to do better. The city's leaders were reminded that they had to live up to the wartime achievements of the Red Army. The unity of front and rear and the bond between the military and civilians, at least in this instance, appeared to be fragile, with martial achievements used to exhort civilians to work harder towards reconstruction. New planning and building methods, mechanisation and qualified workers were necessary to make a decisive breakthrough, not 100-year-old traditions. Yet, even with the arrival of 12,000 repatriated workers and between 10,000 and 15,000 demobilised soldiers, Pronin predicted that reconstruction would take decades, rather than the year or two indicated in the press.[54]

In the face of shortages of manual and skilled labour the city authorities attempted to harness the 'voluntary' labour of ordinary citizens. According to a booklet circulated to repatriated Soviet citizens in 1945, there was enormous popular enthusiasm for rebuilding war-ravaged cities. Stalingrad's citizens had been mobilised since 1943, often through mass volunteering campaigns, to assist in reconstruction. Their numbers were swelled by fifteen thousand Komsomol members from across the Soviet Union.[55] In 1946 John Strohm, for example, met a nineteen-year-old woman living in a dugout in the centre of Stalingrad, who told him 'about the wonderful plans for rebuilding the city, how she gave a day of her time each week to help carry away the blasted bricks and other debris'.[56] Efforts to mobilise citizens for reconstruction work were often embraced with enthusiasm, as an opportunity to assist in the collective reconstruction effort, fulfil one's civic duty and improve one's living conditions. The mobilisation of voluntary labour for the purposes of reconstruction was, of course, not unique to Soviet society, but late Stalinist society continued to make use of voluntary labour for longer than other countries, with a greater burden falling on individual citizens rather than professional construction workers. In the first ten months of 1948 alone 86,705 people volunteered 2,674,800 hours in voluntary labour. They cleared hundreds of thousand cubic metres of rubble, repaired water supplies and roads and planted more than 300,000 trees and bushes.[57]

At a time of financial hardship and national labour shortages mass participation campaigns played an important part in reconstruction, helping to improve the general urban environment, even if they contributed little new housing. Yet, campaigns to mobilise citizens' voluntary labour were much more than an emergency response to the crises facing post-war urban societies. Their practical purpose may ultimately have been secondary to their ideological goals. Late Stalinist mass participation campaigns

[54] GARF, f.A-259, op.6, d.3721, ll.1–5.
[55] Bezdenezhnykh, *Kak vosstanavlivaetsia khoziaistvo*, 39.
[56] Strohm, '*Just Tell the Truth*', 67.
[57] RGASPI, f.17, op.132, d.87, ll.74–5.

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exploited mobilisational techniques which predated wartime and post-war urban crises, techniques which had their roots in the campaigns for urban improvement (*blagoustroistvo*) and the creation of new socialist cities of the 1930s. As Stephen Kotkin, Katherine Lebow and Heather DeHaan have demonstrated, socialist cities were spaces in which the New Soviet man and woman could be forged through collective participation in the shared goal of 'building socialism'.[58] The goal of socialist cities, to quote Kotkin, 'was to teach [citizens] to work and think of themselves in specific ways and imbue the new urbanites with a sense of historic mission: the building of a socialist world'.[59] Encouraging participation in the renewal of urban space inculcated Stalinist values and virtues through the collective performance of civic duty. By encouraging citizens' activism, as the historian Heather DeHaan has argued, 'both planners and city officials sought to foster citizens' identification with the Soviet urban landscape, defined as a site of order, beauty, cleanliness and grace'.[60] Socialist cities did not simply inculcate official ideology through the monumentality of Stalinist architecture but also through social expectations of how citizens were to think and behave. In a period when many cities had been repopulated with new people, predominately rural migrants with weaker identification to their new homes, mobilising voluntary labour was especially important in rebuilding urban communities with a common identity. Although mass participation campaigns were carefully scripted and choreographed, there was nevertheless genuine enthusiasm for contributing to the reconstruction of one's city. After the years of destruction and deprivation one should not underestimate, as Katherine Lebow reminds us, 'the urge to participate in meaningful, productive work, and the conscious or semiconscious conviction that doing so could make life better for oneself and others'. Successful reconstruction depended upon harnessing this impulse.[61]

Conflicts and controversies about planning and the layout of Stalingrad's city centre persisted into the late 1940s and beyond, but as a professionalised building industry developed more permanent solutions and better quality housing gradually began to take shape.[62] By the end of 1950 three-and-a-half billion roubles had been spent on reconstruction, including 700 million roubles on housing construction and communal facilities. Ninety thousand square metres of housing were built in 1949 and 123,000 square metres in 1950, often in three to five storey buildings with good communal services including water, mains drainage, electricity and central heating.[63] Yet much about the urban environment still fell short of expectations. In 1950 a team of investigators from the Ministry of Urban Construction reported that, although

[58] Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 72–105, 198–202; Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia*, 44–73, Heather D. DeHaan, *Stalinist City Planning: Professionals, Performance, and Power* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 147–62.

[59] Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 105.

[60] DeHaan, *Stalinist City Planning*, 148

[61] Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia*, 72.

[62] RGASPI, f.17, op.132, d.87, ll.76–77; Day, 'The Rise and Fall of Stalinist Architecture', 177–86.

[63] V. N. Simbrirtseva, 'Vtoroe rozhdenie Stalingrada', *Zhilishchno-kommunal'noe khoziaistvo*, 1951, No.5, 25–30.

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reconstruction work had gathered pace, central streets and squares were still disorderly. Their report stated that, 'in the main, they (streets and squares) are wastelands covered with the uncleared ruins of destroyed buildings, and neither they nor various parts have anything resembling the appearance of having been completed'.[64] As late as 1951 there were still over 1,300 families living in dugouts and other buildings unsuitable for habitation, many of whom faced long walks to work through the wasteland. It was hoped that all of these people could be housed properly in the course of 1952, but it is doubtful this was achieved.[65]

The slowness of reconstruction had important implications for the functioning of cities and the cohesion of urban societies. The longer it took to rebuild, the longer the war's impact persisted and the deeper the potential fractures. Decisions about what, how and in what order to rebuild, the essence of reconstruction plans, had the capacity to divide opinion and communities. Housing reconstruction and the repair of urban infrastructure, despite creating some of the most pressing problems for city dwellers, were not always prioritised. While Soviet citizens in war-ravaged cities struggled, often for years, in inadequate housing without basic amenities, heavy industrial plants experienced more rapid recoveries. When in April 1947 an American journalist visiting the city asked his guides whether building homes was the first priority for Stalingrad, he was told that industrial enterprises, cultural, educational and healthcare institutions, such as schools, nurseries, hospitals and clubs, were considered higher priorities.[66] Pigalev told the assembled foreign correspondents that over 50 per cent of damaged factories had been rebuilt. In contrast the 50 per cent mark in housing reconstruction was only reached in June 1948.[67] Whilst much of the Stalingrad tractor factory lay in ruins it was already churning out tractors: 6,000 tractors in 1946 alone.[68] By the time the group of foreign correspondents visited in April 1947 approximately 65 per cent of the factory had been rebuilt and production was running at 70 per cent of the pre-war level.[69] By 1950 Stalingrad's industry had been completely restored and production was running at over 30 per cent of pre-war levels.[70] This was achieved by privileging the industrial economy ahead of urban living standards. How Stalingrad's residents reacted to this state of affairs is unclear. After a war in which many soldiers and civilians hoped for a less coercive and more responsive form of Stalinism combined with improved living standards, the protracted period of reconstruction was highly frustrating. Wartime suffering and sacrifice and prolonged post-war hardship did not necessarily create 'equality through poverty' or

[64] Day, 'The Rise and Fall of Stalinist Architecture', 186.
[65] GARF, f.A-259, op.7, d.864, l.113.
[66] RGASPI, f.17, op.125, d.509, l.137.
[67] RGASPI, f.17, op.125, d.509, l.150; RGAE, f.1562, op.41, d.6, ll.101–3, reprinted in E. Iu. Zubkova, ed., *Sovetskaia zhizn', 1945–1953* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2003), 163.
[68] Strohm, '*Just Tell the Truth',* 68.
[69] RGASPI, f.17, op.135, d.509, l.140.
[70] N. Simbrirtseva, 'Vtoroe rozhdenie Stalingrada', *Zhilishchno-kommunal'noe khoziaistvo*, 1951, No.5, 25–30.

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social unity. Allocating funding, determining reconstruction priorities and deciding who was to be rehoused in new buildings were all potentially divisive.

One of the most divisive aspects of rebuilding urban life in severely damaged cities was re-establishing pre-war housing settlement patterns. In cities like Stalingrad, where little remained, this was virtually impossible. Even in less damaged cities the destruction of housing and the movement of people within and between cities meant that many people found themselves living in different buildings and apartments. Demobilised veterans, returning evacuees and repatriates often returned to find their homes occupied by others. In the most severely damaged cities, residential buildings had begun to be used for entirely different purposes. In Stalingrad in May 1946 former homes were still being used to accommodate district Soviets, a bank, the city's main library, a nursery for war orphans, a gynaecological ward and offices for the police and prosecutors. In these instances individuals had to challenge the city authorities and the full bureaucratic force of the state, something that weakened their chances of reclaim their housing. Stalingrad's prosecutor suggested that it might make sense for the city to be exempted from the legislation that allowed demobilised soldiers to regain their housing because of the level of disruption it would cause the city's administration.[71] Attempting to reclaim housing through legal channels was often a complicated and lengthy process that set citizens against each other, municipal governments and even the adjudicating authorities.[72] Inevitably many people with good claims failed in their attempts to reclaim their former homes, something which created deep resentments. Assessments of wartime service sometimes coloured decisions about housing entitlements. Re-evacuees, prisoners of war, repatriates and even the war-disabled often struggled to gain access to urban areas, and to assert their claims to pre-war living space. Jewish evacuees, in particular, experienced stigmatisation, hostility and discrimination, supposedly for having sat the war out in safety behind the lines. The rise in anti-Semitism during and after the war was, in part, fed by a perception that wartime sacrifice had not been universal.[73] Ethnic identity increasingly came to be seen as an indicator of loyalty to the state. War experiences, far from uniting society, had the capacity to divide communities.

Although the wholesale destruction and severe depopulation experienced by cities in western Russia was not a universal experience, Soviet citizens did not have to live in the warzone to experience abysmal living conditions. Poor housing in dilapidated and overcrowded buildings were a feature of Soviet urban life. In 1945 over 60 per cent of Soviet housing had been built before the Revolution. Only 45 per cent was connected to running water, 40 per cent to mains drainage and 18 per cent to central heating. Approximately two-thirds of housing was in wooden buildings intended to serve relatively short lifespans. In many towns and cities it wasn't bombs, shells and bullets that created urban crises, but decades of underinvestment in housing and

[71] GARF, f.R-8131, op.37. d.2445, ll.72–3.
[72] Manley, 'Where should we settle the comrades next?', 233–46.
[73] Rebecca Manley, *To the Tashkent Station: Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War* (Ithaca, NY. and London: Cornell University Press, 2009), 262–7.

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urban infrastructure.[74] The difficulties of life in ruined cities were more obvious and more severe than in cities behind the lines, but the war nevertheless had significant and long-lasting impacts on Soviet urban life.

During the war, cities in the Volga, the Urals and Siberia, in contrast to the warzone, experienced rapid urban growth and expanding populations. Here the war prompted important social and economic shifts, which transformed cities and created a different set of pressures. Many Russian cities experienced a new phase of rapid wartime industrialisation, rather than unprecedented destruction, which intensified overcrowding and also put housing and basic infrastructure under even greater strain. The evacuation eastwards of heavy industrial plants and populations to work in them brought new economic opportunities and challenges. What initially seemed a temporary wartime response had important consequences for the long-term development of these cities, often bringing sustained post-war urbanisation and industrialisation. The Volga region, for example, provided a home for an additional 226 heavy industrial plants, and its industrial output increased 3.4 times. Evacuation re-orientated the region's economy towards metalworking, machine building and the oil industry, enabling it to become a centre for the defence and aviation industries in the 1950s and 1960s.[75] Industrial growth, however, did not bring a corresponding investment in housing, infrastructure or public services. By prioritising the needs of heavy industrial output above all else, future housing, social and environmental problems were created.[76]

Faced with dramatic wartime population increases, the leadership of many industrial evacuation centres wrote to the USSR Supreme Soviet during the war's last months and the first months of peace requesting additional funding, materials and support to improve urban conditions. Far from meekly accepting the planned allocation of resources they lobbied their superiors. In March 1946, for example, three members of the Syzran' city Soviet wrote to A. N. Kosygin, Chairman of the RSFSR Council of People's Deputies, appealing for help. The evacuation of heavy industry to Syzran', particularly the development of oil extraction and processing plants, they explained, had transformed this small provincial city in Kuibyshev oblast' into a 'second Baku in the east'. Syzran's population doubled during the war, but hardly any additional living space was built. The letter writers argued that workers and returning soldiers had an entirely justified expectation that living conditions would improve and that housing would be repaired. A living space norm of just 2.5 to three square metres per person had to be addressed. Despite repeated appeals to the oblast' authorities and the political centre the city had been unable to resolve these problems.[77]

The Secretary and Chairman of the Cheliabinsk oblast' Soviet sent a similar letter to Kosygin on 7 March 1945, requesting that the Council of People's Deputies draft

[74] GARF, f.A-314, op.2, d.189, ll.45–6.

[75] A. I. Repinetskii, *Rabotniki promyshlennosti povolzh'ia: demograficheskii sostav, obrazovatel'nyi uroven' 1946-1965 gg.* (Samara: Izdatel'stvo OOO NTTS, 1999), 13–15.

[76] Repinetskii, *Rabotniki promyshlennosti povolzh'ia*, 23–5.

[77] GARF, f.R-5446, op.48, d.3070, ll.14–14ob.

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plans for improving living conditions in Magnitogorsk.[78] A report about the condition of housing and communal facilities written by the Chairman of Magnitogorsk's city Soviet, attached to the letter, explained the extent of Magnitogorsk's problems. Before the war the city's population stood at 146,000 people; by 1 January 1945 it had reached 222,000, an increase of 76,000, or 52 per cent. Industrial and population growth far outstripped housing construction, as it had since Magnitogorsk's founding. By early March 1945 average per capita living space was 2.83 square metres, and just 1.8 square metres in dormitories. The condition of much of the city's housing was even worse, and 68 per cent of it was concentrated in temporary barracks and dugouts (*zemlianki*). Fifteen per cent of barracks required demolition, and in the next three to five years a further 75 per cent were slated for demolition.[79] As V. Shvarikov, head of the Council of Peoples' Deputies Architectural Administration, put it in a letter to Pronin on 20 December 1946, 'notwithstanding that in the course of the last fifteen years huge sums have been invested in housing and municipal construction, a well-planned city has still not been created. Minimal living conditions have not been created for Magnitogorsk's population, which at present is estimated to exceed 200,000 people'.[80] As a result of the underinvestment in permanent housing by November 1946 there were more than 130,000 people living in condemned barracks built in the 1930s.[81] Poor living conditions, especially in Magnitogorsk's harsh climatic conditions, contributed to high labour turnover, just as had been the case in the 1930s, a situation which added to the difficulties of realising ambitious industrialisation targets.[82]

Kuibyshev, another evacuation centre which experienced rapid wartime industrialisation had, in contrast to Magnitogorsk and Syrzan', built extensively during the war. The arrival of 235,000 evacuated workers and tens of thousands of rural migrants, although partially offset by the mobilisation of men and women into the Red Army, rapidly increased the city's population.[83] By 1945 Kuibyshev's population had risen by 103,000 or 24 per cent, from 427,000 in 1940 to 530,000. Kuibyshev, however, was unusual in that during the war its housing stock had increased by 45 per cent, from 1,495,000 to 2,179,000 square metres, a rate of increase that exceeded population growth. Average living space per person increased from 3.5 square metres to 4.1 square metres.[84] As evacuation progressed whole new city districts sprang up around evacuated plants, although these were not without their problems. In the Kirovskii district, a new suburb which developed around evacuated aviation factories, more than 200,000 square metres of housing was built. While this was to be welcomed approximately 90 per cent of new accommodation took the form of

[78] GARF, f.R-5446, op.47, d.3131, ll.37–36.
[79] GARF, f.R-5446, op.47, d.3131, ll.35–31.
[80] GARF, f.A-259, op.6, d.80, l.47.
[81] GARF, f.R-5446, op.48, d.3069, ll.88–87
[82] Zubkova, *Poslevoennoe sovetskoe obshchestvo*, 42–3; Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism*, 93.
[83] Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Samarskoi Oblasti (hereafter TsGASO), f.R-56, op.2, d.170, l.2.
[84] GARF, f.A-314, op.2, d.192, l.13; TsGASO, f.R-56, op.2, d.170, l.2.

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temporary frame buildings and timber barracks.[85] Furthermore, while new buildings were being built in one part of the city in other districts pre-war housing was falling into disrepair. In mid-June 1946 the challenge of improving housing maintenance was the central question discussed at a meeting of the Kuibyshev city Soviet. In lengthy speech, P. V. Surin, the city Soviet chairmen, stressed the importance of caring for housing. Surin was brutally honest about the failures of local housing administrations to take repairs seriously: 'unfortunately, it is necessary to openly say that we relate to housing barbarically, we don't look after buildings, we don't as a rule repair them on time, we still don't have a careful attitude to homes'.[86] Although Surin, and presumably others, appreciated the importance of improving living conditions across the city, appeals for urban repairs often fell on deaf ears. Other sources confirm that in 1944 and 1945 just half of planned building maintenance was undertaken.[87] At the end of 1945 approximately 200 buildings controlled by district Soviets, with a living space of 19,000 square metres, were in a critical condition and fifty dangerous buildings, with a living space of 5,000 square metres, required demolition.[88] Although Kuibyshev fared better than many cities of its type, and far better than cities on the frontline, it nevertheless faced serious difficulties in building and maintaining housing for its growing population. Even relatively privileged cities found it difficult to realise the official vision of an orderly socialist realist city in concrete form.

For cities in the warzone post-war reconstruction meant clearing away rubble, rebuilding destroyed buildings and re-establishing the basics of urban life. In other cities far from the frontlines 'reconstruction' was about ameliorating the worst effects of wartime industrialisation, urbanisation and population growth. For cities like Syrzan', Magnitogorsk and Kuibyshev the Fourth Five-Year Plan (1946–1950) was not about attempting to eradicate the ruins or catch up to pre-war housing levels. The challenge was to deal with the implications of hastily built housing, long-term underinvestment in building maintenance and the need to provide living space and services for rapidly growing populations. These obstacles were the subject of a major conference of architects, planners, building controllers and engineers convened in Cheliabinsk between 20 and 24 May 1947. Delegates from the Urals and Siberia gathered to discuss urban planning, housing construction and the condition of residential areas, as well as to learn from leading architects and officials invited from Moscow and Leningrad. Delegates listened to reports about the problems of building sufficient housing and creating adequate living conditions in many of those cities which had lobbied Moscow for additional resources in 1945 and 1946, including Magnitogorsk, Cheliabinsk, Sverdlovsk, Novosibirsk and Nizhnii Tagil. The stenographic records of the conference proceedings provide a fascinating insight

[85] TsGASO, f.R-56, op.2, d.231, l.31–2; GARF, f.A-150, op.2, d.187, l.104; N. V. Loviagin, *Gorod Kuibyshev za 50 let Sovetskoi vlasti tsifry i fakty* (Kuibyshev, Knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1967), 48.

[86] 'XXVIII sessiia Kuibyshevskogo gorodskogo Soveta deputatov trudiashchikhsia – Sdelaem nashi zhilishcha blagoustroennymi i krasivymi', *Volzhskaia kommuna*, 19 June 1946, 3.

[87] GARF, f.R-5446, op.48, d.3070, l.32–31.

[88] GARF-, f.A-314, op.2, d.192, l.13-130b; TsGASO, f.R-56, op.2, d.170, l.2.

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into urban life – and a contrast with living conditions in the warzone.[89] Compared to the stilted report on the conference published in *Architecture and Construction* (*Arkhitektura i stroitel'stvo*) the stenographic record provides evidence of relatively open discussion and a willingness to discuss problems.[90]

In theory the reconstruction of these cities was a high priority. Kolsnikov, deputy head of the RSFSR Council of Ministers, reminded delegates that the residents of cities in the Urals and Siberia had the right, like citizens in the warzone, to expect improvements in their living conditions. Yet in practice the reconstruction of the urban environment in war-ravaged cities and cities behind the lines often deviated in quality and form. While the reconstruction of Stalingrad and the fifteen other priority cities made provision for the repair of roads, parks, gardens, water supplies and sewerage disposal systems, these important aspects of the socialist urban environment had been neglected in rearline industrial cities. In the rush to accommodate evacuated factories and their workforces little attention was paid to creating a cohesive urban environment.[91]

Cheliabinsk's choice as the conference's location was no coincidence. It was a prime example of the failures in housing construction and urban planning which the conference sought to address. Cheliabinsk had grown rapidly during the war, becoming a leading centre of tank production, earning the city its nickname 'Tankograd'.[92] Evacuated metal and machine building plants established a firm presence in the city, transforming it into one of the Soviet Union's largest industrial cities. Between 1940 and 1945 Cheliabinsk's industrial output increased by a factor of 4.5. Such impressive industrial growth coincided with dramatic population growth. Between 1939 and 1947 Cheliabinsk's population nearly doubled, from approximately 273,000 to 500,000.[93] Yet little housing was built to accommodate rising populations. As Timoshin, the chairman of the Cheliabinsk city Soviet, reminded his audience in his opening address to the conference: 'comrades, such a rapid development in industry and growth in population outstripped the housing fund, and created a sharp disproportion between the growth in industry and the cultural-living requirements of the population'.[94] Living conditions even within housing controlled by the privileged military-industrial complex were often desperate. According to Cheliabinsk's foremost historian housing shortages were even greater after 1945 than in the 1930s. Nor were fundamental improvements possible in the immediate aftermath of war, as building resources were directed to developing Cheliabinsk's atomic infrastructure. As late as November 1948 over 33,000 employees of the

[89] GARF, f.A-150, op.2, d.139, 140, 141, 142.

[90] 'Arkhitekturnaia rekonstruktsiia gorodov Urala i Sibiri – bol'shaia istoricheskaia zadacha', *Arkhitektura i stoitel'stvo*, No.10, (August 1947), 1–3; 'Stroitel'stvo i blagostroistvo gorodov urala i Sibiri (Cheliabinskoe soveshchanie)', *Arkhitektura i stoitel'stvo*, No.10, (August 1947), 7-8.

[91] GARF, f.A-150, op.2, d.139, l.25.

[92] Lennart Samuelson, *Tankograd. The Formation of a Soviet Company Town: Cheliabinsk, 1900s–1950s* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 217–54.

[93] GARF, f.A-150, op.2, d.139, l.5, 10.

[94] GARF, f.A-150, op.2, d.139, l.5.

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Cheliabinsk Tractor Factory and their families were living in substandard housing, including 5,054 in condemned barracks, 3,130 in basements and almost 9,000 people in self-constructed dugouts (*zemlianki*). Isaak Zaltsman, director of Cheliabinsk's Kirov Factory, repeatedly lobbied Moscow for money and materials to improve the worst housing conditions, which he claimed made it impossible to recruit a permanent qualified workforce.[95]

In his contribution to the conference Cheliabinsk's chief architect, Gorfat, explained how the explosion of temporary dugouts, barracks and shelters complicated urban planning. Much of this construction sprang up during the war around factories situated on the outskirts of the city, in what Gorfat termed 'emergency settlements'.[96] Hasty urbanisation in the past and present, often a reaction to immediate crisis, created problems for the future emergence of well-ordered cities. The dependence on temporary housing prevented its rapid disappearance. The endemic shortage of housing, financial and material resources, however, meant that many cities were dependent on temporary housing. Although architects found it objectionable, it could not be torn down. When these 'emergency settlements' were created the basic principles of urban planning, including environmental considerations, were ignored. Temporary construction was often built close to factories pumping industrial waste into the atmosphere and water courses.[97] Industrial plants built during the war in the east and south east of Cheliabinsk, for example, were dumping huge volumes of polluted water into lakes causing the water level to rise by 1.5 to 2.5 metres. As a result neighbouring collective farms were flooded with contaminated water.[98] Nor was Cheliabinsk unique in ignoring environmental factors. At the Cheliabinsk conference in May 1947 Dubin, Magnitogorsk's chief architect, complained that there was almost complete anarchy in the city's planning. Residential barracks on the left bank of the river Ural had been built close to harmful sources of pollution from the metallurgical industry. He advocated concentrating housing on the Ural's right bank, while allowing industry to develop on the left.[99] Dubin, however, made little real progress in this goal. Indeed, debates about the respective merits of the left and right banks could be traced back to Magnitogorsk's foundation.[100] As late as June 1965 a report signed by Magnitogorsk's chief architect, chief sanitation doctor and chief planner highlighted that around 30,000 people were living dangerously close to sources of air pollution on the left bank.[101]

The residential districts hastily built during and after the war in Sverdlovsk, Nizhnii Tagil, Magnitogorsk and Cheliabinsk were heavily criticised at the May 1947 architects' conference. While building basic housing was the overriding priority, little or no attention was paid to providing roads, infrastructure, communications

[95] Samulson, *Tankograd*, 266.
[96] GARF, f.A-150, op.2, d.140, ll.5–6.
[97] Samulson, *Tankograd*, 261.
[98] GARF, f.R-5446, op.48, d.3069, ll.40–39, 46.
[99] GARF, f.A–150, op.2, d.140, l.33–7.
[100] Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 111–13, 120.
[101] RGASPI, f.556, op.19, d.253, ll.29–37.

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and services. Aside from barracks there was little in these new districts – few shops, schools, nurseries or even green spaces.[102] These spaces were the antithesis of the pleasant, comfortable, planned spaces which Soviet architects envisaged and which filled the pages of post-war architectural journals. For example, in Nizhnii Tagil's Dzerzhinskii district, home to approximately 70,000 people, there were no roads at all, just an unbroken expanse of impassable mud. Pre-school children had to be carried by adults if they were to manage to cross the street. 'You can imagine for yourself', as Kolsnikov observed, 'how workers at night walk along these streets on the way home from work'.[103] These parts of Nizhnii Tagil fell far short of the simplicity, clarity and 'wholeness' to which the best Soviet architectural ensembles aspired.[104]

While the activism and contribution of ordinary citizens, through mass voluntary campaigns, played an important part in the reconstruction of frontline cities, architects and planners in cities behind the lines sometimes saw individual and collective initiative differently. Gorfat was particularly critical of the disruption to urban planning caused by unregulated individual construction. In 1944 the Soviet state unveiled a new policy designed to help citizens build their own homes and provided a stimulus to post-war reconstruction. Individuals could borrow up to 10,000 roubles to be paid back over a ten-year period to build homes, a process often administered via employers. The scheme was extremely popular, despite mixed results and problems in some locations, and led to a significant increase in the amount of housing held as personal property, as opposed that controlled by local Soviets or employers.[105] Gorfat, however, saw individual citizens building their own homes as a 'dangerous' development, and a 'stumbling block' (*kamen' pretknoveniia*). He objected to the design of new structures, the architectural details employed and perhaps feared the erosion of his professional role.

More significant, however, were wider systematic failings. When an industrial enterprise was allocated funds to enable individual construction they only received money to build that structure. The bill for providing roads and connections to water, electricity and mains drainage had to be met by the city.[106] In Gorfat's opinion this was not a rational use of money and created difficulties for planning a consistent urban environment across an entire city. Individual construction within or on the outskirts of cities created pockets of buildings which disrupted urban planning. He also stressed that decisions about where to locate individual housing could provoke disagreements. He described a dispute he had with officials from the Kirov factory over a parcel of land, earmarked for parkland in the city's general plan, on which they intended to build privately owned housing. When the request to build here was refused, the Kirov factory went over the head of the city's architect by appealing to

[102] GARF, f.A-150, op.2, d.139, ll.21–3.
[103] GARF, f.A-150, op.2, d.139, l.23.
[104] Cooke, 'Beauty as a Route to "the Radiant Future"', 148.
[105] Mark B. Smith, 'Individual Forms of Ownership in the Urban Housing Fund of the USSR, 1944–64', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 86, 2 (2008), 283–305; idem., *Property of Communists*, 34–8; Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism*, 96.
[106] GARF, f.A-150, op.2, d.140, ll.22–3.

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the Cheliabinsk Party Committee Secretary, who subsequently ruled in favour of the Kirov factory. When Gorfat objected that the Party Secretary's decision was merely a personal opinion he was accused of failing to fulfil a Party directive, a potentially serious claim. The dispute was eventually resolved when an alternative plot was found. Nevertheless, Gorfat argued that this episode demonstrated that architects and planners lacked authority, especially with party officials. 'There is a significant amount of unauthorised construction', he continued, 'that remains unpunished, which is similarly the result of our lack of sufficient authority with constructors'.[107] Clearly, different individuals and groups in Cheliabinsk had distinct ideas and priorities for the city's post-war development. Individuals hoped to build their own homes, employers to house their workers and find ways to prevent labour turnover and architects to create well-ordered urban spaces and communities.

Concerns about the effects of individual construction on urban development were not confined to Cheliabinsk or even the May 1947 conference. On 18 November 1950 G. Popov, the USSR Minister of Urban Construction, wrote to the USSR Council of Ministers with details of a worrying increase in unauthorised and unregulated urban construction. The legislation that permitted individual housing construction did not require builders to seek approval from architects or building control officials. As a result independent building frequently led to disorderly and poor urban environments. In 1949 the organ of State Architectural-Building Control recorded 2,126 cases of unauthorised building in environmental protection zones, in polluted zones or outside of general urban planning rules. Along with his letter Popov forwarded a proposal for draft legislation designed to force local authorities to relocate unplanned buildings, to prosecute individuals breaking the rules and to dismantle the offending buildings.[108] However, given the continuing housing shortage it is unlikely that such legislation was consistently applied. Decisions to dismantle privately built housing would no doubt have provoked disputes and conflicts, especially when owners felt a strong sense of entitlement to housing based on wartime service.[109]

There were then at least two main experiences of urban reconstruction after 1945 – that of ruined cities in the war zone, on the one hand, and that of industrial cities in the east which grew rapidly during and after the war, but without the investment required to create comfortable or stable urban life, on the other. There was great variation in both the progress of reconstruction amongst war-ravaged cities and the fate of rapidly expanding industrial cities. However, the difference between rebuilding destroyed cities and dealing with the effects of rapid urbanisation at a time of chronic under-investment created one of the most important divisions between post-war Soviet cities. Although wartime propaganda stressed the solidarity between the front and rear, and post-war rhetoric celebrated the unity of society despite the pressures created by reconstruction, the distinction between these two types of post-war

[107] GARF, f.A-150, op.2, d.140, l.21.
[108] GARF, f.R-5446, op.80, d.1640, ll.47–46, 49–48, 45–42.
[109] For an example of a letter of complaint from a war invalid whose house, built on individual credit, was at risk of demolition see GARF, A-385, op.13, d.2475, l.121–4.

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experience were not lost on ordinary citizens. In 1965 N. S. Nasokin, a party member from Gorkii, wrote to Leonid Brezhnev expressing his disappointment about his city's post-war development. Although Gorkii didn't have 'dirt thrown in its face' during the war the letter was keen to stress the city's and its people's contribution to the war effort. Employing the rhetoric of wartime equality of sacrifice Nasokin questioned why his city was still in poor condition, while others had resolved their problems. 'Having participated in the Great Patriotic War, I thrashed my way around Mother Russia and saw many cities and towns. After the war I have been, thanks to my work and holidays, to many cities which experienced the war, and I am becoming ashamed for my native city'. Even the destroyed and wounded cities he had seen now had asphalted roads, well-ordered parks, good public transport and their people lived well. Nasokin noted that, average per capita living space in Gorkii was 5.1 square metres, 460,000 square metres of living space was in dilapidated housing, 180,000 square metres of which were in dangerous buildings, and 67,000 people were living in barracks and basements.[110] These statistics were intended to demonstrate that post-war reconstruction brought few benefits to Gorkii's residents. Inevitably post-war reconstruction had produced winners and losers, rather than social unity. While millions of roubles were pumped into ensuring the recovery of destroyed cities, urbanities who had repeatedly been told that their contribution to the war effort was as crucial as cities on the frontline felt that they were losing out and falling behind. Rapid population growth and industrialisation were never going to be easy to manage, but in an era of austerity the effects were especially divisive.

While the nature and pace of reconstruction varied between cities, individuals also experienced reconstruction in different ways. The war's urban impact and the challenges of post-war recovery were not only very different in cities in the warzone and in the rear, but reconstruction also created divisions within cities themselves. Local elites, decision makers, architects, planners and individual citizens frequently conceived the priorities for post-war reconstruction differently. They faced different challenges and wanted different outcomes from reconstruction. While individuals sought a resolution to their housing problems, factory managers had to think about balancing workers' needs with the necessity of meeting output targets. Meanwhile, Party and Soviet leaders had to balance their budgets and allocate scare material resources for the collective good. Architects and planners attempted to create well-ordered urban environments that looked beyond short-term pressures of providing temporary living space, and thought about creating fully functioning cities which were aesthetically pleasing and pleasant to live in. As in any society urban planning issues were capable of provoking disagreements, divisions and conflicts. The post-war economy of shortages, far from creating unity, reinforced social differences and divisions.

The uniqueness of Soviet reconstruction, however, did not lie in the diversity of post-war urban experience, but the manner in which the war's urban impact was confronted. Given the extent of destruction, there was much about the national

[110] RGASPI, f.556, op.19, d.255, ll.44–6.

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reconstruction effort that was impressive. In the face of extreme shortages of labour, building materials and capital the achievements of the party-state and ordinary people were remarkable. The rebuilding of urban space, however, was less successful than planners had envisaged and far slower than post-war propaganda suggested. While some citizens saw their living conditions improve relatively quickly, the rather fragile progress of reconstruction meant that others had to wait years before they began to experience its tangible benefits. Architects and planners were often thwarted in their attempts to create cohesive urban spaces worthy of modern socialist cities. Many of their visions remained on paper or in maquettes rather than bricks and mortar. Preventing a collapse of urban life and solving immediate crises frequently prevented a more systematic urban reconstruction from taking shape. In the cities explored here, a thorough reorientation of the Soviet urban project came not with the end of the war, but the launch of Khrushchev's mass housing programme of the mid-1950s. This is not to say that important preconditions for subsequent change did not take shape under late Stalinism. Important developments in prefabrication and individual ownership, as Mark B. Smith has demonstrated, were made in these years.[111] Yet, while much of Europe embraced reconstruction as an opportunity to build new forms of urbanity, the rebuilt cities that took shape across Soviet Russia often resembled, in Stephen Kotkin's words, 'the temporary city of the present' familiar from the 1930s, rather than the socialist city of the future.[112] It was not that these visions and the impulse to 'build socialism' did not exist, but the extreme pressures created by wartime destruction and underinvestment took longer to surmount than anticipated. Until a more stable society began to emerge from the aftermath of war it was impossible to construct a new urban form for socialism.

[111] Smith, *Property of Communists*.
[112] Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 129–41.

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