

Moscow Chill and Shanghai Frenzy: Two False Exits from the Communist Urban Order

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On paper, the Russians left Communism behind at a single stroke of the pen.¹ But within their walls and inside their heads the great majority of them remain material and mental prisoners of the Soviet period, whose tattered remnants still ensure – albeit with increasing difficulty – everyday life and survival. As for the Chinese, they continue to celebrate the glory of Mao in the most official fashion. But within their walls and deep within themselves, they are now decidedly elsewhere.

This inverse symmetry, which gives the lie to an apparent historical parallelism, is confirmed in both the development of urban structures and in the outward forms of city life. And in this play of light and shade there are many contradictions, masks, and uncertainties. Quite a few enigmas, too, such as the burgeoning prosperity of some neighbouring country areas, in the river-bends of the Moskova or the Volga just as much as in the immense Yangtze Delta.

However, before embarking upon either the delights of complexity or the torments of impossible comparison, we can underline a few clear realities. For instance, it is indisputable that the greater part of the population of Moscow has long had to live in housing built under Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev, while Shanghai, which was confined to a pre-war structure for so long, is carrying out beneath our very eyes a huge house-moving programme that was begun well after the disappearance of Mao.

It is tempting to attribute the current immobility of Moscow, the majority of whose population seem stunned in the face of their new situation, to the short-windedness of an 'old' Europe. Shanghai's frenzy might then be seen as an illustration of the youthful vitality of Pacific Asia. Maybe. But in that case we must note another clear reality in which this time China is the loser: while Moscow is taking great pains over the built heritage of its centre, Shanghai is beating its own to pulp.

Moscow, flight to the forest

Within the Ring of Gardens (*Sadovoié Koltso*), which follows the line of the seventeenth-century city walls, Moscow is rediscovering the worth of its patrimony. Liberated in part from the bureaucratic and technical functions with which the Communist regime had weighed it down, and from the dreariness which had stifled it, the historical centre is finding its former colours, in which a straw yellow, at once restrained and luminous, is dominant. The municipality jealously ensures that the colour chart, which it has established with the help of experts on the town's past, is adhered to in the restoration work it

imposes on new investors. Nothing is destroyed any more. And what has been destroyed is being rebuilt. International businesses, which have been flooding into Moscow since the country was opened up, are requested to set up their registered offices, their branches, and all their modernity behind the restored façades of old Russia.

It is true that the latter now rub shoulders with a Stalinist architecture which, all things considered, does not go so badly with it. It is like Haussmann and Paris. Nothing to speak of compared with what followed, in the sixties and later: that would certainly have clashed with the historical built heritage. Fortunately, in Moscow as in Paris, 1960s developments spared the essentials of both historic towns. A new arrival, however, has to some extent spoilt the old Moscow, which has not entirely escaped the influence of 'new-Russian' baroque, which history may – who knows – judge more kindly.

In short, the destiny of 10 million Muscovites is not to be found in this part of Moscow, except in a negative sense, through the eviction of those who had been housed in the old bourgeois properties, transformed into communal accommodation. Beyond the so-called 'Ring of Gardens', and as far as the distant motorway ring-road that contains the greater part of the municipal area, an ocean of collective housing is the only option offered to inhabitants. For a thousand square kilometres, over ten times the surface area of the municipality of Paris, you find only Sarcelles and La Courneuve.* The substratum of small detached homes, little Russian-style wooden houses found in many other towns of old Russia, has completely disappeared from the landscape of the capital.

And it is undoubtedly because Moscow was the capital of the Soviet empire that this is so. For, despite the difficulties inherent in the considerable demographic influx which this position brought it – Moscow had only a million inhabitants at the beginning of the century – the government had no choice but to espouse modernity. It was to Khrushchev above all that the Muscovites owed access to the latter, thanks to the housing he provided. That the hasty and huge-scale production of Khrushchevian housing was the cause of their mediocrity – and of their current dilapidation – takes nothing away from the achievement and advancement they represent.

Because of this, one wavers between two apparently opposing pieces of evidence. Should the inhabitants' remarkable attachment to a housing stock, however unattractive, be emphasized? Or should one, on the other hand, stress their dependence upon this stock, their confinement in the absence of any other perspective? In reality, the two observations converge. Today accommodation (and the public heating from which it benefits) is the only reassuring factor in an existence that has become uncertain on all other fronts: employment, purchasing power, health, life-expectancy, schooling, and so on. The privatization of two-thirds of the stock, through the sale – at purely symbolic prices – of housing to its tenants, is setting the seal on this link between residents and their homes, even though it is being accompanied by the partial abandonment of communal management of the units, and ultimately resembles a huge knockdown sale, and a desertion.

So much for the essentials. There remain nuances which, as we shall see, appreciably open up this outline for the present and for the future. A first series of nuances concerns the housing stock as it is now. Khrushchev did not build everything. His successors had more time, reduced demographic pressure, and less urgency. Quality gradually improved; there was some architectural diversification, which did not however challenge the predominance of the 'five floors' (six in British terms) without lift, nor a general average of

18 square metres per inhabitant. But the most important point, common to all these periods, is the presence of trees, of the forest. Like an architect's consolation, the natural or replanted forest has enveloped buildings to such an extent that it almost hides them, as much on the street as in the areas behind. It joins up with the building. The Muscovites are extremely attached to it.

The second series of nuances is also linked to the forest, but this time to the outlying forest, the immense Russian forest in which the town is only a clearing. There, too, the inhabitants of Moscow are concerned. Strolls in the greenery? Certainly, but there are plenty of parks for that in Moscow itself. The use made of the periphery is more significant, and there is a key-word to express it: *dacha*. A word and a myth, long reserved for the élite, that of the old Tsarist regime, that of the Communist *nomenklatura*, that of today's 'new Russian' *nouveaux riches*, the latter pushing the concept of *dacha* to the limit in constructing veritable mansions, extravagant and ostentatious. But during the past twenty years, the *dacha* has been democratized, notably through the establishment of 'garden co-operatives' conceded by the big employers of a regime drawing to a close. A way of saying to employees: 'Supplement your meagre resources yourselves!'. Little by little, garden huts became *dachas*.

Economic liberalization has taken over. A nascent land market has burgeoned around the villages or on new sites. The craze has developed along a double trajectory, rising from the practices of the poorest and descending from the speculations of the richest. Where these two dynamics cross, a property market has appeared, as well as a new key-word: cottage. There was even a cottage boom before the fall of the rouble in 1998 checked its course. Beyond the extravert symbolism, this English loan-word hid a semantic elision: a *dacha* is designed for a summer visit, a cottage Russian-style is equipped for winter. People are still in the country but in an urban housing development. With the idea of a permanent move in prospect.

Overall, the phenomenon reached considerable proportions. It has been estimated² that two-thirds of the Muscovite population has access to a *dacha*, either directly or through relatives. In other words, this element has to be included in any analysis of the residential system of the town. At the very least a dual-residence practice is taking shape, whose distinctive characteristic lies in remaining close to the town, which contrasts with the seasonal migrations of the French, who change region and climate when they go to their second homes. The fact that the Muscovites have sometimes to reckon with as much journey time to get to their *dachas* as the French to satisfy their thirst for sea and mountain, admittedly makes it possible to relativize the actual cultural difference. But this does not at all alter the fact that, throughout Russia, urban areas are strangely connected to the localities used by their inhabitants in the summer. This can be clearly seen when one flies over the country by plane. Like comets, the towns of Russia trail their bucolic complement behind them: a myriad of little white dots in the dark green of the forest.

This dual disposition inspires another possible interpretation, not that of a seasonal alternance but of a residential alternative. The *dachas* are also being kitted out for the winter, and the roads improved – this is in fact one of the prime areas of public investment, very marked in the course of recent years. Would the Muscovites contemplate leaving their flats for their *dachas* or their cottages? Is Moscow in the process of constructing its inverted double? Does the future belong to the private and entirely individual, after having belonged to the public and totally collective? Nothing is certain. Those who dream

of this hesitate to take the plunge. Historically and materially, the urban condition remains too tied to the apartment. How could anyone give this up? And the world of the dachas is far from equipped for everyday city life. None the less, the story is only just beginning. This is one to watch, then.

Meanwhile, Moscow *intra muros* is preparing another strategy, but one whose premisses alone are visible. The most acceptable key-words are: renovation and increased density. This most often means: gentrification and the transfer of inhabitants of modest means. It is envisaged that by means of progressive displacement, sought-after areas will be recuperated by regrouping the occupants in new, taller buildings. In other words, things are only seen to move, and then only in certain localities, if private interests manifest themselves. Otherwise, complete and utter stasis is the rule. There is nothing to combat the slow deterioration of the living conditions of a great number. At a time of demographic stability, Muscovites are essentially being asked to be content with the status quo. And to prepare for winter by collecting apples and potatoes from their dachas, and bilberries and mushrooms during their constitucionals.

Shanghai, the big move

Developed under the International Concessions regime (from the mid-nineteenth century to the beginning of the People's Republic) and long punished for this original sin by the Peking government, Shanghai today is charged with an urgent mission: to provide a counterbalance to the power of Hong Kong. This huge building enterprise reached its full extent with the launch, in April 1990, of the Pudong project. On the right bank of the Huangpu River, virtually free of buildings until then, a new Shanghai would be built over ten years, using the most modernistic standards of the Far East. Behind the emblematic architecture, Pudong was above all to be the focus and emblem of China's new economic ambitions. But it is on the left bank, Puxi, that the majority of the 13 or 15 million inhabitants of the megacity still live.

However, the building works launched at the turn of the nineties also include the reconstruction of the whole of Puxi. The residential fabric inherited from the Concessions and the industrial fabric inherited from the Mao era are on the way to disappearing. The inhabitants of Shanghai are being transferred on a massive scale from an essentially horizontal and over-densely populated environment (an estimated 4 square metres per person in the 1980s) to a world of apartment blocks and high-rise buildings which does, nevertheless, preserve some elements of a neighbourhood-based social organization. On the areas that were freed up, the investors of offshore Asia gave their response to the skyscrapers of Pudong which had formerly owed them much, too. The syncretic built heritage of the beginning of the century, reduced to little more than slums by too many years of poverty and overcrowding, are only rarely spared for restoration. Even the reviving taste for old Chinese styles has found expression in a destructive pastiche.

This great housing-transfer had the mechanical effect of considerably enlarging the urban area and proportionately extending distances between home and work. The bicycle remains very much in evidence, but the powers that be could not do without the very large structures (suspension bridges, tunnels under rivers, motorway ring- and trunk-roads,

underground network) which will perhaps anyway be insufficient to cope with the opening-up of the car market, until now strictly controlled. The questions of water and of the ecosystem in general are still more worrying. But what will quite clearly be most fascinating to follow in the next few decades is the way in which the population withstands, or turns to profit, such an abrupt change not only in their environment but also in an entire system of cultural references in the spheres of work, social security, and consumption.

Let us return to the inherited residential system, and to that which is replacing it. For the past, the key-word is *lilong*. These are little walled neighbourhood units, each jammed close against the next, and each comprising some tens or a hundred identical family homes, also packed right up against each other along internal alleyways. The whole of Shanghai at the time of the Concessions was built thus by small local or international developers. Unlike the working-class backstreets of old Europe, which they sometimes recall, the *lilongs* were adapted to all social levels. There were *lilongs* for the rich, and *lilongs* for the poor. There were also old *lilongs*, profoundly influenced by the traditional structures of the Chinese house, with little enclosed courtyards and much wood paneling, and new *lilongs* closer in concept to western suburban housing, and incorporating art nouveau or art deco ornamentation. There was much syncretism between these two extremes, so that as a whole the Shanghai of *lilongs* was full of surprises.

There was also an ancient Chinese town, but one which this syncretism widespread on either side merged fairly broadly into the whole. All this was indiscriminately challenged by the massive housing-transfer scheme. Not everything has yet disappeared, and we have to believe that the municipal authority will be able to preserve, as it has announced, large stretches of what we should undoubtedly acknowledge as a heritage, despite its partially external inspiration. Isn't what is currently being built today even more certainly international in fabrication?

The relative lack of awareness of the importance of cultural heritage in China is not the *lilongs'* only problem. The second is that they occupy all the inner-city area, scarcely hidden by pre-war business properties along the main roads. At a time when Shanghai is facing the need for a radical change of scale, it is impossible to see how this strictly horizontal housing could have been completely preserved. The third problem is the deep-seated insanitary conditions which sap it. Indeed it is hard to see how it could have been otherwise, when we know that for fifty years it has borne the brunt of a three-fold population increase in the city at the same time as increasing impoverishment. Such as it is, with no alteration other than adding extra taps to existing water-pipes, accommodation originally designed for one family has been divided according to size between three, six, or even fifteen households.

What devotees of Shanghai will miss most is the atmosphere of the back alleys. It is true that local cultures know, perhaps better than any other, how to make the most of limited space, cohabitation, and material deprivation. But the communitarian lifestyle is the ambivalent result of what continues to be harsh social control. Should we be glad of the security it brings or should we deplore the restricted freedom that it implies? Should we love or hate the little old women with red armbands who, while helping a child who has fallen over, spy on your comings and goings? The cheerful tranquillity of shared evenings, when deckchairs and mattresses come out into the yard or onto the side of the

street, however noisy and suffocating, cannot entirely compensate for the misery of discomfort. This is why, no doubt, the prospect of the great move is viewed by the inhabitants of the lilongs with as much hope as regret.

At first sight, there is a great difference between what the inhabitants of Shanghai are leaving and what they will find in the new universe they are being offered beyond the ring-road. Nevertheless, after having experimented for a while with rehousing them in very high-rise tower-blocks (one lilong, one tower) where nobody could find their bearings, the municipality appear to want to abandon this practice of absolute opposites and return to a more traditional position, that of the low-rise apartment block. Now, the apartment block that is not too tall lends itself well to restructuring an area, with its paths and service roads, its courtyard and garden sides, its little squares, its services area, and above all its enclosing wall and single entrance, manned, and closed at night, with its succession of information boards, watchwords and mottos.

It would therefore be mistaken to draw too stark a contrast between the two residential systems. Admittedly, in respect of material and health advantages, there is no comparison, and everybody is pleased about this. On the social side, the much less oppressively crowded conditions are also undoubtedly not so convivial. In broader terms, it is not clear if in the long term there will be an experiential harvest, a maturing of new behaviours, or whether, by contrast, disillusion, tension, or slow deterioration will be observed. On the positive side, one can hope for improved and modernized management and co-management, as demonstrated by the dynamism of some neighbourhood committees where each member takes responsibility for one aspect of daily life, offering their services or intermediation, one for problems with schools, one for childcare, one for those seeking work, or young married couples, the sick, the aged, neighbourhood disputes, and so on. On the negative side, the emergence of juvenile delinquency could become a cause for concern, as at the foot of housing blocks the world over.

These uncertainties are not only fed by new forms of housing. They are also nourished by radical changes in the status of residents and in regulations concerning access to housing. Yesterday the sole responsibility of the 'work units', the allocation of accommodation and neighbourhood is currently left to the judgement of the interested parties, if indeed they are willing to accept becoming property-owners. Incentives in this direction are increasingly insistent, and fully consistent with the massive introduction of private capital into construction companies, which nevertheless remain within the municipal fold. Or rather in the municipal *folds*, given the subdivision of Shanghai land-boundaries at several levels.

This is the situation as far as the urban area itself is concerned. And beyond that? We are in a delta, one of the most densely populated in the world. The Lower Yangtse region is more than just Shanghai. In the Nanjing-Hangzhou-Shanghai triangle (which is only the southern half of the delta) numerous municipalities with populations of around a million, and countless small towns – all asserting their historicity in the face of Shanghai – cohabit. The substratum of this urban network is a very dense rice-growing and market-gardening country area. The distribution of the villages there is very tight-knit, the communities aligned along narrow canals, two-storeyed houses having replaced the single storeys of yesteryear some 12 or 15 years ago. Here, too, changes have been rapid. The most recent of them has produced forests of mansions in the richest basins. Peasant mansions, not urban-dwellers' mansions.

Folly and pragmatism

Comparison of the Russian megapolis with the Chinese megapolis can be usefully made in terms of folly. Both, rubbing their eyes after a long parenthesis, have been pushed headlong into a kind of schizophrenic intoxication. But it is immediately apparent, from the evidence of urban structures alone, that the madness is not of the same order in each case. Other behavioural factors, notably in the economic sphere, could be cited as evidence of these differences.

Shanghai's folly is unquestionable, for it stems from a clearly identifiable public project. To produce in ten years one's futuristic double, starting from a situation ossified for more than half a century, is no small task. The fact that as this new image took form on the east bank it appeared to be reflected back onto that of the ageing west bank, erasing it with equal haste, makes it all the more exorbitant. As a result, 'pragmatic' Shanghai was compelled to construct itself a fresh double in order to offer a real new environment to its basic population, too flesh-and-blood for this game of mirrors played with global stakes. This third Shanghai, constructed at the same time as the second, forms a sort of sensible thick solid concrete ring round the first. All this is the product of exceptional political determination that should evidently be ascribed to the persistence of a strong government, in this case Communist.

In the same vein, following the *tabula rasa* mode, Moscow has only one folder in a single file: the 'Moscow City' project, which is supposed to fit itself fairly modestly into a bend of the River Moskova. One might include in the file a vague intention to 'renovate' the Khrushchevian 'five-storey' (six in British terms) heritage. If there is madness in Moscow, then it is through *individual* projects that it may be seen. These can be divided into two classes, the word taking on all its social significance since the brutal abandonment of the Communist order dramatically increased the economic distance separating the 'well connected' from the rest of the population. What is visible of the individual folly of the former is only the tip of the iceberg, that of ostentation. But this visible part suffices to trouble the dream of the latter.

The twin airs of Muscovite folly play in fact on common ground, the band of forest that rings the city. Town dwellers of modest means, who play out their insecure 'liberated' doubles with only the resources of a Robinson Crusoe, experience the intrusion of the 'new Russians' in the property market, with the pretension of their buildings, as ostentatious consumers and as players in local government or even in the criminalization of their 'substitute paradise', as a veritable aggression. Be that as it may, if the Shanghai model is borne in mind, it is extraordinary that in Moscow such a confused array of individual initiatives should acquire the dimensions of an urban alternative. The Moscow urban belt is most definitely not in the same league as that of Shanghai.

In Shanghai, folly lies within the walls. In Moscow, it is outside them. Conversely, pragmatism is beyond the city walls of Shanghai, while in Moscow it is within. But the funny thing is that the forms in which these two types of pragmatism operate are similar. In both cases, most people's ordinary life takes place in vast and monotonous housing developments, but whose basic modules are moderate and reasonable. The 'five-storey' (six in British terms) building dominates in Moscow, the 'six-storey' (seven in British terms) in Shanghai.³ The great difference is that in Moscow this residential model represents the past, whilst in Shanghai it is the present and the future. The paradox of the

Muscovites is that, while they have left Communism behind, they remain dependent on the housing produced by it. The paradox of the inhabitants of Shanghai is that freed from Maoism, it is only today that they are attaining the emblematic forms of socialist housing – as a result, what is more, of the effects of a capitalistic explosion. Nevertheless, both are urged to become owners of their apartments without, however, achieving the dignity and responsibility of co-ownership status in the management of shared services. Housing for ‘almost everyone’ is still controlled by others.

The town/country relationship sheds complementary light on the distinction between the two models. The Muscovites’ double residence leads them to the suburban countryside where they intersperse their dachas among the existing peasant isbas, happy to sample the goat’s milk and fresh eggs produced there. The inhabitants of Shanghai do not have this relationship of proximity, unless they themselves originate from the surrounding villages. On the other hand, they rush willingly as tourists to the notable places of interest among the lakes, canals, and historic towns of the delta which vie with each other to propose museums, gardens, and temples, and also leisure parks that already resemble their Florida counterparts to varying degrees. The Sunday morning and evening trains are crammed full. And this is only the beginning.

The enigma of the mansions completes the contrast between the rural areas of the two megacities. On the Russian side, these mansions are built by urban-dwellers, on the Chinese side by the rural inhabitants. At first sight, the enigma of the Russian mansions is less opaque. It is not unduly surprising that the splendours of the new economy, flaunting itself in the exorbitant shops and restaurants of restored central Moscow, should also find expression in the sphere of follies, in the triple eighteenth-century Parisian sense: bucolic,⁴ expensive, festive (not to say orgiastic). But it is not so much the mansions as their owners that are mysterious. Who exactly are they? Beyond the classic enquiry into the origin of the new fortunes or their links with the old *nomenklatura*, or again into the extent of their mafioso nature, one can ask whether the owners of suburban mansions come indeed mainly from the social groups present in the centre of the capital. Another hypothesis is that of the predominance of *nouveaux riches* who have come from the edge of the empire, and whom the maintenance of barriers to Moscow in the form of the residence permit or *propiska*, excludes them from crossing the threshold of the city.

The Chinese enigma is of an inverted nature. The mansion-owners are peasant families in each of the villages where these mansions are found.⁵ Their emergence is therefore an indigenous process. But it is precisely because the identity of the owners is so ordinary that their mansions appear so strange. The mystery thickens due to the fact that once the phenomenon appears, it spreads to all the families in a village. It is not just a question of one or two local nabobs’ mansions springing up. More or less simultaneously, all the houses of the village give way to luxurious three- to six-floor piles transpierced with a riot of tinted windows, surrounded by columns and terraces with balustrades, topped by turrets with onion-shaped domes or crowned with miniature Eiffel Tower aerials, and whose interiors are lined with wood panelling, kitted out with chandeliers, plush furniture, and so on.

Despite their size, these remain strictly one-family residences. They even tend to sprout a double when families grow. To each couple its mansion. Thus the villages spread, to the

detriment of what was at the origin of their good fortune: the market-gardening areas. But however fruitful, since the de-collectivization of land, the conjunction of an abundant nature, evident skill, and a dramatically expanding urban market, the courgettes and aubergines could not have sufficed to plunge the villagers into such a bath of luxury. Small village industry played its part, as did reinvestment in urban business. The accession of recent generations to management positions in the city could have put an end to the joys of village life. But it didn't. On the contrary, it was the icing on the cake.

The explanation for this peculiarity is undoubtedly to be found in another, that of the individual's territorial status: people benefit from full citizenship only on the land on which they are born. One might add to this the privilege for those who work the land of being able to build on their own ground, while urban policies leave virtually no place for individuals to construct their own homes. Ultimately, by dint of being opposite or asynchronous in a thousand ways, suburban patterns around the Moskova and the lower Yangtse do have something in common after all. There are genuine false villagers everywhere.

There remains the strangeness of these two urban destinies. A strangeness which achieves pathos through the sheer size of the two cities. One of them is as if prostrate with depression. The energy of its mayor⁶ is insufficient and anyway not of a character to bridge the gap separating a Soviet-style economy – now virtual, but on which the everyday condition of the majority continues to rest – from a new economy with brazen promises but little suited to revitalizing the social fabric at any deep level or taking over from the old order. The other city has a fever, or rather a cheerful febrility in which rulers and population are entitled to believe that anything is possible. Their baseline was lower, witness the comparison between two figures: 4 square metres per person in Shanghai as against 18 in Moscow. However it is already at 8, if not 12, in Shanghai, in new homes,⁷ while Moscow's 18 square metres remain unchanged, and that in old housing.

The climate is cold in Moscow and the Muscovites are feeling its effects. These intensify the further one goes from the capital, even if only as far as the first circle of neighbouring towns. The Russians are cold, and apart from small groups who move around in 'new business' circles, their economic behaviour is suffering from the disquieting chill. Since the old order slipped away, survival strategies have consisted mainly in collecting crumbs, chasing the shrinking advantages still held by all and sundry in an endless round of barter. The climate is less cold in Shanghai, to the extent that one can see there both the fatalism (don't worry too much) and the bustle (the small trades are doing very well thank you) characteristic of towns of the south. For better or for worse, the institutional foundation has not given way. The regime is holding up well, despite its ambiguities. Anything new is a gain, not a loss.

People's behaviour reflects fairly closely the evolution of the cities in which they live. Yesterday Moscow was still the centre of a vast and powerful world. But the Russians no longer know where they are. Yesterday Shanghai was in quarantine. A quarantine that lasted forty years (!). Today it is claiming the status of 'global city'. But history is long. We do not know what price Shanghai will have to pay – in ten years, in twenty years – for today's ambitions and the uprooting they involve. Nor do we know whether the long

Russian Lent is a prelude to a healthy renaissance, gradually but surely pieced together. We cannot know, but it would be nice to think so.

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Translated from the French by Juliet Vale and Andrew Pochin

- * Sarcelles and La Courneuve are notorious areas of blocks of 'council flats' on the outskirts of Paris. [translator's note]

Notes

1. This text is taken from an international comparative study conducted within the framework of the 'City Diversity' seminar (Ministère de l'Équipement et Institut de Recherche pour le Développement, Paris). It was presented to the conference, 'Nouvelles urbanités, nouvelles ruralités en Europe' (LADYSS/Council of Europe, Strasbourg, May 2000).
2. Provisional figures supplied (in 1998) by Olga Vendina, Professor at Moscow University.
3. Social housing blocks without lifts in the French suburbs are usually four-storey (five in British terms) buildings, those of Shenzhen on the outskirts of Hong Kong, as high as eight (nine in British terms). People are evidently not equal as far as stairs are concerned. From Paris to Shenzhen, via Moscow and Shanghai, the pedestrian's last landing gets higher and higher . . .
4. Note the etymological origin of *folie* (folly) from *feuillée* (mass of leaves), a *folie* being a house built in the *feuillée* (forest).
5. Such villages are legion in the countryside around Hangzhou.
6. At the time of writing, this was Mayor Loujkov, whose ambition for Moscow focussed on the wish to give it a new 'saleable' face in the eyes of investors of all kinds. Moscow owes him above all the renewal of its centre and improvements to its major roads.
7. More exactly, this average includes the still-existent 4 square metres per person in the remaining part of the old housing stock, and the increase in the numbers of new dwellings which pulls up the mean.