

THE HEROIC PERIOD OF ARCHITECTURE IN UKRAINE

Early Modernism of the 1920s-1930s

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ABSTRACT: This article is devoted to the search for answers to several burning questions: what is the uniqueness of the industrial, civil and residential architecture of Ukraine in the 1920s - early 1930s? Does it need to be preserved? Why did foreign architectural criticism call these years the "heroic period of architecture", yet the early Modernism of that time is still not appreciated at its true worth in its homeland? What was 'heroic' in the architecture of Ukraine and its first capital, Kharkiv? A brief analysis of the political and economic situation in which the newly-born independent Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic found itself is given. The most striking examples of modernist architecture in Ukraine are selected for argumentation. These are industrial giants such as Dniiproges and Kharkiv Turbine Plant, the new cities of Zaporizhzhia and New Kharkiv, grandiose metropolitan projects: the ensemble of Svoboda Square—the largest square in Europe, as well as other examples of avant-garde architecture built or developed in those years are presented in the article. The reasons for their loss of authenticity in subsequent decades are revealed. Finally, the problem of preserving the heritage of Modernism in Ukraine in the conditions of a new war is touched upon.

KEYWORDS: Modernism, Ukraine, architecture and urban planning, 1920s-1930s.

INTRODUCTION: The first part of the title of this article is a quotation borrowed from European authors. For the first time, I came across this definition in an architectural edition of the early 1930s dedicated to Modernism in the USSR (Badovici, 1933). Then, the famous Greek-French architect and urbanist Georges Candilis entitled his article in the journal "L'architecture d'aujourd'hui" in the 1960s in a similar way (Candilis, 1964).

Almost 90 years later, I tend to agree with those authors. *The aim* of this article is to explore the reality that corresponded to this definition, and to find answers to several burning questions. What is the uniqueness of the industrial, civil and residential architecture of Ukraine in those years? Should it be preserved? Why is it admired abroad and still not appreciated in its homeland?

To begin with, what was 'heroic' in the architecture of Ukraine and Kharkiv? Here are a few figures, for starters: the world-class Kharkiv Tractor Plant (which produced 50,000 tractors a year), with dozens of industrial buildings, was built in just 15 months in 1930-1931, which was a world record for the pace of construction at that

time. Another example is the city of 120,000 inhabitants, "New Kharkiv". This is one of the districts of modern Kharkiv. It was designed in 1930 in 40 days by a group of young architects and students! But it was a whole city—a most complex organism with all its infrastructure, residential buildings, schools, hospitals, clubs etc. Already these figures speak of heroism. But it was not only the speed of construction or its scale that was heroic.

This article is a summary of a long-term study of modernist architecture and urban planning of the period of the 1920s and early 1930s in Ukraine, which the author has been conducting since the 2000s. Separate aspects of the topic are expounded in numerous publications and are more fully presented in the dissertation "Architecture of avant-garde modernism in Ukraine: genesis and heritage" (Smolenska, 2017, in Ukrainian). The most significant architectural and urban complexes, individual buildings of various types, as well as unrealized projects, which are material evidence of the period of avant-garde Early Modernism in Ukraine, became *the object* of this research.

The *research methodology* is based on a comprehensive and systematic approach, including historical, semantic and comparative analysis. The following *methods* and procedures were used: collection and analysis of bibliographic, archival, iconographic and written materials; field surveys of the current state of architectural and urban planning objects; and restoration of photo reproductions using computer programs.

The *research plan* included the following tasks:

- to determine the political and economic problems of the historical period under consideration;
- to bring out the factors that contributed to the progress of the early Modern Movement in architecture and urban planning of those years;
- to select/reveal the most striking examples of Early Modernism in Ukrainian architecture and urban planning;
- to argue their choice and prove their value using archival and bibliographic verbal and visual evidence, as well as statements of other experts published in different years.

THE RESEARCH

To understand the 'heroism' of that time, let us first single out the extraordinary difficulties of this period, which had to be overcome. It was the most difficult political situation in all of Europe and in the territory of Ukraine in particular. World War I brought with it an economic recession, the death of much of the able-bodied young population, and became an activator of a wave of revolutions that shook Europe. Political revolutionary passions were seething in Ukraine, which culminated in the formation of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic with Kharkiv as its capital, in March 1919. In 1922 it became part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) as an independent republic. Ukraine was part of Russia before then, and western Ukraine belonged to Poland until 1939 and partly to Romania and Czechoslovakia until 1940.

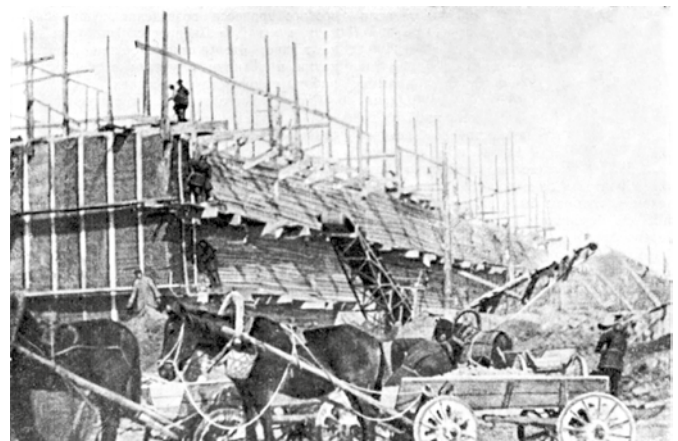
Secondly, economic stagnation after World War I. Agriculture was in decline, and hunger was pervasive. People had nowhere to work, nowhere to live. That was the case throughout Europe. It was even worse in Ukraine: the economic decline as a consequence of World War I and the revolutionary events of 1917. There was also devastation due to the German intervention in 1918 and the civil war that swept through its territory. A significant part of the housing stock, industrial enterprises, and transport facilities was destroyed. They began to be gradually restored and repaired in 1921-1922. The construction industry was virtually non-functional. Building materials were scarce. There were no metal and concrete, and even

no traditional bricks were lacking, due to the destruction of brick factories. Only 1925/1926 can be considered the years of new capital construction. Therefore, the time-frame of early Modernism in the USSR and Ukraine falls in the mid-1920s and early 1930s. This period was very short.

One example is indicative of the industrial construction of those years. In the early 1920s, it was necessary to restore the Chain Bridge across the Dnipro River in Kyiv, which had been blown up during the war. Yevhen Paton, a Ukrainian engineer and scientist known for his work in bridge building, structural mechanics and welding, proposed applying modern design ideas using old bridge piers and "I-beams collected from warehouses along the banks of the Dnipro River, left over from wartime" (Endymyonov, 1925, p.459). These metal beams were of exceptionally large caliber, they were not suitable for building bridges, but there was simply no other metal. And a talented engineer realized it! The Eugenia Bosch Bridge was opened to traffic in 1925. Its length was 675 m, a width of 11,1 m. The bridge was a continuous span structure with 4 spans each of 134 m, 2 spans each of 69,4 m and parabolic upper girdles, suspended on pylons 24m in height. The all-Union magazine "Construction Industry" noted that year: "The construction of the Kyiv city bridge crowns the restoration period of construction ... In the context of our construction after the destruction of the war, this building was a major event in the state". (Endymyonov, 1925, p. 459).

Thirdly, the carrying capacity of building mechanisms and their technical capabilities were limited. Many processes at construction sites were carried out manually. Due to the lack of trucks, horse-drawn carts were often used. The surviving photographs of the construction of the famous high-rise reinforced concrete building of Derzhprom in Kharkiv in 1925-1928, as well as of the shops of the Kharkiv Tractor Plant in 1930-1931, confirm these facts [FIGURE 01].

01 Horse-drawn carts at the construction of the Kharkiv Tractor Plant.
© Unknown, Zherbyn (Ed.). (1990), 1931, p. 185.



Finally, there were problems with low living standards and unsanitary conditions in the cities. People did not have basic amenities: sewerage, running water in their houses; the streets were not paved, there were no telephones, etc. Even in the late 1920s, one-storey buildings prevailed in large Ukrainian cities. Stone and brick houses accounted for less than a third. The rest of the houses were wooden or clay.

What was the impetus for progress, and for forward movement in architecture and urban planning? What prompted ordinary people to such efforts? Let us try to highlight here a few reference markers that will help us find answers.

The era of industrialization had begun. It was another inevitable stage in the development of mankind, a new era on a global scale. It began, first of all, with the most developed countries, Great Britain, the USA, and then embraced many other European countries. The Industrial Revolution opened up new opportunities for the mass production of goods, cars, and houses, accessible to everyone. That is why it was so closely intertwined with the social ideas of equality and the availability of life's goods for everyone. The Industrial Revolution gave impetus to the emergence of new technologies, building materials and structures. This required, in turn, a radical revision of the principles of architecture and construction and urban planning. Advanced architects and engineers understood this, but not all of them. Many architects preferred to camouflage modern building designs with historical styles. And engineers often became pioneers in architecture and construction, whose task was to apply new materials and look for extraordinary constructive solutions for industrial production problems: to construct large spans, illuminate huge production areas with natural light, and build giant silos and water towers. The architecture of industrial buildings was the most progressive of the time.

In addition, the industrial revolution gave impetus to the unprecedented growth of cities—industrial centers. In this regard, ideas for solving the problems of such extraordinary growth began to appear: the Linear City of the Spanish engineer Soria y Mata, Garden Cities of the Englishman Ebenezer Howard, the Cité Industrielle of French architect Tony Garnier, the 'Grossstadt' architecture of Ludwig Hilberseimer, and the urban functionalism of Le Corbusier.

The idea of social equality was also closely associated with the industrial age. Conveyor production of the same commodities, cars, and houses dramatically reduced their cost and made them accessible to everyone. That is why in countries where social and national revolutions took place, modernism was developed and supported: in Germany during the Weimar Republic, in the USSR before 1933,

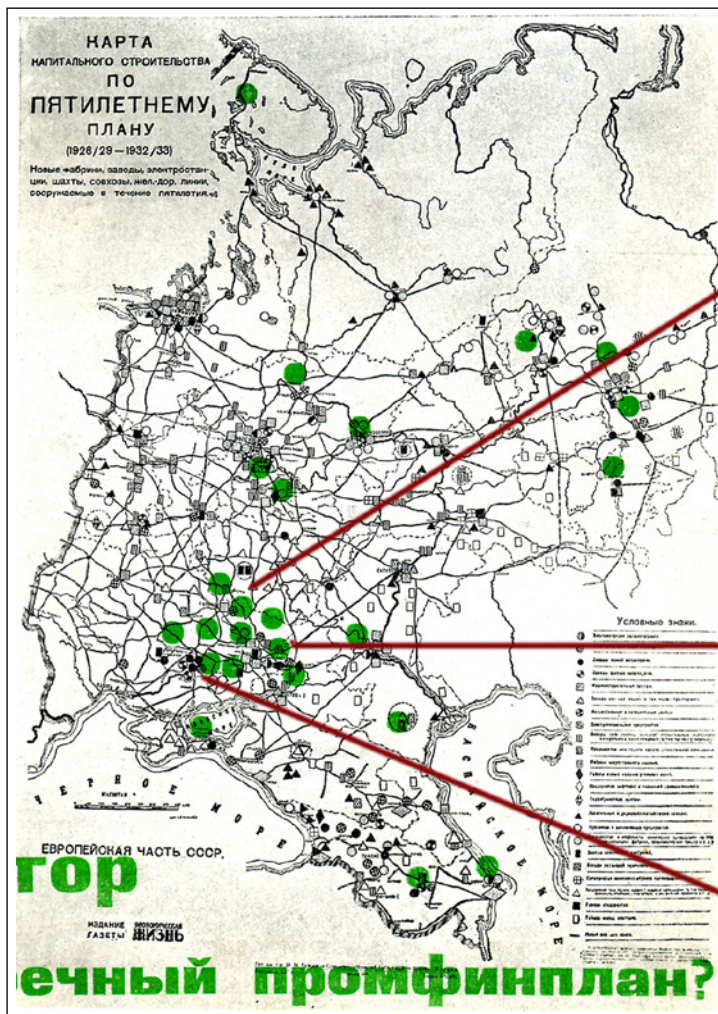
in Czechoslovakia after independence, and so on. The goal of the famous Bauhaus school, which centenary was celebrated by the whole world in 2019, was to create a fundamentally new aesthetics of mass production: objects, furniture, and houses available for mass consumption.

It seems incredible that Early Modernism in the USSR and Ukraine lasted such a short period—less than a decade. That is why its achievements are so impressive. Its time frame falls into the mid-1920s and early 1930s. On the one hand, it was limited by the wars and devastation of the beginning of the century, and on the other hand, by political shifts: in the early 1930s, the authorities forcibly changed the style of architecture to grandiose neoclassical Socialist Realism and began to persecute modernism and its supporters. So, after 1922 the republic was in ruins. But it had a huge potential: the availability of labor and natural resources, transport capabilities, a good geographical location, and most importantly, hopes for a revolutionary transformation of society, gaining national independence. Ukraine took one of the key positions in the process of industrialization of the whole USSR that began in the second half of the 1920s.

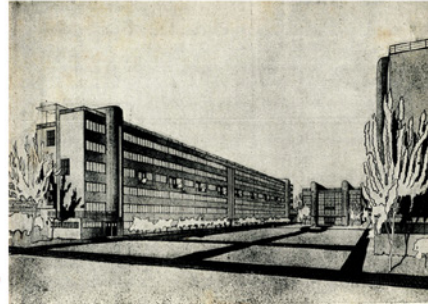
Significant material resources were directed here for the construction of industrial giants, and energy and transport facilities. The map of capital construction projects in the European part of the USSR for the five years 1928/29-1932/33, and statistics for the construction of new cities, prove that Ukraine was a leader among other republics at that time. The greatest concentration of green dots on the map—is the territory of Ukraine. The largest industrial and transport facilities in Europe, advanced in their construction solutions, civil buildings and entire cities began to be built here [FIGURE 02].

The design and construction of a new, powerful hydroelectric station on the Dnipro River in Ukraine (Dniproges) were both innovative and grandiose. Engineer Ivan Alexandrov was the author of the idea of a giant complex, the Dniproges, which included dams, sluices, a hydroelectric station, a transmission network, the river harbor, etc. [FIGURE 03]. Some figures show the gigantic scale of the construction, which was carried out in just 5 years: 1927-1932. The volume of concrete placed in the Dnipro dam was 820 000 cubic meters, its length 760 m, its height 62 m, maximum width at the bottom 40 m. The highway at the top of the dam connected both banks of the river. The advanced experience of mass application of reinforced concrete structures on the Dniproges has been used subsequently on many buildings in Ukraine (Smolenska, 2014).

The competition to design the building of the hydroelectric station was announced in 1929. The project of the group led by Viktor Vesnin (architects S. Andrievsky,



Project of the first stage of construction of "New Kharkiv", 1930.



The panorama of Gorlivka. Project, the early 1930s.

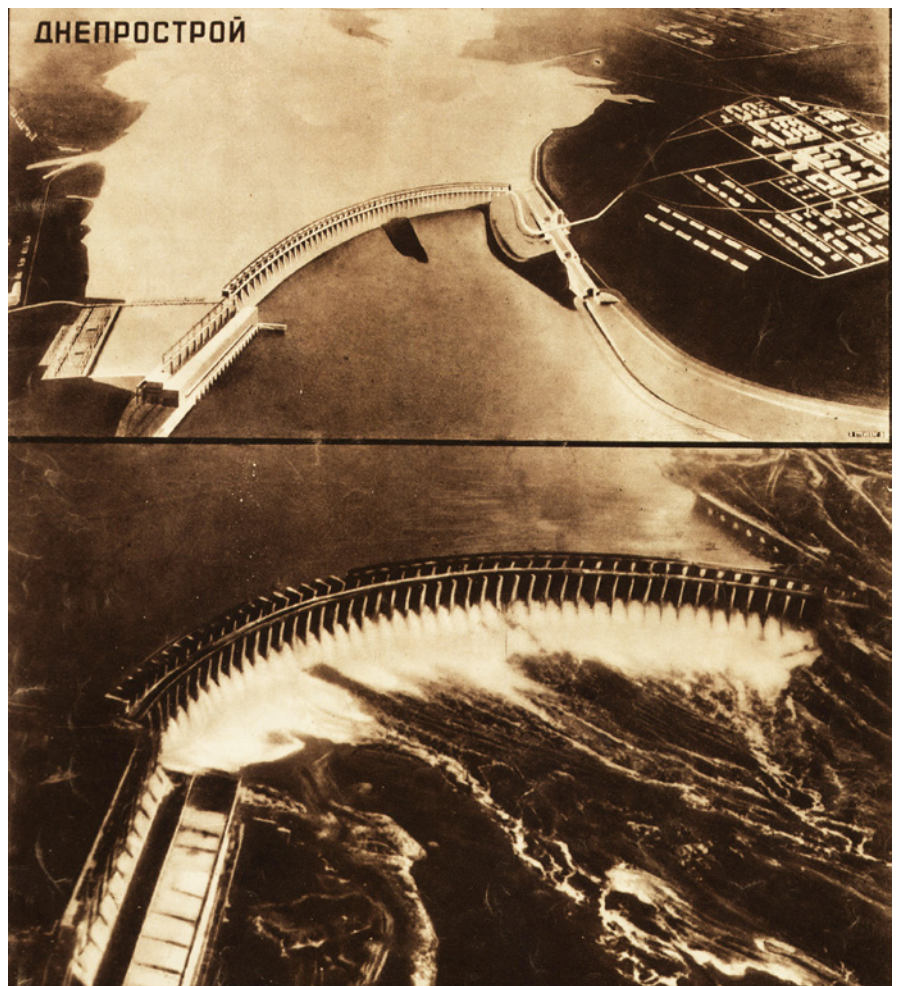


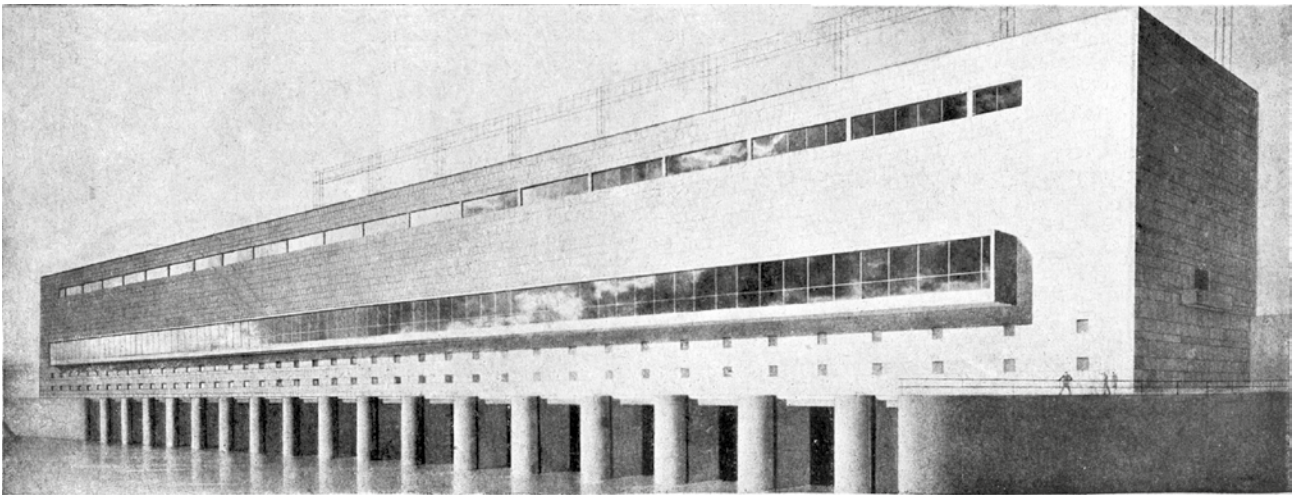
Panorama of Zaporizhzhia. Photo from the 1930s.

02 Scheme of placement of new Ukrainian cities in the map of capital construction objects of the European part of the USSR for the five years (1928/29-1932/33). © Author using data from: Arkhytektura SSSR (1930).

03 Dneprostroy project as planned and implemented. © Unknown, SSSR na stroike / USSR in construction] (1932), 10, 1932 (without page numbers).

N. Kolly, P. Korchinsky, and G. Orlov) was voted the best. It was a monumental horizontal block, 20 m in height and with plan dimensions of 22 x 231 meters. It was supported on massive concrete pillars. The exhaust water used by the turbines splashed out between them. "The HPP building has the shape of a simple parallelepiped. Its dimensions were determined based on the location and dimensions of the equipment (generators, overhead cranes, etc.)" (Orlov, 1954, p. 49). A large glazed bay window was located in the building. According to the designers' concept, it was supposed to illuminate naturally the machine hall and allow workers to have a connection with nature. The glass bay window on the facade contrasted with a wall encased by reddish Armenian tufa. The Dniproges building





04 Dnipropetrovsk. Project for the hydroelectric station (architects V. Vesnin, S. Andrievsky, N. Kolly, P. Korchinsky & G. Orlov). © Дніпрорельстан і Нове Запоріжжя / Днепрострой и Новое Запорожье (1932). Державне пляново-економічне видавництво «Господарство України» (without page numbers).

is widely considered one of the best examples of Soviet Modernism, [FIGURE 04, FIGURE 05] and a network of power lines transmitted electricity from it, to factories and mines.

An industrial hub with giant factories was built near Dnipropetrovsk, based on cheap electricity. Advanced solutions were used in their design. For example, monolithic reinforced concrete thin shells were used in 1931 during the construction of the electrolysis shop of the Dnipro aluminum plant. The workshop had 6 identical buildings measuring 165 by 33 meters, each of which was covered with 14 elliptical vaults 6 centimeters thick.

The issue of housing for the workers of Dnipropetrovsk and industrial enterprises was one of the key challenges stemming from the project. Separate settlements were built first. The so-called “6th capital settlement”, designed by Viktor Vesnin’s group, became the most striking phenomenon in the housing construction of the late 1920s and early 1930s in Ukraine. The ideas of the garden city, and linear building pattern, were vividly reflected in it. As one of its authors-architects wrote: “In the first quarters, built up before 1932, the influence of the so-called “linear” development was largely affected” (Orlov, 1954, p. 50). The principles of Modernism, subsequently enshrined in

the Charter of Athens, were fully embodied. The “6th capital settlement” was almost completely complete by the early 1930s. Wide avenues, green residential areas, and a modern architecture of residential buildings, clubs, hospitals, a cinema, a library and other buildings are captured in photos from the 1930s [FIGURE 06].

Regional planning was born in those years: its goal was the planned use of vast territories, the regulation of all types of construction and the creation of better living conditions for the population of individual large economic regions. For example, the regional planning scheme for Donbas in Ukraine included 13 new cities with a total population of up to one million people. Architects from Germany, including Ernst May and his team, from Holland, and others, all took part in the design of the social cities Horlivka and Makiivka in the Donbas. They specially came to the USSR in 1930 to bring their modernist ideas to life.

Kharkiv had the status as the first capital of the Soviet Ukrainian Republic from 1919 to 1934. That short, but bright segment of the city’s history had essentially changed its appearance, spatial and social structure from a provincial city, by revolutionizing the lifestyle and thinking of its citizens, towards its development as a center of science, culture and education. Before the revolution of 1917, almost 90% of Kharkiv was built of one-storey houses. In the 1920s and 1930s, it became the third most important city of the Union after Moscow and Leningrad, and one of the large industrial centers. In 1931, compared with 1913, its industry increased 14-fold (Khitrov, 1931). New industrial facilities were reconstructed and built there, according to the most advanced technologies of that time.

The first stage of the Kharkiv Turbine Generator Plant was carried out from 1930 to 1932. The main building of the plant was one of the largest reinforced concrete structures in the world in terms of its size and the volume of concrete laid (30,000 cubic metres) (Zherbyn, 1990). The project was developed by Ukrainian specialists from the “Ildustry” trust, under the leadership of Alexander

05 Interior of the hydroelectric station. © S. Smolenska, 2017.





06 The 6th settlement in Zaporizhzhia. VIII quarter. © Unknown, from the early 1930s, *Arkhytektura SSSR* (1933), 3-4, p. 36.

Nerovetsky (Yasyevych, Dekhtiar & Sukhorukov, 1986, p. 37). The building had plan-dimensions of 144 m x 328 m and five spans. Bridge cranes were placed at a height of 21 m and a height of 14 m in the mid-spans. Another industrial giant built in those years was the Kharkiv Tractor Plant (commissioned on October 1, 1931). According to archival data, its assembly shop had plan-dimensions of 516 x 108 m [FIGURE 07].

The image of Kharkiv as a place where all was progressive, expressed an amazing imaginative leap on the part of contemporaries. The Soviet avant-garde clearly declared itself in the city's architecture. Separate buildings and whole new residential areas, even modest park wooden structures, bore the imprint of a new style. Even though not all of the construction was built of reinforced concrete, innovative engineering ideas, functional planning decisions, and modern methods of architectural composition were welcomed throughout, many being implemented following design competition wins.

Kharkiv was, arguably, unique city the USSR in the spectacular impact of its avant-garde architecture. The scales and rate of its growth impressed many commentators more than the achievements of Moscow and Leningrad in those same years. In these two major centers of the Union, numerous new constructions were, so to speak, concealed within existing buildings. Kharkiv was much smaller. The most considerable new civil building was concentrated in the upland areas north of the center. These city outskirts were unexploited territories, allowing the creation of a new image of the Ukrainian capital exploiting the freedom afforded to all. The new high-rise administrative centre—Dzerzhinsky Square (Svoboda Square today)—with its adjacent multi-storey building residential area, was established there [FIGURE 08]. It dominated the entire city, whose old center remained lower-down, at the confluence of the rivers Kharkiv and Lopan. This essentially changed the spatial structure and the silhouette of the city. As the



07 The mechanical assembly shop of the Kharkiv Tractor Plant: a project of the design institute "Gipromez". © Unknown, [Photo of the project of the mechanical assembly shop of the Kharkiv Tractor Plant]. Grigory Lebedev's papers (Fund 1042, Inventory 1, Folder 43, p. 63), Central State Archive Museum of Literature and Arts of Ukraine (CSAMLA), Kyiv, Ukraine, 1929-1930.

press of those years noted, "buildings here are easier to take into account, are more visible, especially since almost all large-scale civil construction of the city of Kharkov has been concentrated in the upland region in recent years ... The capital of Ukraine is growing every year, occupying more and more space, and there is a tendency to expand the city precisely in the northern direction, as a continuation of the upland part..." (Peretiakovych, 1928, p. 45).

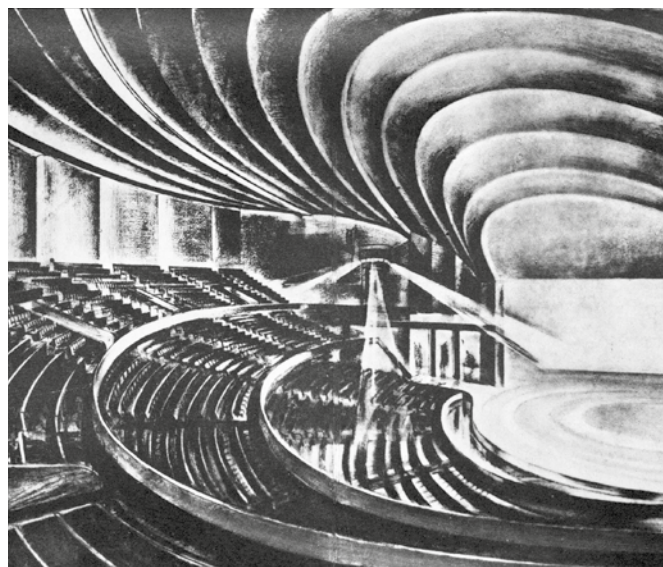
The ensemble of Dzerzhinsky Square was formed through the cumulative process of the competitive design of each of its constituent buildings. Derzhprom (the State Industry Building) was the first and the main building of the future ensemble. It was a multifunctional complex for a multitude of offices of industrial, financial, and administrative trusts and institutions, all concentrated in the capital. The competition for its design was announced in 1925. The project proposed by architects Sergey Serafimov, Samuil Kravets and Mark Felger was recognized as the best, and the erection of the complex took place from 1925 to 1928. Derzhprom was a grandiose concept for its time. Its volume totalled 347,000 cubic meters. It comprised between five and thirteen floors, and its total area was 67,000 square meters.

08 New high-rise residential area behind Derzhprom. Old houses to be demolished are in the foreground. © Unknown, photo from the 1930s / Khitrov (Ed.) (1931).





09 The ensemble of Dzerzhinsky Square during its creation. In the foreground: new residential high-rise buildings and Derzhprom; on the right—the House of Projects, on the left—the House of Cooperation, both in the process of construction. At the far end of the rectangular part of the square is the building of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine; to its left is the building of the International Hotel under construction. © Unknown, photo of the early 1930s / [Photo of Dzerzhinsky Square]. Grigory Lebedev papers (Fund 1042, Inventory 1, Folder 1, p. 459), Central State Archive Museum of Literature and Arts of Ukraine (CSAMLA), Kyiv, Ukraine.



10 International competition for the State Ukrainian Theatre Mass Musical Stage: project for the interior of the auditorium. Architects Kravetz, S. M. & Gerasimov, V.A., Kharkiv, Ukraine. Prize VII, 1930. © L'Architecture Russe en U.R.S.S. Troisième série. Extrait de "L'Architecture Vivante", III, p. 33.

Next, the House of Cooperation in the northern section of Dzerzhinsky Square was accepted for construction in accordance with the designs of the architect Dmitriev. The House of Projects (the Design Organizations Centre, by architects Serafimov and Zandberg-Serafimova, who won first prize in a 1929 competition) was allocated to the southern section of the square: indeed, the circular part of Dzerzhinsky Square was formed by those three high-rise buildings.

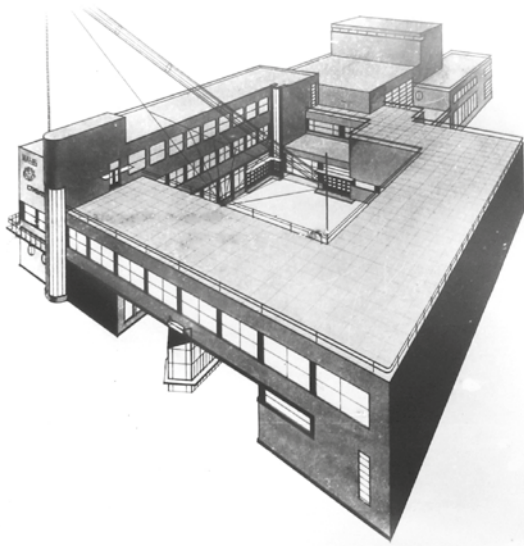
A new residential area in the modernist style had already been constructed behind Derzhprom. The hotel "Internationale" (the hotel "Kharkiv" today)—the largest hotel in the city and in Ukraine during those years—formed the joint of the circular and rectangular parts of the square. Architect Grigory Janovitsky was the winner in the competition for their design in 1928. At the same time, architect Jacob Shteinberg reconstructed two old buildings on Karl-Libkneht-Street (Sumska street later). He combined two buildings into one, destined for occupation by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine. It completed the perspective towards of the square from the main street [FIGURE 09].

Thus, in Dzerzhinsky Square, a modernist metropolitan ensemble, a most grandiose space for its time—was realized before WWII. Only the erection of the House of Cooperation remained to be completed by that stage. Even today, Svoboda Square is one of the largest city-center squares in Europe. Its size amounts to about 12 hectares, and its length is 750 meters, while the diameter of the circular section is 350 meters. Architect Langbard and sculptor Manizer won the international competition to design the monument for the Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko, which adorned Shevchenko Park and the main Karl Libkneht Street not far from the Square.

During those years, the construction of a multipurpose 4,000-seat musical theatre, the biggest in Europe, was started in Kharkiv. In those years, one of the largest theaters in Europe was the Milan Opera House (more than 3,000 seats). The international competition for Kharkiv's theatre project was held in 1930. 144 design submissions were received, 100 from overseas. Renowned architects including Walter Gropius, Hans Poelzig, Alfred Kastner, Renshichiro Kawakita and many others from Austria, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Sweden, and the USA, participated in the competition, which thus took on global significance, not least because a totally new type of modern theatrical building was envisaged. Scene and hall transformations would permit any kind of theatrical action from drama performance to ballet, circus representation or mass activities involving the participation of a great number of actors and spectators. Cinema, acoustic sound options, lighting and other techniques would also be widely used [FIGURE 10].

Another grandiose construction was started in the capital of Ukraine in the early 1930s: a huge sports complex with a stadium for 80,000 spectators. It was envisaged as a complex with many different sports facilities, located in a beautiful park area of 280 hectares. It would command an international status due to its enormous size, and compliance with international standards. Kharkiv architect Nikolay Zvegilskiy was the author of the project, which was officially designated "The G. I. Petrovsky All-Ukrainian Physical Culture Center in Kharkiv" (Smolenska, 2021).

The stadium, with the spectators' stands, was its heart. It also included a cycle track with a cycling and ski station, a palace of physical culture, a swimming pool measuring 50 x 20 meters, a children's sector and so on. Places of



11 Builders' Club in Kharkiv—perspective of the project (architects Shtejnberg, Y., Malozemov, I., & Milinis, J.). © Unknown [Photo of the Builders' Club in Kharkiv]. Grigory Lebedev's papers (Fund 1042, Inventory 1, Folder 1, p. 472), Central State Archive Museum of Literature and Arts of Ukraine (CSAMLA), Kyiv, Ukraine.

12 "New Kharkiv", captured in photographs from the 1930s. © Unknown, SSSR na stroike / USSR in construction (1937), 6 (without page numbers).



mass cultural and educational activity and a theatre for 2,500 people were located near the main entrance. The Institute of Physical Culture, hostels and hotels were to be located on the site.

More than 60 clubs for employees of different specialties were represented in Kharkiv in the early '30s. Some of them were new and they, of course, were built in a modernist style. The Builders' Club was one of the first and most interesting among them. Its project was published in the foreign architectural press. The courtyard was its composite center, and served as an open-air hall: it was possible to get to different functional parts of the Club from that central point. The combination of vertical and horizontal volumes, overhanging the second floor above the passage to the courtyard, semicircular glass stairs, flat roofs, and round windows on the ground floor—all of these created an original modern architectural image [FIGURE 11].

'New Kharkiv'—a residential neighborhood, for 120,000 inhabitants, commissioned for the Kharkiv Tractor Plant, was another experimental building site, occupying 600 hectares. In 1930, Professor Pavlo Alyoshin became involved, with his talented team of vigorous young architects and students, in developing the project. The "Social City", as it became known, typified the progressive ideas of that time: the linear character of its planning, the creation of a green sanitary protective zone between industry and residential settlement, differentiation of apartment buildings according to the demographic structure of the population,

etc. Blocks of houses were provided with service and support facilities—kindergartens, schools, polyclinics, clubs, etc. Functionalism and Constructivism left traces on the design decisions of the master plan, composition and appearance of buildings of the complex [FIGURE 12].

The authorities of the Ukrainian SSR pursued a policy of so-called 'Ukrainization', which played a positive role in the national revival of the country (also known as the "Ukrainian Renaissance" of the 1920s). According to some modern Ukrainian scholars: "in the 1920s, thanks to the policy of Ukrainianization, the impetus of which was given by the national liberation struggle of the previous time, culture in Ukraine has taken an important step towards overcoming provinciality; was organically included in the world art process that created significant artistic value" (Hrytsenko, 2007, p. 330). Ukrainianization of elementary schools covered the entire Ukrainian population of the republic by the end of 1927. "...in the field of education, the Ukrainianization of primary schools had an extraordinary success. If in 1922 there were 6,105 Ukrainian schools and there were 1,966 partly Ukrainian (Russian-Ukrainian) schools, in 1925 there were 10,774 and 1,128, respectively (total: 12,109 in 1922 and 15,209 in 1925). By 1930, the number of Ukrainian primary schools had grown to 14,430, and Russian to 1504; for seven-year-olds the corresponding numbers were 1732 and 267. The Ukrainian language was taught as a subject in all non-Ukrainian schools." (Shevelov, 1989, p. 43).



13 Monument to the poet Taras Shevchenko in Kharkiv (architect Landbard, I. & sculptor Manizer, M.). © S. Smolenska, 2021.

The Ukrainization of the press reached 68.8% in 1930 and 87.5% in 1932.

Many Ukrainian-language publications published news from the field of architecture and urban planning: “New Generation”, “Soviet Theatre”, “Socialist Kyiv”, “Universe”, the professional journal “Budivnitstvo” (Construction), etc. Ukrainian cinematography, too, emerged during those years. Alexander Dovzhenko was a world-famous film director of that time. Ukrainian literature, sculpture, scenography, and monumental painting were also developing. Vasyl Yermilov, a leader of Constructivism in Ukrainian visual arts, was engaged in the development of small-scale architecture, advertising three-dimensional objects, interior design, book graphics, etc. The Ukrainian Renaissance gave a strong impetus to national development, and covered various spheres of life, including education, science, literature, and art, and it did not bypass architecture. In the early 1930s, the generation of formal-aesthetic avant-garde ideas in architecture reached its climax. Many projects were completed or were in a stage of erection.

However, the strengthening of totalitarian tendencies in power in the 1930s led to a ban on Modernism in architecture throughout the USSR and in Ukraine. The return to the classics in architecture and urban planning was reflected in the appearance of Kharkiv and other Ukrainian cities. Existing buildings throughout the country were redesigned hastily, acquiring new neoclassical facades. Simultaneously,



14 Shevchenko monument in the first months of the war, covered with sandbags to protect it from explosions, © S. Smolenska, 29.06.2022.

in 1934, the capital of Ukraine was transferred from Kharkiv to Kyiv. Grandiose construction projects in the city, such as a theatre for 4,000 seats, and the stadium for 80,000 spectators, were stopped and never completed.

Between 1941 until the liberation of occupied Kharkiv in August 1943, the city suffered very much. More than one million square meters of living space were destroyed, and many public and industrial buildings were also ruined and lost forever.

In the process of post-war reconstruction (the second half of the 1940s to the first half of the 1950s) many modernist buildings were reconstructed and received neoclassical facades. Before WWII, the ensemble of Dzerzhinsky Square had accumulated the best features of the Modernist style, but after the war, it was almost completely rebuilt in the spirit of Socialist Realism—the official style in architecture at that time. Only Derzhprom kept its authenticity.

Reconstruction, renovation, and the expansion of buildings from the 1960s to the 1980s, as part of a process of updating or change of function, as well as more recent distortions from the 1990s—all of these continued the ongoing loss of authenticity in modernist buildings and complexes (Smolenska, 2015).

Arguably, after the achievement of independence in 1991, Ukrainian society should have revised its opinion of the heritage of Early Modernism—and tried to ensure

it remained authentic. But the authorities left unpunished the worst cases of distortion of our Modernist heritage. And from then until the present, private businesses and individual owners have rented or bought parts or entire floors, of key buildings, and have changed them according to their own tastes. The present war with Russia had brought new losses. Houses, schools, shops, theaters are being destroyed in Kharkiv and the other cities of Ukraine. The most valuable commemorative monuments are covered with sandbags to protect them from blast damage [FIGURE 13, FIGURE 14]. But how can one save entire buildings—and, of course, people's lives? The problem of preserving the heritage of Modernism in Ukraine is especially acute today in the territories that are under active bombardment.

CONCLUSIONS

It can be stated that the first phase of Modernism in Ukraine was a very short period in the history of architecture—less than a decade. It reached its peak in the early 1930s and was brutally cut short at its point of take-off by the totalitarian policy of power; and it thereafter lost its authenticity over the next 90 years. Those buildings that have retained their original appearance are distorted by wars, time and people, and the lack of an effective state policy to preserve the heritage of the twentieth century. Early Modernism in Ukraine and Kharkiv was a unique phenomenon at the European level. One of the most exciting moments in history—the transition to the industrial age in architecture and urban planning—was materialized and vividly represented in it. This priceless heritage must be preserved and restored, in the interests of European culture as a whole, as much as is humanly possible.

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