

Postwar Sevastopol Architectural Heritage: Discoveries and Preservation Concerns

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Abstract—Article focused on postwar Sevastopol center architecture and planning concepts, one of the best preserved and complete in the 1940-50s practice. New attribution and detailed drawings was discover in City archive recently and never were analyzed. It was a major work by many principal Soviet architects and urban planners, such as V.M. Artyukhov, G.B. Barkhin, M.Y. Ginzburg, L.M. Polyakov, Y.A. Trautman, A.I. Gegello, L.N. Pavlov, M.P. Parusnikov, E.N. Stamo, spending all their efforts on Sevastopol rebuilding from ruins.

Keywords—*Sevastopol; postwar reconstruction; Soviet architecture; Soviet urban planning; Soviet architects; reconstruction; neoclassical architecture*

I. INTRODUCTION

There are a few cities like Stalingrad, Minsk or Sevastopol which exemplify the Soviet approach to postwar urban reconstruction as well as the creation of a new “triumphal” urban landscape image. As it is known, most of the postwar reconstructed cities in Europe were made in a strict “functionalist” modern paradigm. Only in the Soviet Union (and a few years after 1945 in some Eastern Europe countries such as Czechoslovakia or Hungary), the monumental style of the pre-war world continued in a neoclassical or art deco appearance. Despite catastrophic destruction (out of the 3,000 towns and cities that existed in the USSR in 1940, 1,700 were bombed or damaged by war), the most fully-realized urban and architecture ensembles were built during the postwar decade. In some cases, the outcome of warfare drastically cleared out spaces, perhaps not exceeding the scale of pre-war projects but at least made it possible to finally realize them. So, we can say the same thing about the construction industry, including the production of metal, construction cranes, tractors, transport and various machinery. Up to the second half of the 1950s many destroyed cities were reconstructed not to their pre-war state (except some medieval architecture monuments like in Novgorod or in the city-wide ensemble of Leningrad) but rather according to newer designs.

July 20-27 of 1958 Moscow hosted a V Congress of the International Union Architects dedicated to postwar reconstruction practice over the world — session and ensuing three-volume monograph named *Construction and Reconstruction of Towns.1945-1957*[1]. Germany, Bulgaria,

China, Korea, Denmark, Spain, France, Great Britain, Hungary, Japan, Norway, Poland, Romania, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia and USSR were presented — only Switzerland towns did not suffer from warfare destruction. In the first volume USSR presented three major cities — Kiev and Minsk as Union Republic capital cities and Stalingrad — as place of decisive battle of the war. In following volume USSR presented total of 15 towns and cities — only three there were located far from battlefield and bombings (Tashkent, Magnitogorsk and Rustavi), nonetheless this place bears a burden of evacuated population and industry. Strange, but Sevastopol was not presented or mentioned obviously its naval base role (and accordingly secrecy regime) prevails over architecture representation.

II. PLANNING

Sevastopol was a unique situation because it was not a Union Republic capital, nor was it a regional center, but it received almost equal attention and resources as Kiev, Stalingrad or Minsk. Obviously, there are two main reasons for such an attitude — Sevastopol showed a heroic example of defense during the siege (1941-1942) and even though it was destroyed to the ground, out of all the Black Sea shoreline it still had a unique harbor. It was necessary for the Soviet Black Sea Fleet to be renewed and to have a base in Golden Horn Bay. Reconstruction of the city had to show a resurrection of the steadfast will of the navy and citizens as it had already happened after the Crimean (Eastern) War of 1853-1856 — it was expected that history should repeat a second time. The principal idea of reconstruction appeared immediately after the Red Army’s victories in the decisive battles of Eastern Europe’s scene of operations and the front moved west towards the border of the USSR. In the autumn of 1943, two major Soviet architects and members of the Academy of Architecture proposed their concept designs for the Sevastopol reconstruction master-plan. Both Moisei Ginzburg (1892-1946) and Grigoriy Barkhin (1880-1969) proposed a set of sketches and conceptual plans dating October and November 1943 — half a year before the city was liberated and a detailed survey of the city’s facilities that survived the siege was carried out. As in the reconstruction designs of other cities, this procs was a competition.



Fig. 1. Sevastopol general plan concept. M. Ginzburg, 1943.

Barkhin's proposal was selected and in future literature he was always named as the author of the city's General Plan (1946). Ginzburg, as we can judge by his sketches from the State Schusev Museum of Architecture's collection, relied on reports describing almost destruction of the city and proposed to form a new center not in place of the pre-war one but on the adjacent hill, and similarly sprawling northward to the bay's shore. He took the heavily damaged Sevastopol Siege Panorama Building as the origin of a proposed new street and boulevards network from the topmost point of the hill to the north-northwest direction for 2.33 km — one and half times longer than the historical Central City Hill. We do not know what he planned for the remaining part of the pre-war city but at that time the opinion of preserving it as historical ruins was discussed among various Soviet officials.

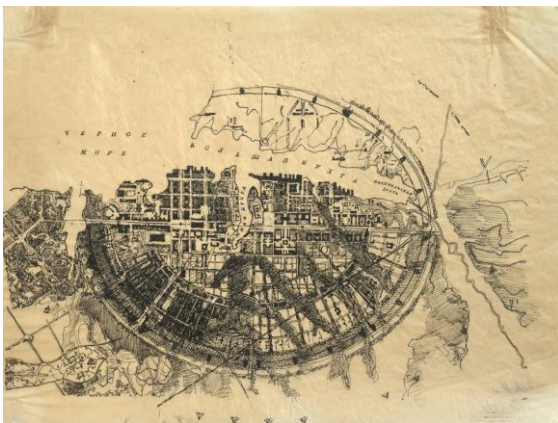


Fig. 2. Sevastopol general plan concept. G. Barkhin, 1943.

Barkhin's sketches from the Moscow Architecture School Museum's collection show a somewhat different approach, since the architect had the possibility to work on these plans for more time (both architects visited Sevastopol in 1945, Ginzburg made several concept designs of memorial complexes here). In the first place, Barkhin wanted to highlight the city's fortification heritage — in his sketches he roughly kept the pre-war street network and proposed an ellipse-shaped perimeter of bastions and boulevards, mimicking a baroque-epoch fortress like the famous Saint-Petersburg projected plans by Jean-Batiste Le Blond (1717). In follow-up sketches, Barkhin paid more attention to the

street network and proposed new squares and public buildings. Despite the liberation of the city, Barkhin's General Plan was prepared before actual mine removal, bomb disposal and topographic mapping was completed. In fact, many actual planning decisions were made by new local architecture authorities — head architect Yuri Trautman (1909-1986) and his deputy Valentin Artyukhov (1931-1978), both Leningrad Construction Institute alumni. The General Plan of Sevastopol was approved by the Council of Ministers of the USSR in 1949 and was heavily based on the pre-war street-network, street-profiles, engineering infrastructure and even building foundations — however Sevastopol's architecture ensemble represents the best of Soviet postwar architecture. Sevastopol lacks gigantic scale of Soviet triumphant squares and long alleys, designed for "visionary spectator" as well as a huge "main building" in the image and semblance of Palace of Soviets (not only well-known Moscow designs but projects for Stalingrad, Novorossiysk etc.) [2].



Fig. 3. Sevastopol general plan zoning. G. Barkhin, 1944-45.

Barkhin proposed not only a more streamlined street network, a system of boulevards and squares (in place of ruined buildings) but also new zoning that had a different scale and types of residential architecture — from 3 to 5-story apartment buildings in the center to garden-city-like cottages outside of it. He also left several sketches of a spire-like tower — probably a symbolic lighthouse (somehow similar to towers on public buildings of other postwar reconstructions like G. Golts' Stalingrad Palace of Soviets project) and another landmark — a public building with a silhouette and features resembling the medieval Castel Nuovo in Naples. The general style of other buildings of course he proposed to be neoclassical — it was not a major change in the city's history — back in the middle of the 19th century neoclassical tastes prevailed among navy officers including the famous admiral M. Lazarev, military governor of Sevastopol and Odessa in 1833-1851. From this period, two remarkable buildings were restored after the war — St. Peter and Paul church (1840-1844) in the shape of an early doric peripter and the so-called Tower of the Winds (1849), both located on the eastern side of Central City Hill. Antique architecture forms — in their authentic pieces encountered in the USSR only there (Sevastopol archeological park Khersones or Kerch Peninsula) —

appeared there much more consistent than in central Russia landscape. There it does not look like artificial politically-driven style but climatic, local resource and landscape dependant.

III. IMPLEMENTATION

Between 1946 and 1949 Artyukhov and Trautman refined Barkhin's proposal based on new topographical surveys and a detailed examination of the city's underground facilities – the sewage system, building basements and foundations, and underground catacomb galleries used as bomb-shelters. Valentin Artyukhov led this process due to his war-time experience (he served as a sapper during preparations to break the Leningrad Blockade (1942-1944). Observations made by his team show that the majority of building foundations survived relatively non-damaged and there was no need to rebuild the sewage pipes system laying below street pavement level (despite calculations proclaiming that each square meter of besieged Sevastopol received on average 1.5 tons of steel during bombardments). So, the decision was made — based on these assumptions and the direction of Leonid Polyakov (1906-1965), another master architect from Moscow – to restore the city on its existing prewar foundations. This 1949 General Plan worked until 1970 — a whole epoch of city resurrection, and many of Barkhin's principles regarding the city's sea-facade, street profiles and zoning [3] were not forgotten, but paradoxically, according to recent opinion of local architects, these principles were considered to be invented only by the "local" Trautman and Artyukhov [4].



Fig. 4. Sevastopol General Plan fragment. V. Artyukhov, 1949.

To outline key planning principles let's focus on street profile and landscape relations. First use of a pre-war street width for main streets leading from North to South around Central City Hill (Bolshaya Morskaya, Nakhimova, Lenina) and the first line building height (entablature) were fixed on a simple 2:1 ratio. The resulting height of 3 or 4 stories was relatively low and "less monumental" than in other reconstructed Soviet cities. Another reason for such a height limit was obvious — it was for seismic safety when traditional construction materials were used (local Inkerman limestone with a small amount of metal and concrete). Because of the actual street network from North to South crosses local stairways that climb steep hill slopes, together producing a dense network of blocks without wide open

spaces for public use and mass-gatherings — Barkhin planned to demolish or not to restore some buildings to produce new squares. Ushakova Square in the south served as a transport hub roundabout for the Historical Boulevard, Sailors Club and hotel Ukraine, as well as for lesser public facilities. The northern point of the city with the entrance to Primorsky Boulevard, the ferry terminal and Dinamo Water Sports Station (one of the very few surviving buildings from the constructivist era) were made into the city's main public space, Nakhimova Square — with public administration and culture buildings on adjacent plots. The third square in the north-west from Central City Hill, Lazareva Square, also served as a transport hub, connecting three major streets and a few smaller ones, leading up the hill and down to the Central Market and Artilleriyskaya Bay ferry terminal. Barkhin also proposed a wider street that would cross the Central City Hill from West to East and in the middle a big square south from the Black Sea Fleet Staff building. However, the hill slopes appeared to be too steep and most of the pre-war houses there had a basement or even the ground level was preserved and therefore Artyukhov decided to straighten and stitch together some of the street network pieces there but without such a scale of demolition [5].

For "regular" living blocks Barkhin, and Polyakov after him, decided to keep density and building height limited to fairly low levels — no more than 13 m high for the facades of central streets. The new urban fabric consisted of enclosed service and private courtyards inside apartment building groups as well as "pockets" of greenery – formal courtyards (with "transparent" metal fences with vases, plaster details and fountains in the middle) opened out onto main streets. Pre-war building lines were respected in most cases, and even today the slight bend of Bolshaya Morskaya Street produces an axial view to Pokrovsky cathedral and the corner tower of the post office. Newly constructed buildings standing on selected axial plots also received tower-shaped silhouettes — both street irregularities and square turns formed a set of "visual joints" — not like in flatland cities with obelisks and pillars, but instead with such details. However, one such attempt resulted in a scandal – the bread factory apartment house on the topmost point of Krasny Descent went beyond the building line by one meter in order to make the tower part more visible. Together with the larger tower of the Sailors Club, they form a dynamic composition of the Central City Hill panorama from the Sevastopol railway station. However, this was a violation of General Plan rules and the architects (A. Kumpan and A. Shuvalova) were forced to quit their jobs and return to Moscow. Nonetheless other tower-shaped building parts were constructed without such events, including the above-mentioned Sailors Club on Ushakova Square — designed by Alexander Gegello — one of Leningrad's avant-garde architecture leaders (until 2018 any details about his work in Sevastopol were unknown [6]) or Leonid Pavlov's Tchernomorets Design Bureau on Lazareva Square — also unknown by local researchers (even in Moscow Pavlov is still a modernist architect only).

Outer districts on Korabelnaya Side or Severnaya (Northern) Side of Golden Horn Bay were designed in lower

density and scale (as Barkhin proposed) — usually one or two-story town-houses with private gardens or two-story houses for 4 and 8 apartments. This separated districts also receive own local centers with public and culture facilities, similar to sotsgorod principle of self-sufficient urban unit of walkable scale.

IV. ARCHITECTURE

The above-mentioned principles — street width, preservation of building lines and the creation of new local visual focuses lead to a most coherent, self-consistent architectural and urban ensemble. Central living blocks and public buildings were designed by different architects — with various backgrounds and education — from Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Odessa, Baku, etc. Each author or collective (they represented in 1948-1952 more than thirty design bureaus, planning institutes and offices, related to City, Navy, Union and various ministries' policies) developed their own personal "style" inside the postwar Soviet neoclassical movement.

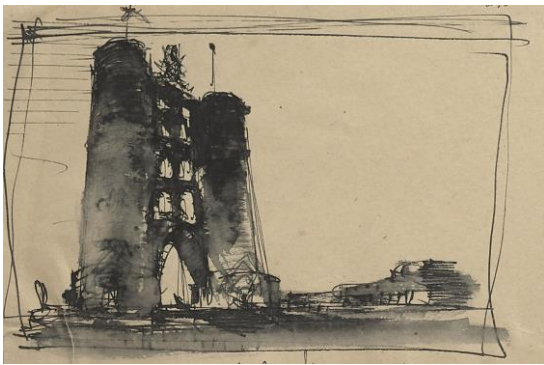


Fig. 5. Public building sketch for Sevastopol Nakhimova Square. B. Barkhin, 1944-45.

Leonid Pavlov, a well-known master of Moscow modernist era architecture designed a monumental rotunda over the south wing of the nearly symmetrical Tchernomorets Design Bureau on Lazareva Square. The main building volume has a fine detailed ionic order in its central entrance and wing loggias. The rotunda placed over the square tower has upside down columns with the wide end on top — it resembles the order of Minoan palaces but with corner ionic capitols — a very artistic approach to an "unchangeable canon". Pavlov also designed a whole facade of the square's opposite side — he placed two smaller streets as well as courtyard openings to ionic order porticos of three-story apartment buildings standing in one row.



Fig. 6. Tchernomorets Design Bureau building. L. Pavlov, 1950-51.

Other architects, like Victor Melik-Parsadanov, having moved from Baku to Sevastopol after graduation, promoted a more Renaissance-looking style — his building in front of St. Peter and Paul church, or the Navy Barracks near Black Fleet Staff or two apartment buildings on Odesskaya Street feature "shadow-catching" deep rustic finishing, high loggias of the topmost floors and overall more "rich" decoration. Leonid Polyakov and Eugeniy Stamo during their short-term assignment from Moscow designed several building facades on Nakhimova Street — with a sleek approach to neoclassical architecture — sophisticated proportion, monumental shapes, arches, and even obelisks, but with overall frugal detailing.

A more conservative and somewhat banal approach of neoclassical principles presented in the city is the Lunacharski Dramatic theatre by V. Pelevin — it is made like a roman temple with a symmetric composition, heavily decorated portico, statues and so on. A different approach, closer to mannerism and baroque architecture was used by G. Shwabauer in the residential quarter on Odesskaya Street or by N. Sdobnyakov in the right-hand side buildings on Gogolya Street — with "shadow-catching" rustic, profiled corners, small towers, accented corners and many other small-scale detailing. Other blocks on Lenina and Bolshaya Morskaya streets also show a rather wide spectrum of classical architecture interpretations in given strict urban regulations. Another example worth mentioning — the pre-war constructed communal housing complex (Zhilkombinat №1 by city head architect M. Wrangel, 1930-1933) was reconstructed by a group of Leningrad architects (A. Urazov, A. Khabensky, S. Estrin) — the inner structure was changed from a corridor system to separate apartments, and communal facilities were converted to retail shops. A most striking, constructivist-looking central courtyard wing received another story and simplified gigantic columns — a meritable compromise between strict avant-garde and triumphant postwar aesthetic approaches.

V. CONCLUSION

In summary, more than 90% of City Central Hill and adjacent streets development were made according to 1949 plans and designs — unrivaled example in Soviet practice of

ever-growing plans and projects. Out of major public facilities only two were made in the “transitional” (from neoclassical to modern) style — the Central Market by Adolf Scheffer and Hotel Ukraine by Yuri Braude. Few pre-war (and pre-revolution) buildings in art-nouveau and even eclectic styles were restored. Modernist era developments took place outside the central core of the city, except for the war memorial on Nakhimova Square and relatively low-rise housing — not complexes but single buildings. Nowadays it is still a unique ensemble recommendable as a candidate for the UNESCO World Heritage list. Currently, the Sevastopol central area is facing a great menace of new developments, that both mimicking neoclassical architecture in an infamous post-modernist manner and violate building height regulation rules. Meanwhile, during last few years dozens of buildings received a preservation grade of regional level monuments, disappointing its made piece by piece without a protection zoning and urban-scale regulations. In 2018 one of the private architecture studios received a commission to develop a set of “recommended archetypes” for use in future projects in the city center. Supposed that archetypes have to be used for future designs approval but today it happens without any public or professional society counsel even a fact, of such assignment, its details and program.

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