

RUSSIA

The Shukhov Tower in Shabolovka Street, Moscow

The radio tower in Shabolovka Street in Moscow can be considered the masterpiece among the works by the great Russian engineer Vladimir Grigorievich Shukhov. Shukhov was the first to invent and use in construction lattice metal shells in the form of hanging and arch-shaped overhead covers and hyperboloid towers (patented by the Russian Empire in 1899). The 25-metre steel lattice tower as part of eight gigantic pavilions built by Shukhov for the 1896 All-Russia industrial and art exhibition in Nizhniy Novgorod was the first hyperboloid structure in the world. In

metres, but the government could not provide a sufficient quantity of steel profiles to realise it.) After the installation of two beams and a flagpole the height of the tower reached 160 metres and for decades it was the tallest building in Russia. It served as a support for the antennas of big radio and TV stations and to this day is under the jurisdiction of the federal government's communications and mass media ministry.

In recent years, big efforts were made by the Shukhov Tower Foundation to preserve Vladimir Shukhov's heritage in Russia (see also *H@R 2008–2010*, p. 152). It is well known that the radio tower suffers from crevice corrosion and needs serious expertise and conservation. In 2011, Vladimir Putin allocated 135 million rubles (\$3.8 million) for its restoration, but no action has been



General view of the Shukhov Tower, 2014 (photo: Nikolai Vassiliev)

subsequent years, Shukhov developed numerous structures of various lattice steel shells and used them in hundreds of buildings. The radio tower in Shabolovka Street, built between 1919 and 1922 with a height of 148.5 metres, became the tallest of Shukhov's towers. (In the initial project the height had been 350

taken yet and the company in charge of the conservation presented a plan for dismantling the structure for restoration (arguing that a repair would be too expensive) and then moving it to a new location: The decision for dismantling has been made already – and some investment companies submitted plans for the construc-



The Shukhov Tower seen from below
(photo: Arssenev)



Detail of the tower's lattice work showing crevice corrosion

tion of a business centre on the site. It is obvious that a dismantling would mean a “subtle” demolition of this landmark and lead to the death of the structure. Therefore, all efforts have to be made and endorsed to stop that decision.

Christoph Machat

Melnikov's House and Studio in Moscow

Several times ICOMOS has reported on the threats to this iconic building and its bad structural condition (see for example *H&R 2002/03*, p. 179; *H&R 2008–2010*, p. 152). Since our last report the state of conservation has further deteriorated, while the types of threats largely remain the same. The following is an extract from a Heritage Alert report prepared in 2013 by the ICOMOS

International Scientific Committee on 20th Century Heritage (ISC 20C; see also <http://icomos-isc20c.org/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/melnikovhousemoscowheritagealertapril2013.pdf>).

The globally known masterpiece of the Russian architectural avant-garde, the Melnikov House built by Konstantin Melnikov in 1927–1929, is under threat of serious damage to its structural stability and historic fabric due to the on-going lack of conservation treatment and the immediate threat now posed by the proposed development on an adjacent site, which endangers the house's internationally important heritage values.

The demolition works which began in August 2012 in the near vicinity to the Melnikov House pose a significant risk to the structural stability of the building. Realization of an architectural project of a new multifunctional center at Arbat Street, 41 with a deep underground parking structure launched in February 2013 will dramatically change the hydrogeology and drainage system of the Melnikov site. The situation is also exacerbated by the underlying geological structure of the land and the delicate nature of the building construction. It is feared that this could lead to irreversible effects and finally to irreparable damage of Melnikov's architectural masterpiece, a building which is internationally published and well-recognized as an outstanding item of Russia's architectural contribution to 20th century architecture.

This is considered to be a new threat which presented itself this year in addition to numerous conservation problems, general deterioration, low quality of restoration works carried out in the 1990s, and changes in the monument's setting.

(...) The pressure on the subsoil and the construction of underground garages in apartment buildings with levels minus 7–8 m has altered the hydrogeology of the site and deformed its drain-



The Melnikov House and Studio, seen from above
(photo: www.architizer.com)

age system. This has led to a weakening of the foundations and cracks in the walls of the Melnikov House. The demolition works which began in August 2012 in the near vicinity to the Melnikov House and construction works launched in February 2013 pose a significant risk to the structural stability of the building. Realization of a proposed architectural project for a new multifunctional

center at Arbat Street, 41 with a deep underground parking structure at minus 15 m, behind the Melnikov House, will dramatically change the hydrogeology of the site yet again. This could lead to irreversible effects and finally to irreparable damage of Melnikov's architectural masterpiece and surrounding historical buildings.

(...) The International Scientific Committee for Twentieth Century Heritage of ICOMOS, Docomomo and the International Union of Architects now urgently ask the Russian authorities to take direct steps to prevent further neglect and stagnation of this uniquely Russian heritage resource of the Twentieth Century. (...)

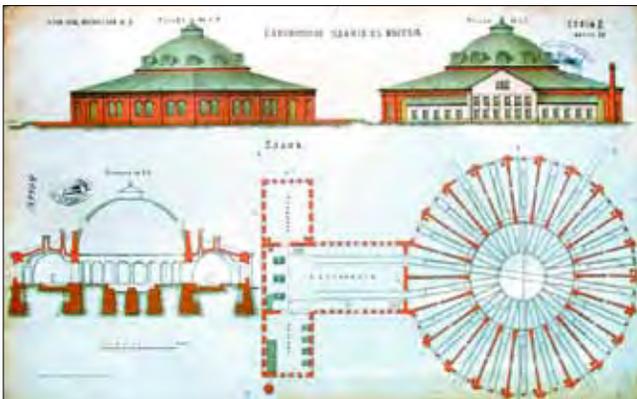
The Circular Depot, Leningradsky Station, Moscow – Hope for this Outstanding Testimony to Early Railway History?

The following evaluation of the circular depot's architectural and historic significance as well as of its threatened state is an abridged version of a report prepared by MAPS (Moscow Architecture Preservation Society; www.maps-moscow.com) in October 2011:

This depot building by architect Rudolph Zhelyazevich, a student of Konstantin Ton, was constructed in the 1850s. It is part of a complex of buildings belonging to the former Nikolaevsky railway (now Oktyabrsky). It was the first engine shed in Moscow and one of the first such buildings in Russia. It was originally two-storied, with a central domed ceiling. There were 10 such depots constructed for the railway lines, of which three have been demolished, two are abandoned and are disintegrating, and the remaining have been remodeled. The "Nikolayevsky" circular depot is thus the only such building remaining in Moscow.

(...) The Circular depot is a newly-declared building of cultural heritage and is protected by the state. (...) Nevertheless, Russian Railways continues to prepare for demolition of the depot, the permission for which is based on incomplete information and is therefore legally invalid. Unfortunately, there is a precedent for this particular form of corrupt practice: in spring 2011, on the basis of an analogous expert conclusion and without the sanction of the city authorities, the Veerny Depot near Leningradsky Station was demolished. It was also in a protected zone and had significant architectural and historical value.

Plan, section drawing and external views of the Circular Depot (© MAPS)



View of the Circular Depot today (© MAPS)



Courtyard of the Circular Depot today (© MAPS)

In March 2013, TICCIH Germany and ICOMOS Germany in a joint letter to the Russian Railways secretary of state urged that the depot at Moscow's Leningradsky Station be preserved and restored. With this initiative, the two German conservation organisations have supported local groups and activists such as MAPS who since 2011 have observed the growing danger for the remains of the circular locomotive shed threatened with demolition although it is listed. The fate of this outstanding example of early industrial heritage in Russia remains uncertain.

Scharoun's Prime

Ever built a province before graduating or turning 25? Ever disappeared for a decade to emerge a happily married professor at an arts academy, with several dozen buildings in one's portfolio? – Almost 100 years ago this fittingly described the beginnings of one Hans Scharoun. His 1915–1925 works have only recently begun to attract the researcher's eye: an East Prussian treasure that had a war as an originator, another war as a demolisher and the post-war misery of Kaliningrad province as a custodian. Political correctness and craftsmen's inability are endangering it today.



Historic photo of the so-called "Bunte Reihe" (Colour Row)

Scharoun's military service stopped a promising high school course and took him from Berlin to Stallupönen (Nesterov, Russia), Gumbinnen (Gusev) and Insterburg (Chernyakhovsk) in a province badly hit at the beginning of the Great War. Eventually an acting head of two (of 24) Construction Advisory Offices, or *Bauberatungsämter*¹, he, with some 30,000 mostly Russian prisoners of war and 500 German architect-colleagues, had over 40,000 houses erected anew and 60,000 repaired², and designed quite a few. A strive for modernity, limited by funds and handy-men's skills, shaped a traditionalist yet expressionist way of local building, with restrained facades painted lavishly in vivid colours: Scharoun was thus one of the first not only to sign Taut's September 1919 Appeal for Colour in Construction³, but also to make words real. Commissioned in 1920, he erected the Kamswykus Suburban Settlement between 1921 and 1924⁴ – a first major task, the only executed example of the colour period, the only Scharoun in Russia today.

Every settlement faces a main street with two city-scale apartment houses, shielding off a common-green-style side street with a pair of cottages and a double row of 16 two-storey houses, all with grocery gardens at the rear. A building line gradually bowing from a side street and back resembles the later *Wohngehöfte*

at Charlottenburg-Nord, while a semi-circular entrance square reminds one of the Siemensstadt. One of the apartment houses even got a "battleship" nickname, for the sake of its pointed rostra-like balcony "nose" – another *Panzerkreuzer*, just like in Berlin!

Utilizing one and the same row house layout, Scharoun varied just a few façade details, arranged flat triangular jutties, singular, in pairs, or pleating up the entire wall; marked the stairs with pointed, double-pointed or tri-partite windows, or niches, or combinations thereof; zig-zagged the parapets – and used colour as in no other of his works. Walls of red, yellow and blue, window cases of green and white, in manifold combinations, were held together by high East Prussian tile roofs. Four-rayed stars, as on Glass Chain drawings, appear on the walls, on doors and on handrails. Little wonder the "Bunte Reihe" (Colour Row) nickname made it into official maps and soon replaced the original name of the settlement.

Once a daring experiment of an architect and his burgomaster (Rosencrantz, also a signatory of Taut's Appeal), carefully placed outside the municipal area to avoid public dismay, and incorporated only after proving to be a success, presented at the 1926 "Die farbige Stadt" (The Coloured City) exhibition in Breslau



The "Bunte Reihe" today



Visualisation of the rehabilitation

(today Wrocław, Poland), the settlement soon disappeared from public view. Even if Scharoun's colour affinity made him one of Breslau's Colour Councillors in 1928⁵, and even if the foyer of the Berlin Philharmonics comes in an abundance of tints – never

again did Scharoun return to these Insterburg beginnings, neither have those who have been researching this architect. The 1993 anniversary chronicle⁶ just showed old photos⁷ giving the West the impression that the ensemble was lost for good – the East

could marvel at it, if only it knew, or if Scharoun would appear in Soviet architectural textbooks. Local living memory somehow withstood both the cleansing of all the tenants (German rail and postal workers had to make way for Soviet ones), and the loss of all the archives, so that both Scharoun's name and the "bat-leship" nickname were kept – yet without any chance of making use of such knowledge. Still, the general scarcity in such a restricted military area as East Prussia during the USSR years preserved the buildings. The war-time loss being limited to one totally destroyed apartment slab, the general lack of maintenance meant that the settlement became one singular preserve of original plaster, door and window frames, handrails, floor finishes, roof tiles, etc.

It has only been in the last decade through Prof. Czeczot's summer schools at St. Petersburg University, and with the help of the investigation by the author of this report in his capacity as counsellor for the Berlin Scharoun Society, that the Colour Row re-surfaced and was listed in 2010⁸, thus reducing the threat to the visual integrity by the lure of DIY markets with their styrofoam delights.

In the same year, the houses were surveyed for the first time ever⁹, and a Colour Row House Owners Association was founded, acting as a client for research and design works. Many Russian and German students of architecture, landscape architecture, restoration and geography have filled summer tutorials, attracted by the name of Hans Scharoun and the unspoiled state of the pitiful ruins of contextual pre-modernism. On the façade paint tests were undertaken in 2011 by an original 1921 manufacturer, giving an idea of the Colour Row as it once was and serving as a basis for a proper implementation, with the help of a craftsmen's class focusing on old masonry, paint and timber works. A knowledge of such, and of monument-friendly engineering, insulation, etc does not exist so far, neither in Kaliningrad province, nor in greater Russia.

A study-and-construction project in the entire province to restore old buildings, not as a one-off expenditure of an international aficionado, but through properly instructed local craftsmen, to generate continuously improving living conditions, will fuel the economic circuit, reduce unemployment and out-migration, and welcome guests! A province once contested, devastated and rebuilt by Russians and Germans, Scharoun and Scharounians, could write history again!

This is an idea that so far has collected much applause¹⁰, many a personal effort, but little official support¹¹: The reluctance of Russian state institutions to deal with "alien heritage" is matched by the Germans' self-inflicted fear of being accused of "revanchism". Luckily, people-to-people commitments are still bridging this gap – but for how long? There is no time to waste; neither the best 1921 plaster nor the dwellers' patience will last forever.¹² Only if the craftsmen's training succeeds, as now promoted jointly with the Görlitz Denkmalzentrum, the Kaliningrad University Urban Utility College, and the "Kamswyker Kreis" fund (<http://kreis.instergod.ru>), and brings its fruit to Chernyakhovsk's Colour Row, the self-mutilation by misled house owners will find a due end, here and elsewhere in the province. Supporters are welcome!

Several Scharoun houses that are on sale now could be a cadre for a timely rehabilitation to mark the architect's 125th birthday on September 20th, 2018, and the Colour Row's centennial in 2024 – but only if we start instantly. Incidentally, in February 2014 the Colour Row Settlement was selected by Europa Nostra as one of the seven most threatened landmarks in Europe. Rescue missions will be organised for this site and the other six during and after the summer and feasible action plans proposed by the end of 2014.¹³

Dmitry Sukhin

¹ Academy of Arts, folder 1.12, no. 25-0000; folder 1.15, no. 19-0331.

² Kruchen necrologue by Scharoun, in: *Neue Bauwelt*, 8 (1947).

³ "Aufruf zum farbigen Bauen", in: *Bauwelt*, 38 (1919).

⁴ *Ostdeutscher Verdingungs-Anzeiger* (Tender Bulletin), an inlet to *Ostdeutsche Bauzeitung* 1920 (nos. 28, 71, 75, 87, 100) and 1921 (nos. 16, 34, 39, 40).

⁵ "Das farbige Breslau" by Rothenberg, in: *Ostdeutsche Bauzeitung*, 99 (1928).

⁶ *Hans Scharoun, Chronik zu Leben und Werk* by Geist, Kürvers and Rausch.

⁷ The Scharoun Fund at the Berlin Fine Arts Academy archives also keeps three technical drawings and a watercolour.

⁸ See definition: "newly found monument of history and culture"; final grading pending.

⁹ Winfried Brenne: "if Colour Row were in Berlin, it surely would have made it into the World Heritage submission", verbal statement made to the author, 2010.

¹⁰ 2010, Cascade Media Event of the Year; 2012, provincial acknowledgement prize.

¹¹ The Kaliningrad provincial heritage authority exists since 2008 and is seriously understaffed; local VOPIK (All-Russian Monuments Society) branch extinct.

¹² Winfried Brenne: "if restoration works don't start now, there will be nothing left to preserve at Colour Row in ten to 15 years", verbal statement made to the author, 2010.

¹³ See <http://www.europanostra.org/news/449/>.