

Le Corbusier 1933-1960
Editor: Kenneth Frampton



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Le Corbusier 1933-1960



Kenneth Frampton

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Le Corbusier's confrontation with the Left materialist architects of the Weimar Republic—the so-called *Neue Sachlichkeit*—at the foundation of the *Congrès Internationaux de L'Architecture Moderne* in 1928 and the three visits that he subsequently made to Russia between 1928 and 1930 brought him into contact with the international Left, and the passing closeness of this association found reflection in Alexandre de Senger's reactionary accusation that he was in fact the 'Trojan horse' of Bolshevism. Of consequence for his immediate development was his exposure to the OSA group's housing prototypes of 1927 with their interlocking duplex units and his encounter with the linear-city concepts of N.A. Miliutin (figs. 1, 2). Both of these ideas soon emerged in his own work; the first in his use of the 'crossover-duplex section' after 1932; the second the 'linear-industrial-city' which he first introduced in 1935. Once assimilated, these typical Soviet avant-gardist solutions were reformulated by him in the mid-1940's: the former as the prototypical section of his *Unité d'Habitation* (fig. 3), and the latter as the *Cité Industrielle* that was central to his regional planning thesis of 1944 entitled *Les trois établissements humains* (fig. 5). As a counter influence Le Corbusier introduced the double-layered glass curtain wall into the Soviet Union in his technically 'progressive' but ultimately faulty *Centrosoyus* building, erected in Moscow in 1929. Without adequate heating, this standard technique of Swiss Jura (used by him in the *Villa Schwob*) could not withstand the rigors of the Russian winter. It was nonetheless included as a technical element in his 1930 reply to a Moscow questionnaire, "Réponse à Moscou," a document for which the plates of the *Ville Radieuse* were specially prepared.

The substitution of the classless *Ville Radieuse* of 1930 for the hierarchic *Ville Contemporaine* of 1922 involved comparable changes in Le Corbusier's conception of the machine-age city, among which the most important was the replacement of a centralized model by a theoretically limitless concept whose principle of order stemmed from its being zoned, like Miliutin's linear city, into parallel bands. In the *Ville Radieuse* these zones were assigned to the following uses: (1) satellite cities dedicated to education, (2) business, (3) transportation zone including passenger rail and air transport, (4) hotels and embassies, (5) residential, (6) parkscape, (7) light industry, (8) warehouses plus freight rail, and (9) heavy industry. It was paradoxical, to say the least, that a humanist, anthropomorphic metaphor was still inscribed within this model. This is evident in Le Corbusier's explicatory sketches of the 'radiant city', which show the isolated 'head' of the sixteen cruciform skyscrapers about the 'heart' of the cultural center, located between the two halves or 'lungs' of the residential zone. Aside from the intermittent centralization which naturally corresponded to this biological scheme, the linear model was strictly adhered to, thereby allowing the separate zones