

An aerial, black and white photograph of a city, likely New York City, showing a dense grid of streets and buildings. A large river, the Hudson River, flows through the center of the image, curving from the top left towards the bottom right. A major highway interchange is visible in the lower right quadrant. The overall scene is a complex urban landscape.

зарядъе

history of papers
herstory of breakout

petrified. Then he left the room without listening to Dmitry's dim complain.

Moscow, December 8th 1945.

She heard the telephone ringing from the hallway, she wasn't used to it yet. She let it rang at length. She was preparing the soup for the evening. She washed her hands and went to pick it up.

Dmitry was excited. He was calling from the studio.

— Being appointed Chief Architect of Moscow at my age! Do you realise, Masha? People ten years older than me are still waiting for such important position. And they'll never have it. Maria knew who *those people* were.

— I knew you were going to make it.

— We'll get a better apartment away from that awful anonymous building, Masha! She didn't know what to answer. Even though it was all new to her, she really liked the House on the Embankment.

— I wait you for dinner at home? I'm preparing the rassolnik. She said with a distracted tone.

— Of course I'll come. I maybe have a drink with the comrades from the Party after work, ok?

Maria hanged the phone and went back to the kitchen, resigned. Rassolnik is perfect for hangovers. Now that Dmitry reached such an important position he will start again to ask her to change their habits. Why has she to side him in those Party gatherings? Everybody treated her as a peasant there. She checked the broth and started chopping the potatoes. She didn't have nothing to say to all these Muscovite ladies. At least that will finally free him from his obsession. Dmitry never named him, but Boris obsessed him. She never understood the reason, thought.

She added the vegetables to the soup and went to the studio on the other side of the apartment. She put her forehead on the window. The feeling of the icy glass pleased her. Beyond the Moscow river giant cranes higher than the Kremlin towers were at work to demolish Zaryadye.



On the top:

View of Zaryadye in the 1890s
signs of commercial activities can be noticed as well as David stars on some
façades on the embankment

Cover page:

Aerial view of central Moscow in 1941-42; right to the Kremlin we can notice the
demolition of the Old Zaryadye quarter and the construction site of the Palace of
the Soviets on the lower left corner

Zaryadye is a plot of land located to the east of the Red Square and Kremlin compound. Its name comes from its function as a marketplace exchanging with the river. It was mainly a working class neighbourhood made of small courtyard buildings that occupied the area until the beginning of the XXth century. Part of it was the former Jewish quarter. It was demolished in the 1930s in the framework of the grand renovation plans for the City of Moscow.

Two stories of paper architecture took place on this same plot of land.

Today Zaryadye is a massive construction site heading to completion of the *Zaryadye Park* planned by New York City architecture firm Diller Scofidio + Renfro. Before this project was implemented, for a few years another project was meant to be built in Zaryadye. A grandiose project designed by the famous architect Lord Norman



Foster. His project was part of a larger wave of re-building, demolitions and renovations that started in the 1990s. Mainly under the authority of Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, Moscow attempted to erase parts of the Soviet era architectural heritage: it can be read as a will to heal a disturbing wound by aggressive plastic surgery. The main surgeon for these operations was Интеко (Inteko), a company owned by Yelena Baturina, Luzhkov's second wife.

The British architect proposed a fully built site with several buildings sporting an old-style post-modern appearance inspired by the nineteenth century neighbourhood combined with the usual high-tech touch that made him famous. This project was backed by Shalva Chigirinsky, who is known to be close to the former city's administration, especially before the financial crisis of 2008. At the same time Foster was working on three other

juicy projects in Russia: a gigantic “green” Russia Tower in Moscow, the New Holland island in St. Petersburg and the renovation of the Pushkin Museum. All these projects aroused around 2006, all of them failed to be built. It is not clear if the giant financial losses of Chigirinsky after the crisis are linked to Foster’s disappearance from the Russian architectural landscape.

The video *PENDING / В ОЖИДАНИИ* is based on an official speech that Foster gave to the Moscow architecture council to present his Zaryadye project. Each short sentence of the architect is doubled by a real time interpreter. The message is clear but elegantly enrobed: it's business that doesn't sound vulgar. I was fascinated by his performance, his bold utterance was rather telling about the whole project. In the video, the actors re-enact the presentation pointing at the present state of the project: nothing.



Screenshot from *PENDING / В ОЖИДАНИИ*
shot in Riga during the Trauma&Revival Contemporary Encounters
[watch the video](#)



Layers of Russian architecture in the 1960s:

Among the Kremlin and St. Basil Cathedral, Shchusev's Lenin Mausoleum, in the background the Hotel Rossiya still in construction and far in the distance Chechulin's work and home, the Kotelnicheskaya high rise building.

To make room for this magnificent project, a massive building was demolished in 2006: the Hotel Rossiya.

The Hotel Rossiya sported three-thousand-one-hundred-eighty-two rooms, a concert hall, a cinema and several more facilities. It was built between 1964 and 1967 to host party members during central committees, its designer was the architect Dmitry Chechulin.

Chechulin is an interesting and influential figure of soviet architecture. It is told that he suffered a lot during the planning of the hotel. It was his biggest project in ten years. He long waited to build in Zaryadye and what he finally built was probably opposite to his architectural views.

Almost thirty years before, Chechulin wasn't the old architect worried about the central party. Chechulin was trained at the Vkhutemas Higher Art and Technical Workshops by the chamaleonish Alexey Shchusev and quickly

get involved in the inner circle of Stalinist architects. Never being the most prominent. That was Boris Iofan.

Iofan received his education in Rome, one of the most exemplar places for architecture from the Neoclassical point of view Chechulin quickly adopted. Iofan was a Jewish from Odessa, he married a half Russian Princess in Italy, he was handsome.

Chechulin came from the countryside, he didn't travel much, he was a bit chubby, he squinted.

The rivalry between the two is epic.

The most important architectural contest of the time in Russia was the Palace of the Soviets. Architects from all over the world sent their projects, it was a competition everybody was looking at. Gropius, Poelzig, Le Corbusier, Perret and many other esteemed architects participated. Even the fascist neoclassic



Boris Iofan points at some details of a project to an interested audience



Profile picture of Dmitry Chechulin

Armando Brasini, Iofan's master, applied with a preposterous building in form of ship.

At the second competition, Chechulin, in association with a colleague, won the First Prize of 10000 rubles. But there was a richer Exceptional Prize of 12000 rubles. Iofan won it.

Their parallel careers went on for a while. During the 1930s, Chechulin was appointed to designing rather important buildings in Moscow.

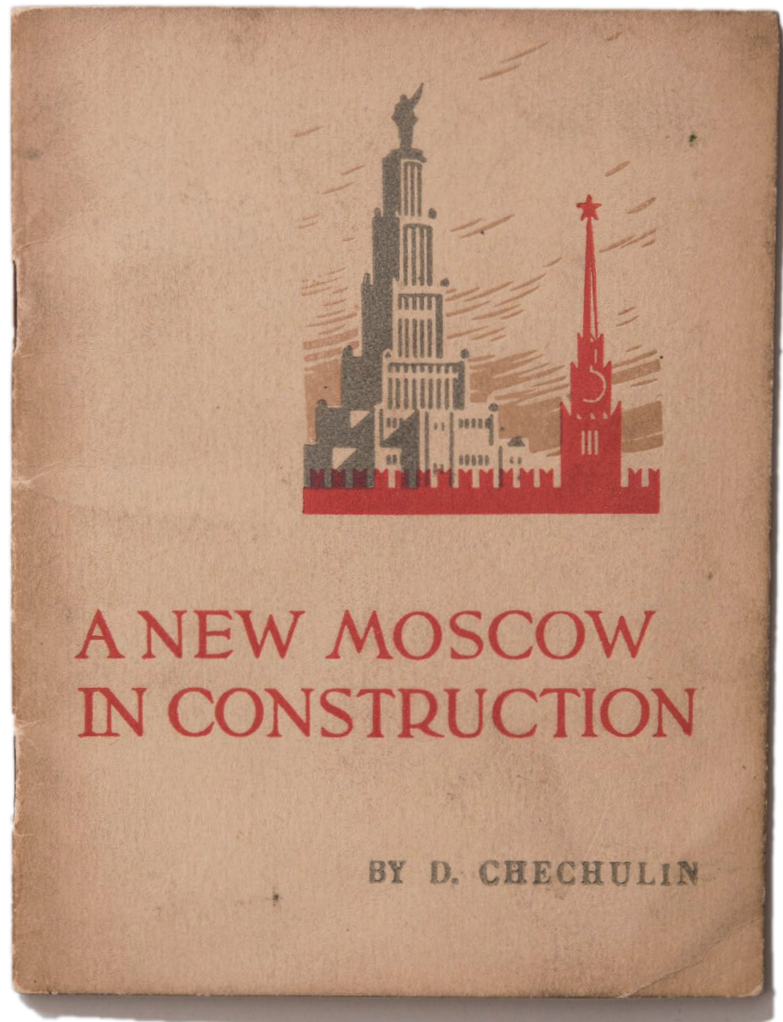
He transformed the Moscow City Hall into a disproportioned-five-stories Greek temple; he indulged himself in covering of marble some Metro stations such as the Dinamo, the Komsomolskaya and the central Okhotny Ryad; he started the plans for the so-called Mayakovskaya square where decades after he would build his Beijing hotel.

he was not unrolling a carpet, he was not waving a fan over her head; he was only holding the door for her. It merely seemed to Maria that the gentleman was doing all of that.

The Kotelnicheskaya High Rise building rose over the Moscow river, and its long shadow moved, as the sun travelled over the sky, like a huge clock hand across grimy tenements, from the Park Usachev-Naydenova to Moskvoretsky Bridge. When the sun was gone, the Red Star flared up in its stead, and made glowing red smears on the glass windows for miles around, on the top stories of the buildings high enough to reflect it. The Kotelnicheskaya High Rise building displayed the entire History of Roman art in well-chosen specimens; for a long time it had been considered the best building of the city, because no other structure could boast a single Classical item which it did not possess. It offered so many columns, pediments, friezes, tripods, gladiators, urns and volutes that it looked as if it had not been built of white marble, but squeezed out of a pastry tube. It was, however, built of white marble. No one knew that but the State who had paid for it. It was now of a streaked, blotched, leprous colour, neither brown nor green but the worst tones of both, the colour of slow rot, the colour of smoke, gas fumes and acids eating into a delicate stone intended for clean air and open country. The Kotelnicheskaya High Rise building, however, was a great success. It had been so great success that it was the last structure Dmitry Chechulin ever designed in years; its prestige spared him to bother from then on.

Two blocks west of the Kotelnicheskaya High Rise building, on the other side of the river stood the House on the Embankment. It was many stories lower and without any prestige whatever. Its lines were hard and simple, revealing, emphasizing the harmony of the steel skeleton within, as a body reveals the perfection of its bones. It had no other ornament to offer. It displayed nothing but the precision of sharp angles, the modelling of its planes, the long streaks of its windows like streams of ice running down from the roof to the pavements. Muscovites seldom looked at the House on the Embankment. Sometimes a rare country visitor would come upon it unexpectedly in the moonlight and stop and wonder from what dream that vision had come. But such visitors were rare. The tenants of the House on the Embankment said that they would not exchange it for any structure on earth; they appreciated the light, the air, the beautiful logic of the plan in their halls and apartments. But the tenants of the House on the Embankment were not numerous; prominent men not anymore wished to be housed in a building that looked "like a warehouse".

The House on the Embankment had been designed by Boris Iofan.



At the same time, Iofan was appointed to design official USSR buildings for the 1937 Paris *Exposition Universelle* and 1939 New York World's fair.

Chechulin's work was present at the very same fair: a booklet named *A new Moscow in construction* was distributed in the USSR Pavilion. On its cover the silhouette of the Palace of the Soviets – the wannabe tallest building in the world – was printed in the same colour of Chechulin's name. The short text signed by the architect is a passionate account of the incredible progress in renovation the city of Moscow was undergoing. Descriptions of the works carried out are followed by a prophecy:

A few years more and on the bank of the Moscow River, towering 1365 feet high, will rise the Palace of the Soviets, the most majestic monumental structure in the world, erected in memory of V. I. Lenin.

Each city has its sky line, characteristics of no other. And thus, not many years hence, a traveller journeying to Moscow by train or boat or automobile when the sun has fully set, no matter what direction from which he approaches, will be greeted, when still 25 miles off, by the magnificent sight of the gigantic figure of Lenin topping the Palace of the Soviets. Artistic light effects will impart a silvery sheen to the statue made of special steel, permitting the great leader's form to be visible far and wide over the City of Moscow, the capital of the USSR.¹



Screenshot from the film *New Moscow* (1938) showing a high rise building in the background of an imaginary future capital
[watch the video](#)

Then Second World War happened.

Chechulin would never admit it in public but he was probably enchanted to see the steel of the foundation of the Palace removed and sent to arms factories during the conflict.

In 1945 Chechulin – after joining the party – was named Chief Architect of the City of Moscow. That position allowed him to revisit the whole plan of renovation of the capital.

New technologies and bigger ambitions brought to the planning of the so-called Eight Sisters. These skyscrapers weren't called skyscrapers because the noun was too closely linked to New York, home of ultimate enemy western capitalism. Therefore they were named *high rise buildings*.

On paper, it was a crown of eight towers surrounding the Palace of the Soviets. But the smaller towers were actually intended for practical uses such as universities, ministry buildings and other public functions. Chechulin could then hope that for once the official buildings had priority to the colossal podium for Lenin's statue and then he could build his own tower.

Author, winner of the Stalin Prize, full member of the USSR Academy of Architecture D. N. Chechulin, chose the path of contrast, in which the amazing beauty of the ancient ensemble remains untouched and independent, and the new



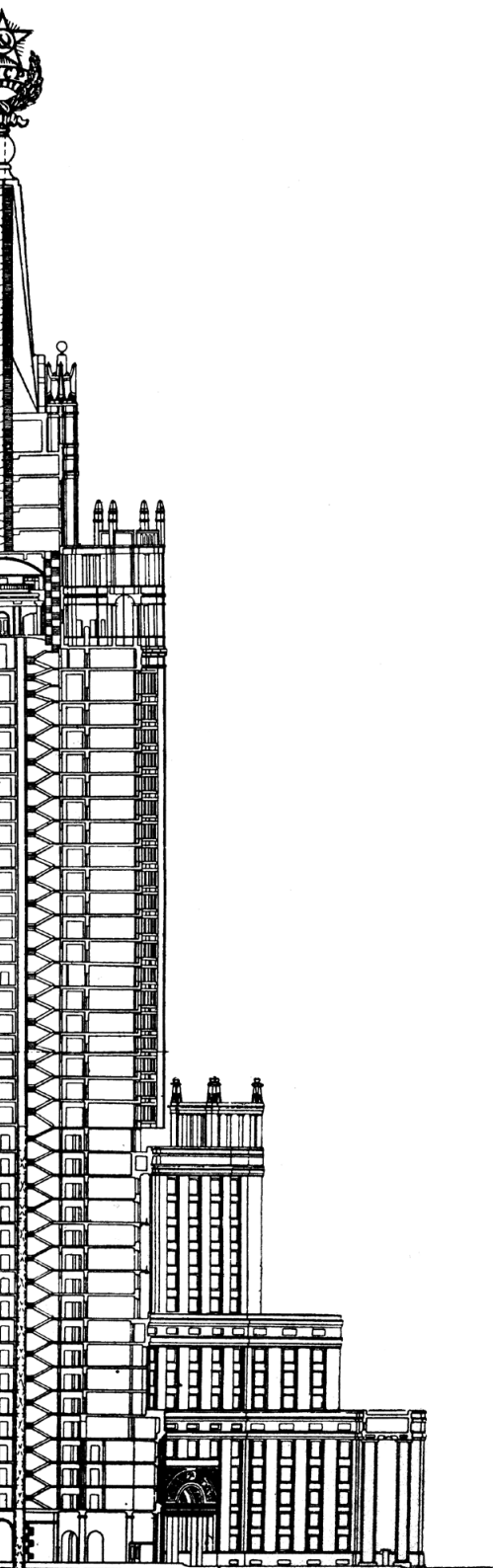
building with its silhouette will echo the vertical of the future Palace of Soviets on the other side of the Kremlin. The building will enter a new panorama of socialist Moscow, which will unfold along the embankments of the river, where high rise structures will emphasize its picturesque twists.²



Dmitry Chechulin points at something to two construction workers

The function of the Zaryadye Administrative High Rise Building, his major project, is still a mystery. Some sources say that one of Chechulin's neighbors at the Kotenilcheskaya Embankment building was quite interested. It was Marshal Lavrentiy Beria, chief of NKVD and close collaborator of Iosef Stalin. A NKVD headquarters in the building could corroborate the legend about a secret tunnel linking the building with the Kremlin.

Besides its use, its position was unconventional as well: the other seven sisters were placed outside of the inner historical centre of the city. Zaryadye is just across the



Red Square. Such a tall tower would make appear the Kremlin ridiculous by comparison and scale. How Chechulin managed to obtain the approval of the Georgian tyrant is unknown. Even Boris Iofan's Palace of the Soviets wasn't that close to the house of power.

But the golden era for the Stalinist architecture died with its great inspirer. Shortly after the death of Stalin, Nikita Khrushchev steered soviet architecture away from monumentality:

Carried away by the ostentatious side, many architects are mainly engaged in decorating the façades of buildings, do not work to improve the internal planning and equipment of houses and apartments, neglect the need to create amenities for the population, the requirements of the economy and the normal operation of buildings.

[...]

For the sake of ostentation, numerous columns were used, Porticoes, complex cornices in other



expensive details, giving the houses an archaic look.

[...]

Former chief architects of Moscow, Chechulin and Vlasov not only did not wage a proper struggle with the waste of public funds in the design and construction, but also allowed themselves excesses in the projects they developed.

Unjustified tower superstructures, numerous ornamental colonnades and porticoes and other architectural excesses borrowed from the past have become a mass phenomenon in the construction of residential and public buildings, as a result of which in recent years, many public funds have been spent on housing construction, on which it could be built more than one million square meters of living space for workers.³

Chechulin never built his tower. Yet he didn't have to wait long to have a new commission. And it was a rather pleasant one.

Medal of People's Architect of the Soviet Union. Dmitry Chechulin has been awarded with three Stalin Prizes, a medal for Labor Valor, two orders of the Red Banner of Labour, one order of the October Revolution, one order of Friendship of Peoples, one order of Badge of Honor, two orders of Lenin, and the title of Hero of Socialist Labour as well.



In the 1950s the only trace of the Palace of the Soviets was an enormous hole in the middle of the city. With the new policies, it was impossible to even think to build something *useless*. It was impossible to actually build such big structures. They say the idea came directly from Khrushchev: he was a sporty man. And a practical one. *Let's fill it with water*, he said.

Chechulin didn't suffer much for designing a functional and spartan swimming pool. He probably suffered more when he had to cover his own dream by building the anonymous rectangular prism called Hotel Rossiya. Still, he was in business and he left his mark in Russian official buildings down to the new House of Parliament built after his death.

In 1950 the USSR Post issued a series of eight stamps each of which depicted one of the new high rise buildings in Moscow. It didn't matter if none of the buildings was finished. It must

have been a nice souvenir for Chechulin.
Sir Foster didn't even have a stamp.



Chechulin's portrait appears among other famous architects in the hallway of the storage place at the MUAR Shchusev Museum of Architecture, Moscow

1. D.N. Chechulin, *A new Moscow in construction*, Foreign languages publishing house, Moscow, 1939;
2. N.P. Bylinkina, N.N Stoyanova, *Высотные здания в Москве (High rise buildings in Moscow)*, Moscow, 1951;
3. Resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Council of Ministers of the USSR of 4 November 1955 No. 1871.

An aerial, black and white photograph of a city, likely Rome, showing a dense grid of streets and buildings. A large river, the Tiber, flows through the center of the city. The sky is filled with large, white, fluffy clouds. The overall tone is historical and atmospheric.

зарядъе

enrico floriddia

history of papers
herstory of breakout