

*Moscow, March 17, 1930*

**My dear [Moisei] Ginzburg,**

I am leaving Moscow this evening. I have been asked to write a report on the recent competition for the Green Town of Moscow. I haven't done so, not wanting to present a judgment on the work of colleagues. On the other hand, I answered the request that was made to me indirectly, by giving the Committee for a Green Town 'some commentaries on the development of Moscow and the Green Town.' **My conclusions cannot agree** with the enthusiasm that the simple word 'deurbanization' seems to raise at the moment.

**There is** a contradiction in the term itself; **this word is a fundamental misunderstanding** that has deceived many Western theoreticians and wasted a lot of the time of governing boards of industries — a fundamental misunderstanding that everything opposes and refutes. **Society is complex; it is not simple. Whoever tries to bring hurried and tendentious solutions to its problems will meet opposition: it revenges itself, it falls into a state of crisis, and despite changes and regulations, it doesn't let itself be manipulated: it is life that decides!**

Last evening, in the Kremlin, in the office of Mr. Lejawa, the vice-president of the USSR, Mr. Miliutin, one of the commissars of the people, had a thought of Lenin translated for me that, far from supporting the thesis of deurbanization, on the contrary confirms the necessity of urban reform. Lenin said this: 'If one wants to save the peasant, one must take industry to the country. Lenin did not say 'If one wants to save the town-dweller'; one mustn't confound, there is all the difference! To take industry to the country, that is to say industrialize the country, that is to create places of human concentration with machines at their disposal. The machine will make the muzhik think. **Nature is good for the city-dweller whose mind has been galvanized by the city, who puts to work, in the city, the diligent mechanism of his mind. It is in the group, in shock and cooperation, struggle and mutual help, in activity, that the mind ripens and brings forth fruits.** One should like to think so, but reality is there; **it is not the peasant who looks at the trees in bloom and listens to the song of the lark. It is the town-dweller who does that.** You understand what I mean, if, frankly, we are not fooling ourselves with words.

**Men feel the need to get together — always, in all countries and climates. The group brings them security and defense, the pleasure of company. But as soon as climates become difficult, grouping encourages industrial activity, production by means of which men live (are dressed, make themselves comfortable). And intellectual production is the daughter of united men. Intelligence develops, is sharpened, multiplies its play, acquires its subtlety and innumerable aspects, in the mass of groups. It is the very fruit of concentration. Dispersion frightens, makes poorer, and loosens all the ties of physical and spiritual discipline, lacking which men return to their primitive state.**

**International statistics show** us that death rates are lowest in the densest agglomerations; they diminish as populations concentrate. These are statistical facts; they must be accepted.

**History shows** the great movements of human thought at the mathematical points of greatest concentration. Under Pericles, Athens was closely peopled like one of our modern cities, and that is why Socrates and Plato were able to discuss pure ideas there.

**Consider more exactly that ten centuries of pre-machine civilization have made these cities for us which at the moment of mechanical expansion are a frightful and dangerous grimace. Admit then that the evil is there, in that heritage, and that its salvation is here: to adapt the cities, which will continue to concentrate themselves more and more (statistics and concomitant elements [266] of modern progress: transports: intellectual attractions, industrial organization); to adapt our cities to contemporary needs, that is to say to rebuild them (as, besides, from their birth they have continually rebuilt themselves).**

**My dear Ginzburg, modern architecture has precisely the magnificent mission of organizing the life of collectivities.** I was the first to proclaim that the modern city should be an immense park, a green city. But to allow this seeming luxury, I increased the density by four and — instead of extending them — shortened distances.

I can nevertheless imagine very well, as a satellite to any urban agglomeration for working and living, a Green Town for resting, eventually organized as with you by turns every fifth day.

I even pointed out in my comments that the compulsory attendance for rest, at least once in three periods, every fifteen days, could be applied like time-clocking for work: and would include the practice of an adequate sport by individual prescription of the doctors of the Green Town. The Green Town becomes the garage where the car is checked (oil, lubrication, verification of organs, revision, maintenance of the car). Besides, the intimacy with nature (radiant springs, winter tempests) incites to meditation, to introspection.

Please then do not see a hostile attitude in **my serene and firm affirmation: ‘Mankind tends to urbanize.’**

Appreciate this characteristic detail yourself — one of the projects of deurbanization proposes, among other things, to build straw huts in the forest of the Green Town. Bravo, magnificent! as long as they are only for weekends! But do not say that having built huts in straw, you can then tear down Moscow.

Very cordially yours,  
**L.C.**