

I. THE TRANSFORMATION OF PARIS

1. The Expropriation of Houses

When the Socialists came to power and were the masters of Paris, the first thing they had to think about was expropriating the houses of the city, in order to transform them and bring them into line with the new social institutions.

The architects consulted in this regard wanted everything to be demolished, and then to have “model houses” constructed, at great expense, in conformity with the plans they presented. Fortunately, the Government was as prudent as it was economical. It therefore rejected the architects’ projects, which would have involved too great an expense, preferring to utilize the houses of Paris as they were and to adapt them as well as possible to their new purpose, rather than launch into a costly system of demolition and reconstruction.

Before giving the details of that transformation of the capital, however, let us first explain how the Administration went about expropriating all the houses in Paris and becoming their legitimate owner. That acquisition of an entire city was all the more remarkable as a financial operation because the State, when the Republic was inaugurated, had debts of more than eighty billion and not a centime in its coffers.

Far from being alarmed by that penury, and knowing perfectly well that France was rich enough to pay its old debts and to contract new ones, the Government, as soon as it was solidly established, hastened to expropriate all the houses in Paris, paying a fair price to their owners. They did not make that payment in metallic money, since they did not have any. Nor did they make it in paper money that would have been immediately depreciated, and rightly refused by the owners. They did it quite simply, and to general satisfaction, with entitlements to annual income payable by the public Treasury.

The mean income of each house was calculated in accordance with the rents of the previous fifty years, and then that income was capitalized, at a standard interest of 5%. The capital thus calculated was transformed into yearly income in conformity with the tariffs adopted by the Insurance Companies.

In the early days it was necessary to give very large sums to the former owners, but as they were dying every day, the income paid to them diminished every year, and was soon amply covered by the produce of the rents paid by the citizens to the State.

Furthermore, what greatly aided the Socialist Government to pay off its own debts and those of previous regimes was the introduction of an income tax.

This new tax was based in the following manner. It was proportional to income so long as that did not exceed 12,000 francs per year, but above that figure it became total—which is to say that it confiscated, purely and simply, everything in excess of the regulation sum of 12,000 francs. The Government considered that that maximum income would be amply sufficient to procure all the well-being desirable to its fortunate possessor, and that tolerating fortunes of twenty, fifty, a hundred or two hundred thousand francs of income, and even more, was encouraging idleness and bad habits, and conserving the worst abuses of the old regime.

When, therefore, one of these individuals was expropriated who had a large income from houses—a hundred thousand francs, for example—the Treasury expropriation duly gave him an annual entitlement proportional to his former fortune, but when it was a matter of drawing that income, the collector of income tax similarly performed his function. Of the hundred thousand francs, he took 88,000 for the State and only left 12,000 to the expropriated individual.

The latter certainly made some complaint on seeing himself thus reduced to the adequate portion, but as the tax in question had been voted by the Representatives of the country and the Administration saw to its strict execution, there was no objection to be raised and, whether he liked it or not, he had to submit to the law.

2. Gallery-Streets

As soon as the Socialist Government had become the legitimate owner of all the houses in Paris, it handed them over to the architects, with orders to get the best out of them, and especially to establish the *gallery-streets* indispensable to the new Society.

The architects carried out the mission entrusted to them as best they could.

On the first floor of each house they took over all the rooms overlooking the street and demolished the intermediary partitions; then they opened large bays in the party walls and thus obtained gallery-streets that had the height and width of an ordinary room and occupied the entire length of a block of buildings.

In the newer quarters, where the contiguous houses have floors at very nearly the same height, the floors of the galleries were sufficiently level, and only small adjustments had to be made. In the old streets, however, things were different. There, it was necessary to raise or lower many floors, and it was often necessary to settle for giving the resultant floor a marked slope or interrupting it with a few flights of steps.

When all the blocks of houses were thus pierced by galleries occupying the length of their first floor, there was no more to do than connect these separate fragments together and thus form an uninterrupted network embracing the entire extent of the city. This was easily accomplished by establishing covered bridges on each street that had the same height and width as the galleries and were fused with them.

Similar bridges, but much longer, were even extended over the various boulevards, over the squares and over the bridges crossing the Seine, so that the gallery-street did not suffer any break in continuity. A pedestrian could thus travel throughout the city without ever being exposed, and, in consequence, was always perfectly sheltered from the rain or the sun.

Furthermore, all these works were carried out with the feverish rapidity to which Revolutions give birth; the laborers worked on them night and day. After a few weeks, the transformation of Paris was complete, and people began to appreciate the results.

As soon as Parisians had experienced the new galleries, they no longer wanted to set foot in the old streets, which, they said, were now only good for dogs. When anyone suggested that they might go outside, they always found that it was too hot or too cold, that there was mud, fog, wind or dust, and they preferred to remain under cover.

Far from suffering, their health only improved, and the almost complete disappearance was observed of all the maladies caused by cold or damp, such as colds, rheumatism, neuralgia, pulmonary fluxions and so on. Moreover, they made considerable savings on clothing and footwear. Their garments, no longer being damaged by rain and dirt, did not wear out nearly as rapidly, and maintained their freshness longer—not to mention that people were liberated from all the costly devices invented as protection against rain, cold and the sun, such as umbrellas, parasols, mufflers, mantles, rubber boots and so on.

Everyone, therefore, was satisfied, except for a few malcontents, of whom there are always some, who can never constrain themselves from criticizing the government and opposing it.

On the one hand, there were all the shopkeepers, who lamented in chorus that their customers had been taken away. No one any longer passed in front of their shops; they would no longer be able to sell anything and bankruptcy was certain. On the other hand, a considerable number of inhabitants complained that their industry had been greatly compromised or even entirely obliterated.

There were manufacturers of umbrellas, and parasols, and those of rubber clothing or footwear, who could no longer sell their merchandise. There were shops selling clothing and lingerie, tailors, hat-makers, cobblers, hair-dressers and couturiers who could no longer cover their expenses, because the articles they provided did not have to be renewed as frequently once they were no longer dampened by rain, dirtied by mud or burned by the sun. There were coachmen and entrepreneurs of public transport who were about to lose all the clients that rainy days attracted to them. Finally, there were physicians, surgeons and pharmacists, who would no longer have sick people to treat once the public ceased to breathe damp air, get their feet wet, catch colds, slip on black ice and get run over by carriages.

There were many other similar and no less self-interested complaints, but the Government remained unmoved by them and, confident in the ultimate result of its efforts, it continued resolutely with the work of transformation that it had begun.

3. *Model Houses*

However, the architects to whom the houses of Paris had been handed over did not stop at opening up the gallery-streets that we have described, but passed on to the upper floors. There too they pierced the party walls and put all the habitations in communication.

That new circulation did not take place in gallery-streets, of course, which would have wasted too much space, but it was facilitated by variously obscure narrow and winding corridors. Thanks to these corridors, which circulated throughout a block of houses, one could reach any part of the neighborhood in a matter of minutes without taking a single unnecessary step and, so to speak, without leaving home. Little footbridges extended over the streets linked the corridors of the upper floors together, and formed a new system of communication that embraced all the houses of the same quarters within its network, and was only interrupted by the quais and the boulevards. These little passages were immediately found to be very convenient, and the inhabitants did not neglect to make use of them in order to visit neighbors or when they went out in casual clothing.

When the architects had finished all these piercings and found themselves without work they began to pursue the Government with their plans for *model houses*, and, as the public Treasury had abundant funds, thanks to the returns of the income tax, it was not very difficult for them to obtain commissions for the projects they were requesting.

All the old, badly-constructed, badly-ventilated and poorly-distributed houses were therefore demolished, and in their place, model dwellings were built, disposed in the following manner:

Every new construction formed a large square whose center was empty and was occupied by courtyards and gardens. The basements, very spacious and well-lit, were all in communication; they formed long galleries that followed the trajectories of the streets, where an underground railway was established. That railway was not intended for passengers, but only for cumbersome merchandise—wine, wood, coal, etc.—which it transported all the way to the interior of houses. Vast storage facilities situated alongside the track served to receive all the products that were not endangered by damp.

Finally, these subterranean levels also contained conduits for water and gas, air-tubes for the postal service, and immense mobile barrels that replaced the old cesspits, and which the railway carried away as soon as they were full. As new constructions gradually replaced the old, these subterranean railways acquired an increasing importance, and did not take long to form complete networks serving entire quarters.

The ground floor of a model house is divided into large well-ventilated and well-lit rooms. These mostly do not serve as dwellings, but as workshops for various industries or as large warehouses for all kinds of merchandise that need to be kept dry.

The first floor is occupied by gallery-streets of unequal dimensions. Along the major roads, they take up the entire length of the building and are proportionately high. Magnificently furnished and decorated, they form “salon-streets,” whose description can be read further on. Other galleries, much less spacious, are more moderately decorated. They are reserved for commercial retailers, who display their merchandise there in such a way that passers by no longer circulate past shops but through them, thus being more keenly tempted by the objects placed before their eyes.

On the upper floors the model houses are divided into a multitude of rooms of various sizes, all illuminated, some overlooking the street and others the courtyard. All of them open into a central corridor that runs the entire length of the building. At its two extremities that corridor ends in monumental staircases that occupy the four corners of the edifice and establish a broad communication between the floors. In addition, for the convenience of the inhabitants, in the middle of each corridor one finds a small spiral staircase that leads rapidly between floors and dispenses with the need to go the long way round via the large corner stairways. Finally, a mechanical elevator, which goes all the way down to the cellars, permits furniture, fuel and packages to be lifted to any floor, for the benefit of people who live on higher levels and do not like to tire themselves out.

Model houses thus rise up to a height of ten stories. The architects proposed to take that number to fifteen, or even to eighteen, in order to obtain greater economies in the cost of construction, but the Government did not adopt those proposals, which would have caused citizens to live at too great a height and oblige them to make overly difficult ascents.

Finally, let us not forget to mention that all the model dwellings are linked together, and to the old houses, by large covered bridges and numerous footbridges, which permit circulation in all directions and at the height of every floor.

While being actively occupied in transforming Paris, however, the Government of the Social Republic did not neglect the provinces. In all cities, even those of the limited size, it expropriated private houses, pierced gallery-streets and constructed model houses, always remembering that, although the mind of France is centralized in Paris, the activity of Paris has to spread out and make itself felt throughout the rest of France.

4. The International Palace

The Palace in question is the most magnificent monument ever constructed by humans, and when foreigners come to Paris it is the first thing that they ask to visit, so great is the universal celebrity of that marvelous edifice.

The International Palace occupies, all by itself, the entire surface of the Cité and the Île Saint-Louis, which have been cleared and then joined together by filling in the arm of the Seine that separated them. Seen as a whole, it presents the form of an immense, perfectly regular ship whose prow is the tip of the Île Saint-Louis and whose poop is the platform of the Pont Neuf, and which rises from the middle of the river as if emerging from the bosom of the waves.

To the south and north, the two facades of an immense development are constituted by three stages of terraces and columns, which occupy the entire length of the two islands and form three galleries extending as far as the eye can see, whose appearance could not be any more grandiose, and which strike all spectators with profound admiration.

The first of these colonnades, the highest of them, dips its feet in the Seine, so to speak, and overlooks the summits of the neighboring houses. Often inundated when big floods occur, it offers a very pleasant promenade during the heat-waves of summer, and then becomes the favorite rendezvous of Parisian sailors and anglers.

Above that first construction is a large balcony and a second gallery, from which the panorama of Paris and the surrounding countryside can be seen unfurling at one's feet.

Finally, on that second colonnade, a third had been built, whose boldness all architects admire, and which gives the edifice a singularly monumental aspect. It supports a vast terrace bordered by a perforated balustrade, which looks from below like lace but takes on gigantic proportions at close range.

The eastern and western facades of the Palace, much less developed than the preceding ones, similarly present a triple row of galleries, except that these are not in a straight line but describe a rounded vault. They are also ornamented with statues and bas-reliefs, and in their disposition they resemble the prow and poop of a stone vessel floating on the Seine, encompassing within its vast hull the entire area that the primitive Paris of the Gauls and the Romans once occupied.

The interior façade of the Palace is no less magnificent than the one overlooking the river, but it is constructed in a less severe style, and a gracious ornamentation breaks up the monotony of its lines in a pleasant manner.

The International Palace serves as the residence of the Government of the Social Republic. To that effect, it is divided up into halls, galleries, offices and other rooms designed for public services, furnished and decorated with sumptuous magnificence. The most curious part of the Palace, however—the one that visitors want to visit first—is the Temple of the socialist religion, a magnificent edifice that surpasses in its grandeur and richness the most beautiful cathedrals of other religions.

Situated in the middle of the two conjoined islands, in the same place that Notre-Dame once occupied, the Temple is itself a monument, forming an integral part of another monument, which it overlooks and overwhelms. On its rounded flanks, a thousand monstrous columns rise up above the mass of the Palace, seemingly intent on scaling the sky and raising into the clouds an immense, unprecedented, prodigious dome, the iron employed in its construction having rendered all the audacities of architecture possible and, so to speak, having realized the dream of the Tower of Babel.

Inside, the socialist Temple forms a nave unique in the world, of an incredible extent and elevation, which sustains on either side a double row of colossal pillars. No one who has not seen that spectacle could ever imagine the powerful and grandiose effect of those gigantic pillars, which launch

themselves in a single jet from the ground to the cupola, and which, by a clever effect of perspective, seem to be even taller than they really are.

The aisles of the Temple, constructed in less majestic proportions more in accord with human smallness, are, by contrast, ornamented with an extraordinary magnificence and seek to flatter the eye that they cannot astonish. The most brilliant marbles, which further emphasize the severity of the bronzes and the gleam of the gold, serves as frames for paintings, statues and bas-reliefs, while a mysterious light filtered by stained-glass windows plays over all those fine things and animates them with magical reflections.

It is in these aisles—which, if they were isolated, would constitute vast temples in themselves—that all the ceremonies of the socialist religion take place: ceremonies as simple in their initial conception as they are magnificent in their execution, and in which is found the objective of the endeavor.

5. Metropolitan Railways

It was not enough for the Socialist Government to create circulation inside houses; it was also necessary to organize it in the old streets, and endow the city with a system of railways permitting rapid transport from one place to another.

To that effect, it began by constructing twenty railways that all departed from the center of Paris, from the International Palace, and headed toward the capital's various barriers, where they linked up with the provincial lines.

These radial railways occupy the middle of broad boulevards recently-pierced and bordered with model houses. They are established on rather high viaducts, which pass over streets, and consequently do not impede the movement of vehicles and pedestrians in any way. These viaducts, constructed entirely in iron and with long spans, are astonishing in their lightness and resilience, and, far from injuring the beauty of the city, form one of its principal ornaments.

Nothing is as magnificent as the sight of these aerial railways, several kilometers long, which, borne by their countless arches, describe interminable straight lines disappearing over the horizon. It is, most of all, from the top of the International Palace that the spectacle is grandiose. The twenty viaducts arriving, so to speak, from all the countries of the world, carrying the passengers of the Two Worlds on their rails, come to end at our feet, thus providing the most gripping image of the universal fraternity of peoples and the unity of the human race.

The system of metropolitan railways is completed by a second network, which follows circular courses. These further tracks are established on lower viaducts, which pass underneath the radial lines. They all depart from the Seine and form half a dozen equally-spaced circling railways around the International Palace, serving all the quarters of the city.

Numerous trains pulled by smoke-absorbing locomotives circulate at brief intervals on all the metropolitan railways. These trains travel at quite rapid speeds, and yet they frequently pick up and set down passengers *en route*, thanks to a very ingenious system which, at each station, permits the exchange of the last carriage of the train, without there being any need to stop the latter or even slow it down. Everywhere that a radial railway crosses a circular track, a communal station is established, which permits travel from any quarter to all the others, with the aid of a near-direct trajectory and a single change of train.

The carriages employed by the railways of Paris are large, comfortable, well-ventilated in summer and heated in winter. They are disposed in such a fashion that people can pass from one carriage to another and circulate along the entire length of the train. One boards a train, not by means of lateral doors, but by a unique entrance situated at the rear. At each station, the people who want to get off go into the rearmost carriage, which is disconnected and replaced by the carriage in which passengers joining the train are located.

Metropolitan carriages are of two types. Some, very simple, provided with solid benches and running no risk of being damaged, always occupy the rear of the train. They are designed for ill-clad individuals or those carrying large parcels. The other carriages, placed at the front, are much more luxurious. Suspended on four springs, upholstered in rich fabrics, ornamented with trimmings and softly furnished, they receive all the passengers whose costumes are in harmony with that sumptuousness. However, the price of these luxurious carriages is no higher than that of the others,

and any individual who is dressed in a manner not liable to cause any deterioration is at liberty to go into them.

The price of tickets is very modest—only ten centimes, regardless of the distance traveled. As one can go anywhere by making a single connection, even the longest journey never costs more than twenty centimes. For a further five centimes, you can board the little omnibuses that wait at every station and conduct you rapidly to the very place to which you want to go.

The railways that have just been described are designed exclusively for passengers. As for merchandise, that circulates via the subterranean railways established in the basements of model houses—railways that ramify throughout the interior of Paris and on which a truly incredible volume of transportation takes place.

Thanks to that double circulation of trains, one aerial and the other subterranean, not a single collision occurs, and the city is furrowed night and day in every direction by countless trains, which pass at high speed beside or above one another, and cross paths perpetually, without ever being able to crash into one another.

Paris is not the only city to have been endowed with railways; similar systems were established in all the larger cities of the provinces situated on a major route. The networks there are, of course, much less complicated than the one in the capital, reduced to one or two lines serving the station and the principal quarters, designed to transport both goods and passengers.

6. The Aspect of the Gallery-Streets

As soon as the gallery-streets had been pierced, the Government took care to decorate them and to bring them into harmony with their various functions.

The broadest and best-situated among them were decorated tastefully and furnished sumptuously. The walls and ceilings were covered with decorative paint, rare marble, gilt, bas-reliefs, mirrors and pictures. The windows were fitted with magnificent hangings and curtains embroidered with marvelous designs; chairs, armchairs and decorative sofas, perfectly stuffed and covered with rich fabrics, offered comfortable seats to weary pedestrians. Finally, artistic items of furniture—antique dressers, sideboards, shelves covered with works of art, statues in marble and bronze, vases containing natural flowers, aquaria filled with live fish and aviaries populated by rare birds—completed the decoration of those gallery-streets, which are illuminated after dusk by thousands of gilded candelabras and crystal chandeliers.

The Government wanted the streets belonging to the people of Paris to surpass in magnificence the reception-rooms of the most powerful sovereigns, and artists, to whom they had given *carte blanche*, ingeniously gathering all the splendors of civilization in a restricted space, realized marvels in which the most unexpected richness was always allied with elegance and good taste.

As for the gallery-streets that were less favorably situated, they were decorated and furnished much more modestly. The majority of them were devoted to commerce and transformed into retail establishments. Everywhere, their walls were covered by the varied display of all the products of industry. This resulted in a kind of decoration that, although not as opulent as that of the salon-streets, nevertheless charmed the eye, and, thanks to its daily renewal, never wearied the curiosity of passers-by. By virtue of this utilitarian employment of galleries, pedestrians circulated continually in the midst of shops and, without deviating from their route, could buy all the objects that tempted them and of which they had need.

In the early morning, the gallery-streets are surrendered to service personnel, who let in air, carefully sweep, dust, wipe and polish all the furniture, maintaining the most scrupulous tidiness everywhere. Afterwards, according to the season, the windows are either closed or left open, fires are lit or blinds drawn, in order to have a mild and even temperature at all times. For their part, the shop-managers clean up their premises, get out their merchandise, arrange their displays and prepare to receive visits from the public.

Between nine and ten o'clock all the cleaning work is completed and the passers-by, previously sparse, begin to circulate in greater numbers. Entry to the galleries is strictly forbidden to any person who is dirty or carrying large burdens; it is also forbidden to smoke there or to spit. There is rarely any need to remind people of these prohibitions, however; everyone understands that the streets, which

are, in essence, fine shops and magnificent salons, would deteriorate very rapidly if people were permitted to spit everywhere and sit down on silk furniture in damp or soiled clothing.

In the afternoon, the crowds become larger and women in elegant costumes begin to appear. Everywhere, there is nothing to be seen but hurried individuals going about their urgent business, buyers examining the displays of shops and asking to inspect merchandise, and inquisitive individuals standing in front of paintings and taking inventory of the myriad curiosities accumulated in showcases—with which no idler, however experienced, can boast of being fully acquainted, and in which, when passing the same places, one always discovers new details that had escaped previous examinations, reawakening a curiosity always satisfied and never sated.

But it is in the evenings, above all, that the gallery-streets present an extraordinary animation, of which no description can give even an approximate idea. The entire population that is working by day in factories, offices and shops, comes together in the gallery-streets, especially in the salon-streets lighted *à giorno* by thousands of chandeliers.

All the women who are still young and pretty stroll there in ball-gowns and satin slippers, their heads decked in flowers, their arms and shoulders bare. They claim that that kind of costume is extremely economical and costs them less than any other form of dress. Their cavaliers are also in very gracious evening suits, which have nothing in common with the cramped frock-coats and stovepipe hats of the old regime. As for old and unpretentious people, their costume is simpler without constituting a stain in the midst of that elegant society.

The evening is thus spent strolling in the street, chatting and laughing with one another about the countless curiosities displayed before the eyes, unless one prefers to go to the theater, a café, a concert-hall or some other place of pleasure.

As the night advances, however, the strollers becomes rarer; everyone goes home; at midnight, the chandeliers are extinguished, save for a few conserved gas-jets, and the only citizens to be seen are those emerging from spectacles and returning to their homes, where they go to sleep with the consciousness that the Social Republic is the best of governments.