
VISIONS OF A RADIANT CITY

an excerpt from
Let's Put the Future Behind Us
by Jack Womack

I am no staret, no holy man, no doomsaying Cassandra; apocalyptic visions do not bombard my waking life, and premonitions of coming days never force me into making millenarian prophecies for which I can be held accountable. But later that night, when at last I fell asleep, leaving my troubles behind in the sunlit world, I dreamed. In my dream I possessed the power of ubiquity, I dreamed of Moscow and the radiant future it had been denied in waking life, and this is what I saw.

Many-storied buildings rose throughout the city, their designs a thousand years ahead of our time: oval towers bridged by skywalks, glass pyramids glowing like braziers, bundles of steel tubes held aright by guy wires, gold-domed cylinders of granite and green tile. Through the black iron latticework of the Tatlin Tower ascended a cyclopean glass ball into which was etched a map of the world, each country made of sparkling red rubies. Rising above all was the Palace of Soviets, three hundred stories in the style of the tower of Babel; at its apex was an aluminum statue of Lenin, one hundred meters high. Two red searchlights beamed constantly from his eyes, directing all into the path of his mesmerize stare. Squadrons of ten-engined airplanes with half-kilometer wingspans soared in formation through the night sky, their fuselages emblazoned with Socialist Realist figures illuminated by tail-mounted searchlights, their loudspeakers endlessly blaring agitprop into the atmosphere. Autogiros buzzed like bees over the city; carmine zeppelins cruised in elegant progression high above black clouds curling up from ten thousand smokestacks. Boulevards twenty lanes wide ran from the Kremlin in every direction. The river, enlarged by voluntary prison labor into a deep ocean harbor, provided Moscow with a seacoast almost Bohemian in its grandeur. Ships docked to load up our national products, goods transported from Stalingrad, Stalinsk, Stalino, Stalinbad, Stalinir, Stalinkan, and Stalinovo, goods to be sent forth to a waiting world: caviar and sables, vodka and papirosi, heroin and hashish, plutonium and red mercury, balalaikas, matryoshkas, lapel pins, rayon banners, platinum busts of our leaders, and coypu. Posters of milkmaids, gymnasts, weight lifters, folk dancers, tractor drivers, miners, soldiers, and all for whom labor is a matter of honor papered every building's facade. Red neon signs mounted to the Kremlin walls proclaimed:

CANNIBALIZATION IS FORBIDDEN

LET'S CATCH UP WITH AND SURPASS AFRICA

WE'LL OPEN A WOMEN'S SHOP

THROUGH WHIPPING TO SOCIALISM

WHO IS KILLING WHOM?

As I watched, Moscow's surviving citizens emerged from their buildings. In silent procession they marched into Red Square. From every streetlight hung friends of relatives of enemies of the people. Trams ran on bone lines. In bookstores, works sold were bound in the skins of their authors. Skulls sprouted from the earth like mushrooms in the city's great parks. Impaled upon the spires of Stalin's seven skyscrapers were the swollen heads of old Bolsheviki: Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek, Bukharin, Rykov, and Drupskaya.

The assembled populace applauded wildly as they watched the moon, gleaming like chains, white as a

