hawkers of "I Love the KGB" tee-shirts. On nearly every street corner are phalanxes of glass and metal kiosks, each about 30 square feet, where you can buy a Coke, a pack of cigarettes, watches, vodka, or Madonna's latest album. The casualties of the new capitalism are not far way. In the Moscow subway sit aging *babushkas*, living the agony of a fixed income in a country with 500 percent annual inflation, selling beets and potatoes set out on old copies of *Pravda*.

No one seemed to personify the changes in Russia better than Viktor, a chauffeur I met in Moscow. Viktor works for a Russian architect in private practice. A few years ago he was a professor of Marxist-Leninist philosophy at Moscow State University. Now retired from a job no longer needed in the new Russia, he drives a budding capitalist to his job sites.

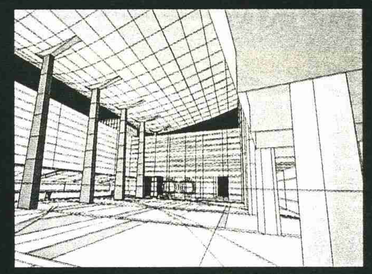
Russia's thirst for things Western includes architecture. In a market that has been closed to them for 75 years, American architects are now designing and building projects on prominent Moscow sites and in other Russian cities. There is heady excitement in working in this once-sealed society, but practicing in Russia can be, and often is, fraught with frustration.

Getting a Foothold

How do you land a job in Russia? There are as many answers to that question as there are American architects now working there. A number of Americans have backed into work through humanitarian activities. For example, Jeffrey Heller of the San Francisco firm Heller & Leake visited the former Soviet Union as part of a contingent of architects from the AIA to help rebuild Armenia after its devastating earthquake in 1989. The visit led to a number of contacts, and Heller is now designing a $30-million airport project in Moscow (page 53).

New York architect Sidney Gilbert first visited the Soviet Union a decade ago as the head of Architects, Designers, Planners for Social Responsibility in an effort to reach out to his Soviet counterparts to help end the arms race. "It was like landing on another planet," Gilbert says, recalling the closed and stolid pre-Gorbachev atmosphere. A few years later ADPSR and the Union of Architects of the USSR started a joint exchange program for Soviet and American architects.

Sergey Kisselev was one of the first Russian architects to visit the U.S. under the exchange and met Gilbert in New York. The two became friends and in 1991 formed a partnership. To date, Gilbert and Kisselev have completed a number of interior renovation projects for American companies with offices in Russia. Gilbert mostly does marketing and some design, funneling projects to his Russian partner, who finalizes design and gets the projects approved and built. Other projects originate in Russia, and the two collaborate on design.

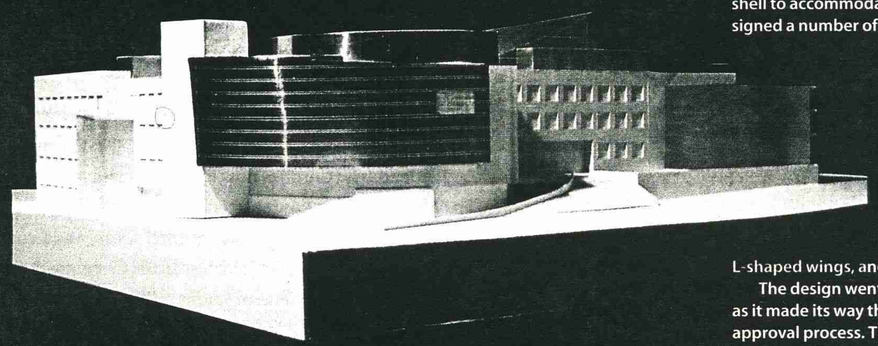


Moscow Bank of the Russian Federation Savings Bank
Ellerbe Becket, Washington
Association of Architects Design Studio, Moscow

This 300,000-square-foot headquarters for Russia's largest bank is now nearing completion. The site in the northeast section of Moscow adjoins 17th to 19th Century buildings (far left), currently being restored.

The bank headquarters incorporates a structure for a technical institute that was started in 1984 and abandoned in 1988. The floor and frame structure was completed, as were some of the cladding and interior partitions. The architects worked with the existing shell to accommodate the bank program, designed a number of infill pieces to create two L-shaped wings, and designed new cladding.

The design went through four revisions as it made its way through the two-year approval process. The exterior of the earliest scheme (left) had a sleek, modern appearance, as did the interior of the banking hall (above). The exterior as approved was modified to respond to local historic preservationists and the City Architect's office.

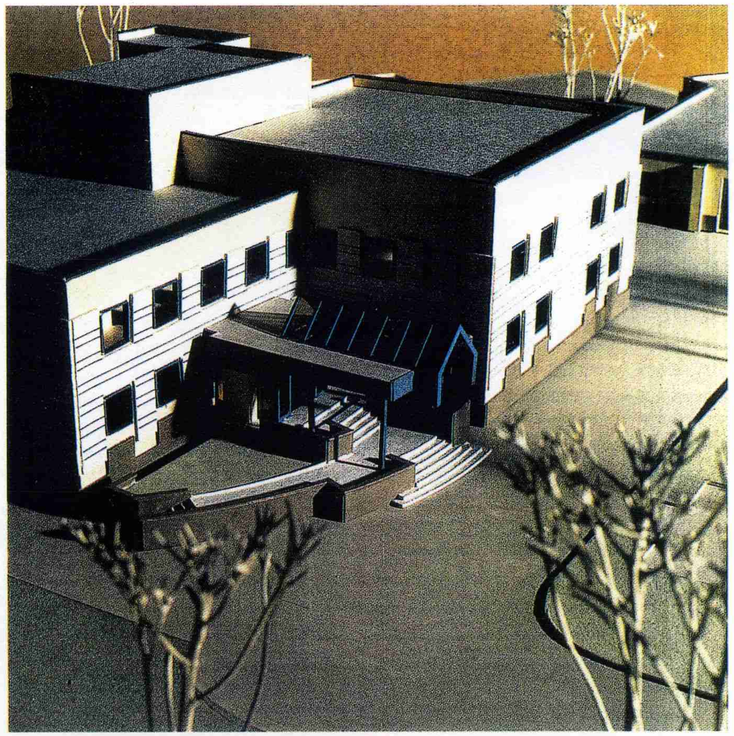


Mos/Otis Elevator International, Moscow
SPGA + Sergey Kisselev & Partners, New York and Moscow

A deteriorating two-story industrial building constructed in 1977 is being renovated for the Moscow headquarters of Mos/Otis, a joint venture company of the Russian Moslift elevator company and Otis Elevator of United Technologies. The advantage of adaptive use is that the permitting process is much easier for "reconstruction" projects than for entirely new buildings.

The Mos/Otis headquarters, still in design, includes an 18,500-square-foot office building and a separate elevator maintenance facility. As part of the development agreement, Mos/Otis agreed to improve an existing children's playground and hockey rink, to be used by residents of a nearby apartment building.

The $2-million headquarters building will contain two floors of office space and worker amenities such as recreation and dining facilities, along with the ubiquitous Russian *banya* (sauna, hot tubs, and steam room).



"It makes New York look as easy as pie," muses Sidney Gilbert. "Anyone coming here and expecting an approval process similar to one in the States is going to be short by about 75 percent." Timothy Bryant, construction director for a Liebman Melting project, says that during a project, "whole government agencies may disappear, or new rules, regulations, decrees, taxes, fees, and governing personnel with altogether different agendas will continually appear and change."

The approval process points up the need to work with Russian architects to get a project built. As members of an old-boy network of favors and patronage, with years of experience in how the game is played, Russian architects are indispensable in guiding a project through an obstacle course of seals and signatures. And the Russians are learning the capitalist system well. Some now specialize as approval expediters.

There is initial approval given for the project's concept, usually granted by the Russian Regional or City Architect's office. Then multivolume approval documents are prepared for various specialists to sign: sanitarians, mechanical, electrical, and structural engineers, fire officials, historic commissioners, utility experts, archeological specialists, environmental impact appraisers, even "vent specialists." Documents for the project by this point are usually from 60 to 75 percent complete. The finished document package is usually checked by architects in a regional office (known as Mosproject) with jurisdiction over all buildings in the region, and is sealed by them.

For their nightclub project, Bromley Caldari worked with a Russian architect for approvals, but completed all construction documents. "We obtained a set of the multivolume building codes for Moscow," explains Jerry Caldari, who had the sections relevant to their project translated. "It's made things easier on subsequent projects, but they have some of the strangest sanitary rules. For example, in a restaurant you can't store chickens and eggs in the same room. Don't ask me which came first."

Comrades in Architecture

Finding a Russian architect to collaborate with is a hit-or-miss proposition. A number of architects I spoke with said they were teamed with architects in the regional Mosproject offices. Noted one American architect: "They were marriages of convenience" that sometimes worked and sometimes didn't. In some cases, the Russian architects became sensitive over turf (understandably), and may have resented American architects' coming in and designing projects, particularly when there are so many Russian architects unemployed because of dire economic conditions. Occasionally there are clashes over aesthetics. When one American architect showed an elevation drawing for a new building to the Regional Archi-