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STRUCTURAL REASONS OF CURRENT UPGRADING: URBAN AND INDUSTRIAL IMAGES OF THE CHINESE CITY CHONGQING FROM 1949 UNTIL 1980

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“Those who arrive at Thekla can see little of the city, beyond the plank fences, the sackcloth screens, the scaffolding, the metal armatures, the wooden catwalks hanging from ropes or supported by saw-horses, the ladders, the trestles. If you ask, ‘Why is Thekla’s construction taking such a long time?’ the inhabitants continue hoisting sacks, lowering leaded strings, moving long brushes up and down, as they answer, ‘So that its destruction cannot begin.’”

Calvino, Invisible Cities

Abstract: belonging to a small group of privileged Chinese cities, Chongqing covers a big economic role for the development of the South-west, since the “Open up the West” policy was launched in 1997. In correspondence with the new economic role, the city has also gained a higher political position among the bigger Chinese cities, becoming at that time a new Municipality. The city itself knew thus a 'redefinition' in landscape borders and economic image, fact that should though be seen as a “Renaissance” attempt granted by the Central Government. In this article we would like to offer a new perspective of this city, whose importance in Chinese scenery is most of the time misunderstood by foreigners: a deeper insight into Chongqing history could therefore offer a chance to reflect on the controversial recent phenomena that have affected this territory. Our interest is directed to the analysis of urban and industrial changes on the background of the establishment of the People Republic of China in 1949, from the concept of Danwei to the re-allocation of the industrial apparatus, and concluding with a section dedicated to the performance of Communist 'propaganda rites' behind the urban grid.

Keywords: *industrial geography, urbanism, Maoist period, South-West China, Chongqing*

I. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 brings the Southwest city of Chongqing on the stage with the other bigger cities, after a few years of darkness due to the difficulties related to the World War II and later to the civil war, that let the city unable to react positively and in a constructive manner

during the first postwar period. In 1946 the city loses the title of capital, owned in 1937, and therefore all the privileges connected with it: a great deal of men, and also their investments, return to their place of origin (usually along the Chinese coast), leaving behind many abandoned industrial buildings like skeletons of dead animals. The ‘modern era’ so highly praised in the urban projects just a few years earlier, is now only a vague memory: the Japanese bombings have in fact affected not just superficially, but also structurally the already precarious balance of a chaotic city at the height of metamorphosis, leaving behind infected seeds of distrust and apathy. In the peculiar timeframe from 1946 to 1949, the city is frozen and cannot do anything but wait for the outcomes of the civil war: any solution is proposed in order to fight the real problems of China in its whole, such as high inflation, widespread poverty, and the lack of social policies in support of the population.

The rests of what was a flourishing industrial and technological settlement, however, are viewed with interest by the new government in Beijing, who decides to upgrade Chongqing to a *municipality* under the direct control of the central government, at least until 1954, when the city finds itself downgraded to the status of Sichuan *provincial town* 省辖市 (shěngxiá shì): during these four years is established here the Office for the Southwest and the Southwestern Military and Political Committee. Being a big city in the heart of China, the government considers Chongqing having all the requirements to serve as political, economic and cultural hub for the region: to confirm the deal between the government and the city is therefore erected the Dalitang Palace 大礼堂 (dàlǐtáng), home of the provincial People's Congress.

The Maoist policy of the Great Leap Forward 大跃进 (dàyuèjìn) provides also for the re-allocation of industrial resources in such areas considered safe from a strategic point of view, i.e. faraway from possible enemy attacks. The coastal areas and the USSR border zones are seen too vulnerable and therefore fall within the First or Second Front 一线 ; 二线 (yīxiàn; èrxìàn), while the internal hilly areas of Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou (Third Front 三线, sānxiàn) are ideal in producing and accumulating the industrial arsenal that should lead China to “produce a quantity of steel equal to that of England within fifteen years”.¹ From 1964 to 1965 are around sixty the state-owned enterprises, the majority of which concerning on armament production, that from more than a dozen cities and provinces, including Beijing and Shanghai, move their factories in the Chongqing area. Two hundred key projects are launched, and forty-six thousand workers are

forced to relocate to Chongqing to continue their job, satisfying in this way the socialist politics about oral transmission of technical knowledge.ⁱⁱ

The failure of the Third Front Operation due to exorbitant costs, the almost total shutdown of production during the Cultural Revolution, and the places chosen as industrial base which will later be proved as unsuitable, led to unsatisfactory economic results in comparison with the high expectations. Hence the inexorable decline, compounded by the fact that the socialist city is mainly an *industrial city* by nature, destined to fail if structural problems arise.

II. A CENTURY OF THEORIES ON WORKING CLASS COMMODITIES

It all began in Russia in 1918, when Lenin launched the “plan of monumental propaganda”, through which he declares war against the unlivable bourgeois world that alienated so much the individual, in order to finally *liberate* the masses. However the first models of urban planning are anything but avant-garde, because they consist in the revival of the traditional *garden city* extended to a national level. In the period 1918-21 we enter into the phase of the so-called “military communism”, according to which the countryside has to be gradually subordinated to the cities. The bourgeois objects that produced alienation in mankind are now called to join a communion with man: a synthesis between human and machine is thus advocated. Architects take all those modernist projects that in Europe have been directed to the lower middle class, especially to the workers, as model: Russia in fact, as China later, aims in the first instance to industrialization. German, Dutch and Austrian projects of the so called *Siedlungen* (working-class dormitory neighborhoods) are re-contextualized in the Russian landscape. The best example is given us by the Austro-Marxism, which already at the end of the nineteenth century had led to the creation of genuine “proletarian monuments”, the *Hofe*: the most important and ‘epic’ between the Austrian superblocks scene is considered to be the Karl-Marx-Hof projected by the urban planner Karl Ehn in 1927. Resembling a medieval fortress in the facade, it is composed of 1.300 apartments, and also kindergartens and laundry areas, a library, offices and shops, a surgery and public parks.

In 1929 a new change of trends in Russian politics pointing now to empiricism leads to deny the construction models previously used. It is clear that Soviet economic policies does not give great weight to the real estate industry, however not as much as it gives to the construction of those who are considered to be the *social condensers* such as workers’ clubs, of which we have a wide range of projects. There are two possible perspectives to which the urbanist should turn the gaze while conceptualizing a city planning: complete immobility or geographical

mobility. The latter idea was proposed by the ‘deurbanists’, and includes the thesis on the “disappearance of the city”. It is rejected by Soviet theorists in favor of the onset of the *Commune*, located in new residential and industrial settlements at a distance of thirty/fifty kilometers from the old city. Here should have been launched a new lifestyle imbued with socialist principles.ⁱⁱⁱ

In 1931 Lazar Kaganovich, as Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, during a speech at the Plenum of the CC expressed this directive: the socialist city must be an industrial city. The request is to stabilize the workforce and exalt the economy with monuments and functional buildings. However, because of the contradiction in purposes between propaganda art and experimental research, urban planning and artistic taste return back to a more conventional and kitsch Stalinist style, known as ‘socialist realism’. It was said that “people have the right to see columns”, while from the urban point of view *Siedlungen* return to be planned on an urban scale as real *cities of the work*.^{iv} The tendency to think in terms of superblocks embraces then the will of compactness and homogeneity of the socialist city. The enslavement of man to work will be a few years later discredited, in order to plan again a city on a human scale: no more technological alienation, but reintegration and search for unity between human beings, the environment, society and local history.

This type of continuous tension in which individuals have to live is perhaps one of the peculiarities of socialist regimes: the clash between divergent ideas, called ‘class struggle’, the rectification campaigns and a dose of experimentalism mean that society is always paradoxically in motion, even if its components are glued to the territory. Nothing is forgotten: even the real estate has to follow socialist rules.

As stated by Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* (1974):

“A revolution that does not produce a new space has not realized its full potential; indeed it has failed in that it has not changed life itself, but has merely changed ideological superstructures, institutions or political apparatuses. A social transformation, to be truly revolutionary in character, must manifest a creative capacity in its effects on daily life, on language and on space – though its impact need not occur at the same rate, or with equal force, in each of these areas”.^v

He maintained also that the ‘Chinese road to socialism’ was much more revolutionary than in Russia, where the Soviets were nothing more than another capitalist form of production, where all the resources were focused in few strategic points at the expense of entire suburban and remote areas where the economy was abandoned to stagnation. The sinologist David Bray revises today the statements made by the French philosopher, pointing out that although he overestimated the potential and the outcomes of Chinese socialism, he was right in defining a proper

boundary between the Russian Soviet and the Chinese Commune, or Danwei 单位(dānwèi).^{vi} Despite the fevered construction of memorials, revolutionary museums, conference halls, train stations and sports stadiums, in fact, it is not in these places that should be sought a willingness to reconfigure the social life of Chinese individuals. The basic unit of the new social organization, representing also the new urban space, is precisely the Danwei, in the form of school, hospital, government office, but especially as factory. The city is no longer conceived as an urban network where the various components work in integration with each other, but as a juxtaposition of self-containing communities (Communes), which are also spatially well-defined through the erection of *walls*.

2.1 The wall

The wall is not a new element in Chinese architecture: in traditional China the houses were typically closed by a brick fence, which had not only the practical function of self-defense, but operated within a precise symbolic system. Both the outer wall and the walls erected within the house, in fact, reproduced the hierarchical social relations dictated by the Confucian doctrine. Urban population should be therefore more conducive to living the ideological passage because it follows the physical nature of the traditional city: the wall remains, but becomes the new symbol of collective labor and of equality in social relations. What changes is the *space* produced and recreated by the wall: while it marked traditionally the limit inside which the patriarch could exercise his power, on the other hand it shapes now a particular collective subjectivity, and at the same time it highlights the independence of the Danwei from the city itself.

The theories of urban planning are initially derived from the Russian experience: already in September 1949 in fact is recorded the presence of Russian observers in Beijing. The problems in construction emerged in the capital, however, are very different from those expected to affect Chongqing in those years: in Beijing the main question is whether or not to tear down the city walls, while in Chongqing it already happened in 1920s. The problem is how to work on the ancient urban grid, whose spatial evolution is still closely linked to the presence of the imperial residence, the Gugong Palace 故宫宫殿 (Gùgōng gōngdiàn), an element that finds no correspondence in Chongqing, where the hills have always prevented the city to evolve with a ‘checkerboard’ pattern.

There are also some socialist theorists who proclaim the need to put a strong demarcation with the old town, by constructing a new Beijing out of the walls. These theories elaborated for the capital, however, do not affect the smaller cities, which are more or less all called to an industrial vocation.

The urban model imposed by the party (the ‘strips and chunks’ structure 条块结构 *tiáokuài jiégòu*), however, gives the opportunity to state Danwei to become virtually independent from the cities themselves: they in fact do not receive funding from local authorities, but the money is directly allocated by the central government.

This system prevents municipalities to have a complete picture of urban planning and to provide citizens with social infrastructure and housing; the breakdown in the integrity of the urban grid is also due to the campaigns of ‘excommunication’ done against the construction industries (Zhou Enlai, 1954) and the cut in funding promoted with a “campaign against wastage”.

While citizens are beginning to see in the Danwei a new point of reference, the administrative structures related to urban planning are being dismantled for lack of money and because branded as ideologically bourgeois. The impasse will end only at the end of the Seventies.

2.2 A standard model of Danwei

Rather than in the Chongqing peninsula, it can be assumed that the establishment of many industrial Danwei has taken place on the ashes of the plants built in the Thirties by both foreign and Chinese entrepreneurs (mainly Cantonese from the coast), that were located in the areas of Nan'an 南岸 (*Nán'àn*), Shapingba 沙坪坝 (*Shāpíngbà*) and Jiangbei 江北 (*Jiāngběi*) (Fig. 1).

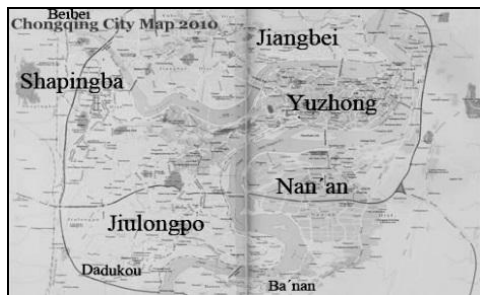


Fig. 1 Chongqing Administrative Districts (Source: Web, 2010)

Since the codes of the architectural design are adjusted to *standardization*, a series of projects for public, private and even university campuses, are elaborated in order to be planted on the entire national territory. The Danwei is therefore outside from the urban context and the environment that surrounds it: it is a Socialist priority to make possible that the same structure operates at full capacity in Chongqing as well as in Shenyang or any other Chinese city.

The traditional organic and often chaotic urban agglomerations are replaced by two standard forms of housing: dormitories (for students, soldiers, unmarried workers) or apartments in Danyuan 单元(dānyuán), Fig. 2 – 5.^{vii} With the motto “first produce, then live” 先生产后生活 (Xiān shēngchǎn hòu shēnghuó), Chinese government opens a season of *austerity*: the square meters per person are reduced from 9 to 4, the facilities such as kitchen and toilet are located only in the common areas, and every kind of ornament has to be eliminated from the urban planning (like arches, balconies, and the traditional gables and gutters that had been initially designed for the roofs).

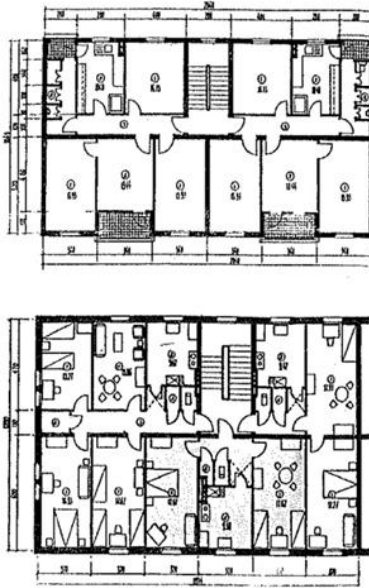


Fig. 2 Apartment-style housing units – Danyuan

(Source: Chengshi jianshe zongju guihua shejiju, *Comments on the Plans Selected by the National Planning Standards Selection Conference and Explanations of the Danyuan*, on *Journal of Architecture 2* (1956): 65, 69.)

The Danyuan above is communal-style. There are two sets of facilities (kitchen, toilet, and living area), and three families share each set. The Danyuan below consists of three apartments, each with its own facilities.

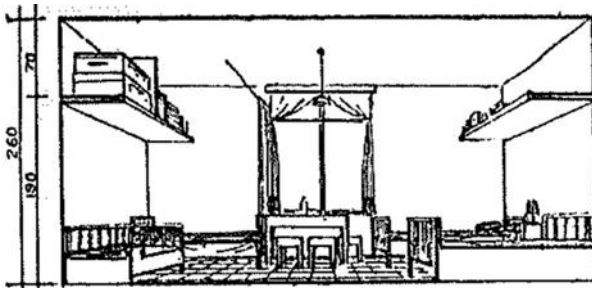


Fig. 3 Internal layouts for standardized residential units.

Source: Ye Zugui, Ye Zhoudu, *On Further Exploration into the Design of Small-Scale Residences*, in *Journal of Architecture 2*

(1958): 30-31.

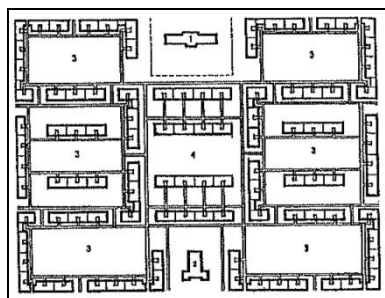


Fig. 4. Plan for a residential compound

Legend: (1) Kindergarten; (2) public bathhouse and laundry; (3) children's play areas, clothes drying, etc.; (4) sports ground. Source: Ye Zugui, Ye Zhoudu, On Further Exploration into the Design of Small-Scale Residences, in *Journal of Architecture* 2 (1958): 35.

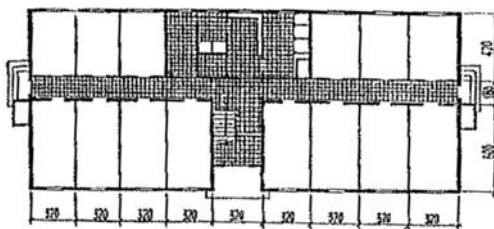


Fig. 5. Floor plan for a dormitory building

Source: Chengshi jianshe zongju guihua shejiju, Comments on the Plans Selected by the National Planning Standards Selection Conference and Explanations of the Danyuan, on *Journal of Architecture* 2 (1956): 72.

Investing in public facilities rather than in private ones is not only a means to reduce costs, but also part of the project of 'everyday life collectivization'. Inside the Danwei then the spatial relationships between the buildings follow a particular trend: representing the socialist state in miniature, the most important building is posed at the entrance, as legacy of Stalinist monumentality, contrary to what was established by Confucianism. The plant however still follows a classic and axial form.

The slogan "Five Transformations" 五化 (wǔhuà) summarizes the salient points of a urban reform through which the Party puts pressure on citizens: housing socialization, collectivization of everyday life, universal education, standardized hygiene, and *greening* in the Communes.^{viii}

III. CITY AND INDUSTRY

The derating of Chongqing to a sub-provincial city under the jurisdiction of Chengdu, fact occurred in 1954, precludes the city itself to have a big development in terms of urban planning: in the peninsula, for example, there are few areas in which planners go significantly to affect the territory. These areas are mainly located where the conformation of the ground allows more easily constructing buildings. According to the map *Peidu gongchang fenbutu*

陪都工廠分布圖(Map on war capital plant distribution, Fig. 6) on distribution of industries in 1946, it is clear that in Yuzhong Peninsula (渝中; Yúzhōng) before the Japanese bombing, there were mainly companies interested in *light industry* (daily consumer goods, textile, rice processing, carpentry and shipbuilding). It is estimated that the city required heavy investment to be rebuilt, and for this reason it would be unaffordable to offer to all the inhabitants a new accommodation in a Danyuan. Hence the phenomenon of appropriation of single properties by more families, and the consequent division of spaces thanks to the use of partition walls.

Planning must follow the guidelines issued by the chief town of Sichuan Province, i.e. Chengdu, and respect the development plan which provides for the widespread distribution of industrial Danwei over the entire surface of the province. Since the end of the Fifties, in fact, Chinese central government moves away from Soviet planning trends to embrace a development policy based on the *city-region*: fearing that the overexpansion of a single center would bring negative effects, CCC decides for a greater control in the wideness of urban area, and in the demographic growth of urban population.

The cure is seen in the spread of small and medium sized urban centers, followed by the decentralization of many industrial plants in the suburbs, which are actually planned as *satellite towns* 卫星城 (wèixīngchéng). Although some scholars have read in this urban practice a sign of the pure Maoist socialist urbanism, new to the West and away from any desire of anti-urbanism, it can still be argued that the model proposed in China has some affinity with the concept of garden city proposed at the beginning of XX century.^{ix} Where the planner Ebenezer Howard designed a green ring to delimit the excessive expansion of the city, Chinese socialist theorists elaborate the possibility to take advantage of the green belt transforming it into agricultural land distributed among Communes: this operation aimed to prevent the further expansion of the city and to guarantee a certain level of commodity supplies for the citizens. So relieved from the burden of having to deal with a great number of people, the city can finally triggers a cycle of self-sufficiency through the Danwei, by performing the only task required by Socialism in order to ensure the existence of the city itself, i.e. a high industrial performance. In Chongqing city during the Maoist period we find again the settlement of some companies operating in the mechanical sector, alongside with tobacco and food processing factories; most of them are located in Nanan district, which was also the original place chosen at the beginning of XX century by entrepreneurs who wanted to open a business at the upper reaches of Yangtze River. Some industrial plants are also situated in Jiangbei district, whose importance is however blurred by the Shapingba suburb, where there is a high number of mechanical, pharmaceutical,

and heavy industries (this area nowadays is still interested by this kind of plants, so much that new ‘industrial parks’ have sprung up). This area lends itself well to the construction of collective industrial models because it has been almost uninhabited up until the Fifties.

The armament industry finally should not be underestimated: plants are scattered around all the four major suburbs, that is, Jiangbei, Nan'an, Shapingba and Jiulongpo 九龙坡 (Jiǔlóngpō). In 1940s a railway has also been designed in order to connect the southern district of Jiulongpo to the northern part of Chongqing, thus enhancing the linkages between the peninsula and the South with the aim to modernize it and to promote the increase in population.

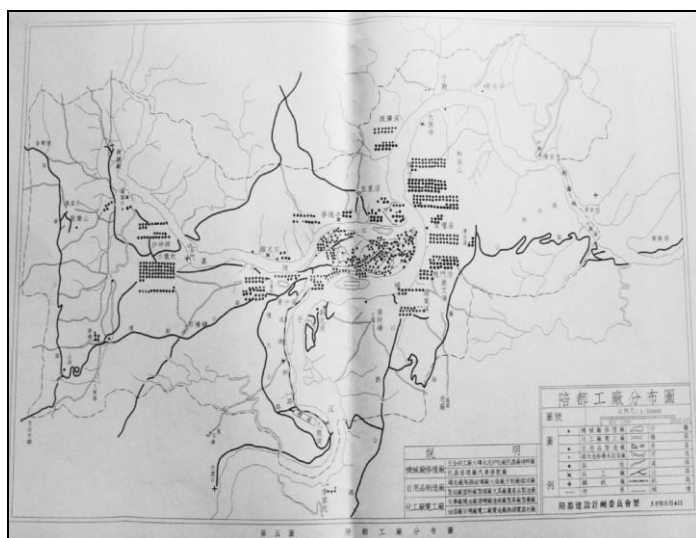


Fig. 6 *Peidu gongchang fenbutu* 陪都工廠分布圖 (Map on war capital plant distribution)

Source: *Peidu Shinian Jianshejihua Cao'an*, 陪都十年建设计划草案, (Draft of the ten-year Construction Plan in the War Capital), 1946

The table *Chongqingshi xinjian gelei fangwu jungong mianji xitongbiao* 重庆市新建各类房屋竣工面积系统表 (Table of area in new Chongqing covered by infrastructure – projects to be approved, Fig. 7) shows data on new areas occupied after the establishment of the PRC, from the first *five-year plan* until 1985: unfortunately this is only an index of projects submitted for approval (竣工; jùngōng) to the local government, therefore this list has to be considered approximate and not representative of the real degree of urbanization in

Chongqing. Regarding industrial facilities we see two peaks during the second and the third *five-year plan*; a fall in 1983. We can also observe interesting data on the construction boom that, at least on paper, took place during the sixth *five-year plan* (mid Seventies); the service sector suffers from the late Fifties until the end of the Sixties, with a further drop in the early Eighties, probably due to cuts in state funding after the Reform enunciated by Deng Xiaoping in 1979.

The Sanxian policy, already mentioned at the beginning of this article, promotes a remarkable development of the distant suburb of Beibei 北碚 (Běibèi), already famous for having hosted the residences of the Kuomintang Party main leaders during the Republican period. This is also the place where the United Front was established. Here a remarkable impulse is given to the automotive and electrical equipment industry, the latter one supported by the relocation of plants originally established in Shanghai, Liaoning and Jiangsu. Between 1965 and 1974 is counted the construction of twenty projects, welcomed as a great success by the central government. Finally in 1966 from Nanjing there is a massive transfer of seven thousand plants related to the electricity sector.

With regard to metallurgy, in 1985 we note the presence of fifty-two factories designated to this sector throughout the city. Many of them, already established at the beginning of the century by foreigners, are located in the southern district of Dadukou 大渡口 (Dàdùkǒu), near the Yangtze River. Chemical industry is stationed in Shapingba district and in the Changshou village 长寿县城 (Chángshòu xiànchéng), *Fig. 1*, while coal processing industries are in Beibei and in other neighboring villages. The cement plants work in Nanan, Jiangbei and of course in Beibei since 1930s, when the Westerners introduced the use of this material for the construction industry.

Chongqing also seems to excel in the light industry: since 1904 there have been already some manufacturing industries of alcohol, refined sugar, and confectionery plants, while in 1905 processing industries, such as cereals, tobacco, and then meats, vegetable oils and drinks started their activity. According to the table, in 1985 there are five hundred forty-seven plants for cereal processing, five hundred eighty-three for beverages, sixty-five confectionery plants, seventy-nine for meat processing, and only one cigarette factory. Finally we find also pulp and paper mills, glass factories, processing centers of leather and plastics, and printing companies.^x

历史阶段	厂房	仓库	办公室	住宅	文教用房	医疗用房	其它
“一五”时期	66.55	29.61	25.16	22.65	52.99	12.01	53.42
“二五”时期	173.68	31.08	14.33	92.68	29.02	4.87	56.52
三年调整时期	34.60	13.04	2.06	63.39	18.00	1.13	1.17
“三五”时期	102.72	43.90	3.94	131.82	20.88	4.52	25.10
“四五”时期	97.61	34.93	6.32	151.55	22.68	3.73	31.06
“五五”时期	97.30	29.41	14.00	243.06	25.87	7.15	44.83
“六五”时期	54.55	40.38	30.42	603.64	36.83	12.42	96.49
1979年	17.14	6.86	1.69	71.73	3.11	0.62	9.64
1980年	18.06	7.61	6.75	103.61	4.18	1.54	15.35
1981年	13.48	8.27	4.06	85.40	4.47	1.98	15.58
1982年	10.78	5.04	1.90	99.06	7.44	1.30	15.54
1983年	6.77	6.52	5.79	134.64	8.92	2.54	10.26
1984年	11.95	11.36	5.81	121.82	13.87	3.30	14.99
1985年	11.58	9.19	12.86	162.73	2.13	3.29	40.02

Fig. 7. Table of area in new Chongqing covered by infrastructure – projects to be approved). Source: Zhou, Yong, Comprehensive History of Chongqing, 2003.

IV. SIGNS OF POWER: PERFORMING PARTY IDEOLOGY IN THE BUILDING INDUSTRY

Self-celebration has always covered an important role in Chinese policy: for this reason in May 1952, when Chongqing is still considered as one of Chinese major cities by the Central Committee, the foundations of a magnificent pavilion called the “Southwest Military Hall” 西南军政大会 (xīnán jūnzhèng dàhuì) are laid in the western part of the peninsula. Works are completed in 1954, and the building renamed as “Southwest Executive Committee Grand Hall” 西南行政委员会大礼堂 (Xīnán xíngzhèngwěiyuánhùi dàlǐtáng) in honor to the local political leadership. This local committee is then abolished in 1956; at this time the palace takes its final name, i.e. “Chongqing Municipal Great Hall” 重庆市人民大礼堂 (Chóngqìngshì rénmin dàlǐtáng). The structure takes up significantly many elements from the Temple of Heaven, Tiantan 天坛 (Tiāntán) in Beijing: this fact could be seen like a parody of the ancient pre-modern culture (the Tiantan was a sacred place in which the Emperor used to perform rites connected with agricultural calendar), but it could also be merely linked to logistical questions. In fact it is worth thinking about the absence of Russian observers in Chongqing, who normally used to set the architectural principles to follow in order to build constructions that could be a result of the pure orthodox Socialism, fact

that was common on the other hand in the capital city during the first stages of the PRC. Chongqing was after all a remote Western city in a period in which communications were still slow and difficult. It is evident that the architect of this colossal work used as tool of comparison a classical Chinese artwork because the early years after the founding of PRC are marked by a certain degree of freedom in architectonic expression, and a lack of Socialist/Soviet artistic cognition.

In 1952 was also decided to pave a cobbled square in front of the entrance, the Renmin Guangchang 人民广场 (*rénmín guǎngchǎng*), which nowadays connects the building with the Three Gorges Museum, built on the former Municipal Museum 西南博物馆 (*xīnán bówùguǎn*) which was set up in 1951.

At the entrance of Dalitang there is a motto written both in Chinese and English, with a significant difference in the use of the term ‘proletarian’, not mentioned at all in Chinese version:

« [...] 是新中国建国后第一座具有独特建筑风格的民族建筑 »

« The Chongqing People's Grand Hall is a valuable cultural and historical heritage left from the older generation of Chinese proletarian revolutionaries. »

The original text could be translated as “[The Chongqing People's Grand Hall] represents the first nationally important building with a unique architectural style after the New China was funded”^{xi}.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Chongqing covers an important role for what concerns the Chinese industrial production, but it is also a key-city as symbol of the “Open up the West” policy. Confirming that it would be too simplistic to look at this place just like a mere instrument used by the Central Government in order to develop an otherwise economic ‘depressed’ area, we considered much more enlightening to find the reasons of such particular changes occurred in this territory through an analysis of past events. We thus turned back chronologically to 1949 when the People Republic of China was established, and new political trends were introduced in Chinese society, in particular from the Soviet Russia. Nevertheless it is fair that Chinese theorists and politicians gave their own personal version of Communism, mainly on urban and architectonical layouts. In fact, if the role of the city during the Maoist period became predominantly an industrial one, some urban patterns remained physically unchanged and somehow helped the citizens to slide gently from the early Republican period to the new era. We refer in particular to the *walls* that stayed on the urban grid even if covering a different meaning related with the new significant presence beyond the city of the Danwei as ‘space of production and

sharing of the Socialist ideology'. The Danwei system of land division became in the end a *spatial substitute* of the city itself, which loses of importance as conglomeration of citizens. The term 'citizen' became also obsolete and was replaced by Tongzhi 同志 (tóngzhì), comrade, as to point out the new social and spatial links working on the ideal of a 'Chinese Socialist city'. Because of the factual distance of Chongqing from the basis of the Central Government, i.e. from Beijing, it was therefore possible for the city to maintain some urban attitudes without incurring into the ideological critique: the example reported in this article is the Dalitang Palace that was erected to celebrate the victorious revolution of 1949. It appears to all intents as a landmark of traditional pre-modern culture instead of a symbol of a fresh post-revolutionary architectonic pattern. This is a clear signal of incongruence and controversy due to a lack of speed in the transmission of the new urban and artistic guidelines.

From the industrial point of view it is evident how Chongqing partially successful escalation in the liberal market nowadays has deep origins, which should be traced back to the beginning of Chinese modern era and then to the establishment of PRC. Some problems related to corruption and the attitude of land appropriation by local government could also be easily linked with its geographical position and with a historical 'disease', that is the strong presence of warlords in the late nineteenth century until 1949. The economic and political changes occurred during the Maoist period marked the territory, but they however guaranteed a certain local historical continuity.

Notes

ⁱ Mao Zedong statement during the Great Leap Forward. The terms *First and Second Front* indicate those industrial districts considered less important for the industrial production because of their unfavorable strategic position. During the Great Leap Forward the Chinese leadership was mainly concerned with heavy industry (atomic bomb research firstly), and considerable investment was made in this sector, that was located in the more secure zones of Central China, the so called *Third Front*.

ⁱⁱ Cf. also S. Han, Y. Wang, *Chongqing, City profile*, p. 116; and C. Bramall, *Industrialization of rural China*, p. 146ff.

ⁱⁱⁱ Please refer to the *green Moscow* project (Ginzburg-Baršč) through which the Soviet capital would have to be transformed into a cultural and entertainment center, connected by rail to other linear cities vocated to the industrial production. This proposal of the early 1930s was not accepted, and on the contrary it was seen as a nostalgic and anachronistic project, a pure exaltation of the railway and of individual mobility.

^{iv} Cf. M. Tafuri, F. Dal Co, *Contemporary Architecture* (Architettura contemporanea), p. 184. The Palladian retrieval takes shape in the project of 1933 for the Soviet Palace in Moscow by Jofan and Žoltovskij, the two winners of the architectural competition held for the construction of this palace. The palace is the current Intourist Palace.

^v Cf. Henry Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 54. Henri Lefebvre (1901- 1991) was a French sociologist and philosopher. He argued that natural space (absolute space) can determine several ways of *spatialization*, or spatial production. He based his analysis on the dialectical moving of three components: the everyday practices and perceptions, the spatial representations and theories, and finally the imaginary space of time. In *The Production of Space* he explained how Space is a complex social construction, analyzing also what are the processes that make possible its construction. As a fervent Marxist, he stated in the end that the social production of urban space, as built up by the hegemonic class, is essential for the perpetuation of capitalism itself (for a deeper analysis on the concept of *hegemony*, see also A. Gramsci).

^{vi} D. Bray, *Social Space and Governance in Urban China*, p. 123ff.

^{vii} The Danyuan is the minimum unit of which a Danwei was composed, and could be associated with a condo. Normally they used to have standard dimensions, just like the flats. In Chongqing we see the example of a copper factory 铜元局造币厂 (tóngyuánjú zàobìchǎng), called today Changjiang Diangongchang 长江电工厂 (Chángjiāng diàngōngchǎng), Long River Plant for Electronic Devices: it was opened in 1905, and in 1949 there were already 1200 families living inside (a family unit is called Hu 户, hù). In the first 1950s other twenty housing complexes were built, each one for eight families. The housing units still remember the row houses of European proletarian neighborhoods: there were single-storey buildings without toilets, where each family had only 12,5 m² available for living. Some extension works were made later, but the conditions for the occupants remained poor. In 1964 there were 2042 families without a kitchen, and 800 families who had to share the toilet.

^{viii} There was a memorable attempt to build a Great Socialist House in Tianjin, but all the purposes proved to be utopian ones. Local people was consulted during the design phase, so that the final shape appeared as a huge traditional house, the so called Siheyuan (sìhéyuán), but with much more common areas, including a library, a school, a hospital, shops and laundries. Completed in 1962, the residents were found, however, to address the problem of the lack of many of the facilities previously promised. Among these, the absence of kitchens compelled people for a long time to prepare their own meals in the house corridors. For further information see D. Bray, *Social Space and Governance in Urban China*, p. 142ff.; with regard to environmental policies, please refer to the chapter *Urban Greening and Tree Planting* (chéngshìlǚhuà hé shùzàolín) in L. Hua, *Reconstructing China, 1949-1979* (chóngjiàn zhōngguó), p. 205ff.

^{ix} Cf. also C. Howe, *Revolution and Development in an Asian Metropolis*, p. 292ff.

^x For more details on Chongqing industrial development, see 重庆建筑志 (Chongqing Jianzhu Zhi; *Annals on Chongqing Construction*), p. 88ff.

^{xi} We translated for convenience the term 民族 as “nation (nationally)”, even if the term has got a deeper shade of meaning. It is in fact connected with the adjective “ethnic”, but because it is not clear if the term refers to Han group or other ethnic minorities located in Chongqing area, we prefer the translation given, assuming that this character could also point out “all the ethnic groups living in China”. The motto was posted near the entrance of the palace in 1997 after a long restoration work.

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