

The Mao Era in Objects

Beijing International Club: American Report

A report, with text and pictures by
RECORD editor Walter Wagner,
on life—and architecture—in
CHINA

Max Urbahn started the whole thing in 1972 when he was president of the AIA. It is the custom and habit of AIA presidents to take a trip the year after their term, and Max wrote, without knowing whether there was such a person or such an organization, to the President, Chinese Society of Architects, Peking, People's Republic of China, suggesting a visit of American architects to China. In August, 1973, a cordial letter agreeing to such a visit arrived, and after extensive arrangements by Max, AIA executive vice president Bill Slayton, and Ieoh Ming Pei, who left China to attend college 40 years ago, 16 of us found ourselves—on April 8th of this year—at the border of China some 40 miles inland from Hong Kong. We walked halfway across a narrow bridge, were met by a young fellow in green khaki and a red star on his cap who can doubtless say "Passport, please!" in 87 languages, and walked on into China for a three-week visit. We were the first group of architects to visit China since the Revolution in 1948, though individual architects had managed visits earlier.

Max Urbahn of New York City was tour leader and, in Chinese terminology, our Principal Responsible Person; Bill Slayton was his deputy. Others were Jim Foley of Columbus, Ohio, NAAB president; Sam Hurst of Honolulu, former dean at USC; Chick Marshall of Norfolk, Virginia, president-elect of AIA; Wally Meisen, assistant commissioner of GSA; Bob Madison of Cleveland; I. M. Pei of New York City; Eileen Pei, his wife, who was also born in China; Arch Rogers, AIA president; Dan Schwartzman of New York City, member of the UIA board; Jack Warnecke of Washington; George White, Architect of the Capitol; Harry Weese of Chicago; travel consultant Sidney Nyhus; and myself.

One is tempted, after such a



Cover of the report

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1974

CREATOR

Walter Wagner

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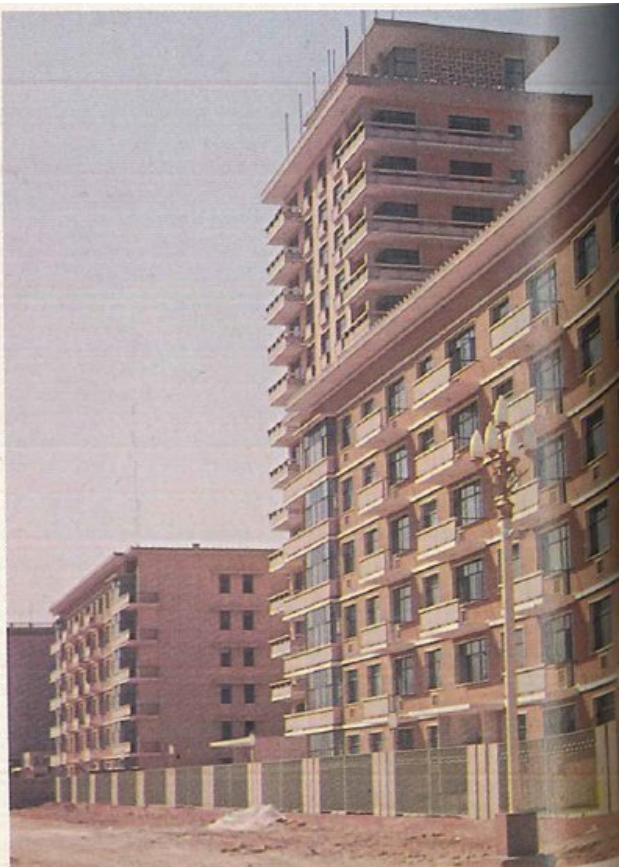
DESCRIPTION

Report of a visit of American architects to China.

Source: Walter Wagner, 'A Report on Life and Architecture in China Today.' *Architectural Record* vol. 156, no. 9 (1974): 111-24.



Housing for foreign diplomats in Peking was completed this spring. Three-bedroom, two-bath apartments have balconies overlooking embassies in this area. This project also adjoins the International Club, with meeting rooms, gymnasiums, indoor tennis courts, an outdoor pool, and table-tennis rooms where our interpreters roundly defeated all American takers. Entry hall of club has an extraordinary (and extraordinarily large) silk tapestry.



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