

**DRAWINGS,
1967-1980**

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Drawings, 1967-1980 by Léon Krier

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LÉON KRIER

**DRAWINGS,
1967-1980**

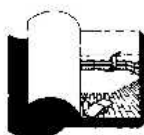
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January-February 1981.

Lay-out by
Marc Gierst - Daniel Staskens - Maurice Culot

LEON KRIER

D R A W I N G S

1967-1980



INTRODUCTION

by

MAURICE CULOT

A BRUXELLES

AUX ARCHIVES D'ARCHITECTURE MODERNE

14 RUE DE PACQUE

M D C C C L X X X

AL
1907
10

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"If the world is to contain a public space, it cannot be erected for one generation and planned for the living only. It must transcend the life span of mortal men; without this transcendence into a potential earthly immortality, no politics, strictly speaking no common world and no public realm is possible."

Vita Activa.

HANNAH ARENDT



WE WILL *no longer* BUILD

by Maurice COLLOT

*"I can only make Architecture, because
I do not build."*

*"I do not build,
because I am an Architect."*

Leon KRIER

K, the shark who is staged by Dino Buzzati pursues and devours incessantly the sailors. Although he knows that the monster is tailing him, Stefano keeps on navigating. When at the end of his life Stefano decides at last to confront the terrible K, he discovers that the shark has been following him only to offer him the most beautiful pearl in the world. But then it's too late.

Krier, the architect who is staged by himself, is more daring; he does not wait to be burdened by

architectural project of the city for opposing the goals of advanced industrial society—has first of all to refuse involvement in building.

Krier's declaration "... I do not build, because I'm an architect" is a provocation but it is also the stating of his independence, and of the irrefutable nature of his project on the city; this project, being neither an abstraction, nor merely an alternative to the actual production of the built environment, is not either just the modernized reproduction of a social utopia. And if Leon Krier speaks with authority, it is because he knows that those who assume responsibilities without having authority become all too easily authoritarian. It is also because he knows that the left/right classification is irrelevant; as to the refusal to build, it is a working hypothesis which neither political position even takes into consideration; because to accept utopia as a philosophical presupposition, would be for them to recognize that they are the instruments of a self-destructive society and that they are no longer creators. The question which Leon Krier confronts is therefore not, whether one should build for the political left or the right, but either to build or if not, to reject building with conviction and determination.

The certitudes of cynical professionals will hardly be shaken by the fashionable doubts which now, as the "apocalypse" is looming, seem to befall sensitive architects. The present doubts are not the doubt of Descartes, they no longer lead to method, but rather are they the expression of a collective anxiety. "As if we lived and fought in a protean world, where anything could at any moment be changed into anything" (HANNAH ARENDT).

What Leon's project for Luxembourg tells us first of all is that it is important to resist. To resist at all cost even if we should be living in the terrible awareness that the process of physical and social destruction of the cities and countryside of Europe is irreversible and total. The resistance to which Leon Krier is urging us, is above all a condition of refusal which however finds its immediate expression in a project on the city. The reconstruction of the European city has no perspective outside this condition of refusal. If one is to analyse contemporary real estate, its incapacity of historical investment becomes evident. Should we be looking towards the Costa Brava, to Brussels or to Gallarate, setting all feelings of sympathy aside, we must confess that all those buildings which themselves claim to be exemplary, cannot be but fakes. The political significance of the project which is conceived as resistance, lies not so much in its eventual realisation; it is on the contrary in the affirmation of its non-realisation that resides the true political validity of a project which is not abstract and not unrealistic either but which is rooted in the consensus of the tradition or rather in that common sense born in the memory of a tradition, in the written and unwritten protests of those who fight against the outrageous industrial modes of production of the built environment. In this perspective resistance is neither a game nor is it a fashion: it demands continuity and adherence to a principle; to a kind of "security regulation" which is conceived and applied in a daily heroism. Heroism which is lived by those who in daily struggles develop a philosophy of the city as an essential function of democracy's development. Thus when Leon Krier posits against the practice of the doubt, the dictatorship of education, it is,

as Michel Bosquet recalled about Marcuse, to provoke and disconcert his interlocutor, asking him "are you prepared to commit yourself to your revolutionary choice as an autonomous being?" Hence obedience in resistance is not a problem of authority but it is both a problem of authority and freedom. The main objective of this resistance, is to help those who lead daily struggles in the city to avoid the trap of fragmentation, it is above all to bring intellectual support to those who struggle for the preservation of the city and of its historical constituents as instruments of development; finally it is a means to participate directly in confronting the structure of industrial production.

In a revolutionar perspective, the avant-garde can only learn from history, not only to save itself from futility and historiography, but above all because in order to mobilize people for a project on the city, this project must be a familiar one, it must promise all the aspects and sympathy of a common world. It then becomes overwhelmingly clear that the city can only exist in its traditional form. Far from saying that this form is perfect, it means above all that this form must be repaired and restored with immense care. To lean on the very unstable structure of tradition, as a means of opposing the industrial system, is that not showing an almost incredible naivety, is it not minimizing radically the weight of the existing productive system; does it not mean that one is making abstraction of all the trade union contradictions and of the left in general? Does it not mean that one is shutting ones eyes in front of the shop-window of consumption?

These doubts are all founded, and yet there exists no alternative. The daily environment of people is changed today in such a way, that the frightful nature of the phenomenon is now being concealed at any social and human cost.

The determination to reconnect with history there where it has been disrupted by capitalism and its amnesic drive constitutes a seductive hypothesis; but does one not have at last to take into account the colossal destruction of memory which is already now a reality, does one not also have to take into account the fact that the socialisation of the city has itself been exploited and taken charge of by Capital? The idea of the ephemeral is already being injected in large doses.

The products which are intended for the construction of this city as well as the tools and the methods which are deployed, appear to the citizens to be strange, hostile, exchangeable and unavoidable at the same time.

People are overwhelmed and dominated by these new and enormous objects: by the motorway and its signals more than the car itself, by the left over spaces much more than the public garden, by the huge infrastructures of public transport much more than by small and efficient tramways. The project on the city of Luxembourg, his "last will" as Leon Krier calls it, destroys the fetishism of these vast objects, makes them appear for what they are; outmoded, ridiculous and useless. Being freed from the virtual weight of all those compromises which every building architect engages in, consciously or unconsciously, Krier then reveals with an aloofness with has nothing bourgeois, his project as the architectural fulcrum, from which he criticizes society in its totality. The fact of studying a city like Luxembourg in its totality has nothing of a sporting feat. It is a