

Living the revolution: urban communes & Soviet socialism, 1917-1932

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Deskripsi Lengkap: <http://lib.ui.ac.id/detail?id=20469887&lokasi=lokal>

Abstrak

Living the Revolution offers a pioneering insight into the world of the early Soviet activists, the fiery-eyed, bed-headed youths determined to be the change they wanted to see in the world. Banding together in the wake of the October Revolution and seizing urban apartments, they tried to offer practical examples of socialist living. Calling themselves urban communes, they embraced total equality and shared everything from money to underwear. They sought to overturn the traditional family unit, reinvent domesticity, and promote a new collective vision of human interaction. A trend was set: a revolutionary meme that would, in the coming years, allow thousands of would-be revolutionaries and aspiring party members to experiment with the possibilities of socialism. The first definitive account of the urban communes and the activists that formed them, this book utilizes newly uncovered archival materials to chart the rise and fall of this revolutionary impulse. It illuminates the thoughts and aspirations of individual activists as the idea of the urban commune grew from an experimental form of living, limited to a handful of participants in Petrograd and Moscow, into a phenomenon that saw tens of thousands of youths form domestic units of socialist living by the end of the 1920s. Living the Revolution is a tale of revolutionary aspiration, appropriation, and participation at the ground level. Never officially sanctioned by the party, the urban communes challenge our traditional understanding of the early Soviet state, presenting Soviet ideology as something that could both frame and fire the imagination.