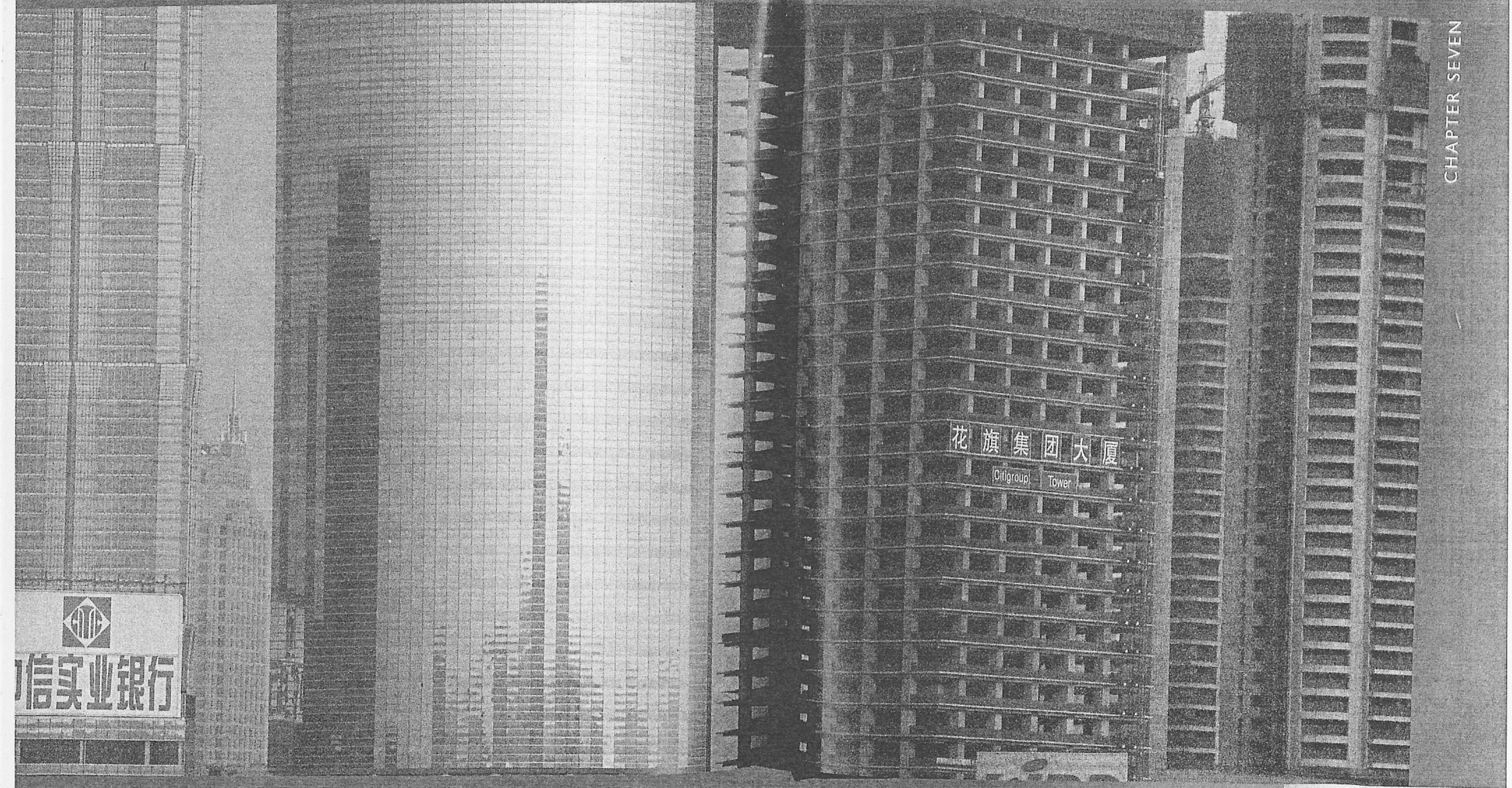


THE GIANT AWAKES

CHAPTER SEVEN



信实业银行

花旗集团大厦
Citigroup Tower

The Giant Awakes

Through the exercise of will power and reason on the part of exceptional individuals, society's decline can be arrested and even reversed.

Plato, *Republic*

Men of experience and foresight have predicted that in another 50 years Shanghai may become the greatest city of the world. This is not the fantastic dream of an untravelled mind. The future holds something great for Shanghai, and that greatness will outstrip all its past achievements, marvellous as they have been.

Ching-Lin Hsia, *The Status of Shanghai, 1929*

Shanghai has grown accustomed to high praise and high expectations. The city's vaunted pre-eminence has been anticipated for over a century, yet Shanghai has never achieved genuine supremacy on the world stage. However, just as happened in the late 1920s, few cities have attracted such public fascination and media attention as Shanghai has over the past decade. The widespread interest generated by the current resurgence of China's most illustrious city is noteworthy on many levels: Shanghai's affinity historically with 'the outside world', its political and economic influence, and the sheer scale of recent regeneration have transfixed global audiences.

These factors, while transcending many themes, are central to urbanism and bound inextricably to historical experience. First, the linkage between Shanghai and the West, despite a severance of nearly half a century, has transformed into acquiescent nostalgia, forming the central pillar of the foreigners' awareness of Shanghai in the 21st century. Second, China's political and economic ascendancy, in which Shanghai plays a central role, are drawing attention both for the opportunities and for the threats they present internationally. Third, Shanghai's urban renaissance cannot fail to impress even the staunchest cynic for the audaciousness of its plans for the future, yet these plans

remain just ideas. In true Shanghai tradition, the relative grandiosity of its buildings casts little more than a design message. A structure's true worth is secondary to the image it conveys.

Just 50 years after the Nationalist government first proposed that Shanghai should become the 'show window' of China, the Communist government has deliberately turned one of the most capitalist metropolises on earth into China's unassailable showcase city.

The nod of approval

The permanent suppression of Shanghai, China's leading connection to the rest of the world, is an implausible ambition. The inevitable resurgence of China's most powerful city was only a matter of time, whether years, decades, or centuries. In a country controlled by a central government, Shanghai needed only the nod of approval that would release the shackles of political bondage that had done so much to undermine its former prowess. Beijing knew it had much to gain from a prosperous Shanghai, and could not afford to keep it constrained. In 1984, Shanghai received its chance to regain lost ground on its southern rivals when the government declared 14 cities open to foreign development. Shanghai was among this group. The following year Beijing appointed Jiang Ze Min as Secretary to the Party in Shanghai and two years later Zhu Rong Ji as Mayor. These two highly educated, influential figures gave Shanghai direct representation in the uppermost echelons of Beijing's political structure. These crucial appointments proved doubly significant when in the 1990s these men were promoted to the top of the Party – Zhu to Premier and Jiang to Chairman.

It was no coincidence that almost immediately Shanghai started to receive financial privileges comparable to its southern competitors. From 1988, it showed signs of closing the gap on the upstart cities that had stolen its primacy. Then in 1989 the student demonstrations in Beijing's Tian An Men Square took the government by surprise and unsettled the Party's higher echelons. As China reeled in the aftermath of governmental suppression, the students in Hong Kong, a stone's throw from China's key economic zones, protested vigorously and vocally. Shanghai, under the strict watch of Jiang and Zhu, remained conspicuously acquiescent.

Months later, during the Spring Festival of 1990, the



Party Chairman Deng Xiao Ping visited Shanghai and urged the municipal government to progress with the development of Pudong, Shanghai's neglected backyard across the Whuangpu from the Bund. Shanghai, it seemed, had earned its reward for compliance during Tian An Men's fallout. Two months later, on 18 April, China's premier, Li Peng, publicly announced the launch of the Pudong development project. After 40 years of neglect, Shanghai was on the rise once more.

Beijing chose Pudong over an area to the south of the former walled city to be the site of Shanghai's modern development area, though it took a couple of years before Shanghai was able to capitalise on its newfound allegiances. China's economy was in the doldrums until 1992, when further economic reforms and the continued collapse of Communism in Europe's Eastern bloc propelled China forward.

Shanghai continued to benefit and prosper under special privileges sanctioned by Beijing, including 18 'super-special' policies announced in September 1995, which catapulted the city into the forefront of urban development in China. Tax breaks, foreign investment incentives and access to huge government loans ensured the rapid transformation of Shanghai, but most especially of Pudong: Shanghai's backyard had become China's show window.

Pudong

'Town Planning' in its true sense would be difficult to apply in Shanghai.

Shanghai Municipal Council Annual Report for 1910

In 1991, in a deft move that exploited the media's thirst for the next big China story, the Shanghai Development Corporation (SDC) invited five international architectural firms to submit proposals for the development of a new business sector for the city. As the firms Dominique Perrault, Massimiliano Fuksas, Richard Rogers Partnership, Shanghai Joint Design Team, and Toyo Ito & Associates focused on Shanghai, it seemed the city had come of age. The SDC's design brief called for a masterplan for a massive area of approximately 2 square kilometres that was to house over a million residents and comprise 50 per cent office space. The plan, it was hoped, would draw the centre of Shanghai across the Whuangpu into a newly designed city, integral to but not dependent on the old Shanghai. With familiar grandiosity and ambition, Shanghai was again being furnished with another masterplan.

Pudong had been eyed for development since the early 20th century. Shanghai's poorest suburb had grown accustomed to the visionary carving up of its pronounced

Above Rows of high-rise workers' accommodati

Previous pages The skyscrapers of Pudong

peninsula with imaginary lines backed by empty words of optimism. In the early 1920s, Pudong was to have been transformed into one enormous harbour facility as Shanghai strove to be the greatest port in the world. By the 1940s, the Japanese envisioned an ostentatious plan radiating from Pudong along monumental boulevards that advanced across a razed former British Settlement. After 1949, Pudong, near to the city's industry and shipping, seemed destined for a lacklustre future as it provided an ideal location for housing workers in regimented rows of concrete apartments that would march monotonously out across former peasants' fields.

At the close of the second millennium, after a century of false starts, Pudong's moment seemed finally to have arrived as it became the focus of 'one of the greatest urbanistic reflections of our times'. Not only was this dilapidated corner of Shanghai garnering attention from the world's media and the world's greatest design minds, but Shanghai was also on the brink of receiving its first truly considered urban plan.

In 1993, the submissions from around the world were presented to the SDC. Against a fanfare of media-fuelled hype, Shanghai and the Communist Party basked in the positive story that was the future of China's gateway. The five designs submitted to the SDC were diverse in their approach to the problem.

The proposal from the British architectural firm Richard Rogers Partnership (RRP) concentrated on the idea of a

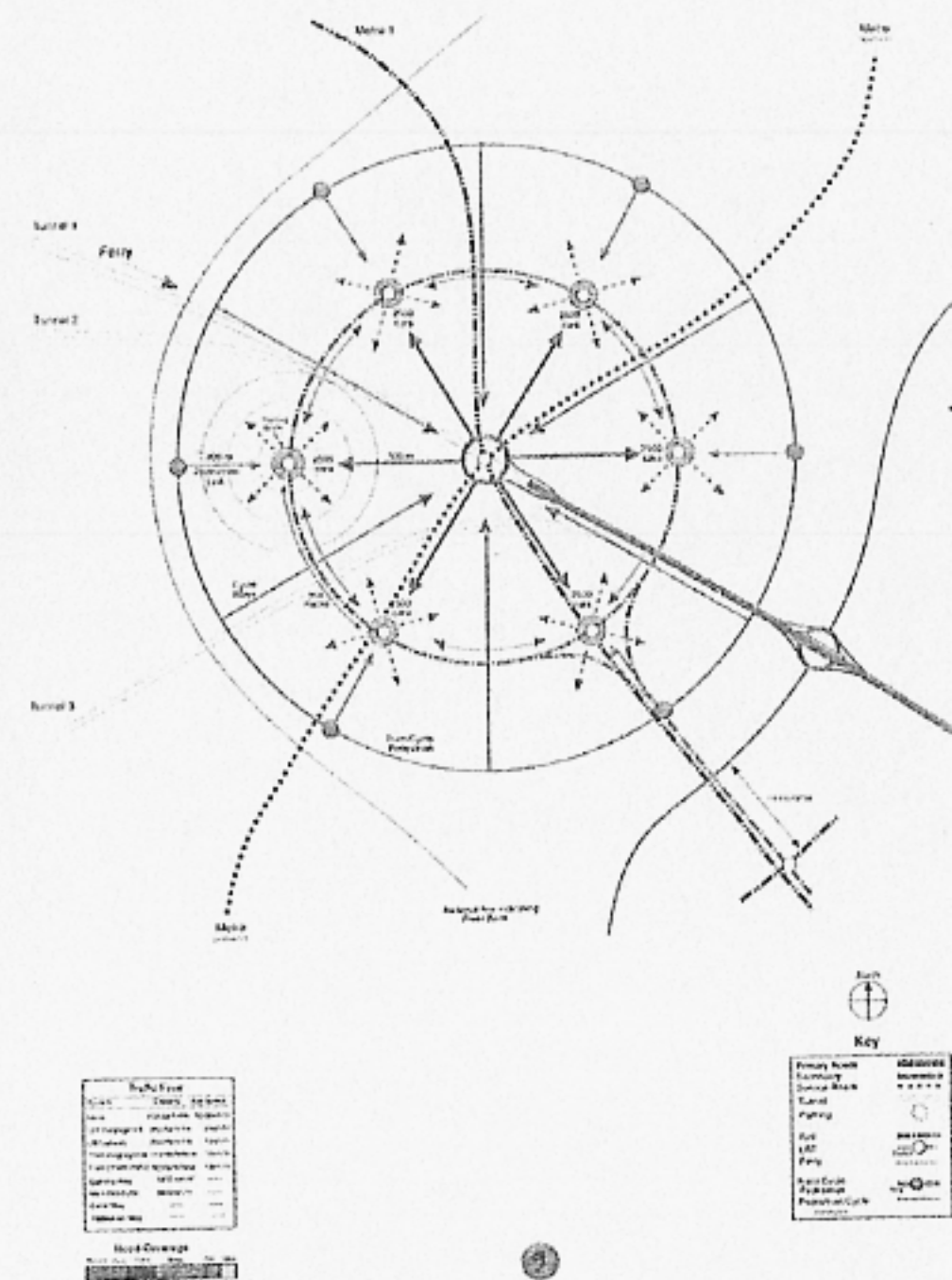
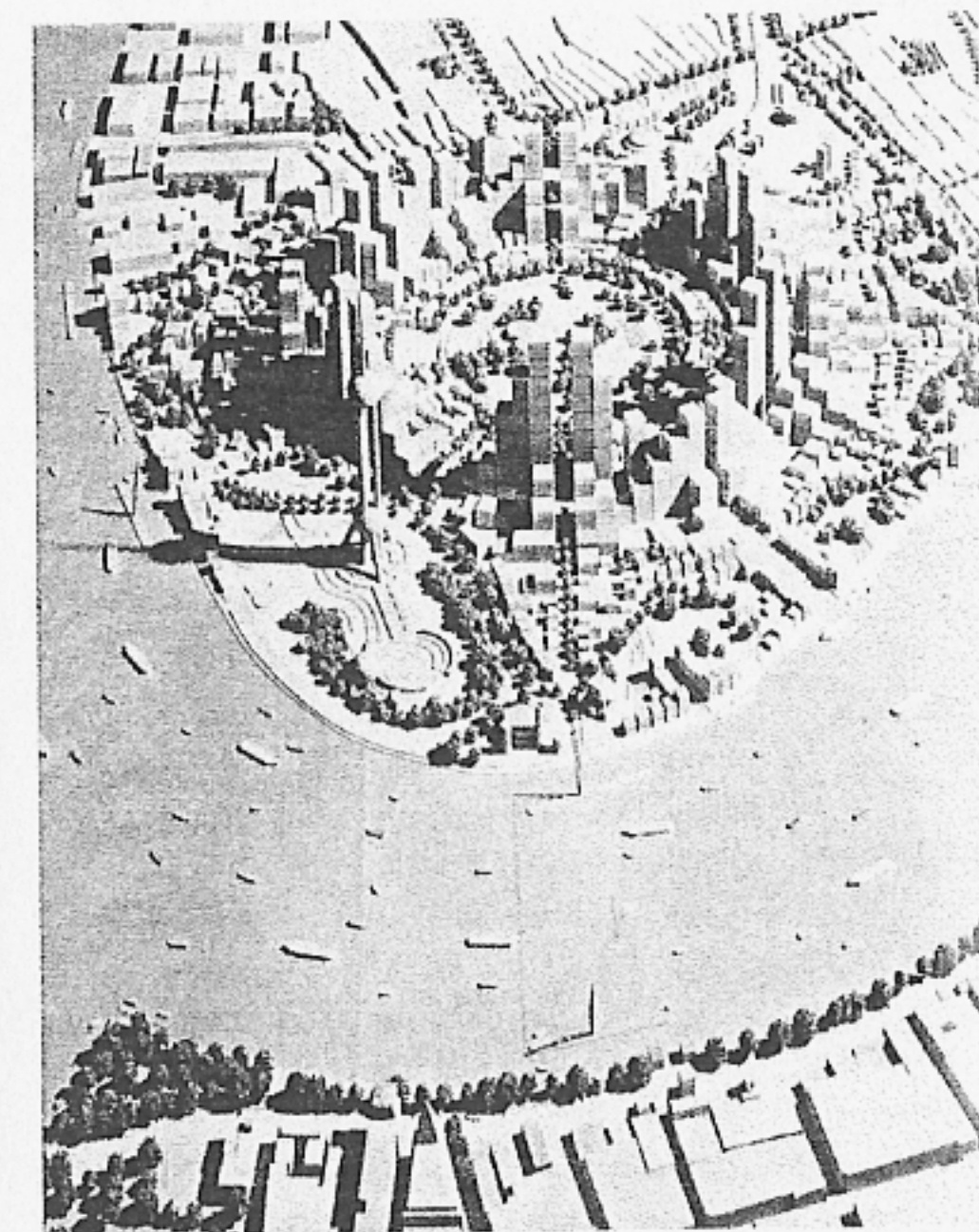


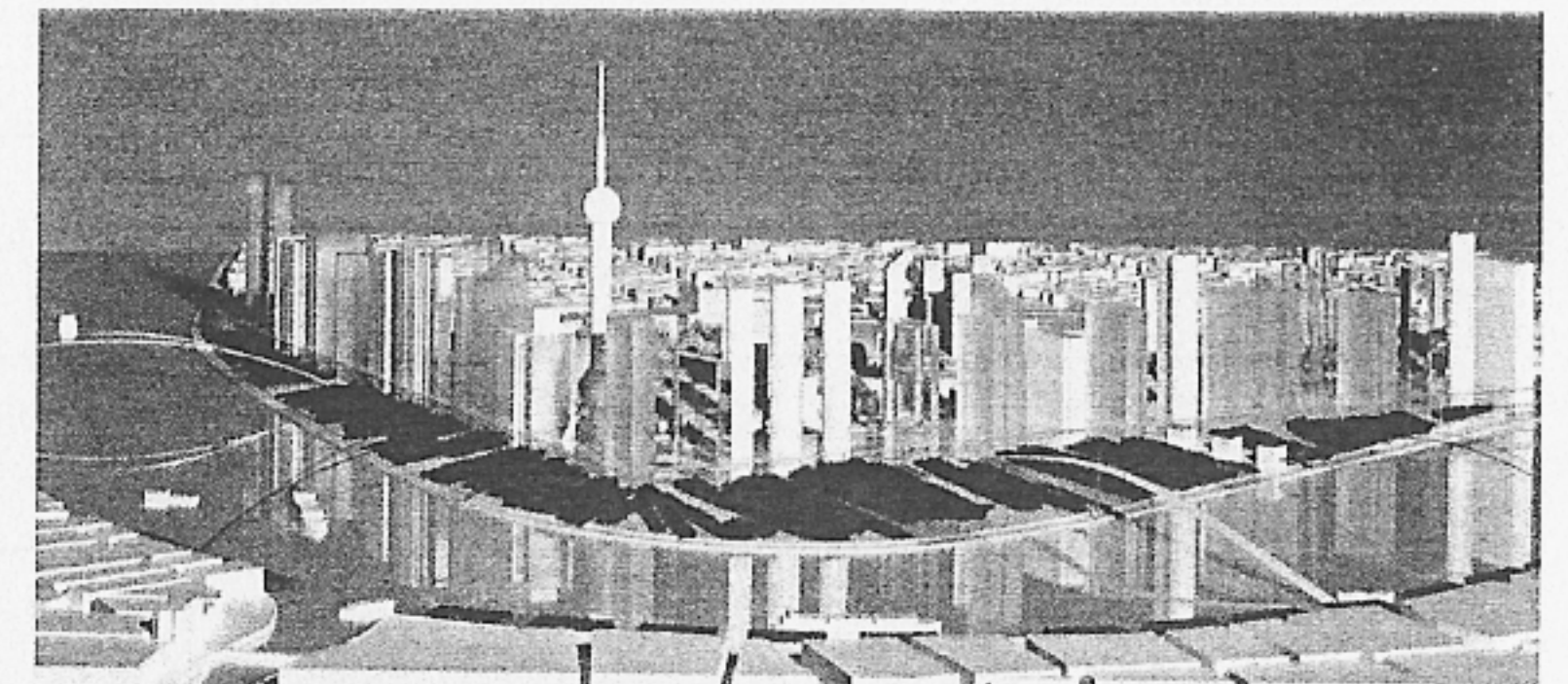
Diagram illustrating the Overall Network of Transport Systems



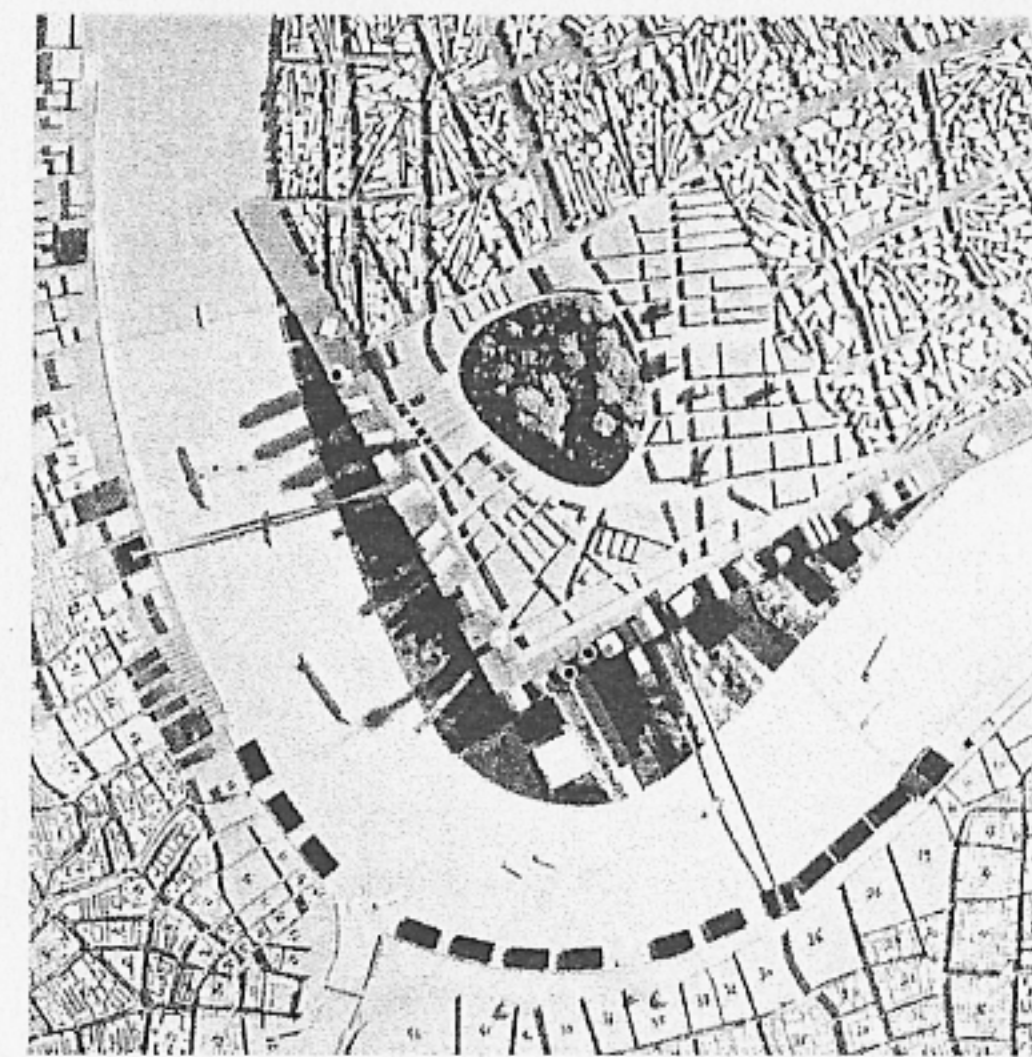
'sustainable compact city' that was sympathetic to the needs of a dynamic metropolis of which it was to be a central part. Forming the focal point of the future development of Shanghai, the concept concentrated on addressing the growing environmental crisis, of which China at that time had little awareness. The idea of housing 1 million people in over 5.3 million square metres, 50 per cent of which was reserved for office space, would have an inevitable and huge environmental impact locally, regionally and globally. Resource efficiency was paramount to RRP's proposal, which aimed to maximise the effective use of transportation and land through the careful arrangement of buildings and open spaces. With a central park forming the hub, the plan resembled a wheel with six avenues radiating outwards from the centre, intersecting three concentric rings for transportation: the first and smallest designed for cars and through traffic, the second for trams and buses, and the third for pedestrians and cyclists. Between the avenues, six nodes of mixed-use development were served by an underground public transport system. The city's commercial, cultural and social activities were concentrated in these areas, while residential, educational and health facilities were located along the river. The close proximity of residential, service and commercial areas was designed to maximise public transport, bicycle and pedestrian use, while the varied height of buildings and their even spacing between the six major avenues ensured maximum use of natural light and ventilation, so reducing energy consumption and pollution. The plan, calculated to 'reduce overall energy consumption by 70 per cent compared with that of conventionally designed commercial developments of a similar scale,' was a major departure from established urban planning schemes that rely on islands of tower blocks intersected by major roads – for so long considered the symbol of progress by many.

Another plan, from the Italian firm Massimiliano Fuksas, adopted an evolutionary approach using a 'highly significant program aimed at dense development, to be realized in phases over a long period'. 'Viewed as no more than a point of departure', the proposal was intended to provide the foundation for future development in different phases, therefore designed to be flexible and adaptable to the city's inevitably changing needs. The concept also attempted to use traditional Chinese elements by drawing inspiration from 'the traditional Chinese house, with its framework based on the relationship between nature and construction.'

A third proposal, by the French architectural firm Dominique Perrault, was founded on an approach that embraced continuity of the city's historical context while building something entirely new across the river. The overall concept, described as 'Towards a living urbanism', focused on 'the void' between the past and the future and the need to protect this 'in-between' to ensure the continuity of our cityscapes. It drew inspiration from the layout and texture of



Above and left The plan for Pudong from Dominique Perrault

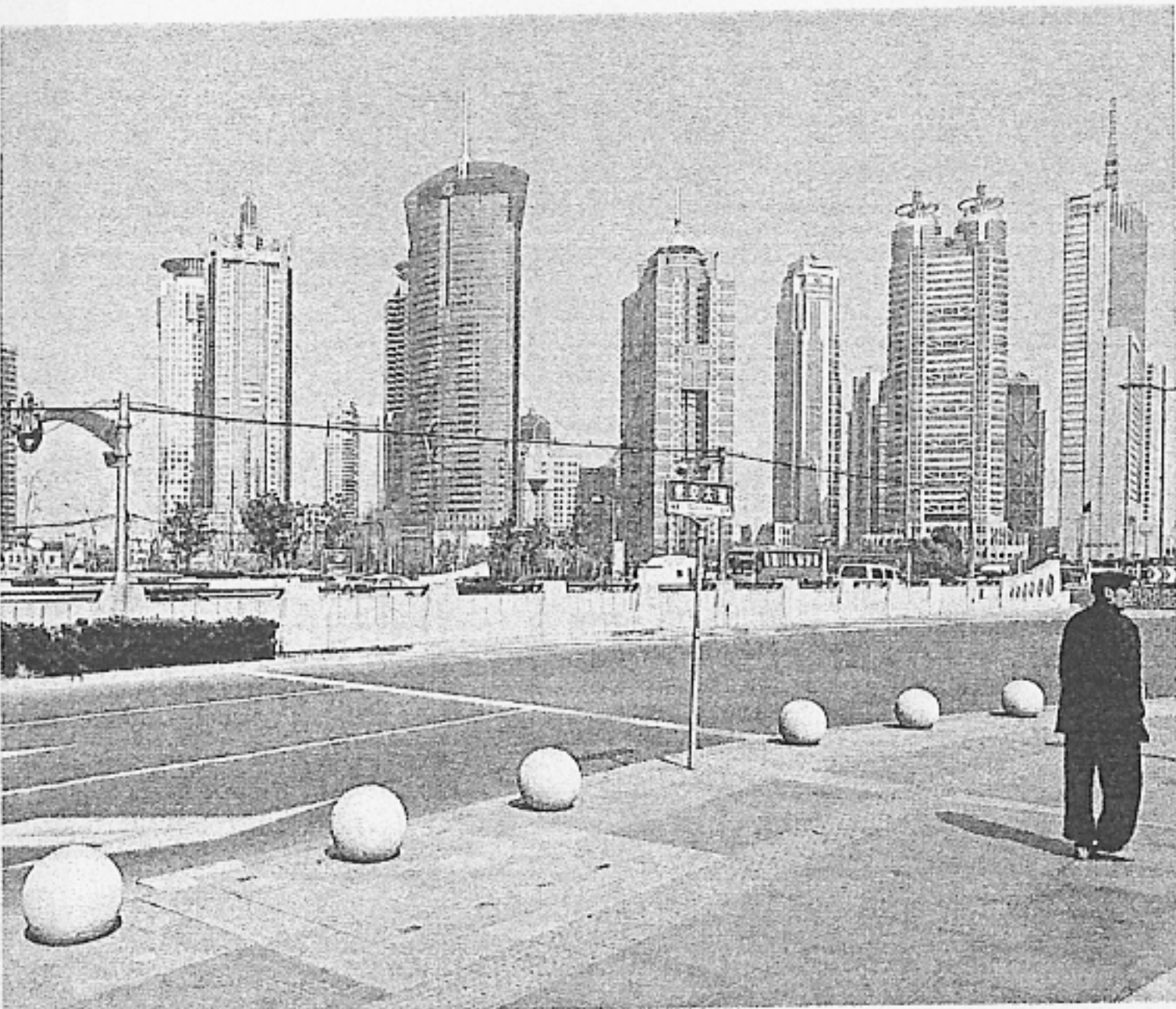


the existing city, including its characteristic street pattern, the course of which was continued in the new areas of Pudong. This principle was intended to ensure that the network of roads and streets in the area could be 'naturally linked' to the existing city. The plan proposed the construction of two lines of high-rise development perpendicular to one another and joining opposite the Bund and contrasting with it, like the 'yin and yang'. A great park was designed to sit at the water's edge in front of the new development, while behind was a new town providing 2 million square metres of office space and other facilities.

Armed with five proposals for the masterplan of China's powerhouse, the subsequent development of Pudong continued apace using none and all of the suggested designs. The government had what it needed to move forward on its own in what it believed was a continuum of 'two decades' unremitting effort' that had 'presented before us a brand new modern metropolis full of energy and vitality' with rows of

Right and below right Richard Rogers's plan for Pudong (bottom) and transport diagram (top)

Below The financial ghetto of Pudong, a fundamentally different urban scale to Shanghai

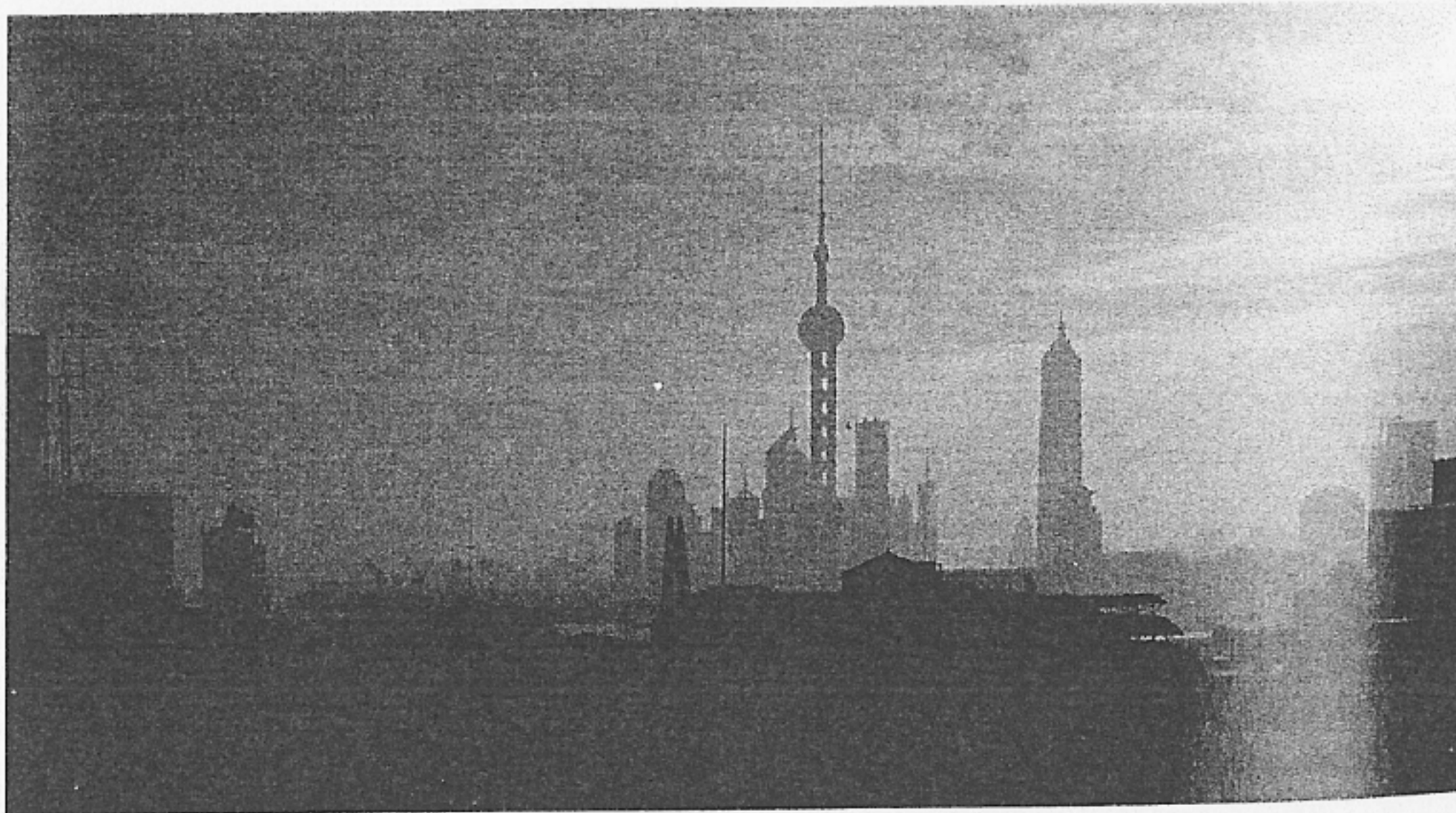


Right The high-rise developments springing up from Pudong's older houses



tall new buildings 'orchestrating a superb march of today'.⁶ Shanghai had been a mercantile city until the 1920s and a political city thereafter, but the development of Pudong presented the first opportunity for the city to attend to its social needs, becoming more adaptable, complex, sensitive and liveable. However, the 'march of today' was orchestrated by politics and economics, the dual influences that had

forged, abused and helped characterise Shanghai. The city's chance to become a truly great metropolis was sacrificed by big business and politics. Money ensured that ill-considered short-term plans and vacuous designs won approval for Pudong, turning the show window of China into a grisly spectacle of brash and irrelevant structures whose sole yet empty claim was their height. The familiar prattle about



Right Pudong's world-famous skyline

Left The parcelled land of Pudong with the older quarters of Shanghai beyond the Whangpu River



soaring structures, so much a part of Shanghai from the late 19th century up to the 1930s, had reappeared on a scale unimaginable to the city's forefathers, who said: 'Shanghai engineers say that the soil will stand nothing higher than fifteen storeys. So Shanghai escapes the menace of what had been called the greatest mistake of modern architecture, the skyscraper. She faces in the future no such makeshifts as [sic] triple-deck streets with ramps, arcades, elevated railways, subways, leap-frog aerial bridges and the like'.⁷

Pudong and its politically motivated and economically fuelled expansion blew such hopes away. Richard Rogers's 'sustainable strategies' were buried under billions of tons of market-driven urban development laid out in extraneous grids sold to the highest bidder. Wide roads marooned islands of land on which pedestrians are stranded alone with towering structures, one such to a plot. Basic concepts of urban planning were swept aside as China rushed to reach the future by building a city of the past. Forewarned that 'unless the government of China shows real resolve and commits itself to planning for sustainable cities, it will soon be faced with massive congestion, pollution and social dissatisfaction on an even larger scale than is endemic to the cities it is using as role models',⁸ Pudong represents one of the single greatest missed opportunities in China's recent urban renaissance. The failure to adopt a successful model that meets the future needs of one of the world's largest cities from a blank canvas boded ill for the regeneration of the former settlements with their well-established network of roads, houses and services.

The former settlements

From 'East and West'

For ages past they've been outclassed,
For speed and comfort too;
But times have changed and now, though strange,
They're building as we do.

Shamus A'Rabbit, *Ballads of the East*

While the plans for Pudong were being drafted and disregarded, the Municipality of Shanghai's policy towards the rest of the city resembled something of a gargantuan land auction. Also, troublingly, the land being sold was occupied by millions of people whose residence in Shanghai ranged from decades to days. The swathes of Li Long houses that had each supported all manner of occupants from multiple families with up to four generations to a room, to small industries and dormitories for immigrant labour were being bought up by developers keen to enter what was potentially Asia's most lucrative property market.

The demand for new housing and office space was conspicuously top-down, with the wealthy foreign investor, armed with unlimited foreign expense accounts, enticed to Shanghai by its commercial opportunities, and having nowhere to live and few places to work. Foreign businessmen and diplomats rented hotel rooms on long-term leases, while their future homes and offices sprouted from Shanghai's fertile soil, and the city's infrastructure underwent one of the largest urban transformations in history.

Shanghai's massive investment in infrastructure and

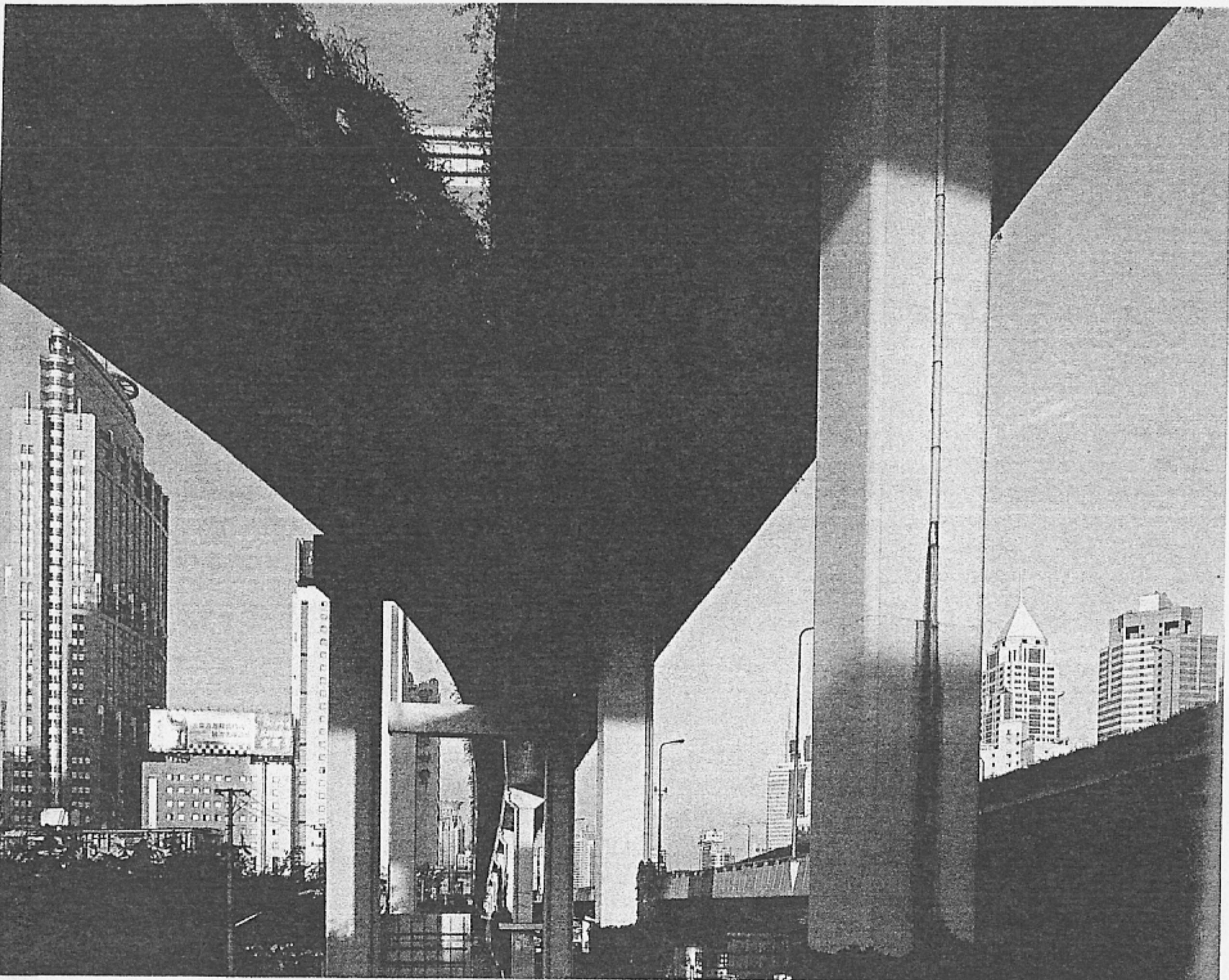
Right Construction workers setting up a new site in front of a row of Li Long houses

Opposite Shanghai's sea of skyscrapers. The route of the highway was the former Yang Jin Bang Creek between the French Concession and the British Settlement.

Below Elevated highways now carve their way through the city



buildings through the 1990s was astonishing in its scope. New communications systems, the city's first subway and first highways, the world's two largest single-spanned bridges, a new airport, 1,300 kilometres of roads, improved water systems, more than 4,000 high-rise buildings and better housing, hotels and public facilities were earnestly planned and built. Shanghai's transformation was undertaken with an almost revolutionary fervour, changing permanently the face of the city in a matter of years. The formerly low-rise Li Long skyline, punctuated by the occasional 1930s high-rise, had given way to the developer's dream – a modern city with elevated highways, underground subways, high-rise apartment living and modern office buildings. However, the haste in attaining the developer's vision echoed the





Above The northern half of People's Square in the 1950s, showing the former racecourse transformed into a public park with lakes and walkways

instantaneousness of a drug-induced high, leaving Shanghai with a hangover that might last decades.

The construction of an elevated highway that carved its way through much of downtown proved China's adoption of the motorcar as the primary means of transport in the future, a dubious policy if accepted by China's hundreds of millions of cyclists. The dream of Western manufacturers to tap into

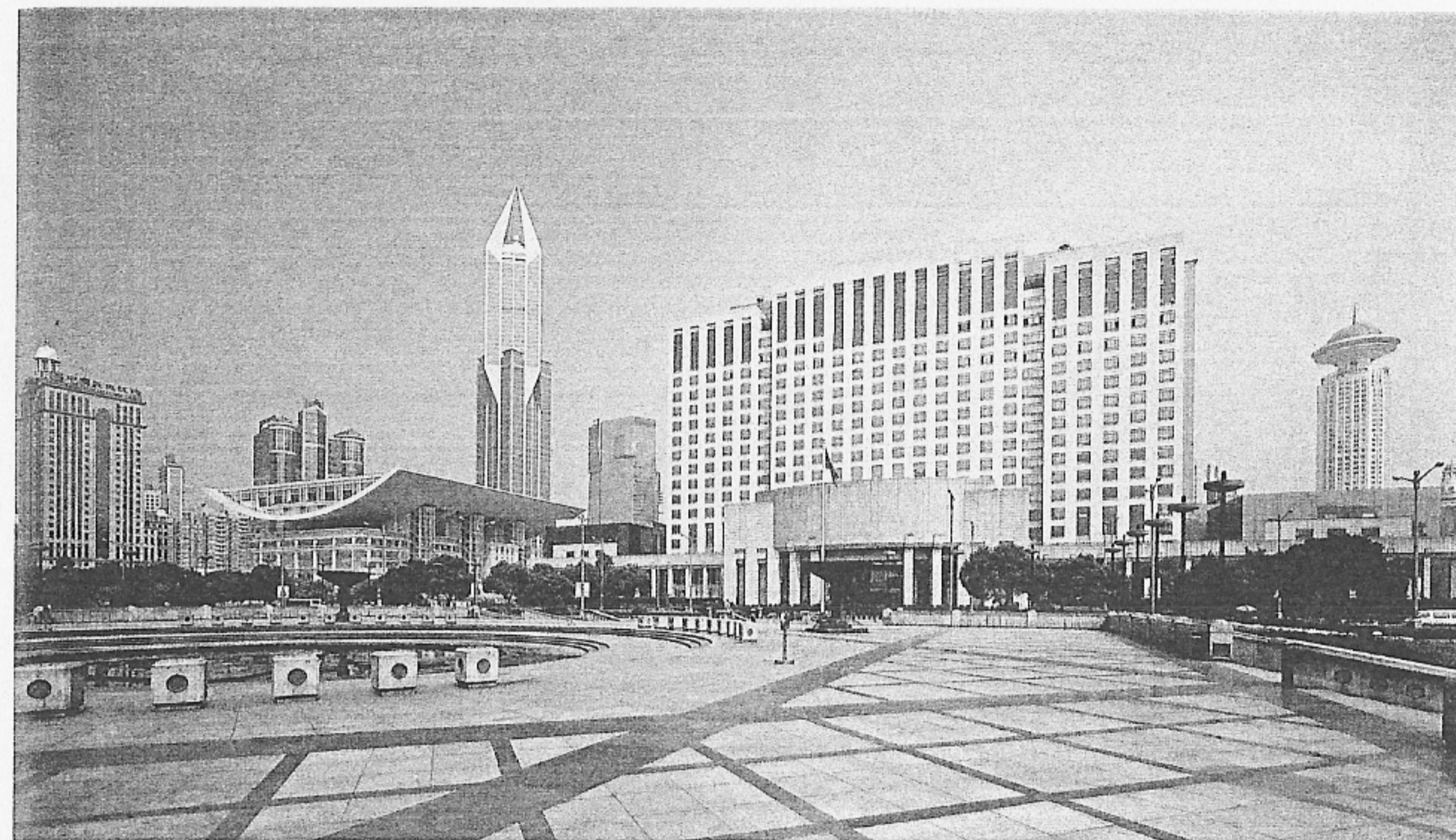
China's potentially vast automotive market is today backed up by a deliberate government espousal of the motorcar both as a symbol of growing affluence among China's middle classes and as a means of offsetting huge unemployment in areas of China formerly dominated by inefficient state-owned industries. Almost a century ago, one writer in the *Far Eastern Review* foresaw this potential in the context of Shanghai:

When one stops to think of the great number of cars running on the streets of Shanghai and remembers that these cars are practically all owned by foreigners one must be impressed with the great possibility for the sale of cars when the Chinese population of about 1,000,000 is seized with the ambition to own motor cars ... from a Motor Car manufacturer's point of view, there is an unlimited amount of business to be done some day.

Although the construction of the highway necessitated the demolition of large numbers of buildings, the east-west section of the highway, named Yan An Lu, was constructed over the former Yang Jin Bang, which had divided the British Settlement and the French Concession. The culverting of this creek as late as 1916 meant that the former King Edward VII Avenue, the road built over the former creek, became Shanghai's widest road after the Bund. Hence, when the decision was made to construct an elevated highway nearly 80 years later, the breadth of the route made it an obvious choice. Furthermore, the idea of an elevated transport system was not new to Shanghai. The idea had been mooted in the



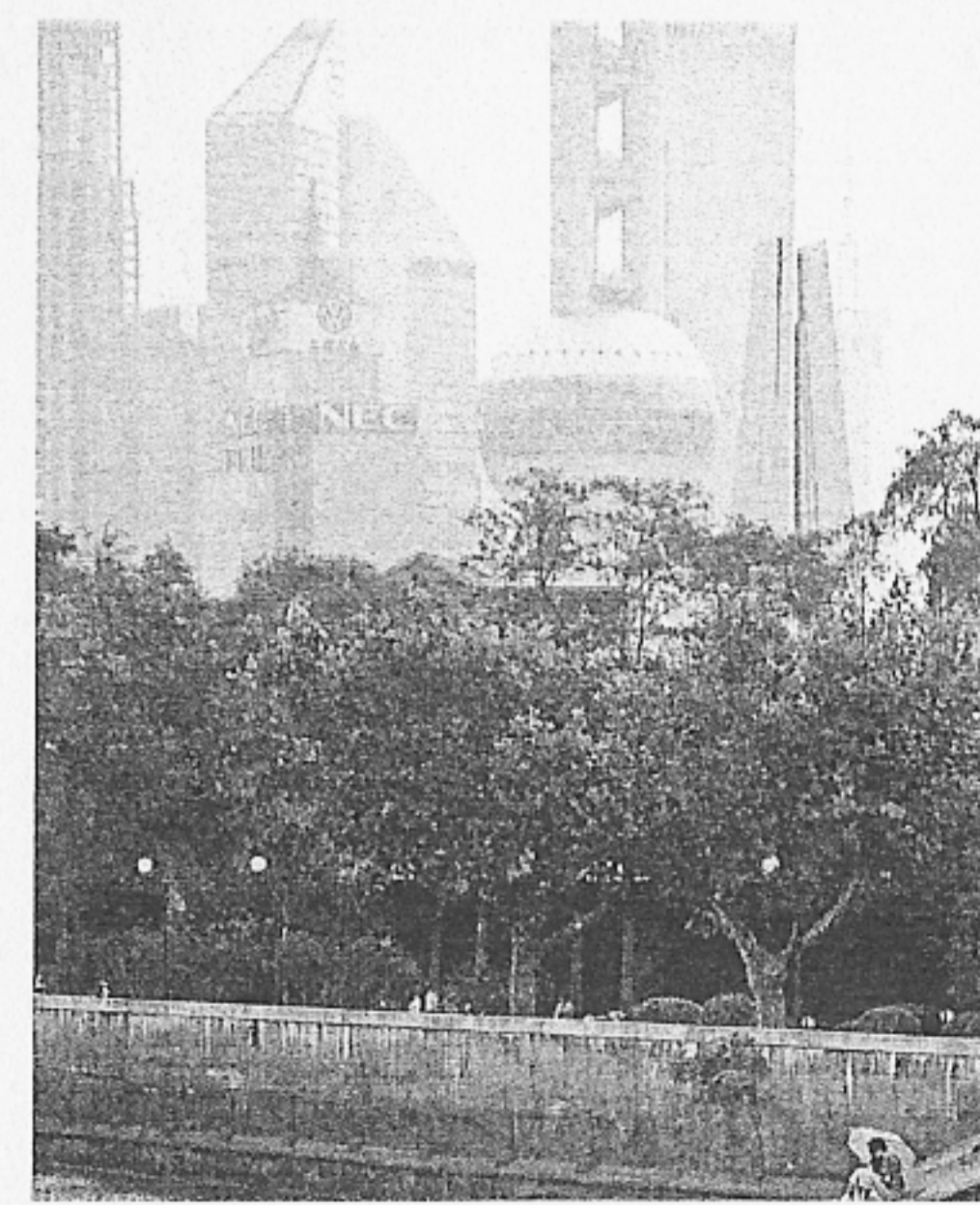
Right The southern half of People's Square looking east showing the Municipality (F5/G5) (left) and the Shanghai Museum (right) (G5)



Above The rather bleak People's Square, showing the Municipality (right), the Shanghai Grand Theatre (left) and a diverse range of skyscrapers in the background

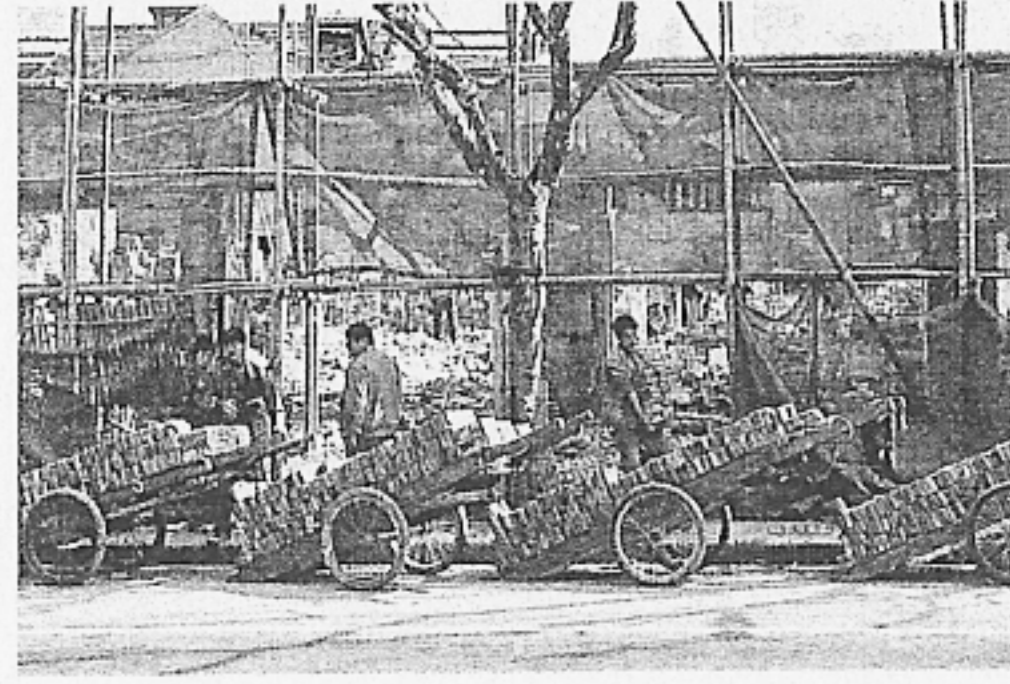
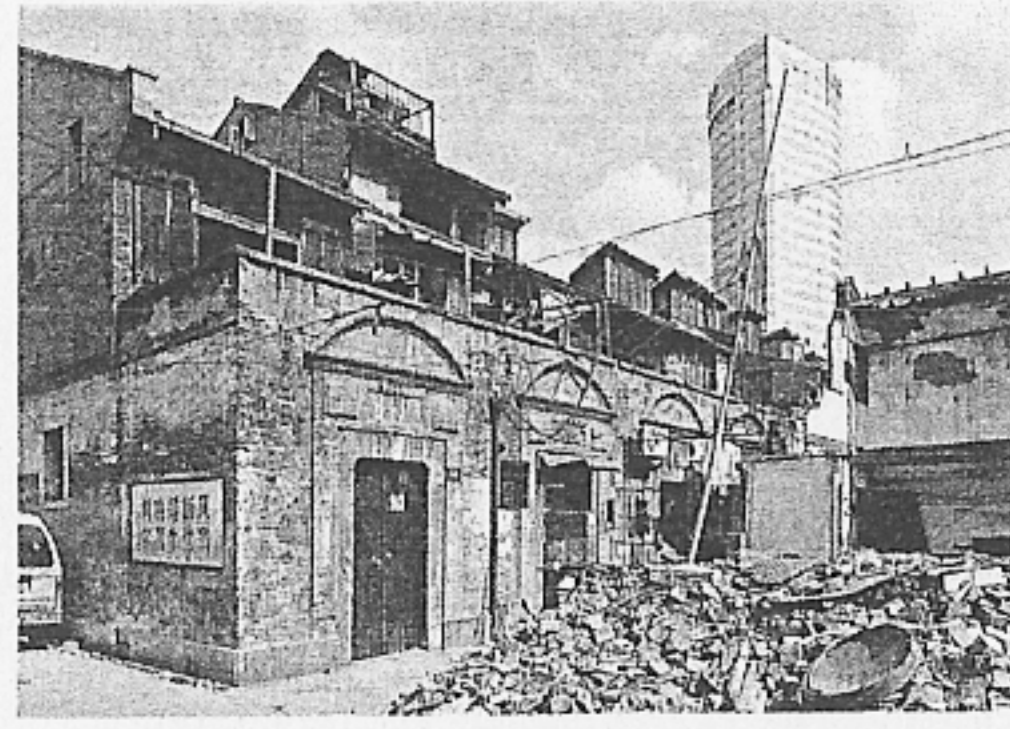
1910s, but it was not until 1921 that Sidney Powell, a renowned civil engineer, architect and surveyor, put together a proposal for two rings of elevated railway radiating from the Bund and connecting with the mainline railway network. The plan obviously failed to impress the ratepayers enough to secure its implementation, but nonetheless it does demonstrate an early desire for improved transportation in the downtown district, which had for so long been crippled by the ineffectiveness of the 1850s Committee for Roads and Jetties. The improvement of Shanghai's roads, cycle-ways and pavements remains a major challenge if car drivers, cyclists and pedestrians are to share equally in the upgrading of Shanghai's streetscape.

One of the largest intersections of elevated roads, rising to four decks of swirling concrete high above the neighbouring buildings, looks down on the former racecourse, now reincarnated as People's Square. This huge area of land, once the only sizeable open space in Shanghai, had hosted countless sporting events including horse races, cricket matches, baseball games, swimming galas and golf tournaments, as well as being the site of the Battle of Muddy Flat, a makeshift Royal Air Force base when Chiang Kai Shek was approaching Shanghai in 1927, and a communist execution ground after 1949. It enjoyed arguably its most valuable incarnation as Ren



Left With few public parks, Shanghai's are accustomed to being creative when seeking a secluded place to find peace and quiet!

This page Shanghai's old housing stock has been subject to massive and sometimes indiscriminate land clearance, causing unprecedented social upheaval and public disquiet.



Min Gong Yuan, or People's Park, from the early 1950s, when trees and lawns interspersed with artificial lakes and streams offered the public a pleasure area in the heart of the city on a scale and of a beauty that the foreigners in Shanghai had never achieved. However, following Shanghai's resurgence, People's Park was too valuable and its location too symbolic to be reserved for the sole purpose of amusing the public. In the centre of the park, overlooking People's Avenue, a pompous parade ground that severs the park into two isolated halves, the new offices of the Municipality of Shanghai were constructed. The design of this monolithic structure, clearly inspired by the traditional Chinese practice of providing a central location for the seat of authority, and like so many of Shanghai's landmark buildings constructed since the 19th century, concentrated more on making a statement than on addressing the needs of its occupants or its surroundings. The building represents a horizontal wall of white marble that disconnects the two portions of Shanghai's only downtown park, turning the remaining open spaces into diminutive parcels of irrelevant formality disguised as public spaces. Shanghai, long acquainted with the maladministration of its local government, had not only lost its one significant open space, but also had it taken by the very body charged with improving the city. Following People's Park, now called People's Square and a quasi-showroom illustrating the city's

newly found confidence, further monumental structures were quick to take root. The Shanghai Grand Theatre (F5), the \$72 million museum (G5) and the Urban Planning Exhibition Hall (G5) now nestle alongside the Municipality (F5/G5), forming the four pillars of Shanghai's primary public realm, whose very existence has been undermined by their construction.

Shanghai's history is replete with a consistent lack of regard for public spaces, despite repeated claims to the contrary from the administrations charged with their improvement. People's Square represents a catastrophic abuse of power or lack of experience on the part of urban planners, whose piecemeal attempts to rectify the paucity of public spaces by bulldozing entire blocks of housing will never return Shanghai's primary park to the people. Instead, power and money have dominated the decision-making process, and the influence and inexperience of the developer have proven too potent. Nowhere is this more evident, more controversial and more destructive than in the area of housing.

Shanghai's nationalised housing stock, once a windfall for the government, had stood almost completely neglected for half a century and so had become a tiresome burden. The sale of these properties for redevelopment provided a means of alleviating this pressure on the public purse. Plots of land were sold to developers in a deregulated land-use system that offered no incentive to safeguard the physical and social

cohesion of the city, but instead rode roughshod over public concerns and individuals' rights: 'The more money they made by selling leases, the more money each district had to spend on infrastructure development.' In four years from 1993, Shanghai sold leases for 1,334 land parcels covering 78.4 million square metres to developers. This coincided with, and was dependent on, large-scale relocations, which began in 1993. Former parcels of Li Long were pulled down to make way for high-rise developments.

In 1990, the population of Shanghai was approximately 13 million. Today, it is close to 20 million, yet the individual living space has nearly trebled from under 5 square metres per person to 13.8 square metres in 2003. With an enormous increase in the city's population, many of the high-density residential areas in or near the downtown, comprising 4.281 million square metres of 'shabby and dilapidated houses', were razed. In the name of urban regeneration, 900,000 households and countless communities were removed from the city's most desirable areas and relocated to the city's outskirts, creating massive urban sprawl. Nonetheless, an enormous housing programme provided 16.2 million square

metres of accommodation in under two decades, equating to 53 per cent of the gross housing in Shanghai and 'exceeding the total housing construction area in the first 30 years of the New China'.¹⁰

While it was claimed that these new residential areas provided an environment in which 'man reaches unprecedented harmony with society and nature',¹¹ the destruction of large areas of high-density city centre housing was, for the first time, threatening the unique texture of Shanghai's urban fabric – a texture formed over many decades by the amalgam of disparate communities coming together to conduct business. Vast swathes of land were leased by government, bulldozed and redeveloped for an entirely new type of clientele. The buildings, erected in place of the intimacy provided by former alleyways, houses, shops and small businesses, have been largely exclusive, homogeneous, unilateral developments denying public access, participation and interaction. Plot by plot, the dense grain of Shanghai's streets and their seemingly irrepressible social character were being eroded by anonymous glass facades or gated complexes that created a barren wilderness at street level –



Left New residential towers being built north of Suzhou Creek

Right Shanghai's older houses are often overshadowed by newer high-rise apartments



Far right, above The character of one side of this street contrasts starkly with that of the other, illustrating the old character of the Shanghai street life (left) and the new high-rise character (right), divided by multi-lane roads that sever the city metaphorically and literally.

Far right, below Typical old-style Shanghaiese frontages with high densities of living and activities



Below Dismantling the old and building the new



the most important and dynamic component of Shanghai.

The process continued almost unchecked until the late 1990s, when dissenting voices could no longer be ignored. In the depths of the Asian financial crisis, Shanghai, confronted with an unprecedented oversupply of office space fuelling dramatic rent reductions, faced genuine fears of a property crash. The slowing development offered a temporary reprieve as official policies shifted towards a greater awareness of public needs. Murmurings of architectural preservation, sustainable urban development and rights of property owners were concepts now acknowledged, though little understood, in the corridors of power, and not just used with brazen abandon in government exhibitions and in official reports. Designated 'excellent historical architectures in 12 historical and cultural regions',¹¹ 398 structures were assigned the title 'Heritage Architecture', a title intended to provide protection to these buildings from demolition and adverse modification. Although it contained intrinsic problems, this measure marked an important phase in the evolving debate that continues to reclaim a focus on the public realm from the dual influences of finance and politics. However, the power and influence of politics remain absolute, so whether or not a site is culturally or historically significant, if it conflicts with political interests, it will be removed. The only

truly sacred sites are those that conform with or have historical links to the prevailing political process. The epitome of such a process is the site of the first congress of the Communist Party, which is now attached to a kitsch tourist redevelopment. These two sites alone epitomise the state of current architectural preservation and urban regeneration in Shanghai. Politics and economics rule, while the local population, who know nothing of or care little for the tawdry idiocies encouraged by self-proclaimed design gurus, are routinely excluded or forcibly removed from their homes and banished to the suburbs in order that tourists can be served bland versions of historical events that led to one of the most divisive periods of Chinese history or wealthy visitors can sip coffee in a faux-traditional environment and claim they have experienced the real Shanghai.

It is still too early to judge whether or not these attempts at architectural and urban rehabilitation of the thousands of buildings built in Shanghai since the 1980s will improve Shanghai's character and texture, and it is premature to analyse individual contemporary structures. History will be the judge of their success. Some of the more inappropriate structures built in the 1980s are already being pulled down and replaced by buildings that are more sensitive to their immediate surroundings. Mistakes that have been made are being acknowledged, and this encourages constant improvements in the quality of design practice and theory. The new generation of Chinese architects, like those who returned from America in the 1920s, are pioneers in a new and exciting period of development in their country. They have had much to learn in a very short space of time, but they

no longer lack experience. The knowledge and skills they have acquired are finally being translated into qualitative improvements in architecture and urban design.

Seeing through the charade

There is certainly nothing more wonderful in the East than the rapid growth of this place.

Sir Rutherford Alcock, *Capital of the Tycoon*, 1863, p. 128

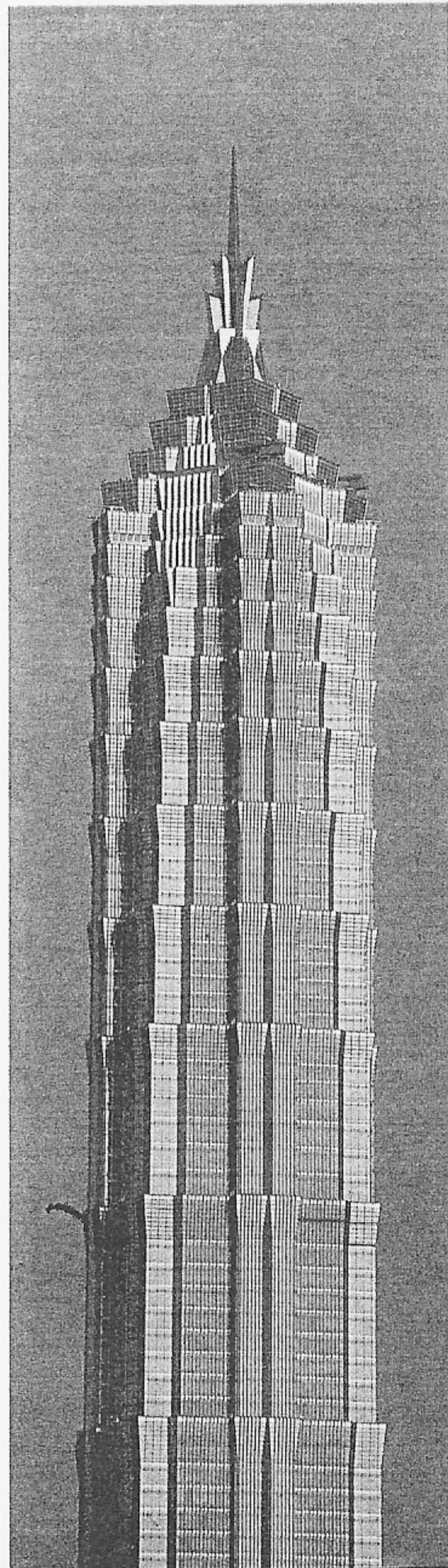
Despite the many conflicting forces, Shanghai has continued to grow, and still boom has not turned to bust. Shanghai, in its own irrepressible way, has managed to stoke the superlatives that satiate an ever-eager global audience that feeds on the city's aura. The world's first commercial magnetic levitation train whisks travellers to the airport at speeds in excess of 400 kilometre per hour, high-speed rail links to Beijing are expected to cut travel times in half, the city's airport is getting a second terminal, elevated railways have been added to the expanding subway network, plans for the world's largest port have been drafted that will house a million workers, and a number of satellite towns accommodating up to a million residents each are designed to satisfy the projected population increases in a city that has already grown by 400 per cent in two decades. Shanghai, as always, shows no sign of stopping. The plans for the future provide captivating viewing and present awesome problems, but one cannot fail to be impressed by the determination of the Chinese to succeed.

Nonetheless, the amazing statistics, the awe-inspiring architectural models and the sci-fi computer visuals that are employed at public exhibitions or official presentations to



Left The scale model of Shanghai in the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre

The Jin Mao Tower (15) set standards in modern design construction in Shanghai

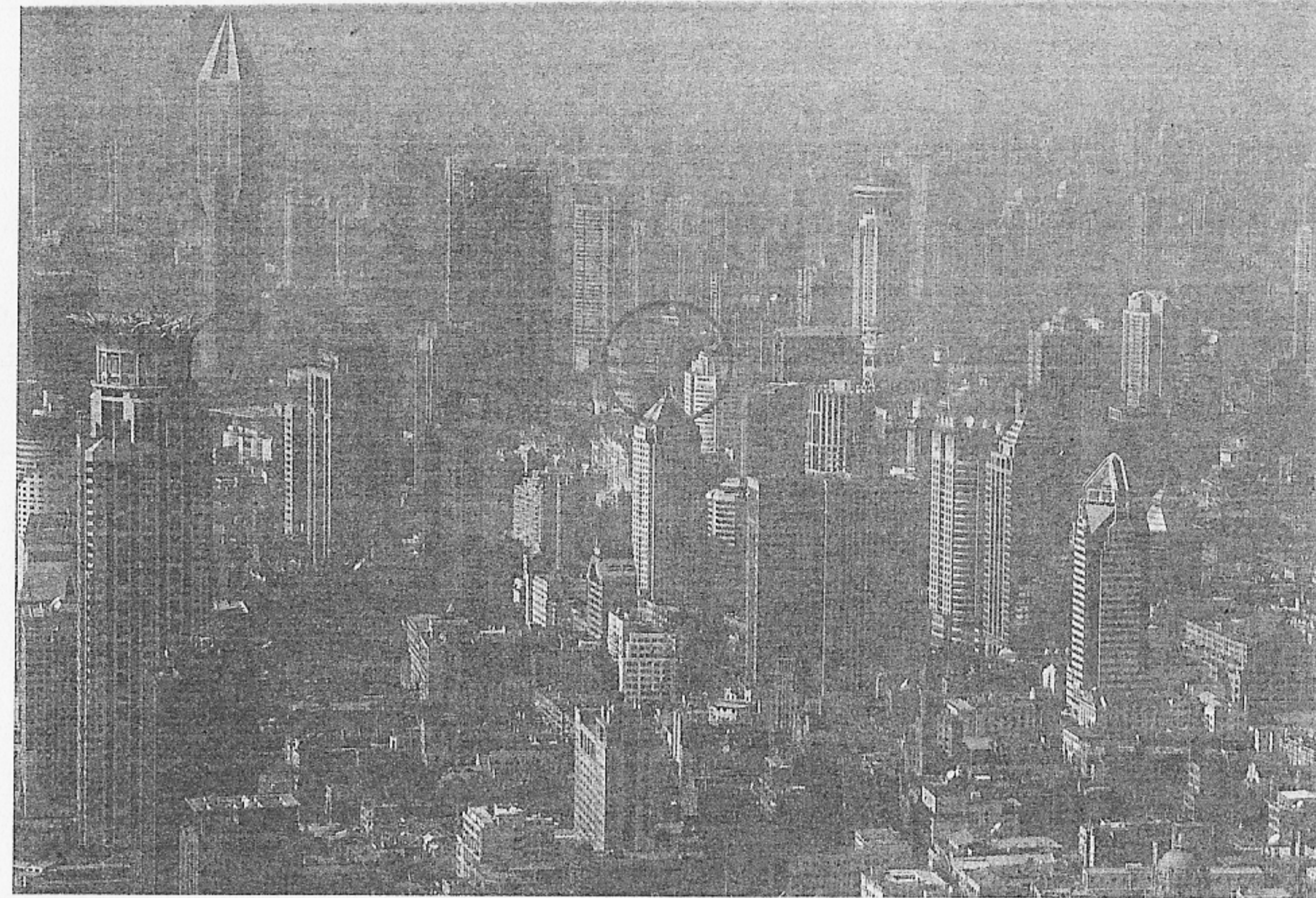


boast the city's future deal only with the tangible aspects of development and often neglect the intangible. As Yatsko puts it, Shanghai remains 'a city often stuck in control-oriented, authoritarian ways. Closer examination reveals Shanghai's fixation on building the hardware or physical infrastructure of an international economic hub, while undervaluing the importance of the necessary software, including ... access to accurate information'. This neglect is certain to have a detrimental effect on public opinion, which is already aggrieved at the lack of representation, consultation and dialogue from those involved with the development process. Neglecting the city's social, cultural and legal needs might yet undermine all the effort that has gone into building the concrete and glass towers that so captivate foreign and domestic tourists.

When one stands on the Bund beneath Pudong's showcase towers, or wanders along Nanjing Road at night with its ubiquitous flashing neon, or sits in People's Square contemplating the vastness of the encircling urban landscape, there is certain to be a Chinese peasant or foreign equivalent gawping, open-jawed, at the awesome sights before them. Ironically, none of the sights is new. They are the same spectacles that captivated visitors to Shanghai nearly a century ago, only on a different scale. Shanghai's 1930s 'modern skyscrapers, the highest buildings in the world outside of the Americas, and its straw huts shoulder high' have been replaced by their modern-day equivalents.¹¹

'Software' has always been the neglected partner to awe-inspiring 'hardware' that projects the sensational and the superficial. People will forever come to Shanghai and marvel at its science fiction landscape, unaware that it is all a show, a charade of fantastic proportions to convince others of the enchantment of a city that has never really existed. While other great cities evolve over centuries, taking time to mature as their fortunes ebb and flow, Shanghai, the 'vast brilliantly-hued cycloramic, panoramic mural of the best and the worst of the Oriental and Occidental',¹² revels in the idealism of its infancy. At the dawn of the third millennium, Shanghai has changed little in its approach. As Harold Acton commented in 1948, when he spoke of Shanghai's architecture contrasting with that of other cities:

You may not like the architecture [of other cities] but you have to admit its integrity and a certain splendour. Each is a product of its own civilization; these monuments are habitable by the sort of man who made them: they have personality. But the buildings along the Shanghai Bund do not look man-made: they have little connexion with the people of China; they are poisonous toadstools sprung up from the mud, a long line of pompous toadstools raised by anonymous banks, trusts and commercial firms. Imposing from the river with their turrets and clock-towers, but essentially soulless: no court or government had designed them and given them life. There they stand trying to give materialism importance, but they fail.



Above and left These two photos show how much Shanghai has changed in 30 years. The old photograph was taken in the 1960s, showing the northeast corner of People's Square with the Park Hotel (until the 1980s, China's tallest building), the former Foreign YMCA, China Apartments and Moore Memorial Church, and the Sun Department Store protruding above the sea of low-rise Li Long houses. The new photograph, taken from the same angle, shows the extent of high-rise development since the 1980s. The Park Hotel is just visible to the right of the base of the large dark building (top middle-right). None of the other buildings is visible.