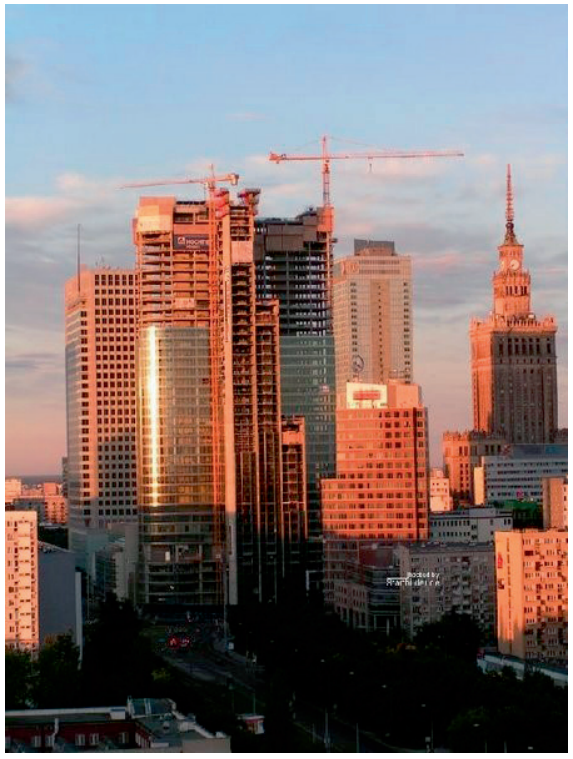
No. 20

TRONDHEIM STUDIES
ON EAST EUROPEAN CULTURES & SOCIETIES

Marcin Kula



MESSAGES OF STONES

The Changing Symbolism of the Urban Landscape in Warsaw in the Post-Communist Era

April 2007

Marcin Kula is a distinguished Polish historian. He is professor of Warsaw University and of the Leon Kozminski Academy of Entrepreneurship and Management. In his research and writing he has covered Latin-American as well as contemporary (post-1945) Polish history. Between 1968 and 1990 he worked at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences. His latest book publications include The Selfportrait of Family X. An image of Jewish life in Poland in the interwar period (2007); The Uses of History. A short report (2004); and Communism as Religion (2003).

ISSN 1501-6684

Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures and Societies
Editors: **György Péteri** and **Sabrina P. Ramet**
Editorial Board: Trond Berge, Tanja Ellingsen, Knut Andreas Grimstad, Arne Halvorsen

We encourage submissions to the *Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures and Societies*. Inclusion in the series will be based on anonymous review. Manuscripts are expected to be in English (exception is made for Norwegian Master's and PhD theses) and not to exceed 150 double spaced pages in length. Postal address for submissions: Editor, Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures and Societies, Department of History, NTNU, NO-7491 Trondheim, Norway.

For more information on PEECS and TSEECS, visit our web-site at http://www.hf.ntnu.no/peecs/home/

This photo on the cover (the Palace of Culture and Science of Warsaw with surrounding newly-built high-rises) is from Wikimedia Commons accessible at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Warsawa2,jpg

Marcin Kula

Messages of Stones. The Changing Symbolism of the Urban Landscape in Warsaw in the Post-Communist Era

The fall of communism in Poland led to a major reorientation in the official vision of history and, at the same time, to the rise of local initiatives. Both these factors resulted in a change in the symbolism visible on the streets of many Polish cities. This was also the case in Warsaw, with which the present paper deals.

These changes were all the more remarkable since the communists set great store by references to history and to historical symbols. Even though these references may have been biased or selective, the communist authorities rarely forgot them, and were particularly focused on them during the post-war reconstruction of Warsaw.

The changes that swept the Polish capital after the fall of communism were so numerous that presenting them all would turn this article into a very lengthy catalogue. For this reason, I only mention those which I believe are the most typical. Also, in view of their number, I was unable to photograph all the buildings and monuments illustrating those changes. Since the paper can accommodate even fewer photographs, I have decided to focus first of all on those which are less-known[1].

Even a partial discussion is prone to encounter certain difficulties. Some of the changes in historical references happened, or were at least planned, still before the fall of communism – as in the case of the reconstruction of Warsaw's Royal Castle[2] or the construction of the monument of the Warsaw Uprising[3] (fig. 1, 2). Others took place after 1989 but were simply an outcome of processes for which 1989 did not represent any sort of breakthrough. On a practical level, it would require a long monographic work to determine what construction started when or when a particular memorial plaque was put up.

Many of the changes in the urban symbolism were not intentional but came about as a side effect of other processes. One of these was the disappearance of the billboards

---

[1] All pictures, except for the one on the cover, were taken by the author in April-May 2004. The author is indebted to Piotr Oseka for scanning the photos.

[2] The Royal Castle was seriously damaged during the siege of Warsaw in 1939. As part of the wholesale destruction of the city after the Warsaw Uprising 1944, the Nazis blew up the castle walls. The reconstruction of the castle sped up in 1971.

[3] For a long time, Polish communist authorities rejected the idea of erecting a monument to commemorate the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, and the efforts to build it could be the subject of a separate paper. Eventually, the monument was unveiled only after the fall of communism, on the 45th anniversary of the Uprising on August 1, 1989.

and posters with typical communist content and their replacement with modern commercial advertisements, which are placed even in locations commemorating the most tragic events of the city's history; the almost total disappearance of milk bars[4]; the construction of new buildings in place of older ones – which, while perhaps not of great historical value, used to give the city its character. The symbolic landscape also changed due to the booming construction of new churches, the appearance of a small shrine even in the (traditionally left-wing) Warsaw Housing Co-operative[5], as well as the proliferation of crosses, candles and flowers at the sites of fatal car accidents. Significantly, advertisements began to be placed both on old historical buildings and on those that symbolised the communist era, such as the Palace of Culture[6].

A side effect of economic changes has been the greater care that all sorts of organisations take of their headquarters: they highlight their historical value, illuminate the buildings at night, etc. Historical buildings are being renovated to house various organisations or restaurants. The fact that there are more commercial outlets in the Old Town[7] is not due to any specific attitude toward historical buildings but rather to the ceaseless quest for funds by the institutions housed there. Besides the opening of numerous new restaurants, this is well exemplified by the Polish Academy of Sciences that rents its very interesting historical basements for a male strip club.

A change in a building's purpose can be profoundly symbolic, even if that is most likely not the original intent. One example is the former Polish United Workers' Party headquarters – the so-called Party House[8] – which after the fall of communism not only came to house the first Stock Exchange, but it was also blessed by the local bishop (as were almost all of the other financial institutions located in the district). In this case, the sprinkling with holy water had the air of an exorcism.

---

[4] They were the most popular (and cheapest) eateries of the communist era.

[5] An estate of relatively inexpensive apartment buildings in the northern part of the city, largely built before 1939.

[6] Officially: the Palace of Culture and Science (originally named after Joseph Stalin). A skyscraper built in the centre of Warsaw's downtown in 1952-1955, it was staged as the "gift of the peoples of the Soviet Union for the people of Poland". At the time it was built, it completely dominated Warsaw's skyline. Today it's still difficult to overlook, especially in the downtown area.

[7] A district of Warsaw, dating from the end of the 13th and the early 14th century, 90 percent of which was destroyed during the Warsaw Uprising in 1944. Much of its reconstruction was completed in 1953; this was commemorated by a plaque praising the communist government for its efforts in rebuilding the district, placed at the entrance to the Old Town Square.

[8] Building constructed in 1948-1952 to house the headquarters of the (communist) Polish United Workers Party (PZPR). The cost of the construction was covered out of theoretically voluntary contributions of the "working masses".

The Palace of Culture also became the subject of the irony of history. Even before the fall of communism, it became the location of the first night club featuring strip-tease as well as the first casino in Warsaw. Afterwards, it came to house the headquarters of Coca Cola Poland. Pope John Paul II celebrated mass in front of the palace during his 1987 visit to Poland. The enormous reviewing stand, built in Stalinist times, served as the base of the altar. Also significantly, the Palace of Culture's Congress Hall was the place where the (communist) Polish United Worker's Party was officially dissolved in 1990.

However, in the present article I want to focus on those changes in symbolism that were intentional. I will attempt to group the manifestations of the changes according to the historical periods to which they attest. Frequently, however, it is impossible to assign a symbol to a specific period, and in addition frequently those who change the symbolic level of the urban landscape simply recreate things as they were, without reference to a specific time.

1. *References to Early History*

The changes analysed in the present paper do not just concern the commemoration of episodes from the most recent past. In Warsaw's Bródno district, there are ideas to symbolically reconstruct the prehistoric settlement that had stood there. Naturally, it would only be a reconstruction in the broadest sense of the word – the ancient fort would serve as the inspiration for a modern entertainment centre. The historical reference would make the centre more attractive and emphasise the uniqueness of the neighbourhood, which would also like to be able to claim some historical heritage.

Another action intended to emphasise the historical traditions of a district, in this case dating to the 17th century, was the building in another district of the city, Wilanów, a monument of King Sobieski and Queen Marysieńka[9] (fig. 3). The construction and the monument itself were probably intended to integrate the local community. At any rate, the project was carried out in close co-operation with the residents. It was at their urging that Marysieńka was made to look a little more sexy. The monument has a message which remains current today: it shows a loving family and honours a defender of Christianity. However, there is more to the monument than

[9] John III Sobieski (1629-1696), king of Poland from 1674. Defeated the Turks at Vienna in 1683 and was hence hailed as a defender of Christianity and of Christian Europe. Marysieńka (Marie Casimire Louise de la Grange d'Arquien) was his wife. The royal couple lived in the famous palace in Wilanów.

the local, moral and religious message. It also honours the glory of Polish arms. According to the original design, the central element was to be a gigantic *bulawa* (the ceremonial mace that served as the insignia of Polish *hetmans*, or army commanders) which would be taller than the Palace of Culture, thereby imbuing the monument with an anti-communist message as well. Due to the historical character of the proposed site, this part of the monument has not been built yet. In any case, the design hails a Poland strong through Christianity, through the strength of the Polish family, and through the opposition to foreign influence.

A longer period of Polish history (1573 to 1795) is commemorated by the monument to the free elections of Polish kings, located in the area of the Wola district where the elections took place (fig. 4)[10]. As with the Sobieski monument, the district of Wola wanted to show that it has its own historical tradition – i.e. it wanted to emphasise its unique heritage. Now it has something which others don't, and it is something that isn't connected with the communist-era term "Red Wola"[11]. From a more pragmatic point of view, Wola now also has something that can attract sightseers.

By building the monument, the district also emphasised the connection between its own local history and the history of the whole nation. The monument praises the election of Poland's rulers as an early example of democracy in Europe. The fact that the election system was at times the source of the state's weakness and, perhaps, its demise in 1795[12], goes unmentioned, as does the fact that the kings were elected meant that the nobles were strong and the kings were weak. This in turn made it impossible to institute an absolute monarchy and contributed to Poland's deviating from the pattern of development which characterized the most highly-developed European states.

Like the Sobieski monument, the election monument is very politically correct. The plaque attached to it shows two noblemen shaking hands (as a sign of national conciliation?) in front of the Primate of the Roman Catholic Church. The crown that tops the monument is naturally a closed one and bears a cross.

Similar phenomena, a case of subconscious social engineering, can become apparent in actions concerning symbols that commemorate events of lesser historical

[10] From 1573 to 1795 Polish kings were elected by the nobility, who assembled in Wola for the elections.
[11] Because Wola was traditionally the industrial district of Warsaw, the communist authorities gave a lot of publicity to the industrial plants located there, and the supposedly "red" sentiments of the workers who lived and/or worked there.
[12] The third partition of Poland, after which the country, divided between Russia, Prussia and Austria, disappeared from the political map of Europe for the next 123 years.

importance. The Targówek district's realization that it is the site of a 300-year-old plague column commemorating the victims of an epidemic at the beginning of the 18th century can't really be explained by a sudden surge of interest in the people who perished then. Nor can the explanation be a desire to mark the site of a former cemetery. The district renovated the column and representatives of the local government took part in its second unveiling, the local schools' colour parties saluted with their emblems, and the local parish priest blessed the monument – and all of this basically in order to provide the local residents with another sign of their own history and remake the district's image into something more than just a concentration of apartment block estates[13].

An important change in the urban landscape, referring in a sense to the 18th century, has been the reconstruction of one of the sides of the Teatralny (Theatre) Square.[14] It is all the more important since it includes the former City Hall (fig. 5). However, more than the original 18th century condition, the present reconstruction restores the square's appearance before the Second World War.

The late 18th century was also the time when another idea being carried out today (the construction of the Temple of Divine Providence) originated. The building was originally intended to express the nation's gratitude to God after the adoption of the Constitution of May 3rd. [15] The meaning of the actions being undertaken today does not refer specifically to the time of the Great Sejm. It is much broader – more on which below.

Another idea not yet carried out, although currently being pursued, dating back to the late 18th century, is the plan to build a monument of Tadeusz Kościuszko[16].

---

[13] In the communist era, Warsaw was characterised by whole neighbourhoods of huge, usually ugly concrete buildings, forming housing estates unpleasant both in terms of their architecture and their inhabitants. Of course, they still exist today and, as in the past, are known as *blokowisko* – from the word "blok" (in this context, apartment block). This urban design feature has not been unique to Warsaw and it can be encountered in most cities in the former communist countries between the Elbe River and Vladivostok.

[14] Teatralny (Theatre) Square - a square in downtown Warsaw, completely destroyed during World War II. Post-war reconstruction did include the square's southern side (the Narodowy (National) Theatre) and the Wielki (Grand) Theatre), while the northern side was not reconstructed, but became the site of the monument to the Heroes of Warsaw (1964).

[15] Constitution of May 3rd - Europe's first national constitution. Passed by the so-called Great *Sejm* (parliament), also known as the Four-Year *Sejm*, in 1791. It aimed (but failed) to reform and strengthen the state. It has remained a symbol venerated until today.

[16] Tadeusz Bonawentura Kościuszko (1746-1817), general in the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War, leader of the 1794 Polish uprising against the Russian Empire, later known as the Kościuszko Uprising.

It is interesting that even attempts to symbolically commemorate events from the relatively distant past - the 18th century - can arouse very strong emotions. There was disagreement over where to bury the remains of King Stanisław August Poniatowski after they had been brought to Poland from Wołczyn[17]. This conflict was a continuation of the disagreement over the evaluation of Poland's last king. Finally the royal remains – or rather what remained of the remains – were interred at St John's Cathedral in Warsaw in 1995.

2. *References to the Time of the Partitions of Poland*

Regarding the 19th century, what has been especially emphasised are several events connected with the national uprisings. For instance, the battlefield of Olszynka Grochowska was cleared.[18]. In 1998, a document attesting to "The salvation of Olszynka" was built into the burial mound there together with – which is noteworthy – earth from other battlefields where Poles had fought and died. This was a way for the local community to emphasise the district's ties with the long tradition of patriotic uprisings and wars of liberation, and with the national history in general. Similarly, the Śródmieście district restored the Traugutt Cross, which stands at the site where the last commander of the January Uprising was executed (fig. 6)[19]. It should nevertheless be noted that initiatives to commemorate national uprisings have been relatively few in number.

An important project commemorating the time of the national uprisings – and in a certain sense, their symbolic closure – was the mounting of a sculpture of Apollo in a chariot onto the facade of the Wielki Theatre (2002). Antonio Corazzi's[20] original plan when he constructed the building between 1825 and 1833 included the sculpture. However, after the November Uprising, the Tsarist authorities did not allow it to be

[17] Stanisław August Poniatowski (1732- 1798), the last king of Poland. Ruled from 1764 until his abdication in 1795, when Poland disappeared from the political map of Europe. Died in St. Petersburg. After a troubled journey, his remains finally found a resting place in the crypt of a church in his birthplace, Wołczyn (in present-day Belarus).
[18] Today part of Warsaw's Praga Poludnie district. The site of a battle fought on 25 February 1831, during the November Uprising.
[19] Romuald Traugutt (1826-1864), the last commander of the January Uprising (1863-1864). He was unable to achieve military success - he was captured and hanged by the Russians.
[20] Antonio Corazzi (1792-1877), Italian architect, designed several important buildings in Warsaw.

placed on the theatre. As a mark of the event's importance, the contemporary sculpture finally placed on the facade was unveiled on May 3rd by President Kwaśniewski.

Interestingly, certain proposals to commemorate events from the 19th century became the subject of the same sort of debates that erupted around ideas with regard to the 18th century. During a Żoliborz district council meeting doubts were raised about whether to restore the basements of the Citadel[21]. It was argued that the renovated basements could become a tourist attraction. But the Citadel was built by Tsar Nicholas I to punish Warsaw after the November Uprising. So the council members' attitude – while somewhat amusing – is not entirely surprising. What is surprising is the fact that the Citadel hasn't become a symbol of the Polish national struggle or of Poland's national tragedies – even though many Polish patriots were held in its prison and dungeons, and many died there. The Execution Gate has been restored and is cared for – but less than 100 meters away, the glass case that housed the remnants of the Citadel's gallows is broken and graffiti has been sprayed on around it (fig. 7, 8). It is likely that it was the communists' adoption of it as their own historical symbol that has reduced its value as an object of possible veneration.

Restorations carried out by several corporations were justified with reference to 19th century history. Bank Handlowy (presently Citibank Handlowy) restored the Evangelical-Reformed Cemetery tomb of Leopold Kronenberg (1812 - 1878)[22] who founded the bank in 1870 (fig. 9). The Warsaw Water Works decided to renovate the grave of Sokrates Starynkiewicz[23], the engineer, Russian general and president of Warsaw who opened the city's first and still operating filter plant (1886). He died in 1902 and was buried at the Russian Orthodox Cemetery. Other organisations have taken care of certain 19th and early 20th century industrial buildings. The old paper-mill in Konstancin-Jeziorna, a small town to the south of Warsaw, lying directly outside the city limits, has been transformed into a shopping centre. The old Warsaw tram power plant, whose construction began in 1905, today houses the Museum of the Warsaw Uprising (opened in 2003). For several years now, there have been discussions on how best to use the old municipal power plant built in 1904 in the

[21] The Warsaw Citadel, also known as the Alexander Citadel, a fortress built in Warsaw on the order of Tsar Nicholas I after the defeat of the November Uprising. Most of the building was completed between 1832 and 1836. This was the place where many Polish patriots were imprisoned and tortured.
[22] Leopold Kronenberg (1812-1878), industrialist, financier, railroad builder, political activist.
[23] Sokrates (Sokrat) I. Starynkiewicz (1820-1902) was the President of Warsaw from 1875 to 1892.

Powiśle neighbourhood. There have unfortunately been no good ideas for the adaptation of another interesting example of old industrial architecture, the gas storage tanks of the old municipal gasworks from 1888. After the transfer of the Warsaw University Library to new facilities, the old 1894 library building has been used as a lecture hall – unfortunately, to the detriment of its historical value.

3. *References to the Restoration of Independence*

The period of regaining independence and the war of 1920 is commemorated by, among others, the monument of the Polish-Americans' War Effort (fig. 10), by a plaque mounted on one of the Warsaw University buildings in honour of the Academic Legion[24], as well as the placing of a historic artillery gun in front of the Kazimierzowski Palace[25] - on the exact spot where an artillery battery had stood when the Bolsheviks were approaching Warsaw in 1920 (fig. 11). One of the streets was renamed in honour of the Battle of Warsaw. No less important, and commemorating both the regaining by Poland of its independence and the entire period between the two world wars, are the two monuments of Piłsudski[26] (fig. 12, 13), the monument of Dmowski[27], the monument of Witos[28] (unveiled already in 1985), and naming the intersection of Warsaw's two main streets in honour of Dmowski, one street in honour of Witos and one of the downtown squares after Piłsudski.

In certain instances, the regaining of national independence in 1918 had a destructive impact on the city architecture. Most of the work intended to wipe Warsaw's appearance clean of all traces of what it had been (a provincial Russian city), starting with the demolition of the Orthodox church that had dominated it, had been completed before the beginning of the Second World War. These days the only conflicts which are likely to occur would involve opposition to the renovation of certain buildings, as was the case with the basements of the Citadel mentioned above. There may also be debate on whether to honour a particular episode or person from Russian times. A discussion of this sort

[24] A formation of students, created to defend against the Bolshevik forces approaching Warsaw in 1920.
[25] A 17th century palace, rebuilt in the 18th century, today houses Warsaw University chancellor's office.
[26] Józef Piłsudski (1867-1935), politician, Marshal of Poland, Chief of State from 1918 to 1922, staged a coup d'etat in 1926, and subsequently, regardless of formally held posts, remained de facto head of state until his death.
[27] Roman Stanislaw Dmowski (1864-1939), leading nationalist politician, leader of the National Democratic Party, political writer, held many public offices. Dmowski was a political adversary of Józef Pilsudski.
[28] Wincenty Witos (1875-1945), peasant party political activist, prime minister in 1920-1921, 1923 and 1926.

recently took place at Warsaw University. The question was whether a plaque should be put up to commemorate Professor Mikhail S. Tsvet, a Russian botanist and inventor of the analytical method of chromatography, who lived and worked in Warsaw between 1901 and 1908[29] (fig. 14). The initiative came from international scientific circles. There probably isn't anybody in Poland who has anything against Prof. Tsvet as a person. Nevertheless, the issue arose of whether the university should honour him, since he was a foreigner and citizen of an empire that occupied Poland. The problem was solved in a brilliant way: the plaque put up on one of the university buildings in 1994 states that Prof. Tsvet discovered chromatography "within these walls" (not "at this university"!).

4. *References to the Interwar Period*

The period before the Second World War is commemorated primarily by completing the reconstruction of the city, especially in such important places as Teatralny Square. As mentioned above, the reconstruction covered the entire side of the square, together with the facade of the former City Hall (the 18th century Jabłonowski Palace) and the 18th century St. Andrew's Church (destroyed in 1944, initially partially reconstructed, dismantled in 1954 and currently – after a final reconstruction – functioning as the Brother Albert and St Andrew the Apostle Church for the Ministry to Artists and Writers).

Most of the renovation work being done today on a number of Warsaw's streets (e.g. in the Praga district) or on certain building facades aims at a more or less accurate restoration of their pre-war appearance. There is the recurring initiative to restore to Próżna Street its pre-war look of a typical urban Jewish street, or to reconstruct (or, practically build anew) the synagogue in Praga.

The return to pre-war conditions is also seen in the restoration of the pre-war names of many Warsaw streets, as well as in the rebuilding of many monuments which had been removed under communism, such as the Peowiak[30] monument in Małachowskiego Square (fig. 15). The reason for re-installing this monument must have been the desire to return to the state from before the war – surely not many

[29] Mikhail S. Tsvet (1872-1918), Russian botanist, physiologist and biochemist.
[30] *Peowiak* – member of the POW, the pro-independence Polish Military Organisation which in 1914 – 1918 was active in Warsaw.

Varsovians still remembered it, and possibly even fewer were aware of what the POW was.

Pre-war sculptures or their designs also served as models for monuments built after 1989 (Piłsudski's at the Belweder, see fig. 12, and Słowacki's[31] in Bankowy Square, see fig. 33). Another instance of returning a monument to its pre-war state was the reinstallation on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier of plaques commemorating battles and places of suffering that had been removed during the Stalinist period. Some other symbols were also restored – for instance, the above-mentioned cannon behind the Kazimierzowski Palace at Warsaw University (see fig. 11).

The desire to return to what prevailed before the Second World War has affected even relatively small elements of the urban landscape. One example is the reinstating of the pre-war text on the memorial boulder lying by the Wisłostrada expressway, near Traugutt Park. For years, it had carried the famous quote, "Republics are as good as the education of their youth"[32], which was followed by these words: "In honour of the work of teachers / the Board of the National Town Council of the City of Warsaw". The inscription dated from 1956. Most people probably never even noticed the boulder. In November 1998, it was turned over and embossed with the words of Józef Piłsudski: "To renew human souls, to change man, make him better, mightier and stronger – that is your task." Under the quote, the text reads as follows: "In honour of the work of our capital's teachers on the 20th anniversary of regaining independence. The Municipal Board, 1938." The change restored the original text and was proposed by the Association of Piłsudski and Independence Organisations and the National Remembrance Society. It is significant that even such a seemingly unimportant, out-of-the-way boulder was remembered.

The cultivating of memory of the pre-war period is sometimes expressed through local actions which commemorate even relatively insignificant events and locations. One example is a tablet placed on a building at 12 Mazowiecka Street, stating that between 1915 and 1939 the building housed "the well-known bookstore of Jakub Mortkowicz, remembered for his service to Polish culture, publisher of the

[31] Juliusz Słowacki (1809-1849), one of the three great Polish Romantic poets.
[32] The words of Jan Zamoyski (1542-1605), included in the founding document of the Zamość Academy, a school established in Zamość in 1594 by Zamoyski as Great Crown Chancellor. Popularised by Stanislaw Staszic (1755-1826), Enlightenment era thinker and political reformer, in his work " Remarks upon the Life of Jan Zamoyski" (1787).

works of such authors as Stefan Żeromski and Maria Dąbrowska"[33]. The tablet was unveiled on the 100th anniversary of the founding of the publishing house (2004).

References to the inter-war period tend to reject commemoration of communist activists or other figures honoured under communism. As mentioned before, this has been manifest in the change of many street names, but also in the decision not to renovate the grave of the three communist heroes, Władysław Kniewski, Władysław Hibner and Henryk Rutkowski, executed in 1925 for killing a police informer. The grave is located in the moat of the Warsaw Citadel. Under communism, the grave was looked after very well -- now it has fallen into complete disrepair (fig. 16).

In some cases, ideas of returning to former names and symbols have been contested – like, for instance, the proposal to give the University of Warsaw its pre-war name, Józef Piłsudski University. This particular idea has not been carried out – which doesn't mean that the matter has been settled definitively. In certain instances, there have been departures from the pre-war and Piłsudski tradition – as was for instance the case with transferring the official residence of the Polish President from the Belweder to the Radziwiłł (Namiestnikowski) Palace[34]. Incidentally, both palaces served as residences of many officials of whom the Poles' memory is not necessarily fond and Poland's last pre-war President Ignacy Moscicki did not reside in the Belweder, so perhaps this is not such a great break with tradition after all. The connection between the Belweder and Piłsudski was reaffirmed by the Piłsudski

[33] Jakub Mortkowicz (1876-1931), bookseller and publisher. Stefan Żeromski (1864-1925) and Maria Dąbrowska (1889-1965) – leading Polish writers.

[34]The Belweder is a palace dating to the mid-17th century. It received its present, neo-classical shape in 1818-1822. It was the residence of the Russian Grand Duke Constantine. In 1918-1922 it served as the residence of Józef Piłsudski as Chief of State, in 1922-1926 residence of the presidents of Poland, Narutowicz and Wojciechowski, in 1926-1935 again Piłsudski's residence. During the Nazi occupation, it was the Warsaw residence of Hitler's Governor-General, Hans Frank. From 1945, it served as the residence of the president of Communist Poland, Bolesław Bierut, and later all of subsequent Chairmen of the Council of State, who were the nominal heads of state. After the fall of communism, it was initially the residence of the president of the Republic of Poland. As the residence of the Grand Duke Constantine, the Belweder Palace was the object of the famous attack on November 29, 1830, which marked the beginning of the November Uprising. The Radziwiłł Palace dates from the 17th century and has been subject to numerous reconstructions. After 1817, it served as the residence of the Russian *namiestnik* (regent) of the Kingdom of Poland, Gen. Józef Zajaczek (thus alternatively named the Namiestnik Palace). In the interwar period, it served as the official seat of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers. During the Nazi occupation, it was turned into a casino and a hotel for the Germans. After the war, it provided the ceremonial rooms for the Council of Ministers (here took place, in 1955, the signing of the Warsaw Treaty, in 1970, the signing of the Polish-West German Treaty, and, in 1989, the Round Table Talks that paved the way for the abolition of communist rule in Poland).

Museum being located there, as well as by placing the Marshal's monument just outside the gate (see fig. 12).

5. *References to the Second World War*

Newly created or modernised elements of urban symbolism have included numerous references to the Second World War, the most noticeable among them being the renaming of many streets in honour of wartime heroes and events. Others included the opening of the above-mentioned Museum of the Warsaw Uprising; the placement on the columns of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier of new plaques commemorating wartime battles and places of Polish suffering; and the building of new monuments. Some of them became quite famous, all the more so as the people of Warsaw had awaited them for a long time. There were real, sometimes multi-year, open or covert conflicts with the communist authorities over some of them. The above-mentioned Warsaw Uprising monument, the plans for the construction of which were met with especially fierce opposition from the communist government, was finally built at the very end of the communist period – although it was unveiled on August 1, 1989, already after the elections in which the communists were defeated (see fig. 2). Other monuments, such as the one commemorating the victims of Katyń[35] (fig. 17), or the Fallen and Murdered in the East[36] (fig. 18), the Underground State[37] (fig. 19) and Monte Cassino[38] could only be built later. The last of these monuments was carved from Italian marble and located in a street which had its name changed from Nowotki[39] to Andersa Street[40] (fig. 20). Another monument honours the Poles killed in

[35] Katyń was the site of the 1940 mass execution of Polish officers by the Soviet secret police (NKVD), west of the Russian town, Smolensk. For years the Soviet Union denied responsibility for this crime. Therefore, in communist Poland it was impossible to put up a monument to honour the victims. Officially, Nazi Germany was blamed for the massacre. Nevertheless, the victims weren't even commemorated as (supposedly) killed by the Nazis.

[36] That is, in the Soviet Union.

[37] This is the generally accepted name of the entire Polish military and civilian resistance against the German and Soviet occupation, 1939-1945. The name was based on the assumption that in spite of being occupied, the Polish state still existed and exerted resistance, under the direction of the government of Poland in exile (in London), with its delegate operating underground inside occupied Poland – which was the case.

[38] The scene of the victorious battle of 1944 against German troops fought, at the side of the western Allies, by the 2nd Polish Corps under General Władysław Anders. The battle was the corps' greatest victory during the war.

[39] Marceli Nowotko (1893-1942), co-founder and leader of the Polish Workers' Party (Polska Partia Robotnicza - PPR) – this name for the communist party was used from 1942 to 1948.

Volhynia[41]. Notably, it was put up by the thoroughfare named Armii Krajowej Road[42] (fig. 21, 22).

Sometimes various groups would commemorate the same event with separate monuments. One example is the monument devoted to the memory of Poles' suffering in the East, built in Podwale St. in addition to the Katyń monument in the Powązki Cemetery and the Monument to the Fallen and Murdered in the East in Muranowska Street. On top of this small monument is the stylised, symbolic word "Katyń", and below the following text:

In memory
of Polish Armed Forces officers
murdered by communist
Soviet totalitarianism
throughout
the Evil Empire
after September 17, 1939.
The Katyń Committee[43]
Col. Ryszard Kukliński[44]
The Poles of Chicago
Warsaw, May 1998

Under the text is a sign stating that the memorial boulder is a "Stone from the fields of our fathers".

There appeared numerous plaques and tablets that commemorate various persons and events from the Second World War. Some smaller communities, such as for instance housing co-operatives, honoured their dead with memorial tablets or boulders. To mark

---

[40] Władysław Anders (1892-1970), general who during the war created the Polish Army made up of Poles exiled and imprisoned in the USSR and later fought on the western front; the victor of the Battle of Monte Cassino.

[41] Volhynia (in Polish: Wołyń) – a historical region in Ukraine which in 1942-1943 was the site of extremely fierce Ukrainian-Polish fighting and the ethnic cleansing of Polish civilians.

[42] The road was named after the largest military resistance organisation during the Nazi occupation.

[43] A voluntary committee founded to uncover the truth about the executions of Polish officers by the Soviets in Katyn and to commemorate the victims.

[44] Colonel Ryszard Kukliński (1930-2004) was officer of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces. He worked as an agent for the CIA. He had been brought out of Poland by the Americans to the United States shortly before the imposition of martial law in December 1981. He was sentenced to death in absentia by a Polish military court. The verdict was overturned in 1995, and the case was discontinued in 1997.

its anniversary, the small Fenix co-operative put up a stone (fig. 23) on which the following is stated:

> In homage
> to the Founders
> and members of
> the Fenix
> Co-operative
> who fought,
> suffered and died
> for Poland.
> The residents
> 1913-2003

Some districts or housing estates have marked the sites of fighting during the Warsaw Uprising (1944) on the land they presently own. Some veterans' groups have put up monuments or plaques in memory of their comrades in arms. Sometimes these are quite small monuments and modest tablets – such as the small the chapel with a sign informing that during the Warsaw Uprising today's Solidarności Avenue was the site of the "Virgin Mary Redoubt" (fig. 24). Another example is the stone laid in memory of the soldiers of the Home Army Gozdawa Battalion (fig. 25). It features a poem written by Lieutenant Andrzej Sieczkowski in September 1944:

> When everything around burns and crumbles down
> The enemy in the New Town, the church of Saint John
> Under a shower of fire, rubble and steel
> Proudly it survives and it still fights on
> Encircling the fighting city with its ring of stone
> For thirty-two days held the Gozdawa Redoubt.

Other examples of most probably independent, grassroots actions to honour the memory of comrades-in-arms include the monument of the 1st Armoured Division, i.e. Gen.

Stanislaw Maczek's troops[45] (fig. 26), or a small boulder with a text saying, "Here, on August 15, 1944, the entire crew of Liberator EW 264 of the 178 Bomber Squadron of the Royal Air Force was killed while bringing help to the fighting city of Warsaw", whereupon the names of the killed airmen are listed (fig. 27).

The changes that occurred in Poland have also become visible in Warsaw's cemeteries. The remains of many prominent Poles who were killed in battle or died far from home were returned to the city. The grave of Marshall Rydz-Śmigły[46], which had previously been a humble earthen mound, was now changed to an imposing stone tomb, which is often covered in flowers. Names of relatives who had been executed at Katyn were added onto many family tombstones. The Sanctuary of those Killed in the East, which was created in the last years of communism by Father Stefan Niedzielak at the St Charles Borromeo Church in the Powązki Cemetery, is being maintained and taken care of. Father Niedzielak, who was murdered under suspicious circumstances (the murder has never been solved) and is sometimes called "the last victim of Katyń", lies in a prominent grave directly beside the church.

Certain plaques in honour of communist heroes have been removed (e.g. those at Warsaw University commemorating Janek Krasicki[47] and Hanka Szapiro-Sawicka[48]). Some communist monuments were pulled down (for instance, the monument of Marceli Nowotko, who, by the way, was killed not by the Nazis, but by his own party comrades).

Some of the actions intended to wipe out the memory of communist war heroes gave rise to public debates and controversies. One example was the dispute whether one of the bridges over the Vistula should continue to be named in honour of General Berling[49]. It must nevertheless be noted that has been no mass campaign to tear down communist monuments devoted to wartime heroes – even those which the people of

[45] Stanisław Maczek (1892-1994), general, 1942-1945 commander of the 1st Armoured Division which fought alongside the Western allies.
[46] Edward Rydz-Śmigły (1886-1941) was, from 1936, Marshall of Poland. In September 1939 he was Commander-in-Chief. After the defeat of Poland he went, along with the Polish Government, into exile to Romania. Later he returned to occupied Poland and died in Warsaw.
[47] Jan Krasicki (1919-1943), leader of the communist underground resistance organisation, the Youth Combat Union (Związek Walki Młodych).
[48] Her real name was Anna Krystyna Szapiro (1917-1943) and she was co-founder of the Youth Combat Union.
[49] General Zygmunt Berling (1896-1980) was the commander of the Polish division created in the USSR and the Polish formations that reached the Vistula River with the Red Army in 1944. The front then stopped on the Vistula and the Soviet Army extended no assistance to the Home Army troops of the Warsaw Uprising. General Berling's Polish formations, however, sent several landing parties over to the left bank of the Vistula, where the major part of the city lies and where the uprising was being fought. The reason why these parties were sent remains unclear. Any assistance they could render could not have been very meaningful.

Warsaw never warmed to. The monument of resistance fighters continues to stand in front of the former Party House, as does the Kościuszko Division monument[50]. The monument of General Berling is still in its place. No damage has been made either to the Brotherhood of Arms monument, which was built in 1945 in the district of Praga and has been generally believed to be a monument to Soviet troops (although it depicts Soviet *and* Polish soldiers). While the monuments expressing the Poles' gratitude to the Red Army, previously built in nearly every Polish town, have been demolished in many cities, the one in Praga remains. It continues to be called the monument of the "Four Sad Guys" or the "Four Sleeping Men". Although these names can hardly be seen a sign of great respect, they cannot be regarded as offensive either. It is good to be able to tell that there have been no reports of any untoward behaviour at the Soviet Army Soldiers' Cemetery-Mausoleum, the resting place of over 20,000 soldiers who died taking Warsaw from the Nazis.

Harking back to the war years are also the initiatives to commemorate the Polish Jews. Before the collapse of communist power, a Jewish Martyrdom and Combat Memorial Route was built. It starts at the monument of the Heroes of the Ghetto (built in 1948, fig. 28), and ends at the wall-shaped monument surrounding a fragment of the Umschlagplatz, i.e. the place where people deported to death camps were forced into the cattle wagons (fig. 29). The route between the two monuments is marked by symbolic boulders. There was a debate about whether the Umschlagplatz, which was after all much larger than the small fragment covered by the monument, should be built on. Adjacent to the Heroes of the Ghetto monument is an area called the Willy Brandt Square, where a plaque has been placed near the spot where, in December 1970, the German chancellor knelt in honour of the Jews exterminated by the Nazis – an event which went practically unmentioned in the contemporary communist media (fig. 30, 31, 32). Recently a monument of Janusz Korczak was built in the centre of the city[51].

Commemorating Jews killed during the Holocaust will be one of the functions of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews which is going to be built in the former ghetto – although this fragment of Jewish history in Poland will not be the only one it will be

[50] The Tadeusz Kościuszko Division, formed by the communists in the USSR to fight alongside the Soviet Army.
[51] Janusz Korczak (originally Henryk Goldszmit, 1878 or 1879-1942), paediatrician, child educator, writer. Although he had had a chance to save his own life, Korczak chose to stay with the children from his orphanages in the Warsaw Ghetto and followed them to the Treblinka death camp.

devoted to. To show respect for the old site of Warsaw's main synagogue torn down by the Nazis, in the skyscraper built on the spot several rooms has been set aside for exhibits by the Jewish Historical Institute which is located nearby. The Monument to the Fallen and Murdered in the East (see fig. 18), which, by the way, does not specifically refer to the history of Warsaw, includes a Jewish tombstone as well as symbols of the Muslim and Tartar minorities, Polish citizens who all suffered immensely at the hands of the Soviet Union.

An interesting aspect of Warsaw's wartime memories is the unceasing veneration of a particular site – a veneration which historical research has shown to be completely unfounded. There is a tale that the Nazis set up a gas chamber in a tunnel beneath the tracks of the Zachodni Train Station, where they killed many people. Historical research does not bear this story out. Some Varsovians, however, refuse to acknowledge this. Masses are conducted for the supposed victims, and flowers and grave candles are placed on the spot. This is quite interesting – Warsaw has so many places of confirmed suffering that there is no shortage of sites where the victims of the last war can be honoured. It would seem, however, that some people feel the need to expand the list of sites marking Polish martyrdom. Perhaps, in light of their memories of communism, they suspect that some of this suffering and sacrifice continues to go unappreciated or unmentioned. Maybe the attitude reflects the tendency, sometimes encountered in Poland, to treat martyrdom as a source of group identity; perhaps it is an attempt to "out-suffer" others, or maybe it tells about people's desire to identify with the fallen in light of their own hard and sometimes tragic life.

6. *References to the Communist Period*

Attitudes towards the communist period have been reflected in various changes in the urban substance. One of these manifestations was the multitude of changes in street names. Another was the dismantling of monuments mentioned earlier. Particularly significant was the tearing down of one of the most powerful symbols –

the statue of Feliks Dzierżyński (Dzherzhinski)[52]. Significantly, it was replaced by a statue of Juliusz Słowacki (fig. 33). Also noteworthy was the dismantling of the monument To the Fallen in Service and Defence of People's Poland[53]. Because during its planning and construction it was referred to as the Fallen in the Struggle for the Consolidation of People's Power, it was baptized by Varsovians "the Consolidator". Unveiled in 1985, the monument was clearly in opposition to the vision of history promoted by Solidarity, at the time a movement quashed and driven underground. Having been a monument built by the victors to commemorate their victory, after the fall of communism "the Consolidator" was treated in accordance with the merits of its message.

Of course, the innumerable small statues of Lenin that had stood in various institutions disappeared. The Lenin Museum and the Museum of the Revolutionary Movement were shut down; their facilities presently house, significantly, the Museum of Independence and the "John Paul II Collection" (i.e., the works collected by Zbigniew and Janina Porczyński, donated to the Polish Roman Catholic Church and now currently forming a collection under the official patronage of the Primate of Poland).

The building which undoubtedly aroused the greatest emotions was the largest single artefact Stalinism left after itself in the urban landscape of Warsaw (and Poland), the Palace of Culture and Science. It opened in 1955, initially bearing the name of Joseph Stalin. As it would be very difficult and impractical to demolish it, entries in every competition of urban design since 1989 have proposed "drowning" the Palace among surrounding high-rises. In addition to the already mentioned spontaneous shift in its symbolism, even some deliberate efforts were made to promote change in that direction. These began already under communism with the construction of the so-called "eastern wall" area of Marszałkowska Street. The department stores known as Domy Centrum were supposed to counterbalance the

[52] Feliks Dzierżyński (Dzherzhinski) (1877-1926) was a Polish revolutionary, old Bolshevik, founder of the Soviet security police and architect of the system of repression.
[53] The official name of the Polish state in communist times was "the Polish People's Republic" (it was introduced in the 1952 constitution). However, the country was usually referred to more simply as "People's Poland ".

Palace with their modernity (fig. 34). According to the original plans, the "eastern wall" was also supposed to be taller (which Gomułka[54] did not allow).

With time, the name of Stalin on the Palace was covered with a neon sign saying only "The Palace of Culture and Science" (as if anybody could mistake the building for something else). Recently a huge clock has been mounted on the tower. Most probably, it is supposed to evoke associations with Big Ben (fig. 35). The basements of the palace now house a museum of communism known by the characteristic name of "SocLand".

The Palace hosted large anti-communist events held on the 50th anniversary of Stalin's death. It also hosted the "End of Yalta" exhibit, which opened shortly before Poland joined the European Union in 2004. It is interesting to hear representatives of the palace's management – who always take part in the openings of such events – to praise the changing times and criticise the era that the Palace of Culture symbolises. During the opening of the "End of Yalta" exhibit, the host clearly went too far in his speech by saying that in comparison to the enormity of communist crimes "The crimes of the Nazis were more or less only an episode in history".

Notable in comparison with the above actions is the praiseworthy effort of the palace management to take care of the graves of those Russian builders who were killed in accidents during the construction and were buried in the cemetery of Warsaw's Russian Orthodox Church.

Unlike the Palace of Culture, another Stalinist symbol in Warsaw, the Marszałkowska Housing Development (MDM) and Konstytucji (Constitution) Square adjacent to it (fig. 36), have aroused no controversies. The residents of Warsaw have become used to the square, which on the whole is fairly well arranged in spite of flaws of design and architecture. The only problem, the name of the square (commemorating the constitution of 1952), was solved thanks to a convenient rule of Polish grammar. Since the genitive case of the singular noun "constitution" is identical to the genitive of the plural "constitutions," it was decided that the name of the square honours not the Stalinist constitution but all *Polish* constitutions in general.

In the city, the "PRL-nostalgia" (nostalgia for the period of the Polish People's Republic) has been tangible in the care exhibited for sometimes even small details of the urban landscape dating from those times. When the Moskwa cinema (which had

[54] Władysław Gomułka (1905-1982) was leader of the (communist) Polish Worker's Party (PPR) 1943-1948, and the (communist) Polish United Worker's Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza - PZPR) from 1956 to 1970.

been quite popular among Varsovians for decades) was torn down and replaced by a modern office building, people saw to it that the two stone lions decorating the cinema's entrance had been preserved and placed in front of the new building (fig. 37). This has been done in spite of the fact that the sculptures have no artistic value at all. On the other hand, this move was in line with the post-modernist tendency to retain decorative elements of an old style or system in life and architecture, in order to provide the residents with a sense of continuity and thus to make them feel better. It is interesting that (at least so far) there have been no suggestions to mark in the Warsaw landscape the positive attitude of many residents toward the Polish People's Republic, similarly to the initiative to build a monument to the Union of Socialist Youth[55] in Płock, or to raise a statue in honour of the late Edward Gierek[56] in Włocławek. There have been no voices calling for the restoration of the Dzierżyński (Dzherzhinski) monument, in contrast to what happened in Moscow. Perhaps what prevents such ideas (especially the last one) from coming to the surface is the general view of communism as an anti-Polish import from abroad, which paradoxically is not incompatible with nostalgia.

The suffering of people during Stalinism has been widely commemorated throughout the city. The Monument of the Martyrs of Communist Terror 1944-1956 marks the secret graves from that period. The monument was unveiled in 1993 and stands in front of the St Catherine Church, in the Służewiec neighbourhood, close to the field where the murdered victims were secretly buried (fig. 38). Engraved on one of the stones that make up the monument (fig. 39) are the following words (written by an unidentified inmate of the Mokotow prison[57]):

Passer-by,
Bow your head and stand still
Here, every lump of earth is soaked in blood
This is Służewiec, the Polish Thermopylae
The resting place of those who fought until the end

[55] A communist youth organisation, 1957-1976, incorporated into the federation of youth organisations called the Union of Socialist Polish Youth.
[56] Edward Gierek (1913-2001) was first secretary of the (communist) Polish United Worker's Party in 1970-1980.
[57] Warsaw's best known prison is located in the Mokotow district. Colloquially, it is referred to as "Mokotow".

No funeral marches,
No salvoes and no wreaths
Just a shot in the head at the Mokotów prison
And then a small pony took us to Służewiec

... With her name on our lips – to be victorious or die
We fought under "Wilk", in the walls of the Old Town
At Narwik, at Tobruk, at Monte Cassino
To find our resting place in the sand of Służewiec ...

Unknown Prisoner of Mokotow

A plaque commemorating the suffering of the victims of communist police repression and torture has been placed on the building of the Stalinist Ministry of Public Security (which now houses the Ministry of Justice). It is noteworthy that the tablet makes no mention of communists, many of whom were also imprisoned there and tortured by their own comrades (Stalinist *ubeks*[58]).

Many symbols and monuments commemorate the anticommunist resistance. Sometimes they refer to specific episodes – such as the events of 1968. A tablet in honour of the student movement of that time was put up at the entrance to Warsaw University. A plaque in honour of those persecuted at this time was placed at Gdański Station, where most of the Jews forced to emigrate boarded their trains leaving Poland.

Some of the new symbols honour Solidarity – one of the city's main avenues was renamed after the movement. The street's former patron, General Karol Świerczewski, was a figure that the communists promoted particularly intensely, perhaps in the naive hope that he would outweigh the popularity of Piłsudski[59].

[58] Under Stalinism, political police stations were known as "Security offices" (*Urzędy Bezpieczeństwa),*or UB. Hence the colloquial name for a secret policeman: *ubek*.
[59] Karol Świerczewski (code-name "Walter", 1897-1947) was a veteran of the Spanish Civil War, Polish and Soviet general, Poland's deputy Defence Minister from 1946. He was killed under unclear circumstances in the conflict with the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), which was fighting the communist Polish forces in south-eastern Poland.

An event which has been very extensively commemorated is the murder of Father Jerzy Popiełuszko[60]. His grave, replete with national symbols (fig. 40), the naming of a street after him, his monument which stands in that street (fig. 41), are all expressions of remembrance and veneration. Also noteworthy are the tablets that have been put up to mark places visited by John Paul II. Probably the most interesting are the two tablets placed on the wall of the Polish Army Field Cathedral, under the statue of the pope. One of them says: "The Holy Father / John Paul II / prayed / in the Polish Army / Field Cathedral / on 9 June 1991", and the second, "To the son of an Officer / of the Polish Armed Forces / on the Golden Anniversary / of His Ordination / the Polish Armed Forces/ AD 1996" (fig. 42).

Naming a street formerly honouring a communist hero after the Pope, or the naming of another after Cardinal Wyszyński[61], even if it was an expression of religious thinking, had an aspect of commemorating resistance against communism. Perhaps the first of these considerations was what motivated those opposed to naming another street after Father Popiełuszko – although in this case, it is more likely that the local residents were simply used to the old name, which had been the street's original name and which was entirely inoffensive (the name was *Stołeczna* i.e. "Capital Street").

Recently, another place has appeared that symbolises resistance against communism – the grave of Colonel Kukliński. The colonel, a former officer of the Polish General Staff who secretly worked for the CIA, died in Florida on February 11, 2004. The urn containing his ashes was deposited in the Avenue of Merit in the Powązki Cemetery in Warsaw. In this way, the long discussion about Col. Kukliński in Poland (was he a hero of the struggle against communism, or a traitor working for the CIA?) ended with him being inducted into the national Pantheon.

[60] Jerzy Popiełuszko (1947-1984) was a Catholic priest connected with the Solidarity movement. After the introduction of martial law, he celebrated special masses "for the Motherland and those suffer in its cause". He was kidnapped and murdered by members of the communist secret police. His death and his funeral were some of the most important events of the last years of communism in Poland. It's very likely that Father Popiełuszko will be canonised.

[61] Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński (1901-1981) was the Primate of Poland from 1948. He was imprisoned between 1953 and 1956.

Yet another place reminding of anti-communist opposition is the grave of Jacek Kuroń[62], located by chance next to Colonel Kukliński's grave at Powązki Cemetery. Although the two lie side by side, it is probable that in view of the political differences between them few or no flowers will be placed on both graves by the same people, at least at the near future.

Fortunately, the negative attitudes toward communism have not led to vandalism at cemeteries. The graves of communist leaders have not been desecrated, even though some of them, such as the tombs of Bierut and Gomulka certainly stand out. The only thing which has happened in cemeteries is the occasional removal or painting over of the letters "Tow." (for "towarzysz", i.e. comrade) placed on the tombstones of people who had close ties with the communist party (PZPR).

Naturally the frequency of flower-laying ceremonies at particular graves has changed, as have the dates of official observances at cemeteries to commemorate important anniversaries.

On a different, though related, subject it should be mentioned that the University of Warsaw did not remove the official portraits of the chancellors who served under communism: Stanisław Turski (1952-1969) and Zygmunt Rybicki (1969-1980). This is the case in spite of the fact that, particularly the second of them evokes strong negative emotions as the man who, as deputy-chancellor in 1968 and later, repressed the anticommunist student movement and was only removed as a result of the changes of 1980. The older generation of the faculty still harbours hostile feelings toward Rybicki, and these feelings could easily have been used as an excuse to remove his official portrait. However, this did not happen. On the other hand, the Chancellors' portrait gallery includes a portrait of Henryk Samsonowicz, who was elected as an opponent of Chancellor Rybicki, and who was removed by the authorities in 1982. There is a picture of Chancellor Grzegorz Białkowski (1985-1989), who sympathised with the opposition, and of Andrzej Kajetan Wróblewski (1989-1993), who undertook the difficult task of transforming the university after the fall of communism. Most noteworthy, however, is the fact even a portrait of Professor Klemens Szaniawski is hanging in the gallery. Professor Szaniawski was elected chancellor in 1984, but the authorities never allowed him to take the post. Since he never officially held the post,

[62] Jacek Kuroń (1934-2006) started his political career as a communist. He became, later on, one of the best known leaders of the anti-communist opposition, co-founder of KOR (the Committee for the Defence of Workers) in 1976.

he is the only person pictured not in a toga but in a suit, and the text under the portrait says "Rector Electus" instead of "Rector Magnificus".

7. *References to the Entire History of Poland*

Besides symbols referring to specific periods in history, there have also been numerous undertakings with the intention to make broader statements about the history of Poland. The care for cemeteries – not only Catholic ones – which began to be promoted before the fall of communism, makes a statement which is broader than one about a specific moment or event in Polish history. The Jewish History Museum is meant to commemorate the many centuries of the participation of Jews in Polish society and not "just" the Holocaust. The first of the many dates placed on the base of the new Polish Cavalry Monument is 972, i.e. the year of the Battle of Cedynia[63] (fig. 43). The Traugutt Cross (see fig. 6) also makes a broader statement than "just" about the January Uprising. After the fall of communism, plaques were added to it informing that the symbol had been renovated with the help of various organisations, including the Katyń Committee and that the model of the Independence Cross "awarded by Polish President Ignacy Mościcki[64] to the soldiers of the January Uprising[65]" had been hung on it "thanks to the efforts of underage political prisoners of 1944-1956". This was intended to demonstrate the continuity of the nation's martyrological and independence tradition. The same intention has been behind the construction of the urn with earth from battlefields on which Poles had fought in the burial mound at Warsaw's Olszynka .

A statement about a much broader and longer period is the stone dedicated to Polish Siberian exiles, located at the roundabout named after them. The sign on it says the following: "In memory of the Poles exiled to Siberia in the 18th and 19th centuries and fated to not return to their homeland". The stone was put up by the Siberian Exile's Association in 2004 (fig. 44).

The reinstalling of the plaques taken off the Grave of the Unknown Soldier during communist rule and the putting up of new ones offer an entirely different perspective upon Polish history. The same can be said of Piłsudski Square, where the

[63] The victory of Polish ruler Mieszko I and his brother Czcibor over the Saxon murgrave Hodon.
[64] Ignacy Mościcki (1867-1946), chemist, president of Poland from 1926 to 1939.
[65] The national uprising against Tsarist Russian rule in 1863-1864.

grave is located and where one of the Marshall's two monuments in Warsaw stands. (see fig. 13). The square has a very important place in Polish history. It was here that the Tsarist authorities built a Russian Orthodox church that symbolised Russian domination. As mentioned earlier, the Poles tore the church down after regaining independence. The square was where Piłsudski reviewed military parades. During the German occupation it was renamed Adolf Hitler Platz, and the disappearance of this name was a powerful symbol of the victory over the Nazis. Victory Square is what it was called under communism. This was the square where John Paul II celebrated a mass during his first visit to Poland after becoming Pope (1979). This is where the funeral ceremonies for Cardinal Wyszyński were held (1981). After the imposition of martial law, people would arrange a cross of flowers here; the cross remained in place for a long time, constantly renewed, until the authorities took it away, using the pretext that the square had to be re-paved. Today, on the axis of the square, which is at the same time the axis of the grave, there is a tablet with the following words:

On this spot
Pope
JOHN PAUL II
celebrated Mass
on 2 June 1979
and, on 31 May 1981,
Primate of Poland
Cardinal Stefan
WYSZYNSKI
began
his final journey

Gradually, Piłsudski Square has been turned into a sort of "national sanctuary". Considering the fact that one of its sides has not yet been rebuilt, the past and present conflicts over its reconstruction are worthy of note (fig. 45). The northern side has been taken up by an extremely elegant building, designed by the famous architect Norman Foster. Not only is the building's style quite sedate, it was agreed that it would not house any loud bars or restaurants (fig. 46). Also characteristic are the periodically appearing

voices of opposition to having a playground on the square. Today, even roller-skating is forbidden there (fig. 47).

Messages that refer to the entire history of Poland are frequently borne by churches. The new door to the former garrison church – which after the fall of communism became the Polish Army Field Cathedral – contains panels showing the Battle of Legnica, the Battle of Grunwald, the defence of the Jasna Góra monastery, the Battle of Vienna, the Kościuszko Uprising, the Battle of Warsaw and Monte Cassino[66]. The door also features a sign with the following meaningful words: "Milito pro Christo" (fig. 48).

The St Stanisław Kostka church (fig. 49) is literally saturated with historic messages – beginning with an artistic representation of the baptism of Poland, through mementoes of the national uprisings - military banners hanging in the nave of the church, numerous plaques and symbolic graves commemorating people killed on battlefields and in camps during the Second World War (fig. 50), and a stone commemorating Grzegorz Przemyk (a boy beaten to death by communist police in May 1983). This historical overview of sorts ends with the grave (fig. 40) and monument of Father Jerzy Popiełuszko (fig. 51), who is especially venerated at the church.

The messages so richly present at the St Stanisław Kostka church make up a coherent martyrological and martial vision of the history of Poland. A sort of culmination of this vision is a sign saying “We stand guard” in letters modelled on the Solidarity logo, written on the pavement by the church’s gate and symbolising both a religious and a patriotic message, which in this case was most probably perceived as one and the same (fig. 52).

The symbolic references at the Temple of Divine Providence pertain to the country’s history as a whole too. Its construction reviews Polish history from the attempt to save Poland in the late 18th century (the Constitution of May 3rd), through successive defeats to the final successful outcome, the crowning glory of which is constituted by the fulfilment of the historical promise to build the temple. The building would thus be a way

[66] The Battle of Legnica - 1241, against the Mongols; the Battle of Grunwald - 1410, against the Teutonic Knights; the defence of the Jasna Góra monastery - 1655, against the Swedish invasion; the Battle of Vienna - 1683, against the Turks; the Kościuszko Uprising - 1794, against the Russians; the Battle of Warsaw - 1920, against the Soviets; the Warsaw Uprising - 1944, against the Germans; Monte Cassino - 1944, against the Germans.

of saying that the work interrupted by the partitions, German occupation and communism has finally been completed. In a certain symbolic sense the construction thus closes a historical cycle – from independence to captivity and from captivity to independence regained.

A similar, though smaller-scale message is carried by the already mentioned hoisting of the statue of Apollo's chariot onto the facade of Warsaw's Wielki Theatre (2002). The sculpture which the Tsarist authorities refused to allow has finally taken the place for which it was intended. The cycle has been completed (and let us hope that it really has!).

Sometimes, elements of the urban landscape that had existed for longer periods and recently assumed symbolic significance have also become the subject of debate (as have those elements related to specific times). One of these debates concerned the continued existence of the Różycki Bazaar which was established in the beginning of the 20th century. In 2002, the merchants' association of the bazaar organised a 101st anniversary celebration, hoping that the power of tradition would overcome the district authorities' plans to close the marketplace down.

8. *Stones Do Speak – But They Only Say What We Want Them To*

Let me summarise with the following remarks.

The fall of communism led to profound changes in the city's historical symbolism. The sum of all of the changes introduced resulted in a radical turnaround in the symbols' message. Corresponding changes of particular symbols in specific areas and/or organisations have entirely transformed the image of history that these symbols present, even though the changes may have focused on symbols representing only particular times.

This transformation was due to a greater extent to the addition of new symbolic elements than to the removal of old ones. Nevertheless, there have been instances of old symbols destroyed and, more often, of the elimination of old symbolism through the renaming of streets.

Symbolic changes frequently reflect contemporary political affiliations and divisions. The same historic event may be commemorated with several plaques or

memorials and the main difference between them tends to be the political beliefs and community affiliation of the people who worked for their creation;

Grass-root initiatives by veterans, various civil-society groups, districts, neighbourhoods, workers of various organisations, have been playing a prominent role in the changes described. Some of the new monuments and/or plaques feature texts written by actual participants of the events being commemorated. This makes a monument even more meaningful to the community.

Changes in symbols were sometimes introduced to satisfy a need for local integration and recognition of local achievement. The wish to assert local claims of national-historical significance figures high also. Often times, interventions in the symbolic landscape were motivated by the need to cultivate specific memories (traditions) of various small local communities (veterans' associations). This was the case in Wilanów, where the Sobieski monument was built, as the text on the monument testifies, not only "in honour of a Great Commander and King of Poland," but also to celebrate "the first citizen of Wilanów". Another case in point is the stone at the Fenix housing co-operative memorializing their residents who "died and suffered for Poland".

The funding of new symbolic artefacts (or of the renovation of old ones) often comes from private sources. The plaque on the building which between 1915 and 1939 housed the Mortkowicz bookstore was paid for by a firm, System 2000, which currently has its headquarters there. On the King Sobieski Monument it is stated that the monument was built thanks to the help of a foundation established in order to finance the project. The names of the chief donors are also listed and it is emphasized that "The King Jan III Sobieski Monument Foundation carries out its statutory aim with no contributions from public funds, thanks solely to support by firms and private donors". The boulder commemorating Siberian exiles bears a plaque stating this: "To the Municipal Road Works Enterprise with thanks for its financial and technical support in the building of this monument. Former prisoners of Siberia." A sign on the monument in honour of the soldiers of General Maczek's First Armoured Division, which fought in France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany, states that the monument was funded by "cities, provinces, national institutions from Western Europe and organisations and donors from the entire world". In the case of many other places of remembrance, it is immediately obvious that their construction was financed largely through public collections and/or from funds other than the national or municipal budget. The problem in such cases is that, often times, the

groups supporting the idea for the construction had more power to promote and initiate the project than to care for the memorial afterward or to convince the city to care for it. Thus, supposedly solemn places are not taken care of, especially if they are located in out-of-the-way places. Even the Sobieski monument has to stand without some of the metal letters of its inscription because they have even fallen (or been torn) off.

The changes in the symbolism of urban landscape emphasise the continuity of national history, seen as disrupted by various historical misfortunes and recently especially by communism. The most obvious example here is the construction of the Temple of Divine Providence – but there are others, such as the reinstating of pre-war street names, the changes to the Traugutt Cross and the installation of the originally planned ornament on the facade of the Wielki Theatre.

The transformation we have discussed also reflects the urge to fill in many "blank spots" in Poland's history, emphasizes the glory of the country's past and accentuates the traditional vision of Poland as a nation of martyrs and rebels. Also, it makes tangible the high centrality of Roman Catholicism in Polish life. Many of the symbols have reflected the typically Polish connection between anti-communism, religion, and the suffering of wartime. It is impossible to separate the anticommunist and religious dimension in the thinking that led to the renaming of Julian Marchlewski[67] Street to John Paul II Street, in the veneration of Father Popiełuszko, or in the addition to the plaque on the Polish Underground State Monument of the information that the monument had been blessed by the Pope. There is no way to distinguish between anti-communism, religiousness and respect for the Warsaw Uprising in the motives that led to the putting up of the monument of the Virgin Mary Redoubt.

The changes we have explored also reflect the fact that until the Holocaust, Warsaw had a large Jewish population. The only other national minority that could be considered would be the Russians. After all, in the times of the partitions Warsaw was a large Russian city. However, there is nothing to indicate that anybody would want to preserve the memory of Russian presence in the city. Its traces can still be seen in the Citadel and the forts around it, the three Russian Orthodox churches, one of which was

[67] Julian Marchlewski (1866-1925) writer, journalist, socialist and communist activist, in 1920 chairman of the Polish Provisional Revolutionary Committee, which was established by the Bolsheviks in Białystok as a national government of sorts, in anticipation of a Soviet victory in the battle of Warsaw.

changed into a church of another religion, and in the Russian Orthodox cemetery which has by now become largely Catholic (fig. 53). A historian will also be able to discern traces of the Russian presence in the planning of the Żoliborz district. However, elements such as the layout of city streets do not form part of the city's symbolic tissue, and are comprehensible only to scholars.

An exception in the areas of remembrance of things Russian is maintaining of symbols commemorating the already mentioned Russian president of the city, Sokrates Starynkiewicz. The square bearing his name elicits no protests; this exception is likely due to his great contributions to the city's development.

Some of the changes concerned events that were secondary to those that were in fact being commemorated. An example is marking the spot where Chancellor Brandt knelt in front of the Heroes of the Ghetto monument (fig. 30, 31, 32).

The changes after the fall of communism frequently carry a contemporary political-ideological message -- for example, the importance of the family (e.g. the Sobieski monument, fig. 3), or a patriotic, anticommunist or Catholic message (like in the case of the places of veneration of Father Popiełuszko), or one reflecting the new international situation. It wouldn't be surprising if the planned monument of Kościuszko contained a message about Poland's friendship with the United States.

The changes in the symbolism or the city's public arts and monuments often seem to serve and improve the city's appeal to inhabitants and tourists – to emphasise its originality and beauty, to increase the value of buildings, to find new and better uses for existing buildings, or to better serve the needs of business and/or entertainment.

The political systemic transformation that has given rise to the transformation of the symbolism of the urban landscape has also caused economic difficulties, which frequently interferes with the need to restore historical monuments and symbolic sites. The transformation prevented many of those sites being deliberately or accidentally destroyed – but it also put many others in danger due to the rise in real estate values. It has increased the need to seek and obtain funds for the upkeep of existing symbols or the creation of new ones. Many old buildings could only be renovated with assistance from private funds, which frequently required the name of the sponsoring company to be placed on the historical building during the renovation. In this way, history intertwined with modernity and old buildings came to express a modern message as they never had before.

9. *Have the Changes Come to An End?*

The last issue is that of defining the chronological boundary of the changes in the symbolism of the urban landscape triggered by the political transformation. Of course, in every city certain changes occur constantly, dictated by the normal course of urban life. But when does the clearly defined wave of change end?

It seems that the wave of post-communist changes in Warsaw has not yet crested. Monuments that could not have been put up under communism are still being built. The names of streets that still clearly evoke the communist era are being changed.[68] At the same time, one of Warsaw's central intersections has sprouted an artificial palm tree – a very tall "royal palm" (fig. 54). In a city located a long way from the tropics, the tree is both amusing and absurd. The motives for its construction and the way it was received by the Varsovians could be the subject of a separate study. The initial hypothesis would probably be that the palm tree represents an escape into the absurd, away from the generally difficult situation of the city and the country, and is at the same time itself a symbol of the absurd. It may also be seen as an expression of the ordinary human need for fun which always tends actually to be the need to escape the troubles and difficulties of everyday life. Regardless of what any possible surveys would show, one thing can be certain: the Warsaw palm is not an expression of the continuing fascination with history and the symbolic dimension of the urban landscape. After all, it is the first palm in the history of Poland, and thus its power of referring to the history of the country can be limited at most[69]. Most people do not seem to grasp the irony of its being located in front of the former Party House. So, even if many residents of Warsaw still probably think of history and sometimes even escape into history, there are also those who prefer the idea of thinking of and escaping to the Caribbean.

---

[68] When this essay was printed, the Polish government had just drafted a law aimed at removing the symbols of communist rule from public life. The use of the names of communist leaders for streets, schools, parks, ships, planes and trains is to be banned.

[69] The palm may in some way refer to Jerusalem. It stands at Jerozolimskie (Jerusalem) Avenue, named for a road that once led to a Jewish village referred to as "Jerusalem," which was located near where Zawiszy Square is today, not far from the centre of modern Warsaw. The village was established in the 18th century as part of "increasing the productivity of Jews" through making them perform agricultural work. However, no one in Warsaw today (besides specialists) knows the origin of the name of Jerozolimskie Avenue and nobody who walks down the street thinks of Jerusalem.

Previous issues of TSEECS

No. 1 Michael David-Fox, Masquerade: Sources, Resistance and Early Soviet Political Culture. May 1999
No. 2 Gábor Klaniczay, The Annales and Medieval Studies in Hungary. August 2000
No. 3 Mark B. Adams, Networks in Action: The Khruschev Era, the Cold War, and the Transformation of Soviet Science. October 2000
No. 4 Frode Overland Andersen, Fragile Democracies: A Study of Institutional Consolidation in Six Eastern and Central European Democracies 1989-1997. November 2000. ISBN 82-995792-0-1
No. 5 Jon Raundalen, Indianeren som westernhelt. En studie av den østtyske westernfilmen (The Indian as a Western Hero. A Study of the East German Western-films). In Norwegian, with an English Summary of 11 pages. February 2001. ISBN 82-995972-2-8
Nr. 6 György Péteri, ed., Intellectual Life and the First Crisis of State Socialism in East Central Europe, 1953-1956. November 2001. ISBN 82-995792-3-6
Nr. 7 Victoria de Grazia, American Supermarkets versus European Small Shops. Or how transnational capitalism crossed paths with moral economy in Italy during the 1960s. ("Approaches to Globality" sub-series). March 2002.
Nr. 8 Catriona Kelly, "The Little Citizens of a Big Country": Childhood and International Relations in the Soviet Union ("Approaches to Globality" sub-series). March 2002
Nr. 9 Scott M. Eddie & Christa Kouschil, The Ethnopolitics of Land Ownership in Prussian Poland, 1886-1918: The land purchases of the Aussiedlungskommissionen. May 2002.
Nr. 10 Knut Andreas Grimstad, The Globalization of Biography. On Multilocation in the Transatlantic Writings of Witold Gombrowicz, 1939-1969 ("Approaches to Globality" sub-series). June 2002.
Nr. 11 Vjeran Pavlaković, Sabrina P. Ramet, and Philip Lyon, Sovereign Law vs. Sovereign Nation: The Cases of Kosovo and Montenegro. October 2002.
Nr. 12 Ingmar Oldberg, Uneasy Neighbours: Russia and the Baltic States in the Context of NATO and EU Enlargements. December 2002.
Nr. 13 György Péteri, ed., Patronage, Personal Networks and the Party-State: Everyday Life in the Cultural Sphere in Communist Russia and East Central Europe. March 2004. ISBN 82-995792-4-4
Nr. 14 John Connelly, Reflections of Social Change: Polish Rural Sociology, 1930-1965. September 2004.
Nr. 15 Constantin Iordachi, Charisma, Politics, and Violence: The Legion of 'Archangel Michael' in Inter-war Romania. ISBN 82-995792-5-2
Nr. 16 János M. Rainer & György Péteri, eds., Muddling Through in the Long 1960s. Ideas and Everyday Life in High Politics and the Lower Classes of Communist Hungary. May 2005. ISBN 82-995792-6-0
Nr. 17 Jim Samson, Placing Genius. The Case of George Enescu. May 2006.
Nr. 18 György Péteri, ed., Nylon Curtain. Transnational and Transsystemic Tendencies in the Cultural Life of State-Socialist Russia and East-Central Europe. August 2006. ISBN 82-995792-7-9
Nr. 19 Kruno Kardov, Reconstructing Community, Recreating Boundaries. Identity Politics and Production of Social Space in Post-War Vukovar. November 2006.

ISSN 1501-6684