WARSZAWA
SIEMASZKI
Warszawa Siemaszki

Fotografie z Narodowego Archiwum Cyfrowego

Warszawa 2014
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WARSZAWA SIEMASZKI

Przedmowa

Wielkie i wartościowe są zbiory Archiwów Państwowych. Dzięki trudowi i profesjonalizmowi pracowników archiwów zbiory te są systematycznie powiększane, opracowywane i udostępniane z myślą o licznych pożytkach płynących z kontaktu z nimi i ich znajomości. Archiwiści upatrują szczególną satysfakcję w popularyzowaniu wiedzy o powierzonych ich pieczy skarbach kultury narodowej oraz gwarantowaniu dostępu do nich wszystkim zainteresowanym osobom. Jeśli zważyć na to, że archiwalia charakteryzują się szczególną wrażliwością na warunki przechowywania oraz podatnością na uszkodzenia – szczególnie to widać w przypadku fotografii – możliwości ich udostępniania w sposób inny niż jedynie poprzez bezpośredni kontakt z oryginałem są chętnie wykorzystywane. Dominuje dzisiaj udostępnianie skanów całych serii archiwaliów online. Kilkanaście milionów skanów jest już dostępnych w ten sposób i bardzo szybko zwiększa się liczba nowych.

W zbiorach Narodowego Archiwum Cyfrowego znajdują się jednak fotografie zasługujące na szczególne zainteresowanie, a w związku z tym jak najszerzej popularyzowanie i rozpowszechnienie. Zbiorem takim dedykuję się specjalnie przygotowywane, a następnie drukowane albumy. Taka sytuacja ma właśnie miejsce w odniesieniu do spuścizny fotograficznej Zbyszka Siemaszki, jednego z najwybitniejszych twórców w dziedzinie fotografii, który koncentrował swą uwagę na Warszawie. Jako naoczny świadek i uczestnikografo-wanych przez siebie wydarzeń, takich jak między innymi powstanie warszawskie, postrzegał on Warszawę w sposób szczególny i taki jej obraz utrwała na swoich fotografach. Wybór jego dzieł prezentujemy w tym albumie z nadzieją, że spotka się on z Państwa zainteresowaniem.

Władysław Stępniak
Naczelný Dyrektor Archiwów Państwowych

Preface

The collections of the State Archives are huge and valuable. Thanks to the hard work, imagination and professionalism of the staff, these collections are regularly expanded, developed and made available, with a view to the diverse benefits of exposure to and familiarity with them. The archivists derive particular satisfaction from popularising knowledge about the treasures of national culture in their care and ensuring access to them to all interested persons. Since the archives are particularly sensitive to storage conditions and susceptible to damage, especially in the case of photographs, ways of accessing them by any means other than contact with the original documents are welcomed. Today, the predominant method of access involves making scans of entire series of archives available online. Several million scans have already been made available in this manner, while the number of new scans is growing exponentially.

Apart from this, the National Digital Archives contain photographs deserving of particular attention. Such collections are issued in the form of specially printed albums. One example is the photographic heritage of Zbyszko Siemaszko, one of the most outstanding artists in this field, who focussed mainly on Warsaw. As an eyewitness of and participant in events occurring in Warsaw, including the Warsaw Uprising, in which he took an active part, Siemaszko succeeded in looking at the Polish capital and capturing its images in a unique manner. We hope that the selection of his works presented in this album will meet with your interest.

Władysław Stępniak
Director General of the State Archives
Photographs constituting the Photographic Archives of Zbyszko Siemaszko have been selected from the rich oeuvre of this well-known photographer. Because of limited funds, the Archives of Mechanical Documentation (National Digital Archives since 2008) has purchased only a part of the author’s heritage from him. From the end of 2006\(^1\), employees of the Archives selected photographs on the basis of descriptions placed on envelopes containing rolls of film. This procedure was aimed at selecting those photographs on Warsaw-related topics from the communist period that seemed to be the most valuable at that time in terms of filling out collections. This choice of photographs was an understandable decision also because of the photographer himself – a collaborator of Stolica weekly in the years 1953–69 and the author of numerous publications devoted to Warsaw. Currently, the Photographic Archives of Zbyszko Siemaszko collected in

\(1\) Purchased items entered into the Acquisition Book under the following numbers: 732 (item acquired on 8 March 2007), 736 (item acquired on 28 June 2007), 747 (item acquired on 18 December 2007), 752 (item acquired on 10 June 2008).
Zbyszko Siemaszko urodził się w 1925 r. w znanej wileńskie rodzinie fotografów. Jego rodzice – Leonard i Tatiana – przez wiele lat prowadzili zakład i sklep fotograficzny w centrum Wilna, który odkupili w 1920 r. od rodziny słynnego fotografa Stanisława F. Fleury’ego. W swoim atelier Leonard Siemaszko portretował m.in. Józefa Piłsudskiego, Władysława Raczkiewicza (późniejszego prezydenta na uchodźstwie), biskupa Stanisława Bandurskiego oraz archimandrytę Filipa Morozowa. Współpracował także w charakterze fotoreportera z Redakcją „Illustrowanego Kuriera Codziennego”, z „Ekspresem Wileńskim” oraz „Słowem”2, dla których wykonywał miejskie pejzaże, dokumentował wydarzenia na obszarze Wileńszczyzny, zajady, wizyty dostojników państwowych, w tym również pobyt prezydenta Ignacego Mościckiego w Wilnie w 1929 r.

Zbyszko Siemaszko od dzieciństwa obcował z fotografią, podobnie jak jego dwaj starsi bracia: Leonard i Henryk. 

Like his two elder brothers, Leonard and Henryk, Zbyszko Siemaszko has been involved in photography since childhood. When he joined the Home Army – more specifically, ‘Szczerbiec’ – the 3rd Partisan Brigade of the Home Army – together with his brothers and father during the war, he assumed the pseudonym ‘Swojak’ (countryman) and began to document the everyday life of partisans with a Leica camera. He photographed preparations for operations and moments of rest following completed operations and made portraits of soldiers. As he said himself, he did not photograph battles because they took place mainly at night and he actively participated in them himself. During an operation in 1944 Zbyszko was gravely wounded twice in the head, captured by the Germans and taken over to the Gestapo. Luckily, his friends managed to liberate him from the prison hospital the following day3. Of 900 photographs taken by Zbyszko Siemaszko during the war, only around 300 have

3 Ojciec i synowie, „Stolica” 1968, nr 20, [nie podano autora], s. ii.
4 „III Brygada Wileńska AK w obiektywie Siemaszki, „Kurier Wileński” 1994, 12 sierpnia. Wycinek prasowy w teczce osobowej Z. Siemaszki, [nie podano autora], archiwum ZPAF.

In the first years of its existence, „Stolica” devoted a great deal of coverage to the reconstruction of the city from the destruction of war. Its journalists wrote about streets, housing estates and buildings being designed at that time and described survived. In 1994, they were shown at an open exhibition held on the 50th anniversary of ‘Operation Storm’ in the Old Gallery of the Association of Polish Art Photographers (ZPAF) in Warsaw and then presented in many Polish cities.

In his creative activity, Siemaszko focused particularly on photographing architecture. This subject was probably imposed on him by the institutions for which he worked at the beginning of the 1950s, namely, the Welfare Construction Enterprise in Warsaw, where he ran a photographic documentation workshop, and the State Enterprise for Construction and Conservation of Monumental Architecture, for which he prepared the photographic documentation of historic buildings. In his declaration of membership in the Polish Association of Photographers in Warsaw, in the space for ‘most favourite topics and type of photographic technique practised’, he wrote: ‘construction and landscape – bromide technique’.

Siemaszko's master was Edmund Kupiecki. The young photographer was able to observe freely his older colleague’s methods and techniques, since both of them worked for Stolica. It is also worth mentioning that Kupiecki, as one of two members of the Polish Association of Photographers in Warsaw (later the Association of Polish Art Photographers), introduced Siemaszko to this organisation when the latter was attempting to become a member. At that time, Zbyszko Siemaszko was already a member of the Polish Photographic Society.

In the first years of its existence, Stolica devoted a great deal of coverage to the reconstruction of the city from the destruction of war. Its journalists wrote about streets, housing estates and buildings being designed at that time and described...
Siemaszki architekturą, doskonalenie warsztatu, w którym niebagatelną rolę odgrywa światło, dały w efekcie subiektywny, niezwykle interesujący zapis warszawskiej codzienności w ciągu kilku minionych dekad.

By uzyskać perfekcyjne i zaskakujące ujęcie, Siemaszko wspinał się na dachy budynków i stamtąd fotografował panoramy szerokich warszawskich ulic czy np. kroczący w pochodach tłum. W jego fotografii architektury szczególnie widoczne jest precyzyjne kadrowanie. Linie wyznaczone przez elementy budynków zbiegają się, tworząc przemyślane, harmonijne kompozycje. Jak mówi syn fotografa, w praktyce często polegało to na przesuwaniu ciężkiego aparatu ze statywem o metr, dwa i mozolnym poszukiwaniu najlepszego możliwościowego ujęcia.

Zbyszko Siemaszko przez kilkadziesiąt lat uwieczniał na zdjęciach te same ulice i budynki. Zachowywał jednak przy tym świeżość spojrzenia, starając się znaleźć intrygujący punkt widzenia. Potrafił wynająć dźwig i sfotografować secesyjne kamienice przy Alejach Jerozolimskich na tle punktowców w taki sposób, aby odbiorcy instynktonie przywodziły one na myśl krajobraz Manhattanu. Nie bez powodu lubelski „Sztandar Ludu” piślał o Siemaszko w notatce z 1963 r., anonsującej jego autorską wystawę, jako o człowieku, „o którym mówią, że jest fotografikiem zakończonym w stolicy”.

W twórczości fotograficznej Zbyszka Siemaszki znajduje się wiele zdjęć lotniczych. Widać na nich wybudowane po wojnie osiedla, dzielnice, założenia urbanistyczno-architek-

marked by elements of buildings converge and create well-thought-out and harmonious compositions. As the photographer’s son says, in practice this often consisted of shifting a heavy camera on a tripod by one or two metres, along with strenuous efforts to find the best possible shooting position.

For a few decades, Zbyszko Siemaszko recorded the same streets and buildings in his photographs. However, he managed to retain a certain freshness of observation, trying to find some interesting vantage point. For example, he hit upon the idea of hiring a crane and photographing Art Nouveau tenement houses in Aleje Jerozolimskie against the background of the highest buildings in such a way that the viewer would instinctively associate them with the skyline of Manhattan. It was not without reason that the Lublin newspaper „Sztandar Ludu”, in a note announcing his personal exhibition in 1963, described Siemaszko as ‘a photographer who is said to be in love with Warsaw’.
The photographic work of Zbyszko Siemaszko contains many aerial photographs presenting housing estates, districts and urban and architectural solutions built after the war, such as Muranów, Mokotów or the Eastern Wall. In these photographs, we can see new buildings emerging from a ‘sea of ruins’ and grass spreading over once densely developed city districts long after the war.

The inhabitants of Warsaw were often shown by Siemaszko at street level. When he looked for shots from above and photographed people moving along wide thoroughfares, he achieved the effect of a dynamic city in a continuous rush. Sometimes he entered a shop or a department store along with others and recorded an apparently ordinary purchase: the choice of an appropriate house lamp, material for a woman’s suit or the most beautiful toy for a child in the austere period of communist Poland.

Architecture was not the only thing on which Zbyszko Siemaszko focused in his photographic activity. He liked working with Danuta Rago; their collaboration resulted in albums about St Mary’s Altar by Vit Stoss and the art collection of the Porczyński family. Together, they also took photographs for a publication entitled Fabryka Samochodów Malolitrażowych POLMO Bielsko-Biała, which appeared in 1979.

In 1957, Zbyszko Siemaszko took a short break from his work for Stolica. Having received a scholarship from the Ministry of Culture and Art, he travelled to Paris for two months. The newspaper did not fail to praise this significant achievement of its main photographer: “One of the most outstanding of our photographers!”

It is worth mentioning that the artist took aerial photographs of every Polish castle and was the co-author of the albums Warszawa z lotu ptaka (‘Warsaw from a bird’s-eye view’) and Polska z lotu ptaka (‘Poland from a bird’s-eye view’). Their titles and the photographs they present confirm Siemaszko’s fondness for taking aerial shots.

11 Warto wspomnieć, że artysta wykonał zdjęcia lotnicze wszystkich polskich zamków, a także był współautorem albumów Warszawa z lotu ptaka oraz Polska z lotu ptaka. Ich tytuły i prezentowane zdjęcia potwierdzają zamiłowanie Siemaszko do fotografiowania z samolotu.


fotografików polskich, Zbyszko Siemaszko, przebywał ostatnio – jako stypendysta Ministerstwa Kultury i Sztuki – we Francji.\textsuperscript{14}

Zdjęcia Siemaszki często pojawiały się na szpaltach warszawskiego tygodnika. Przygotowywał on fotoreportaże zarówno z największych wydarzeń kulturalnych w mieście, jak i z oficjalnych uroczystości państwowych. Wiele jego zdjęć opublikowano w celu zilustrowania przebiegu V Światowego Festiwalu Młodzieży i Studentów, zorganizowanego w Warszawie w 1955 r. Zaglądał również do budynku Sejmu przy Wiejskiej, odwiedzając z aparatem salę obrad i korytarze.

W fotoreportażach Siemaszko pokazywał także codzienne życie mieszkańców miasta: w pracy, na ulicy i w parku. Przeglądał się ludziom, rejestrował wydarzenia, jednak to architektura Warszawy pozostawała dla niego najważniejszym tematem zdjęć.


\textsuperscript{14} T., Fotografia co tydzień, „Stolica” 1958, nr 1, s. 9.

\textsuperscript{15} D. Rago, Mój przyjaciel Zbyszko, „Fotografia” 1983, nr 3, s. 24.

Art, he went to Paris for two months. The newspaper did not miss the opportunity to point out this remarkable achievement of its main photojournalist: ‘One of the most outstanding Polish photographers, Zbyszko Siemaszko, has recently spent time, as the recipient of a scholarship from the Ministry of Culture and Art, in France’.\textsuperscript{14}

Photographs by Siemaszko often appeared in the pages of the Warsaw weekly. He prepared photo reports on the biggest cultural events in the city as well as on official state ceremonies. Many of his photographs were published for the purpose of illustrating the progress of the 5th World Festival of Youth and Students organised in Warsaw in 1955. He also entered the building of the Polish Sejm at ul. Wiejska, visiting the session room and corridors with his camera.

In his photo reports, Siemaszko also showed the everyday life of Warsaw inhabitants: at work, in the street and in the park. He watched people and documented events, but the architecture of Warsaw was still the most important theme of his photographs.

When analysing film negatives, which constitute the original material for every photographer, we can see that all of them are elaborated carefully in every detail. Siemaszko perfectly adopted Edmund Kupiecki’s style of work: he could wait patiently for proper natural lighting that might appear at a certain time of the day or the year. A cloudy sky or a sunny day might make it easier for him to implement his photographic ideas, but might also frustrate them. The preparation process also included the study of maps and city plans. Siemaszko’s work proves his inborn (or acquired) patience, mastery of photographic methods and techniques and inventiveness in handling well-known topics.

The artistic oeuvre of Zbyszko Siemaszko is characterised by strong efforts to ensure a high aesthetic level of presen-
Introduction: patiently anticipated light, accurate composition of the frame, an attempt to take a highly individual look at something that has already been documented hundreds of times. Today, his photographs of department stores, railway stations, cinemas, bars, cafes and hotels constitute an extremely valuable documentation of buildings and interiors that no longer exist, have been rebuilt or now perform other functions. Some buildings, such as Supersam (a large self-service store), the Chemia trade pavilion, or the Skarpa cinema, have disappeared from the map of Warsaw quite recently. In the photographs that have survived, we can see what these buildings looked like shortly after being opened, still very beautiful and ‘redolent with freshness’, such as the glaringly bright Palace of Culture and Science.

All of the photographs by Zbyszko Siemaszko included in NDA’s resources were made available online in 2011. Since that time, due to the growing interest in post-war modernist architecture and the fashions of the 1950s, 60s and 70s, these photographs have been presented at exhibitions, in publications, multimedia projects and in articles with increasing frequency. Colourful street portraits of pedestrians from 1959 have become very popular on the Internet, as have other works by Siemaszko, which are widely commented upon in the Facebook profile of the National Digital Archives.

We have decided to prepare and publish the first album of Siemaszko’s work, which contains a selection of photographs connected with Warsaw. We hope that the album we are offering you will be a source of unforgettable aesthetic experiences, and we encourage you to view more photographs on the web pages of the National Digital Archives.

Katarzyna Kalisz, Bartłomiej Kuczyński
Odbudowa

Od pierwszego numeru, który ukazał się w 1946 r., w czasopismie „Stolica” rok po roku dokumentowano żmudny proces odbudowy Warszawy po kataklizmie wojny. Kreślono plany rozwoju miasta, podziwiano trud i ofiarność materialną wszystkich Polaków, którzy przyczynili się do odrodzenia stolicy z ruin. Na łamach tygodnika apelowano o organizowanie zbiórek pieniężnych: „Od 5 zł do 100 milionów”, „Dziemy Warszawie, jutro Warszawa nam” – pisano w pierwszym numerze¹. Następnie szczegółowo poddawano dyskusji realizacje urbanistyczne, pisano o życiu w mieście, jak również o możliwościach polepszenia warunków egzystencji. Odbudowa miasta, tak głęboko wyniszczonego wojną, zwiastowała ogromne zmiany mające nadejść w kolejnych latach. Unowocześnienie tkanki miejskiej na podstawie przedwojennych planów rozbudowy, stworzenie terenów zielonych i placów dla mieszkańców oraz budowa nowoczesnych „M”, dostępnych dla każdego należały do głównych założeń przyświeca-

Reconstruction

Starting with its first issue, published in 1946, the Stolica weekly magazine documented the laborious process of the reconstruction of Warsaw after the disaster of war, year by year. City development plans were sketched, and admiration was expressed for the efforts and financial generosity of all Poles who contributed to the resurrection of the capital city from the ruins. The newspaper published appeals for the organisation of fund-raising campaigns. ‘From 5 zlotys to 100 million’, ‘Today it’s us for Warsaw, tomorrow Warsaw for us’ – this is what we find in the first issue of the magazine.¹ Later, the implementation of urban designs was discussed thoroughly, and life in the city and opportunities to improve the standard of living were described. The reconstruction of the city which had been so completely destroyed by the war heralded huge changes that were to occur in subsequent years. The modernisation of the urban fabric on the basis of pre-war expansion plans, the creation of green areas and

¹ [nie podano autora], Budujemy swoją Warszawę, „Stolica” 1946, nr 1, s. 9-10.

¹ [author’s name not given], Budujemy swoją Warszawę (‘We are building our Warsaw’), Stolica 1946, no. 1, pp. 9-10.
The absence of available space in more convenient locations seriously restricted the potential of new urban designs.\(^2\)

Apart from the permanent shortage of flats, it seemed particularly important to solve the labour shortage problem. The war had taken the lives of many men, and many others had been crippled. Therefore, bricklaying was undertaken by women, who created their own construction teams. After four months of training, the more ambitious and diligent women could become skilled bricklayers, but first they had to undertake simpler tasks. In order to become professional builders, both women and men had to attend lectures after hard physical work a few times each week, and volunteers could take part in special courses preparing them for the role of model workers.

Apart from intensive construction work, the first post-war years were characterised by the extremely intensive removal of tons of debris from the city, carried out through...
the combined effort of inhabitants and transients (including foreigners, e.g. German prisoners of war). Attempts to improve the efficiency of the work and minimise the construction time of new housing estates were undertaken by making use of large deposits of debris, which were processed in specialised grinders. In the Muranów housing estate, built on the site of the ghetto, which had been razed to the ground during the war, new buildings were erected on an uncleared rubble heap, the reason behind the characteristic elevations of land there. In spite of enormous community efforts made on behalf of the restoration of Warsaw by hundreds of thousands of pairs of hands, workers had to be prepared for dangerous surprises during operations conducted in the older part of the city, even many years after the war. These included unexploded bombs covered with a layer of soil and debris, or sometimes, as in the case of construction of the Za Żelazną Bramą housing estate, extensive basements hidden under derelict houses intended for demolition. In 1967, during clearing and demolition work in the ‘Wild West’ area (the part of Warsaw situated west of the Palace of Culture and Science), the ground unexpectedly collapsed. Former inhabitants of this part of the city explained that the basements stretching over a large area were remains of numerous breweries once located in that district. Thousands of Warsaw inhabitants, including schoolchildren or even employees of ministries in obligatory suits and shoes, took part in the cleaning of streets and squares as a part of an annual September community campaign. The volunteer work of Warsaw inhabitants made it possible to clean the city quickly and cheaply. In propaganda terms, these activities were an extremely convenient opportunity...
to generate enthusiasm and to build and reinforce patriotic feelings while working together for the benefit of the capital of Poland. Following the period of removal of debris from streets, the idea of voluntary social action was continued by cleaning lawns. However, this work did not arouse as much emotion as the removal of debris had done. Elegantly dressed ladies could work calmly and steadily while gentlemen in white vests stopped for a moment of conversation and rest. In the history of the reconstruction of Warsaw, the reconstruction of the Old Town was an invaluable undertaking. As early as 22 July 1953, the Market Square, fully rebuilt in the first stage of work, was officially opened, along with ul. Zapiecek and ul. Piwna. The reconstruction of ul. Nowomiejska, the defence walls and the barbican was planned for subsequent stages. The Royal Castle was the last item completed in this urban development plan. For many years after the war, the square in front of it stood empty. The only building towering over the W-Z [East-West] route was St Anne’s Church. The main part of the castle was completed in 1974; the reconstructed interiors were opened to visitors in 1984. The last element completing the restoration of the Old Town, Kubicki Arcades, was not opened until 2009. Apart from the restoration, reconstruction and rebuilding of selected palaces and tenement houses, urban planners implemented plans for the newly-designed city. Sometimes they hit upon excellent construction ideas by accident. One such idea arose during the preparation of the concept for closing the eastern wall of Plac Stalina [Stalin Square]. The erection of monumental buildings was initially planned there, but decorations prepared on the occasion of the 5th International Festival of Youth made architects and urban planners realise that it would be better to develop this part of ul. Marszałkowska with lower buildings and to place the highest buildings well in the background.  

5 M.S. [author’s initials], Wielka..., (Great ...) op. cit.
considerations led to the preparation of a design that was eventually put into practice by Zbigniew Karpiński and Jan Klewin. *Stolica* expressed its admiration for the imposing scale of the project: ‘15 new buildings will contain 2,083 living quarters and over 370,000 cubic metres of office, commercial and service space’\(^6\). The complete restoration and reconstruction of post-war Warsaw took several decades. By reading articles published in *Stolica* and tracking past events step by step, we can see the great effort of people who contributed to the restoration of the splendour of Warsaw as the capital city.

\(^5\) M.S., *Wielka...*, dz. cyt.

\(^6\) Tk [author's initials], *Wiecha nad Śródmieściem* (‘Topping out over the City Centre’), *Stolica* 1963, no. 35, p. 8.
Kościół Sakramentek pod wezwaniem św. Kazimierza przy Rynku Nowego Miasta; 1953

St Kazimierz Church at Rynek Nowego Miasta (New Town Market Square), 1953

Przodownicy odbudowy Starego Miasta; lata 1951-1953

Model workers of the reconstruction of the Old Town, 1951-53

Odbudowa Starego Miasta; 1953

Reconstruction of the Old Town, 1953
Odbudowa Starego Miasta; 1953

Reconstruction of the Old Town, 1953

Odbudowa Zamku Królewskiego w Warszawie; 1974

Reconstruction of the Royal Castle in Warsaw, 1974

Budowa osiedla Muranów; lata 1952-1959

Construction of the Muranów housing estate, 1952-59
Construction of a housing estate, 1952-59
Construction of the Muranów housing estate, 1953

Construction of the Muranów housing estate, 1954-57
Aleja Niepodległości,
widok z dachu budynku 82/90 na południe,
lata 1954-1955

Aleja Niepodległości,
view from the roof of the 82/90 building to the south, 1954-55

Budowa domów przy ulicy Gimnastycznej na Mokotowie; 1955

Construction of houses at ul. Gimnastyczna in Mokotów, 1955

Aleja Niepodległości,
widok na północ,
lata 1954-1955

Aleja Niepodległości,
view to the north, 1954-55

Osiedle bloków mieszkalnych przy ul. Kraushara i Wiktorskiej na Mokotowie; lata 1955-1960

Housing estate of blocks of flats at ul. Kraushara and ul. Wiktorska in Mokotów, 1955-60
Budowa bloków przy ulicy Kasprowicza na Żoliborzu; 1955

Construction of blocks at ul. Kasprowicza in Żoliborz, 1955

Budowa Mostu Gdańskiego; 1958

Construction of the Gdańsk Bridge, 1958

Budowa Ściany Wschodniej; 1963

Construction of the Eastern Wall, 1963
Budowa Ściany Wschodniej; lata 1964-1966

Construction of the Eastern Wall, 1964-66

Budowa rotundy PKO; lata 1962-1963

Construction of PKO Rotunda, 1962-63
Budowa Ściany Wschodniej; 1966

Construction of the Eastern Wall, 1966

Budowa osiedla bloków mieszkalnych pomiędzy ulicami: Pańską, Emilii Plater, Śliską i J. Marchlewskiego; 1964

Construction of a housing estate of blocks of flats between the following streets: ul. Pańska, ul. Emili Plater, ul. Śliska and ul. J. Marchlewskiego, 1964
Porządkowa akcja społeczna podczas „Dni Warszawy”, wrzesień 1960

Community action: cleaning work during Days of Warsaw, September 1960

Społeczne prace porządkowe na pl. F. Dzierżyńskiego, wrzesień 1963

Community action: cleaning work at Plac F. Dzierżyńskiego, September 1963
Warsaw was a special city with a centuries-old tradition, but after World War II it was actually rebuilt from scratch. A place where the customs of the incoming population and pre-war inhabitants collided, it was also full of other contrasts. For many years after the war, inhabitants were tormented by the sight of derelict buildings in the ‘Wild West’ situated west of the Palace of Culture and Science. In the city centre and in more distant districts, buildings damaged during the war and secured by inhabitants awaited a thorough renovation. However, many tenement houses standing in the city centre were demolished despite their good state of preservation. Rebuilt and enlarged to a remarkable extent, ul. Świętokrzyska gained a metropolitan character, and wide thoroughfares with new blocks of flats aroused particular admiration. It was thus no accident that this street was called the ‘Wall Street of Warsaw’ by the Stolica weekly.¹ For many years after the war, Warsaw faced the

¹ tk, Miasto młode i przekorne, ‘Stolica’ 1962, nr 25, s. 2-3.
problem of satisfying the demand for flats in the expanding city as soon as possible. The number of new housing estates grew, but as time went by, many of them increasingly looked as if they had just left an assembly line. There were attempts to minimise the time necessary for building new flats while simultaneously reducing investment costs. For this purpose, complete architectural designs and the most-frequently-occurring construction elements were used. Some perceived the danger of ‘building uniformity’ that could turn the architecture of Warsaw into ‘concentrated forms of optical boredom’. At the beginning of the 1960s, even the Warsaw Unification Workshop worked on the Miastoprojekt – Północ [City Project North] team. Emotions were soothed by Adolf Ciborowski, chief architect of Warsaw for many years, who strongly supported the idea of erecting repetitive buildings. He thought that Warsaw housing estates would differentiate themselves sufficiently through the introduction of colouristic diversity or of commercial and service pavilions. He also emphasised the need to use typical features of individual designs, such as the Saxon Axis, to the widest possible extent. Ciborowski suggested that architects should creatively combine already existing elements with enrichment of the urban landscape by means of ‘setting, finishing, colour, architectural detail and landscaping elements’.

In the years when the pursuit of a cost-saving policy was necessary, but the principle of repetitiveness of architectural design had not become prevalent in the housing industry yet, the Koło housing estate arose in the outskirts of the city, eventually becoming a Warsaw district. Earlier, before 1939, the Workers’ Estates Association (TOR) had erected a complex of buildings there. After the war, the implementation of housing estate designs prepared by Szymon Syrkus and his wife Hanna began on closed landfills and non-arable lands...
in the vicinity of former clay pits. Buildings erected at that time were distinguished mainly by bright-coloured cladding from Pińczów limestone and later by cheaper facing with plaster slabs. The subsequent decision to discontinue the use of such finishing and to leave the brick walls of buildings free of plaster was criticised by Szymon Syrkus, the general designer of the housing estate.5

The Koło housing estate was a comprehensive project. In addition to blocks with tree-shaded courtyards, detached and duplex houses designed by Michał Przerwa-Tetmajer were erected there. The new housing estate also included a laundry, a kindergarten, a bathing area, a grocery shop, a tailor’s shop and a hairdresser’s salon. Earlier, TOR had built a primary school and a cultural centre.6

In spite of necessary cost savings and the need to follow recommendations concerning the widest possible use of prefabricated units, successful designs for public utility buildings were also implemented in Warsaw in those times. In the 1960s, the Ochota (temporarily called ‘Zawisza’ at the stage of construction work) and Powiśle (called ‘Skarpa’, i.e. the ‘Slope’) railway stations were built on the crosstown railway line.7 These structures were praised for their lightness and originality. The decorations of the Warszawa Śródmieście [Warsaw City Centre] railway station building, opened in 1963, were designed in the workshop of the Academy of Fine Arts under the guidance of Professors J. Soltan, Z. Ihnatowicz and W. Fangora. The ceiling, which resembled a stretched aluminium grid, was designed not only to attenuate light, but also to suppress the noise that was prevalent near the former clay pits.8

5 MAR, Koło Centralne – początek wielkiej dzielnicy, „Stolica” 1953, nr 45, s. 8-9.  
6 Tamże.  
7 K.K., O nowych dworcach inaczej, „Stolica” 1963, nr 48, p. 4.
caused by passing trains. During the construction of the Warszawa Centralna railway station building, proper finishing was also ensured: the walls were lined with Kojełga marble imported from the Soviet Union, and the surfaces of the platforms were lined with dark granite from Strzegom. Aluminium and glass were used for the surfaces of ceilings, sound-absorbing materials were purchased in Czechoslovakia, and moving stairways and ramps arrived from Austria.

From among the commercial building designs successfully implemented in Warsaw, it is worth mentioning Supersam, a large self-service store that no longer exists. This first Warsaw supermarket was designed by architects Jerzy Hryniewiecki and Maciej Krasinski and builders Wacław Zalewski and Andrzeja Żurawski. Professor Hryniewiecki emphasised the high quality of the materials used to erect the building, which was achieved thanks to the efforts of Maciej Krasinski. In this case, the interior of the building was also decorated with high-quality material, i.e. a mosaic designed by a married couple named Rechowicz. The site of the Supersam store, in conformity with the concept of spatial arrangement of the square, excluded the possibility of building a car park. The location of the supermarket near a busy transport node was intended to guarantee easy access to the shop. It was assumed that Warsaw inhabitants travelling by bus and tram every day would do their shopping there on the way home from work. This decision was made deliberately, contrary to proven Western standards that assumed the construction of car parks near large shopping areas.

The problem of the lack of parking and the location of such a large store in the prestigious Mokotów area was solved in a manner that aroused numerous protests: in 2006, the building was demolished and replaced with an office building with shopping space in its lower storeys.
Efforts were also made to ensure an appropriate level of architecture and interior decoration at the time of designing cinema buildings. The former ‘Stolica’ cinema at ul. Kopernika was designed by the engineer-architect Zygmunt Stepiński. Those who entered it could admire terracotta mosaics designed by Krystyna Kozłowska. The opening of the building (July 1960) coincided with the premiere of the superproduction Krzyżacy by Aleksander Ford in Polish cinemas.12 People stood in long queues to buy tickets, and those who did not manage to get tickets at the box office had to buy them from a tout at a much higher price. The only traces that remain of the ‘Stolica’ cinema today are part of the mosaics and a neon sign with the inscription ‘kino Skarpa’ (Skarpa cinema). The building was demolished in 2008 and an apartment building erected in its place.

Many building designs from the period of Communist Poland, particularly in the field of housing, were criticised for their lack of careful preparation and finish, their excessively small area (as measured in square metres), and the lack of differentiation between designs which were copied throughout the city. It is, however, worth remembering a number of Warsaw designs, such as Sady Żoliborskie, Koło or Osiedle za Żelazną Bramą [neighbourhood behind the iron gate]. We can also appreciate the aesthetic value of buildings that have often been criticised, such as railway stations or commercial buildings. Sometimes it would suffice to remove large-format advertising panels and clean up the buildings and their surroundings.
Trasa W-Z, lata 1961-1968

W-Z Route, 1961-68
Plac Zamkowy; 1967

Ulica Krakowskie Przedmieście; lata 1954

Krakowskie Przedmieście, 1954
Pałac Staszica przy ulicy Nowy Świat, lata 1960-1970

Staszic Palace at ul. Nowy Świat, 1960-70
Teatr Wielki; 1956

Grand Theatre, 1956
Ulica Jasna; lata 1965-1975

Ul. Jasna, 1965-75
Hotel Warszawa przy ul. Świętokrzyskiej; lata 1955-1956

Hotel Warszawa at ul. Świętokrzyska, 1955-56

Ulica Mokotowska; 1958

Ul. Mokotowska, 1958

Aleje Jerozolimskie; 1955

Aleje Jeruzolimskie; 1955
City centre, 1955-62

Palace of Culture and Science, 1959-63
Palac Kultury i Nauki; lata 1964-1965

Palace of Culture and Science, 1964-65

Śródmieście, okolice ulicy Grzybowskiej i ul. J. Marchlewskiego w pobliżu Hal Mirowskich; lata 1962-1967

Osiedle Muranów; 1959

Muranów housing estate, 1959
Osiedle Koło; 1953
Koło housing estate, 1953
Osiedle na Mokotowie; lata 1955-1965
Housing estate in Mokotów, 1955-65

Ulica Marymoncka; lata 1956-1965
Ul. Marymoncka, 1956-65
Osiedle przy ulicy Aleksandra Wejnerta na Mokotowie; 1954

Housing estate at ul. Aleksandra Wejnerta in Mokotów, 1954

Wycieczka polskich i zagranicznych dziennikarzy na Bielanach. Widoczny Naczelnny Architekt Warszawy Adolf Ciborowski (trzeci z prawej). Widok od strony ulicy Skalbmierskiej w kierunku budynków stojących u zbiegu ulic Kulczyckiej i M. Oczapowskiego; 1958

Trip of Polish and foreign journalists to Bielany. Adolf Ciborowski, Chief Architect of Warsaw, is one of the people visible in the photograph (third from right). View from ul. Skalbmierska towards buildings located at the corner of ul. Kulczycka and ul. M. Oczapowskiego, 1958

Budynki stojące przy ul. Częstochowskiej i Szczęśliwickiej, Ochota; 1953

Buildings located at ul. Częstochowska and ul. Szczęśliwicka, Ochota, 1953
Osiedle Sady Żoliborskie; 1973

Sady Żoliborskie housing estate, 1973

Ulica Stefana Żeromskiego; 1958

Uł. Stefana Żeromskiego, 1958
Warszawa Śródmieście railway station, 1963
Dworzec Śródmieście; 1963

Warszawa Śródmieście railway station, 1963
Warszawa-Powisle railway station, 1963
Stacja kolejowa Warszawa-Powiśle; 1963

Warszawa-Powiśle railway station, 1963
Dworzec Centralny; lata 1977-1978
Warszawa Centralna
railway station, 1977-78

Stacja kolejowa Warszawa-Ochota; 1963
Warszawa-Ochota railway station, 1963

Dworzec Centralny;
lata 1977-1978
Warszawa Centralna
railway station, 1977-78
Dworzec Gdańsk; lata 1959-1970

Warszawa Gdańska railway station, 1959-70
Dworze Gdańsk; lata 1959-1970

Warszawa Gdańska railway station, 1959-70
Tor wyścigów konnych na Służewcu; lata 1960-1970

Horse racetrack in Służewiec, 1960-70
Port Lotniczy Warszawa-Okęcie; lata 1978-1983

Warszawa-Okęcie Airport, 1978-83
Kino Skarpa, 1960

Skarpa Cinema, 1960
Kino Stolica; lata 1955-1965
Stolica Cinema, 1955-65

Kino Praha; lata 1955-1965
Praha Cinema, 1955-65
Pawilon Chemii u zbiegu ulic Brackiej i Nowogrodzkiej; lata 1961-1970

Chemia trade pavilion at the corner of ul. Bracka and ul. Nowogrodzka, 1961-70
Pawilon Chemii u zbiegu ulic Brackiej i Nowogrodzkiej; lata 1961-1970

Chemia trade pavilion at the corner of ul. Bracka and ul. Nowogrodzka, 1961-70
Supersam przy ul. Puławskiej; 1962

Supersam (large self-service store) at ul. Puławska, 1962

Pawilony handlowe przy ulicy Marszałkowskiej; 1958

Trade pavilions at ul. Marszałkowska, 1958
Most Poniatowskiego; lata 1965-1967

Poniatowski Bridge, 1965-67
Aleja gen. Karola Świerczewskiego; lata 1955-1959

Praca

The Stolica weekly reported information about events, describing apparently trivial topics, for instance, the everyday life of working people, and illustrating them with photographs. A good example of this is a photo report from the route of bus no. 132, which provided a connection between Nowy Świat and ul. Kasprowicza in Bielany. At that time, it took exactly 28 minutes to travel from one terminus to the other.1 Alongside the driver, near the engine cover, stood a ticket inspector in uniform. The inspector not only sold single tickets and checked season tickets, but he also informed people waiting at a stop when the bus was filled to capacity2.

In 1956, Stolica published reports on the progress of work at the building site of the Warsaw Metro and presented city transport development plans. In order to prepare a reliable report for the newspaper, photojournalists Siemaszko and Kupiecki decided to go underground in the Targówek district.3

Work

1 [author’s name not given], Autobusem 132 ('By bus no. 132'), Stolica 1958, no. 23, pp. 12-13.
3 [author’s name not given], Targówek – stacja krańcowa ('Targówek: the final station'), Stolica 1956, no. 32, pp. 8-9.
The construction of tunnels at the site of the planned final eastern Metro station began as early as the 1950s. As today, many technical problems connected with the structure of the geological substrate in Warsaw partook of a financial nature, which was clearly emphasised in *Stolica*: ‘... as far as the possibility of building the Warsaw Metro is concerned, everything boils down to three classical Napoleonic conditions: money, money, money!’ – alarmed one of Stolica’s journalists. He suggested that experienced builders should be concentrated in one place, as preventing their dispersion would make it unnecessary to train new personnel in case of future growth of the city’s economic potential with regard to investment in the metro. According to plans, the double railway line would lead through the Warszawa Wileńska station area under the Vistula to Plac Teatralny and then split, with branches to ul. Próżna, Pl. Konstytucji, Pl. Unii Lubelskiej and Służewiec, as well as to Pl. Dzierżyńskiego, the Warszawa Gdańska railway station and Młociny. As early as 1956, Stolica optimistically assumed that the metro would be opened ‘in about ten years’. Meanwhile, the only option for passengers was to be squeezed into overcrowded buses, trams and trolleybuses.

In times characterised by a continuous shortage of supplies, a successful Christmas depended largely on the efficiency and commitment of the personnel of the Confectionery Plant ‘22 Lipca’ state-owned enterprise in Warsaw (the former E. Wedel). Thus, the Stolica weekly proudly informed its readers about a two-fold increase in sweets production during the pre-Christmas shopping period. The journalists described the activities of all of the workers participating in the production of chocolate sweets, known for their exceptional taste. Readers could learn
about the stages of production of tasty Wedel layer cakes, pralines, Amatorski blocks, Manila crisp praline blocks and Stołeczna chocolate. Experienced female employees of the plant painted silver packaging with pictures of chocolate Santa Clauses, dogs, teddy bears and dolls, prepared sweet blocks or extruded chocolate from an injector to decorate layer cakes. As someone well informed about the life of the city, the Stolica reader had to know the detailed process behind the printing of his favourite weekly. Thanks to its articles, he could learn about professionals operating complicated printing presses. In 1962, in the printing plant of the Workers’ Publishing Co-operative ‘Prasa’ in Warsaw at ul. Okopowa, a photo report was created with the participation of employees of the plant, which printed Stolica and other newspapers. These photographs were taken on the occasion of the purchase of a new gravure rotary press in the German Democratic Republic for the amount of 27 million PLN. Machine operators, a gravure rotary press maintenance technician, the manager of the platemaking room and a female collector were presented. This was also a good opportunity to explain to readers that the weekly, which was already partly illustrated with photographs ‘in natural colours’, would be more expensive and that a price increase from 2.50 to 3 zlotys was necessary.

Once it was not difficult to find a shoemaker or a tailor in Warsaw. In Krakowskie Przedmieście, under the name ‘Repair shop for works of art and objects of art’, there was the workshop of an exceptional Warsaw craftsman, Gracjan Lepianko, who was known for his unusual skill in restoring the former excellence of old and damaged, yet still beautiful, objects. His small workshop was full of tools, porcelain and wooden figures, glassware, pictures and furniture. The omnipresent items, large and small, awaited their turn to regain their old splendour, along with those already repaired, made

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6 DU, Na eksport „E. Wedel”, na rynek wewnętrzny z.p.c. „22 Lipca”, na święta: 230 ton cukierków choinkowych, „Stolica” 1956, nr 51-52, s. 29.

7 [nie podano autora], Z tajników sztuki drukarskiej, „Stolica” 1962, nr 7, s. 2-4.

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6 DU, [author’s initials], Na eksport „E. Wedel”, na rynek wewnętrzny z.p.c. „22 Lipca”, na święta: 230 ton cukierków choinkowych, (E. Wedel Confectionery Plant for export, z.p.c. “22 Lipca” Confectionery Plant for the internal market, and 230 tons of sweets for Christmas)

Stolica 1956, no. 51-52, p. 29.

7 [author’s name not given], Z tajników sztuki drukarskiej (About some tricks of the printing trade), Stolica 1962, no. 7, pp. 2-4.
oczekiwały na swoją kolej, by odzyskać dawny blask, a te już zreperowane znacząco utrudniały poruszanie się w niewielkich rozmiarach pomieszczeniu. Mistrz Lepianko witał interesantów zawsze ubrany w biały lekarski kitel i zabawną czapkę.


Na przestrzeni kilkudziesięciu lat niektóre zawody zupełnie zniknęły z warszawskiego krajobrazu, a część z nich ewoluowała. W czasach PRL-u niechętnie pozbywano się zepsutych lub pozornie bezużytecznych przedmiotów. Często zbyt obszerna spódnica trafiała do krawcowej, by spróbować ją przerobić, a pończochy, w których puściły oczka, do repasaczki. Nadal jeszcze jednak można naprawić u mechnika zepsute samochody i zamówić u szklarza nowe szyby.

Over several decades, some professions completely disappeared from the Warsaw landscape, while others evolved. In the times when Poland was a communist state, people were unwilling to get rid of damaged or apparently useless items. If a skirt was too big, it was often brought to a tailor with a request to alter it, and stockings with ladders were brought to a stocking mender. It’s still possible, though, to repair broken cars in a mechanic’s shop or order new glass panes from a glazier.
Autobus linii 132 na trasie; 1958

Bus no. 132 on its route, 1958
Samochód pomocy drogowej ze Stacji Technicznej Obsługi; lata 1955-1957
Tow truck from the service station, 1955-57

Budowa metra w Warszawie; 1956
Construction of an underground train line in Warsaw, 1956
Zakłady Przemysłu Cukierniczego „22 Lipca”
Przedsiębiorstwo Państwowe; 1956

Confectionery Plant
‘22 Lipca’ state-owned enterprise, 1956
Drukarnia Robotniczej Spółdzielni Wydawniczej „Prasa”, 1962

Printing house of Workers’ Publishing Co-operative rsw ‘Prasa’, 1962
Mieszkanie przodownika pracy, murarza Stanisława Krzymińskiego, w MDM (Marszałkowska Dzielnica Mieszkaniowa) residential quarter, 1954

Apartment of a model worker, the bricklayer Stanisław Krzymiński in the MDM (Marszałkowska Dzielnica Mieszkaniowa) residential quarter, 1954

Mistrz rzemiosła Gracjan Lepianko in his workshop at ul. Krakowskie Przedmieście, 1960-70

Master craftsman Gracjan Lepianko in his workshop at ul. Krakowskie Przedmieście, 1960-70

Murarski zespół dwójkowy; lata 1950-1960

Two-person team of bricklayers, 1950-60

Zakład obuwniczy; lata 1955-1965

Shoe factory, 1955-65

Mieszkanie przodownika pracy, murarza Stanisława Krzymińskiego, w Marszałkowskiej Dzielnicy Mieszkaniowej w Warszawie; 1954

Apartment of a model worker, the bricklayer Stanisław Krzymiński in the MDM (Marszałkowska Dzielnica Mieszkaniowa) residential quarter, 1954
Mieszkanie przodownika pracy, murarza Stanisława Krzymińskiego, w Marszałkowskiej Dzielnicy Mieszkaniowej w Warszawie; 1954

Apartment of a model worker, the bricklayer Stanisław Krzymiński in the MDM (Marszałkowska Dzielnica Mieszkaniowa) residential quarter, 1954
Artistic Furniture Manufacturing Plant in Henryków, 1953
Oddział położniczy w szpitalu; 1962
Obstetrics ward in a hospital, 1962

Szkoła Podstawowa nr 89 im. Stefana Żeromskiego przy ul. Kowelskiej; ok. 1968
Stefan Żeromski Primary School no. 89 at ul. Kowelska, ca 1968
Fabryka Samochodów Osobowych na Żeraniu; 1957

Passenger Automobile Factory [Fabryka Samochodów Osobowych – FSO] in Żerań, 1957
Przodownik odbudowy Starego Miasta; lata 1951-1953

Model worker on the reconstruction of the Old Town, 1951-53

Jubileusz trzydziestolecia twórczości Stefana Wiecheckiego „Wiecha”, 1960

30-year jubilee of the career of Stefan ‘Wiech’ Wiechecki, 1960
Funkcjonariusz Milicji Obywatelskiej; 1959
Officer of Citizens’ Militia, 1959

Funkcjonariusze Milicji Obywatelskiej; lata 1950-1970
Officers of Citizens’ Militia [Milicja Obywatelska], 1950-70
Zbyszko Siemaszko – portret; lata 1955-1965

Zbyszko Siemaszko, portrait, 1955-65

Zbyszko Siemaszko fotografujący budowę zapory wodnej w Dębe, 1962

Zbyszko Siemaszko photographing the construction of a dam in Dębe, 1962
Leaving the city for a Sunday rest was not an easy task. Only the lucky few had cars; most of the inhabitants had to use public transport. Others, unburdened by a large family or baskets with food, decided to go by scooter, motorcycle or bicycle. In spring, popular destinations for weekend trips among Warsaw inhabitants were areas situated close to the city’s borders, such as Bielany, Młociny, Wilanów or Powsin. If the weather suddenly worsened, it was possible to get back home within a relatively short time. A frequent destination for Sunday trips was the Culture and Leisure Park in Powsin, only 15 minutes away from Pl. Unii Lubelskiej. Facilities offered by the centre made longer stays possible for Warsaw inhabitants. Visitors had small summer bungalows at their disposal, and catering outlets served sausages, bigos (traditional Polish hunter’s stew), coffee and tea. Those who preferred active forms of relaxation could use playing fields and hire sports equipment from an available rental point.

1 tk, 15 minut od Placu Unii, „Stolica” 1961, nr 21, s. 2-3.
On days when higher attendance was expected, such as Labour Day, a programme of the day’s activities was posted on a noticeboard, including information about sports areas (offering individual use of volleyball, basketball and badminton courts and a football field), playgrounds for children, a shooting range (with a small-calibre-weapon shooting course under the guidance of an instructor), archery, athletics and table tennis. Those less interested in physical exercise could play chess or bridge after hiring the necessary accessories. In the reading rooms, it was possible to read current periodicals and interesting books (the latter could also be borrowed) or to play indoor games. The floor was occupied by those willing to dance to the rhythm of music played from a tape recorder.

On hot summer days, in order to cool off and find refreshment, it was enough to take a short tram ride to the nearest beach on the Vistula or the nearest summer swimming pool. In the 1950s, inhabitants of Warsaw had a number of water centres at their disposal, including the Legia club at Łazienkowska, Jeziorko Kamionkowskie and Czerniakowskie Lakes, the Gwardia club and municipal beaches on the Vistula at ul. Miedzeszyńska and, starting in the late 1950s, at ul. Wybrzeże Helskie.

The Stolica weekly reported that the beach between the Poniatowski Bridge and the railway bridge was available to Warsaw inhabitants as an official sunbathing area beginning in 1958. The access fee was 2 zlotys for adults and 1 zloty for children. To enhance the comfort of users, showers and a ladies’ dressing room were built and the bathing area was marked off. It was also possible to hire deck chairs and sports equipment.

For many years in Warsaw, the swimming pools of the Legia club were also extremely popular and were visited by people of every age, as many as 3,000 a day. This site was used not only for sunbathing, but also as a place to meet...
friends. After a major renovation in 1953, inhabitants had not only the buffet and the restaurant at their disposal, but also ‘dressing rooms, showers, deck chairs, a deposit point and a solarium for ladies’.³

Warsaw inhabitants fatigued by the heat could also find some refreshment near huge fountains in the park surrounding the Palace of Culture and Science. As usual, this was the greatest attraction for children, who could play as much as they wished in water gushing from the mouths of lions in the hot walls of the city centre. Adults also soaked their feet in fountains, though, as was written in 1968, this was apparently due to the insufficient number of swimming pools in the city.

In their spare time, children and adults could relax in an amusement park by taking a ride on a train or Ferris wheel. The amusement park operated near the Poniatowski Bridge; its location, near the viaduct close to the Vistula, was marked in successive editions of the map of Warsaw from 1958-62. Children also spent time in courtyards and played on every free bit of ground. Younger children were taken by their mothers, grandmothers or minders to municipal parks and gardens or to Jordan’s gardens (playgrounds), of which there were fifteen in Warsaw.

In autumn and winter, instead of making trips outside the city, Warsaw inhabitants caught up on their shopping. The longest amount of time could be spent in the CDT (Centralny Dom Towarowy) department store, the biggest shopping facility in Poland, situated between ul. Krucza and ul. Bracka and Aleje Jerozolimskie. Many customers visited the electric and technical appliance department, particularly before Christmas. In the fashion salon, gentlemen could make themselves thoroughly familiar with the ladies’ autumn dress collection, prepared by Przekrój magazine and presented on aesthetic fashion dummies.⁴ In 1968, CDT became friends. After a major renovation in 1953, inhabitants had not only the buffet and the restaurant at their disposal, but also ‘dressing rooms, showers, deck chairs, a deposit point and a solarium for ladies’.³

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a part of Domy Handlowe Centrum (Central Department Stores), a state-owned enterprise that also comprised stores on the Eastern Wall. When Junior, Wars and Sawa began to operate in full swing, CDT lost popularity to these stores.

Those who liked having fun among a larger group of people attended evening dance parties in the Hybrydy students’ club, which attracted large crowds with their live bands. Jukeboxes playing current hits were also very popular. Rooms with billiards or table football – the latter a rarity in the 1960s – were set up for enthusiasts. A cosy atmosphere filled an authentic cellar, where one could sit over a drink or a cup of coffee.

A huge number of restaurants, cafes, confectioneries and bars (particularly cafeterias) were opened in Warsaw. One of the most popular locations was ‘Lajkonik’ (its official name, ‘Krakowianka’ was not commonly used) with unusual decorations, which was situated at Pl. Trzech Krzyży. The draw-

ings and inscriptions on the walls were added by popular artists and comedians. In October 1965, after a major renovation of rooms and paintings, this cult spot was ostentatiously reopened, making it possible again to arrange a rendezvous there and to sit for hours over a cup of black coffee.

From today’s perspective, we can see that forms of leisure and recreation have not changed significantly since the period of communist Poland. Indeed, getting tickets to a cinema, theatre, concert or exhibition often involved waiting in long queues, but many alternatives remained, such as visiting a cafe or students’ club, or simply sitting on a park bench and feeding pigeons. The period of the People’s Republic of Poland is regarded as a time of austerity, but people could organise their spare time no less effectively than today. Even though they had fewer opportunities, they used swimming pools and municipal beaches for leisure purposes and relaxed in the open air.
Plaża nad Wisłą na Saskiej Kępie; 1960

Beach on the Vistula in Saska Kępa, 1960
Plaża nad Wisłą, 1958

Beach on the Vistula, 1958
Culture Park in Powsin, 1961
Odkryte baseny kąpielowe
WKS Legia przy ul. Łazienkowskiej; lata 1958-1968

Outdoor swimming pools of WKS Legia club at
ul. Łazienkowska, 1958-68
Outdoor swimming pools of WKS Legia club at ul. Łazienkowska, 1958-68
Fontanna przed Pałacem Kultury i Nauki; 1955-1957
Fountain in front of the Palace of Culture and Science, 1956-57

Ogród jordanowski przy ulicy Wawelskiej; lata 1950-1960
Jordan's Garden at ul. Wawelska, 1950-60
Gra w zośkę przed budynkiem Sejmu; lata 1955-1956
Playing footbag in front of the Sejm building, 1955-56

Osiedle Praga I; lata 1955-1965
Praga I housing estate, 1955-65

Amusement park, 1955-65
Centralny Dom Towarowy, 1967

cdt (Centralny Dom Towarowy) department store, 1967
Kino Moskwa; lata 1955-1965

Moskwa Cinema, 1955-65

Kiermasz książki podczas Dni Oświaty, Książki i Prasy w Warszawie, 1963

Bar przy ulicy Świętokrzyskiej; 1958

Bar at ul. Świętokrzyska, 1958
Kawiarnia Lajkonik
(właściwie Krakowianka);
lata 1955-1965

Lajkonik (actual name: Krakowianka) Cafe,
1955-65
Every year on 1 May, central celebrations of Labour Day – events associated with the strongest Communist propaganda – were held in Warsaw. Successive anniversaries of the proclamation of the Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation were also pompously celebrated on 22 July. The summer of 1955 was an exceptional one, because Warsaw organised a completely unique event: the 5th World Festival of Youth and Students. Many weeks in advance, Stolica described the preparations for this event. The Festival began on 31 July, shortly after the granting of a ‘gift of the Soviet nation’, namely, the Joseph Stalin Palace of Culture and Science, to the Polish nation and the opening of the 10th Anniversary of the July Manifesto Stadium. For a city like Warsaw, which had an insufficient number of hotels (only 12 in 1958) and grappled with transport difficulties, organising such a large event and welcoming 30,000 delegates and journalists from 114 nations was a huge challenge.
In Grochów and Rakowiec, festival cities were established with sleeping areas in barracks, kitchens, dining rooms, or even shoemakers’ and tailors’ workshops. A smaller town for athletes was built in Bielany. All of these projects were expensive, but positive examples of cost reduction were also reported. In a propaganda article, the Stolica weekly informed readers that: ‘Water supply plants also cut down on costs by using rubber tow instead of expensive lead for sealing pipes. Electricians from the Łódź Association decided to save on 100 impregnated posts through the rational planning of cables’. Festival guests were transported by buses sent to Warsaw along with drivers from other Eastern bloc states: Ikarus buses from Hungary, ZiS buses from the Soviet Union and Skoda buses from Czechoslovakia. The press office of the festival was located in the Hotel Warszawa at ul. Świętokrzyska. Polish students who passed an examination before the Qualification Board were entitled to work as interpreters, but the competition was stiff: 5,000 persons from all parts of Poland decided to take the exam. The Documentary Film Production Company in Warsaw was entrusted with the task of recording festival events and reporting current information about the festival in the Polish Film Chronicle. In addition, an international project by Polish and Soviet filmmakers in the form of two full-length films was planned. The first was to serve as a documentary reporting the progress of the festival, while the second would present the folklore of all nations as represented on Warsaw stages.

Po miesiącach od zakończenia festiwalu wielotysięczne rzesze uczestniczące w centralnych dożynkach po raz pierwszy przeszły w pochodzie z placu im. Józefa Stalina na wieczór dożynkowy odbywający się na Stadionie Dziesięciolecia.

W 1957 r. „Stolica” wzmiankowała o głównej uroczystości Bożego Ciała w Warszawie oraz o procesji

Every year, Labour Day processions in Warsaw marched past the honorary stand at ul. Marszałkowska. Among the marchers were members of the Flying Club of the People’s Republic of Poland, representatives of Warsaw’s Printing and Rotogravure Printing House, employees of the Huta Warszawa steelworks and the editorial staff of the Stolica weekly. In 1961, a ‘rocket’ with young astronauts rode on a platform down ul. Marszałkowska, and school youth carried a placard with the slogan: ‘Today I’m a schoolboy, tomorrow I’ll be Gagarin’. These decorations were strictly associated with Soviet astronaut Yuri Gagarin’s successful pioneering trip into space less than three weeks earlier.

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preaching Primate of the Millenium, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński. This was a special event, because the primate had been released from internment in Komańcza a few months earlier on the wave of the October thaw.

Events celebrated in Warsaw were usually official ceremonies. All processions had to march down ul. Marszałkowska in front of the honorary stand at Plac Józefa Stalina, which was later renamed Plac Defilad. The destination of the marches was either Plac Konstytucji 22 lipca 1952 [Constitution of 22 July 1952 Square] in the MDM housing estate, or the 10th Anniversary Stadium. However, it must be remembered that Warsaw inhabitants were often forced to participate in such celebrations by their superiors at work or by school headmasters.

V Światowy Festiwal Młodzieży i Studentów; 1955
5th World Festival of Youth and Students, 1955
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5th World Festival of Youth and Students, 1955
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Stadion Dziesięciolecia Manifestu Lipcowego podczas
XIV Międzynarodowego Kolarskiego Wyścigu Pokoju; maj 1961

10th Anniversary of the July Manifesto Stadium during
the 14th International Bicycle Peace Race, May 1961
Central harvest festival, September 1958

Celebration of Labour Day, 1 May 1961
Uroczystość Bożego Ciała w Warszawie celebrowana przez Prymasa Polski, kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego; 20 czerwca 1957

Feast of Corpus Christi in Warsaw celebrated by Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, Primate of Poland, 20 June 1957

Obchody Święta Pracy; 1 maja 1963

Celebration of Labour Day, 1 May 1963
Uroczystość Bożego Ciała
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Feast of Corpus Christi in Warsaw celebrated by Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, Primate of Poland, 20 June 1957
Warsaw inhabitants often faced problems that took many years to solve. Nevertheless, everyday life went on at its own pace, and inhabitants often simply became accustomed to the existing difficulties, waiting patiently for change to come.

In spite of the difficult postwar years and the dull period of Communist Poland, Warsaw inhabitants, especially women, made efforts to look elegant and fashionable in the street. They made up for the insufficient supply of clothing shops by bringing store-bought material to a tailor, or using their own inventiveness, skills and creativity. It was also possible to buy attractive clothes at bazaars, and lucky ones could rely on packages sent from their families and friends living abroad.

Buildings destroyed during the occupation period stood unrepaired in the city for many years after the war. There were no tree-lined squares adjacent to them, but it was...
sponsible to arrange the surrounding space somehow. Not everyone could take a walk with their child to a park or a Jordan’s garden. Accordingly, playgrounds for children with basic equipment and fixtures, i.e. a sandpit, ladders, a slide and swings, were established among the partly ruined buildings of the city centre, with benches placed nearby. Naturally, orderly squares with grass and trees were established in growing numbers; even the Swiss Valley was rearranged.

Still, though, horse-drawn carts carrying coal, and subsequently trucks as well, were commonly seen on the streets of Warsaw. At the end of the 1950s, 170,000 flats, schools, offices and hospitals in Warsaw were heated with coal furnaces. Coal was supplied by the Warsaw Fuel Trade Company to district fuel offices, where it was bought by inhabitants. Fuel was distributed by carters, who had a bad reputation; it was commonly said that fuel was not delivered in full to the intended recipients. Sometimes coal was unloaded directly onto the street, and then had to be transported into the cellar by the inhabitants themselves.¹

The city suffered from a lack of restaurants, cafes and dance clubs that were open late evenings and nights and could be afforded by Warsaw inhabitants with average incomes. The real problem appeared when a guest arrived from abroad. Along the routes of the places visited most frequently by tourists, it was impossible to find outdoor cafes where one could sit over a glass of wine or a cup of coffee. All establishments were closed in the evening, so foreigners could only dream of a night life in Warsaw. Even though in some locations existing establishments were temporarily open on a round-the-clock basis, initiatives of this kind unfortunately lacked sufficient consideration and planning; these places were located far from evening tourist routes and were occupied by suspicious-looking individuals at

¹ U., brak tytułu, „Stolica” 1958, nr 41, s. 4.
Everyday life in Warsaw

Warsaw inhabitants, and the rides were a source of great fun for children.

Pedestrian traffic on city centre streets was quite intense during the day. Świętokrzyska, Marszałkowska, Aleje Jerozolimskie and other main streets were jammed with crowds of people rushing somewhere. In the 1950s and 60s, the need to build underground pedestrian crossings at the most important traffic junctions was mentioned in the press from time to time. In particular, the intense traffic during the 5th World Festival of Youth and Students reinforced the belief of urban planners that it was necessary to introduce two-level grade-separated junctions. Intense traffic on roads was also caused by popular single-track vehicles: mopeds, Osa scooters and WFM motorcycles.

Apart from everyday problems, the city also experienced extraordinary and surprising events, such as the unexpected night. Because of the small number of customers during the night hours, or their suspicious appearance, such establishments were quickly closed down. Apart from that, Warsaw inhabitants suffered from a shortage of clubs and places to dance.

For many years, even after the construction of the Palace of Culture and Science, the moving stairway on the W-Z [East-West] route served as a very important point on the city’s map; it was a real attraction for excursions arriving in Warsaw from all parts of Poland. Built as a part of the W-Z route and opened officially by Bolesław Bierut on 22 July 1949, it connected Pl. Zamkowy with the route’s tunnel. This was a popular meeting point for Warsaw inhabitants, and the rides were a source of great fun for children.

O. Sobański, Światła wielkiego miasta, „Stolica” 1967, no. 15, pp. 6-7.

M.S., Wielka koncepcja a względę realne, „Stolica” 1955, no. 34, pp. 6-7, 15.
advent of bad weather. Heavy downpours could cause complete paralysis within a district. On two days, 26 August and 12 September 1968, they seriously disrupted traffic in Mokotów. Roads were inundated by gradually accumulating water that could not flow into blocked gutters. This caused serious difficulties in the movement of city transport vehicles, as well as flooded cellars. Carrying their shoes in their hands, pedestrians tried to ford streams flowing along pavements and roads. Drivers of cars and two-wheeled vehicles had to rely on good luck and the solid workmanship of their machines when making their way down the flooded streets. And when the weather was hot and dry, street sprinkler vehicles were dispatched; they were entitled to the right-of-way when going through an intersection, in which traffic was directed by a militiaman.

It was difficult for American and West European culture to penetrate the Iron Curtain. Nevertheless, some inhabitants of Warsaw tried to overcome the problems and omnipresent dullness of Poland under communist rule. They wore fashionable clothes befitting those hard times, and the chosen ones had an opportunity to see concerts of legendary rock bands: The Animals in 1965 and The Rolling Stones in 1967.
Ulica Marszałkowska między placami: Zbawiciela oraz Unii Lubelskiej; lata 1953-1963

Ul. Marszałkowska between Pl. Zbawiciela and Pl. Unii Lubelskiej, 1953-63

Dolina Szwajcarska; 1957

Dolina Szwajcarska [Swiss Valley], 1957

Wóz konny z weglem, ul. Madalińskiego 70/78; lata 1955-1965

Horse cart with coal, ul. Madalińskiego 70/78, 1955-65
Intersection of Al. Jerozolimskie and ul. Nowy Świat


Intersection of Al. Jerozolimskie and ul. Nowy Świat, 1955
Intersection of Aleje Jerozolimskie and ul. Nowy Świat
Intersection of Aleje Jerozolimskie and ul. Nowy Świat
Skrzyżowanie Al. Jerozolimskich i Nowego Świata

Intersection of Aleje Jerozolimskie and ul. Nowy Świat
Ulica Marszałkowska, widok z Hotelu MDM w kierunku Żoliborza; lata 1955-1957

Ulica Marszałkowska from the Hotel MDM towards Żoliborz, 1955-57
Autobus komunikacji miejskiej; lata 1965-1968

City transport bus, 1965-68
Plac Trzech Krzyży; 1957
Pl. Trzech Krzyży, 1957

Ulica Świętokrzyska i hotel Warszawa; lata 1955-1965
Ul. Świętokrzyska and Hotel Warszawa, 1955-65
Bar Praha in Aleje Jerozolimskie, 1961-64
Bar Praha w Alejach Jerozolimskich; lata 1955-1965

Praha Bar in Aleje Jerozolimskie, 1955-65
Bar Praha w Alejach Jerozolimskich; lata 1955-1965

Praha Bar in Aleje Jerozolimskie, 1955-65

Skrzyżowanie ulic Krucej i Hożej. Widoczny neon baru mlecznego Bambino; 1962

Intersection of ul. Kruca and ul. Hoża, with the neon sign of the Bambino cafeteria, 1962
Ulica Wspólna; 1957
Ul. Wspólna, 1957

Budynki Sejmu; 1956
Buildings of the Sejm, 1956
Ulica Marszałkowska na skrzyżowaniu z ulicą Świętokrzyską; lata 1973-1974

Ul. Marszałkowska at the intersection with ul. Świętokrzyska, 1973-74

Schoady ruchome przy trasie W-Z; 1966

Moving stairway near W-Z Route, 1966
Ulica Marszałkowska na skrzyżowaniu z ulicą Świętokrzyską; lata 1973-1974

Ul. Marszałkowska at the intersection with ul. Świętokrzyska, 1973-74
Pawilon meblowy przy ulicy Przeskok; lata 1965-1975

Furniture pavilion at ul. Przeskok, 1965-75
Most Poniatowskiego; lata 1959-1965

Poniatowski Bridge, 1959-65
Ulica Świetokrzyska; lata 1960-1965

Ul. Świętokrzyska, 1960-65
Intersection of Aleje Jerozolimskie and ul. Marszałkowska, 1964

CPN (Central Office of Petroleum Products) filling station in Janki, 1957-65
Ulica Marszałkowska; 1956

Ul. Marszałkowska, 1956

Plac F. Dzierżyńskiego; 1962

Plac F. Dzierżyńskiego, 1962

Skrzyżowanie Al. Jerozolimskich i ulicy Marszałkowskiej z budynku „Uniwersal”; 1968

Intersection of Aleje Jerozolimskie and ul. Marszałkowska from the ‘Universal’ building, 1968
Ulica Targowa; lata 1953-1960
Ul. Targowa, 1953-60

Ulica Targowa; 1963
Ul. Targowa, 1963
Ulica Grochowska; lata 1965-1968

Ul. Grochowska, 1965-68

Marecka kolej wąskotorowa na ulicy Radzymińskiej; lata 1960-1968

‘Marecka’ narrow-gauge railway at ul. Radzymińska, 1960-68
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