

RESIDENTIAL COMPLEX OF TOR HOUSING ESTATE IN WARSAW'S DISTRICT OF GROCHÓW

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This Residential Complex is situated between the streets: Podskarbińska, Stanisławowska and Kobielska; it is composed of 10 buildings and is one of the two housing estates completed by Workers' Estates Association (Towarzystwo Osiedli Robotniczych – TOR) in Warsaw. This housing estate is, in line with the tasks completed by TOR, an example of welfare housing emerging in the Interwar Period, whose fundamental goal was ensuring the proper housing conditions to the least prosperous social strata. The welfare housing estates in the Interwar Poland, including the activity of Workers' Estates Association and the buildings erected thanks to its efforts, entered the area of interest of scientists many years ago and today is a well-researched subject. However, what surprises is the fact that the housing estate in Grochów is one of the least known complexes. Useful information can only be found at websites of fans of Warsaw, or in city guides. No mention of the complex can be found in the magazine devoted to welfare housing *Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie*, which provides up-to-date information about building objects completed by TOR. Because no building layout plans were preserved, we must rely on the memory of current residents. The repeated short mentions about the housing estate contain information about the authorship of Natalia Hiszpańska and Mirosław Szabuniewicz, dated, depending on the source, between year 1935 and 1938¹, and the accompanying short characteristics not directly related to the facts about the establishment in Grochów, but characteristic of most welfare housing estates built in the Interwar Period². The TOR housing complex in Warsaw's district of Grochów stands out with its curious and unique form and functionalities, hardly found in other housing estates of Warsaw. Each of the buildings has a dis-

tinguishable projection, in which there were rooms without residential function. Buildings situated at the crossing of Podskarbińska and Kobielska streets from the northern side were connected with brick-made two-storey connectors (Fig. 1). Unfortunately, nowhere can be found the origin of this solution that distinguishes the housing estate in Grochów among other projects completed by TOR.

The housing situation in Poland and the founding of Workers' Estates Association

The housing situation in Poland in the Interwar Period did not differ significantly from the situation in neighbouring countries. In fact, the problems in Poland were even more serious. It was related to the deepest point of the housing crisis, which had continued for so time then, and which was worsened by the World War. The seriousness of situation became apparent in the first quarter of the 20th century. Criticised were bad housing conditions in the basements and outbuildings occupied by the poorest classes of society, which resulted primarily from architectural solutions, which failed to provide sufficient sunlight and fresh air. Another factor was overpopulation of these dwellings. These problems were present in Warsaw, too, but here the situation was much worse than in other cities. Around the year 1915, statistically, in one residential building dwelled 95 people, whilst in such cities as Paris, Poznań, Prague, Berlin or Vienna, in similarly sized building lived half as many people³. In the year 1915, *Aesthetic needs of Warsaw (Potrzeby estetyczne Warszawy)* by Alfred Lauterbach was published. The subject of the analysis contained there were the parts of Warsaw dating back to the 19th century, in the publication referred to as "new districts". Their character is critically con-

¹ According to the publication of M. Leśniakowska and The Communal Register of Monuments the housing estate was built in the years 1935–1937, M. Leśniakowska, *Architektura w Warszawie 1919–1939*, Warszawa 2000, The Communal..., on numerous web sites also can be found dating to the years 1935–1937.

² M. Leśniakowska, op. cit., The Communal Register of Monuments attachment in directive Nr 2998/2012 of the President of Warsaw of 24. 07. 2012 r., poz. 00006766, 00006767, 00006765, 00006868, 00006869, 00006911, 00006912, 00006913, 00006914, 00006325; www.torgrochow.cba.pl (available 9 II 2014); www.twoja-praga.pl (available 9 II 2014).

³ A. Lauterbach, *Potrzeby estetyczne Warszawy*, Warszawa 1915, p. 8.

fronted with earlier building developments. In the year 1917, the magistrate established the City Regulation and Development Agency, involved in collection of data necessary for preparation of regulatory projects⁴. All the housing responsibilities, so far in the hands of private investors – owners of tenement houses – were entrusted to communes pursuant to the communal self-government decree of February 4th, 1919, which, as one of the very first regulations, tackled the problem of health of residents⁵. The statistics kept at that time show that sewage system was installed in only 15% of worker flats, whilst the inspection in Wola district showed that only 25% of workers' flats had water-closets⁶. Oftentimes, in the event of tenement houses, there was only one toilet for the entire residential segment. In wooden barracks, outdoor privies or cesspits were used. Workers' dwellings at that time were usually situated outside the city centre. The downtown small apartments' rooms were rather bachelor apartments for middle class. Interwar Period press articles confirm high awareness of the negative effect of these dwellings on human health. The main problems quoted were dampness resulting from lack of proper sunlight and ventilation of the flats and problems with heating, as a result of high variances of temperature, as well as smoke coming from in-flat heaters/stoves. Such housing conditions were the cause of rheumatism, rickets in children, vermin, tuberculosis and problems with sight, in particular in people who do housework in insufficient light. Moreover, these poor housing conditions were seen as the cause of nervous problems⁷.

Very important for the development of architectural thought of the capital city in the Interwar Period was the fact that Warsaw attracted most of renowned architects. The first students of the Department of Architecture of Warsaw University of Technology after the First World War graduated from this school and they regarded the housing problems as top priority. Among them, the Syrkus or the Brukalski families, thanks to ties with CIAM, trans-

planted avant-garde solutions to the Polish market. In the year 1921, Warsaw Housing Cooperative was established, which in the year 1925 started to build the first colony in Żoliborz district. Despite the fact that the goal of the Cooperative was improvement of living conditions of the poorest social strata, its Chapter did not mention workers' flats, anyone could become a member of the Cooperative. These flats, despite being far less expensive than the ones available in the free market, for many worker families were still too expensive, which is why only few of the residents of the first WSM colonies were workers, the rest was intelligentsia⁸.

In order to further look for the solutions ensuring dwellings for workers, on April 26, 1929, the Polish Association of Housing Reform was inaugurated, with scientific and research profile. On March 2, 1930, the Association convened a conference devoted to housing problems, which was supposed to be the basis for preparing a housing and building act⁹. The housing problem was understood as the housing conditions of workers. The two fundamental problems were high rent and overpopulation of flats. Teodor Toeplitz postulated that rent should amount to not more than 1/6 or maximum 1/5 of wage, whilst the cost of rent based on capital taking into account reliefs amounted to approx. 43% of wages, whilst without reliefs, more. PTRM decided to intervene and presented the workers housing estates construction organisation project to state government. In order to implement the postulates, the Council of Ministers on February 1, 1934 decided to establish Workers' Estates Association (Towarzystwo Osiedli Robotniczych – TOR)¹⁰. It was concluded that workers are unable to use standard credit action. This is why the state donated 5 million zlotys to finance this action, establishing TOR with the initial capital of 500 thousand zlotys. The Association was entrusted with the tasks of initiating the construction process, exploitation and sales of flats built in the form of blocks of flats or detached houses¹¹. The resolution establishing

⁴ S. Różański, *Planowanie przestrzenne Warszawy (1916–1939)*, [w:] *Warszawa II Rzeczypospolitej (1918–1939)*, Warszawa 1968, p. 324.

⁵ J. Cegielski, *Budownictwo mieszkaniowe w Warszawie w okresie międzywojennym*, [w:] *Warszawa II...*, p. 119.

⁶ *Z Polskiego Towarzystwa Reformy Mieszkaniowej*, „Dom Osiedle Mieszkanie” 1934, no 1, p. 20.

⁷ A. Skwarczyńska, *Złe mieszkanie a zdrowie*, „Dom Osiedle Mieszkanie” 1934, no 12, p. 12, 13, 14.

⁸ E. Mazur, *Warszawska Spółdzielnia Mieszkaniowa 1921–1939: materialne warunki bytu robotników i inteligencji*, Warszawa 1993, pp. 41–42, 44.

⁹ H. Syrkusowa, *Ku idei osiedla społecznego*, Warszawa 1976, p. 97.

¹⁰ H. Syrkusowa, op. cit., p. 163.

¹¹ See *Wiadomości z akcji drobnego budownictwa. Budownictwo robotnicze*, „Przegląd Budowlany”, *Ruch budowlany*, 1934, no 2, p. 49.

the organisation set forth the rent at 20-25 zlotys for families with maximum income of 250 zlotys¹², which was incomparably less than before. Finally, on March 29, 1934, TOR was established as a limited liability partnership and as its administrator was appointed Mr. Jan Strzelecki¹³. The company was to implement normalisations and standardisations, in order to reduce the costs of building of flats of the space above 36-42 m².

In the years 1934-1939, a number of housing buildings were completed from TOR funds, for workers all over Poland. Multi-family and single-family houses were built in detached and semi-detached system. In big cities, that is Warszawa, Katowice, Łódź, Poznań, Kraków, as well as smaller towns like Mościce, Janowa Dolina or Zagnańsk. The basic criterion was the construction of houses in housing estate layout, because it enabled standardisation and cost reduction¹⁴. The Workers' Estates Association granted financial support for the construction of objects fulfilling the TOR's programmed assumptions to communes, cooperatives and institutions. It served as a kind of intermediary between Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego and the investors. It evaluated building plans and their purposefulness, as well as initiated the construction process and prepared the annual plan of the action of construction of small and inexpensive flats. BGK's funds for the realisation of building objects were appropriated upon request of TOR¹⁵. This way, as a result of cooperation with Warsaw Housing Cooperative, WSM in Rakowiec was build, among other things¹⁶. Own housing estates of various organisations, still administered by TOR. An example of such project is the housing project discussed in this article.

Selection of location and building objects completed

The Workers' Estates Association set forth the guidelines for selection of land on which to build the

housing estates. The most important factors were the costs of land and infrastructure. Because these flats were designed for the poorest citizens, who often-times were unable use public transport, in order to reduce the walking distance, it was recommended that place of dwelling had to be located within the distance of 1.5-2 km from the workplace¹⁷. Grochów was the second largest, after Wola, and continually growing centre of industrial works. This is why this location was an obvious choice for the second housing estate (the first one was the housing estate in Koło). The land plot nearby Polskie Zakłady Inżynierii was the most appropriate among the proposed locations. However, the Supervisory Board decided that it was too expensive to buy¹⁸. In order to solve this problem, an agreement was signed by Municipal Board of Warsaw. The commune was supposed to provide land of 2.6 ha fully developed and within 5-minute walk from a tramway stop. In exchange, the commune could have say in the selection of occupants, presenting candidates who meet TOR's requirements¹⁹. The criteria of allocation of a flat was the amount of wages, housing conditions, family status, moral and social quality of the candidate²⁰. According to the agreement, the city obtained the title to 1/12 part of the property²¹. The city granted two land plots, on which currently there are two buildings. Their selection arose from the ownership of the land for the buildings. The donated two land plots covering the area of 26 779 m² were the property of the commune and could be straight away leased to TOR²². In connection with the investment project planned by TOR, the Municipal Land Development Plan located in Podskarbińska Street (Fig. 2). The designed use of these two plots for TOR complexes not only allowed for locating the flats nearby the place of work, but also ensured appropriate living quarters and conditions, in line with the emerging concept of welfare estates. Ten four-storey residential building were erected in the donated land. Four of them were positioned with

¹² H. Syrkusowa, op. cit., p. 163.

¹³ *T.O.R.*, „Dom Osiedle Mieszkanie” 1934, no 3-4, p. 40.

¹⁴ J. Strzelecki, *Organizacja i działalność Towarzystwa Osiedli Robotniczych*, „Dom Osiedle Mieszkanie” 1934, no 2, p. 13.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 10-11.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

¹⁷ *Wytyczne obowiązujące przy wyborze terenu pod budowę osiedla T. O. R.*, „ Dom Osiedle Mieszkanie” 1937, no 4-6, p. 64.

¹⁸ *T. O. R. Sprawozdanie z działalności Towarzystwa Osiedli Robotniczych spółki z ograniczoną odpowiedzialnością za rok 1937*, Warszawa 1938, p. 10.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ *T. O. R. Sprawozdanie z działalności Towarzystwa Osiedli Robotniczych spółki z ograniczoną odpowiedzialnością w Warszawie za rok 1938*, Warszawa 1939, p. 52.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 50.

²² APW [The State Archive in Warsaw], Akta Nieruchomości [Property Records], ref. 11938, fol. 2, 3.

gable along Stanisławowska Street, separated with service facades, the other six were positioned in the rectangle delimited with Podskarbińska and Kobielska streets and connected with connectors on pillars made of bricks. In the close vicinity of the building development, in Podskarbińska Street, a school was planned. On the other side of the street, there were sports and recreation grounds. Similar purpose was planned for the land plot located on the other side of Stanisławowska Street²³. In this area in the year 1938, Physical Education Centre was planned²⁴.

Characteristics of housing premises

According to TOR's guidelines, flats were not to exceed 36 m² each²⁵. The standard fittings for workers' flats of this size were toilers and washbasins, however, bath and laundry were planned outside the flat, to common use premises. There were 3 types of flats in the buildings erected in Grochów: single-room of 19.5 m², one and a half room of 31 m², one and a half room covering the space of 36.5 – 37 m²²⁶. Most of the flats had one and a half room. In the buildings located in Stanisławowska Street, most flats were of the third type. The buildings were composed of repeatable sections, four identical flats in each section. An exception was the end section with a sanitary part²⁷. Smaller "one and a half room" flats were located in buildings with connectors.

The Association was established in the year 1934, when the smallest flats were generally built. The construction of housing estates aimed at improving the living conditions of worker families in Poland began as early as in the 1920s, when Mr. Stanisław Tołwiński, involved in the Warsaw Housing Cooperative, as minimum housing unit regarded two rooms with a kitchen and a toilet²⁸. Since the year 1930, the situation of workers gradually worsened, rents increased and their wages were reduced. In order to provide them with housing they could afford, smaller flats were started to be built. In the year 1934, the basic housing unit for a family of 4-6

was a "one and a half room" flat²⁹. As the ultimate point of the search for the minimal flat in Warsaw we can regard the housing estate of the Warsaw Housing Cooperative (WSM) in Rakowiec, financed from TOR funds, with flats covering the space of 33 m², which became the model for the 1st series of TOR housing estate in Koło, completed later on³⁰. In these buildings, the flat's space was reduced even more and did not exceed 30 m²³¹. However, this size was not sufficient. Based on the experience of residents, in the 2nd series housing estate in Koło, the living space was increased to 32.6 m² and 35.8 m²³². The flats in Grochów have one bigger type, in which the size exceeds the 36 m² provided in the guidelines. However, this establishment was the latest built workers housing estates before the Second World War. At that time, the economic crisis of the early 1930s was already extinguished, which enabled the realisation of bigger and more comfortable flats.

The factors determining the form of the buildings

Despite the fact that the part of the city in which the housing estate was planned to be erected was relatively undeveloped and most streets existed only in plans, the land plots granted by the city had very precise borders, which determined the layout and cubature of the buildings. Podskarbińska, Stanisławowska and Kobielska streets were the borders of the complex from the east, south and north. The course of Podskarbińska and Kobielska Streets could not be changed, because along them as early as in the first half of 1920s, municipal houses were erected for the homeless, who could rent flats based on tenancy right³³ (Fig. 3). The complex of hostels for the homeless consisted of three brick-made hostel buildings erected in historic forms at the corner of Podskarbińska and Kobielska Streets according to the design of Mr. A. Matuszewski, as well as of wooden and brick-made buildings on the other side

²³ Ibidem, fol. 28.

²⁴ APW, Akta Nieruchomości [Property Records], ref. 11942.

²⁵ J. Strzelecki, op. cit., p. 14.

²⁶ *Sprawozdanie z działalności ... za rok 1938*, p. 46.

²⁷ This statement is possible due to the preserved II series buildings plans, a part of them is analogous to the existing buildings in Stanisławowska Street.

²⁸ Ł. Heyman, *Nowy Żoliborz 1918–1939. Architektura-Urbanistyka*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk 1976, p. 87

²⁹ *Życie W.S.M.*, 1934, p. 1-2.

³⁰ *Osiedle T. O. R. na Kole*, „Dom Osiedle Mieszkanie” 1935, no 11, p. 33.

³¹ Ibidem.

³² *Sprawozdanie z działalności ... za rok 1937*, p. 42.

³³ *Budownictwo mieszkaniowe magistratu m.st. Warszawy 1924–1928*, p. 5, 6.

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 7, 10, 20, 21, 24.

of Kobielska Street³⁴. The land adjacent in the west to the land plots granted to TOR belonged to Polish Red Cross.

Typical for “flats most needed in the society” minimal space could not accommodate bathrooms, which were located in a special common-use space. In the 1st series of the first own TOR housing estate in Koło, corridor layout was designed, thanks to which two common-use rooms at each floor were available to all residents³⁵. The segment layout used in the 2nd series required a different solution. For this reason, bathrooms and laundry-rooms were located in the basement. High-ceiling and sufficiently ventilated utility attics let the residents dry their laundry³⁶. None of these solutions could be used in Grochów. The block layout of the buildings suggested the solution similar to the one used in the second series of buildings in Koło, however, this was not possible for two reasons. The first was the higher protection in the event of war. In January 1937, the Council of Minister issued a Resolution regarding the need for preparing the anti-aircraft and anti-chemical defence. The protection of housing estates and building complexes was going to be provided by the Minister of Internal Affairs³⁷. Despite the fact that detailed guidelines and recommendations with respect to the construction of buildings meeting the anti-aircraft and anti-chemical protection requirements were specified in the Regulation of the Council of Ministers in force since April 29, 1938³⁸, the tasks required for this type of protection were completed in the year 1937, among others in TOR’s buildings in Grochów. Besides ferro-concrete structure of the roof, replacing the former wooden structure, anti-aircraft shelters were built in the basement. This is why bathrooms and laundry-rooms could not be located there, as was the case in 2nd series of buildings in Koło³⁹. Depressed terrain in relation to the canals makes impossible the building of deep basements⁴⁰, therefore the natural solution would in this case be

moving the basement functions to the attic with the drying room. Unfortunately, precisely defined borders of the land plot made it impossible. So far completed multi-family buildings in general had three storeys. However, the city changed the guidelines for the development of this land, requiring the construction four-storey buildings⁴¹. The land plot limits did not allow for more space between buildings, and adding one storey resulted in their failing to fulfil of one of the basic principles – sufficient sunlight exposure. The architects had to strive to achieve the minimum elevation of the buildings, which could only be done at the cost of lowering the attic⁴². For this reason, each building has near one of the gables a separate vertical segment, in which there are bathrooms and laundry-rooms. In the event of buildings near the block by the crossroads of Podskarbińska and Kobielska streets, attics had to be lowered so much that they could not fulfil their function, therefore the drying-rooms were moved in this part of the estate to special annexes, which connect the buildings and are available directly from the blocks with bathrooms and laundry-rooms. The blocks and connectors were located from the northern side, in order to avoid shading of backyards⁴³ (Fig. 4, 5). The solution for common spaces in Grochów gives the buildings an exceptional character. This layout, certainly rising the costs of building, was not implemented in buildings which did not require such the solution. The changing laws and specific conditions of individual locations forced the architects to seek non-typical solutions, which resulted in a housing estate unique in terms of functional solutions and aesthetics.

Auxiliary functions and Community Centre

The TOR housing estate in Grochów was designed in line with all the recommendations for a welfare housing estate put forth in the Interwar Period. The conditions that needed to be provided

³⁵ *Osiedle T. O. R. na Kole*, “Dom Osiedle Mieszkanie” 1935, no 11, p. 35.

³⁶ *T. O. R. Sprawozdanie (...) za rok 1937*, Warszawa 1938, p. 46.

³⁷ Regulation of The Council of Ministers of 29 I 1937, Dz. U. nr 120, poz. 73

³⁸ Regulation of The Council of Ministers of 29 IV 1938, Dz. U. nr 32, poz. 278.

³⁹ *T. O. R. Sprawozdanie (...) za rok 1937*, Warszawa 1938, p. 46.

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ *T. O. R. Sprawozdanie (...) za rok 1937*, Warszawa 1938, s. 46, APW, Akta Nieruchomości, [Property Records], ref. 11938, fol. 27, 34, sign. 11939, fol.19, 25.

⁴² *T. O. R. Sprawozdanie (...) za rok 1937*, Warszawa 1938, p. 46.

⁴³ Ibidem.

for the residents included not only healthy accommodation, sufficient sunlight exposure and low rent, but also complete auxiliary infrastructure, which would enable the residents to meet their living and cultural needs. For this reason, the Supervisory Board of TOR passed the resolution appropriating funds from credits also on the construction of public utility objects⁴⁴.

A crucial element was providing the residents with shops in the vicinity, to save their time, in particular in the situation when the head of the household could not, for financial reasons, afford a house maid. At the same time, such shops had to offer goods matching the financial resources of an average worker. In the housing estate in Grochów, service outlets had the form of single-storey pavilions situated between the gables of housing buildings along Stanisławowska Street. They accommodated: butcher-house, patisserie and grocery shop (Fig. 6, 7).

The Workers' Estate Association, similarly to the Warsaw Housing Cooperative, run social and education activity, through taking load off flats, through the opportunity to use common spaces, which at the same time contributed to cultural development of the residents. In the housing estate in Koło in the year 1937, a community centre was commissioned, in which there were: a kindergarten, meeting hall, library, reading room, 3 outpatient clinics, Kropla Mleka ("a drop of milk") and rooms for occupant associations activities⁴⁵. In the completed building complex there is no community facility, however, some sources quote information of culture and leisure clubs in the connector buildings⁴⁶. The existing housing buildings in Grochów were redesigned in the post-war period. Due to the bad housing situation lasting for many years, spaces in connectors and sanitary blocks were adapted to become flats (Fig. 8). No preserved plans of the objects and no knowledge of their form, as presented in the previous chapter, results in presuming that beyond laundering and drying, these connectors could have fulfilled the function of a community centre. The explanation of the origin of connectors and sanitary

sectors, as well as the documentation preserved in the State Archive in Warsaw, let us refute such conjectures. The Community Centre in Grochów never came to existence, although planned from the very beginning. The Land Development Draft Plan for the land near Podskarbińska Street envisaged the building of a community centre at the crossroads of Stanisławowska and Terespolska streets⁴⁷ (Fig. 3). However, this land was not entirely the property of the city and could be handed over to TOR only in the future. This is why at the early stage of planning of the housing estate, the community centre was planned to be built in the corner plot at the crossing of: Podskarbińska and Stanisławowska streets⁴⁸ (Fig. 9). The building's design was two separate bodies in the ground floor, connected at the first floor, making an arcade supported on columns, similar to the connectors with drying-rooms⁴⁹ (Fig. 10). Despite the fact that this land plot in the land development draft plan was planned for residential buildings, a community centre could be incorporated there, because the general land development plan of the capital city of Warsaw envisaged its use for public utility buildings⁵⁰. At the beginning of September 1938, the design project of the community centre was ready⁵¹. This was going to be the next building completed, after erecting 8 blocks of flats with shops. Some detailed drawings did not survive, therefore, we are unable to determine the functions incorporated there. The failure to complete the building in the end was caused by formal and legal circumstances beyond control of the investor. Despite favourable opinion of the city, problems emerged on the part of the crediting institution – Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego. The decision of TOR's Supervisory Board authorising the construction of general use objects was contested. BGK questioned the possibility of building general use objects from the funds appropriated for financing the construction of housing estates. After considering the case by the Economic Committee of the Council of Ministers, BGK's protest was repealed. However, the time spent on these procedures resulted in shifting the building

⁴⁴ Ibidem, p. 37.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 32.

⁴⁶ *Funkcjonalistyczne osiedle TOR, Grochów*, <http://fotoforum.gazeta.pl/72,2,746,46342674,46599026.html> (available 13.03.2014).

⁴⁷ APW, Akta Nieruchomości [Property Records], ref. 11938, fol. 27.

⁴⁸ APW, Akta Nieruchomości [Property Records], ref. 11938, fol. 43.

⁴⁹ APW, Akta Nieruchomości [Property Records], ref. 11938, fol. 8, 9.

⁵⁰ APW, Akta Nieruchomości [Property Records], ref. 11938, fol. 6.

⁵¹ APW, Akta Nieruchomości, [Property Records], ref. 11938, fol. 5.

works to spring of the year 1939⁵². As a result, this object never came into existence. The closest social facilities: the library and kindergarten, as well as sports grounds and a pitch, were on the other side of Podskarbińska Street, in the buildings erected in the years 1927-1928, accommodating premises for the homeless⁵³.

Unfulfilled project of 2nd series housing estate

From the very beginning, the estate was planned to be bigger. The completed building complex was just the first series. In the year 1937 land development draft plans, besides the two plots on which stood the 1st series of buildings, appropriate for development was regarded the land by the eastern corner of the crossing of: Podskarbińska and Stanisławowska streets. Completed in the land in part belonging to the city and in part to the State Treasury used by Państwowe Zakłady Inżynierii⁵⁴, the buildings could have supplemented the urban development of the nearby sports pitch, surrounded from the west and south by communal houses for the homeless⁵⁵. Another area was the land being direct continuation of the land handed over for the first series in Stanisławowska Street, in the narrow strip by the street belonging to the city, and farther to the Polish Red Cross ⁵⁶ (Fig. 2). Since the year 1937, the Workers' Estates Association carried out negotiations with the users, in order to purchase this land for further expansion of the housing estate. The extension of the estate at the areas belonging to the Polish Red Cross required modification of a section of Terespolska Street. Without moving its path to the west, the narrow strip of land handed over for the estate's development, would be cut off from the rest of the land with a communication thoroughfare, which would be very disadvantageous and impractical ⁵⁷ (Fig. 11, 12, 13).

In the year 1939, plans of construction of 2nd series housing estate were prepared⁵⁸. The new

buildings were to be erected on the land owned by the city, expanded onto the land potentially purchased from the Red Cross. Therefore, one might say that these efforts were successful (Fig. 14). Seven blocks were located at the area bordering Terespolska and Stanisławowska streets, adjacent to the completed 1st series of the housing estate. Thanks to slight shift of Terespolska Street to the east, four building could be fit there, positioned with gables along Stanisławowska Street, being the continuation of 1st series buildings. Three of them are analogous to the building objects completed in the 1st series along Stanisławowska Street⁵⁹ (Fig. 15). Behind them were three shorter buildings, which, as in the 2nd series buildings, were initially planned to be connected with the connectors elevated above the ground floor (Fig. 14, 18). The connectors can be seen in the survived site plan from May 1939; however, there were no architectural plans with it⁶⁰. From the later plans, dating back to July 1939, it follows that no connectors were planned at that time (Fig. 16), but a utility attic was planned, in which there were going to be bathrooms and laundry-rooms⁶¹, replaced with connectors and sanitary sections in the earlier objects (Fig. 17). We can therefore assume that the concept of connecting the buildings was abandoned at the stage of detailed design of individual buildings. The last of the buildings, located along Terespolska Street, had the same length as the two rows of buildings of the 2nd series, and had a drive-through gate at the ground floor, of the same width as the distance between the rows⁶². The second series design project did not envisage the construction on the initially planned land on the other side of Podskarbińska Street, used by Państwowe Zakłady Inżynierii. This land, separated with a communication thoroughfare, was not attractive, because they did not make a single entity with the housing estate. The newly designed buildings had four storeys and corresponded with brick-made detail to the buildings erected in the 1st series or simply repeated them⁶³. Housing premises, in

⁵² T. O. R. *Sprawozdanie (...) za rok 1938*, Warszawa 1939, p. 11.

⁵³ *Budownictwo mieszkaniowe magistratu...*, p. 7, 8.

⁵⁴ APW, Akta Nieruchomości [Property Records], ref. 11939, fol. 17, 22.

⁵⁵ The area marked in the picture by the letter B, APW, Akta Nieruchomości [Property Records], ref. 11938, fol. 28, 33.

⁵⁶ The area marked in the picture by the letter C, APW, Akta Nieruchomości [Property Records], ref. 11938, fol. 28.

⁵⁷ APW, Akta Nieruchomości [Property Records], ref. 11939, fol. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12.

⁵⁸ Projects of II series buildings are stored in The State Archive in Warsaw, Akta Nieruchomości [Property Records], ref. 11938.

⁵⁹ See APW, Akta Nieruchomości [Property Records] , ref. 11938, k. 11, 13, 14, 15.

⁶⁰ APW, Akta Nieruchomości, sygn. 11938, k. 24.

⁶¹ APW, Akta Nieruchomości, sygn. 11938, k. 18, 19, 20.

⁶² APW, Akta Nieruchomości, sygn. 11938, k. 24.

accordance with the upward trend in the last years before the Second World War, were supposed to be even bigger than in the 1st series. Some flats were planned to have the size larger than 40 m². In the building planned along the present day Terespolska Street in the 2nd series housing estate in Grochów, there were double-room flats with servant's quarters and bathroom⁶⁴.

The design projects of the buildings were submitted for approval to the Department of Regulation and Measurements of the Municipal Board at the end of July 1939⁶⁵. The outbreak of the Second World War made it impossible to complete the building project.

Authorship and Dating

The authors of TOR's housing estate in Grochów are presumed to be Ms. Natalia Hiszpańska and Mr. Mirosław Szabuniewicz⁶⁶. However, this presumption must be regarded as at least in part wrong or incomplete. Ms. Natalia Hiszpańska was the daughter of the architect Franciszek Eychhorn. In the year 1924, she began studies at the Department of Architecture of Warsaw University of Technology, however, her name is not included in the list of graduates, which might have been the result of an omission, but might as well mean that she did not obtain the graduation diploma⁶⁷. Unfortunately, the Students Register Office of the Warsaw University of Technology does not have the documentation of Natalia Hiszpańska that could help in solving this puzzle. No other projects completed by her are generally known, and after getting married in the year 1932, she devoted her life to scouting. She died in Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. Mr. Mirosław Szabuniewicz graduated from the Depart-

ment of Architecture in the year 1928⁶⁸. The information about his participation in the construction of TOR's housing estate in Grochów can be found in the note drafted on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of work. However, this note does not name him as a designer, but rather a person managing the construction process of the housing estates in Grochów⁶⁹. The verification of the information "at the source" was difficult, because right after the war, he went abroad and stayed there till the end of his life. In the 1930s, the building permits were for some time published in *Przegląd Budowlany*. Among the announcements, one could find the approval for the construction of ten three-storey blocks of flats completed by the Workers' Estates Association in the year 1937⁷⁰. The year 1937 points to the housing estate in Grochów. Mirosław Szabuniewicz in this note, as in the article by Mr. Olszewski, is mentioned as a supervisor of the building works. Moreover, the architect mentioned is not Natalia Hiszpańska, but Lucyna Nowak-Markowiczowa. The signature of this architect can be found on design projects of six of the seven buildings planned in the 2nd series, of which three, what is worth mentioning here, are copies of the buildings completed in Stanisławowska Street. Ms. Lucyna Nowak-Markowiczowa (formerly Nowak-Białostocka), had certain experience in designing workers' housing. In the year 1935, she designed, in cooperation with Anatolia Hryniewicka-Piotrowska, a complex of workers flats between Grochowska and Kamionkowska streets. Two years before that, the architects, together with Mr. Roman Piotrowski, designed model projects for small residential housing of BGK⁷¹. Close cooperation with the wife of Roman Piotrowski, who took charge of the chief technical position in the Workers' Estates Association, gave her afterwards the chance to work

⁶³ See Elevations of the proposed buildings, APW, Akta Nieruchomości [Property Records], ref. 11938, fol. 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 24.

⁶⁴ APW, Akta Nieruchomości [Property Records], ref. 11938, fol. 24.

⁶⁵ APW, Akta Nieruchomości [Property Records], ref. 11938, fol. 11, 12, 16.

⁶⁶ M. Leśniakowska, *Architektura w Warszawie 1919–1939*, Warszawa 2000; The Communal Register of Monuments in directive Nr 2998/2012 of the President of Warsaw of 24.07.2012 r., 00006766, 00006767, 00006765, 00006868, 00006869, 00006911, 00006912, 00006913, 00006914, 00006325; www.torgrochow.cba.pl (available 9 II 2014); www.twoja-praga.pl (available 9 II 2014).

⁶⁷ The name of Natalia (Eychhorn) Hiszpańska could not be found in the Faculty of architecture publications, containing

a list of all diplomats, issued on the occasion of its 50th anniversary; see *Warszawska Szkoła Architektury 1915–1965: 50-lecie Wydziału Architektury Politechniki Warszawskiej*, alphabetical list of graduates, item 2329 and 1664, Warszawa 1967.

⁶⁸ See *Warszawska Szkoła Architektury 1915–1965: 50-lecie Wydziału Architektury Politechniki Warszawskiej*, alphabetical list of graduates, item 2329 and 1664, Warszawa 1967.

⁶⁹ A. K. Olszewski, *50-lat pracy architektonicznej Mirosława Szabuniewicza*, „Architektura”, 1979, no 381-382.

⁷⁰ *Wykaz zatwierdzonych budowli*, item 650, „Przegląd Budowlany”, 1937 no 9, p. 541.

⁷¹ A. L. Nitsch, *Leksykon architektów i budowniczych Polaków oraz cudzoziemców w Polsce działających* (typescript stored in ZG SARP).

over the housing estate in Grochów. In view of this, we should ask why the author is presumed to be Natalia Hiszpańska. This information was probably taken from unpublished lexicon by Nitsch⁷². In the very same publication, this estate is assigned to Mirosław Szabuniewicz. It is worth noting that the adopted in the Lexicon convention of preparation of entries does not assume specifying the role of the architect in the realisation. As a result of that, three objects are listed on which he worked, regardless of his function. The information about the authorship of Natalia Hiszpańska can be found in the *List of losses of Polish architects in the World War* (Lista strat polskich architektów w wojnie światowej) prepared in the year 1979. Its activity was referred to as “participation in the design of the project of the housing estate in Warsaw in Podskarbińska Street”⁷³. Nitsch’s lack of precision in citing information obtained from other sources resulted in assuming that this building complex was designed by Mirosław Szabuniewicz in cooperation with Natalia Hiszpańska, with disregard of Lucyna Nowak-Markowiczowa. In light of the presented information, we should however regard Szabuniewicz as a person supervising the construction process. Natalia Hiszpańska, who prior to that only participated in just a few projects authored by her father⁷⁴, could have worked as a draughtswoman, or a person cooperating with the chief architect Lucyna Nowak-Markowiczowa. In the draft projects of the community centre, there is only the signature of the architect Roman Piotrowski⁷⁵, who fulfilled one of the chief roles in TOR. Final projects of all the buildings were also approved and signed for by him. His role can be considered as the role of a general architect⁷⁶.

The last issue calling for systematisation is the dating of the building complex. Popular sources in general date this housing estate back to the year 1938⁷⁷. The dates ranging from 1935 to 1937 can also be found⁷⁸. However, the information of approval of the building project published in *Prze-*

gląd Budowlany in the year 1937 rules this possibility out. According to Nitsch, the construction works took place in the years 1937 and 1938. The correctness of these dates can be confirmed in the preserved reports from the operations of the Workers’ Estates Association from the time of creation of the building complex. The construction works started in September 1937⁷⁹, and the buildings were commissioned in December 1938⁸⁰.

Conclusion

The housing complex of the Workers’ Estates Association in Grochów is one of the most crucial examples of welfare housing developing in the Interwar Period, the purpose of which was improving the housing conditions of the poorest strata of the society and at the same time the realisation of social and educational objectives. Despite the fact that this housing estate, in the finished form, did not have the elements necessary for achieving these objectives, the analysis of the unrealised projects shows that this was a fully-fledged project of a coherent establishment. Difficult land conditions and limitations imposed by the city did not allow for the implementation of standard functional and spatial solutions, thus forcing the architects to look for alternatives. As a result of that, the buildings were given attractive and unique bodies, whose aesthetic qualities were highlighted through contrasting the grey plaster of the facade with brick-made elements. At the same time, the housing solution is indicative of the trend, stopped by the world war, followed by the workers’ estates construction sector in the late 1930s.

Lack of interest in the estate and scarce knowledge in this subject are certainly not conducive to keeping it in proper condition. The building complex currently administered by housing cooperatives is in bad condition. No major renovation has been carried out. The residents of individual flats replace the window frames on their own account, unfor-

⁷² Ibidem.

⁷³ *Lista strat polskich architektów w wojnie światowe*, (typescript stored in ZG SARP).

⁷⁴ A. L. Nitsch, op. cit.

⁷⁵ APW, Akta Nieruchomości [Property Records], ref. 11938, fol. 8.

⁷⁶ The role of that person that I see in this case consisted in determining the nature of the project, the main character of buildings and then approving the resulting objects. They did not themselves perform an accurate draft of any of them.

⁷⁷ See www.twoja-praga.pl (available 12.03.2014); <http://www.torgrochow.cba.pl> (available 12.03.2014).

⁷⁸ M. Leśniakowska, op. cit.; The Communal Register of Monuments in directive Nr 2998/2012 of the President of Warsaw of 24.07.2012 r.

⁷⁹ *Sprawozdanie z działalności ... za rok 1937*, p. 10.

⁸⁰ *Sprawozdanie z działalności ... za rok 1938*, p. 48.

tunately, without maintaining the original window compartments design. No interference in the building's structure led the building to awful condition, however, at the same time, this way the building survived in practically unchanged form. The exception is the replaced windows and the windows created during the adaptation of the connectors for apartments. This housing estate is not registered in the Register of Historic Monuments; the buildings were only registered in the Communal Register of Monuments, thanks to which the buildings avoided thermal insulation of walls⁸¹. Unfortunately, housing cooperatives do not have sufficient funds or know-how to use proper renovation methods, which might soon lead to obliterating the characteristic features of this housing estate.

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⁸¹ www.torgrochow.cba.pl (available 17 III 2014).