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MODERNIST PARTY HOUSE IN ZIELONA GÓRA. ARCHITECTURE TO BE DISCOVERED

According to the tendency that was observed at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s, each provincial town, including Zielona Góra, was to be expanded. At that time in every area of social life, including architecture, there was a fixed set of values and symbols. Urban planning and architecture were to be adapted to the propaganda needs of the new social-political formation. A decision was made to build an elegant building, the seat of the Provincial Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party. The Central Office for Architectural and Construction Projects was entrusted with the project. The team headed by Mikołaj Kokozow designed a building reflecting the tradition of interwar architecture that linked constructivism and so called quasi-classicist modernism. The building at 23 Bohaterów Westerplatte Street in Zielona Góra is an example of socialist realism, which was a dominant style in Polish architecture in the years 1949-1956. The former Party House was designed in quasi-classicist style, decorated with quasi-historical detail. The building has a permanent position in the cultural landscape of Zielona Góra, being part of post-war history and an important element of the continuity of the cultural heritage and history of the town.

Keywords: history of architecture, modernism, social realism, monument

1. Introduction

In the Lubusz Voivodship, modernist architecture is not well identified. However, there are very significant monuments from that period: churches, schools, railway stations, post-industrial buildings, hospitals, post offices, fire stations and many others.

A very interesting example of modernism in church architecture is Christ the King Church in Gorzów Wielkopolski from 1930, designed by the Berlin architect Kurt Steinberg. Founded on a central plan in the shape of a rotunda covered with a pyramid-shaped cupola, with a detached tower on a square plan, the church is an important dominant feature in the town's panorama. Modernism in architecture is also represented in the region by numerous public buildings, e.g. L. Kruczkowski Theatre in Zielona Góra with a simple and monumental

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façade, built in 1931 according to the project of the Berlin architect Oskar Kaufmann. [1] The recently “discovered”, abandoned and neglected hospital building in Nowa Sól is a unique example of modern architecture from that period. This is the first hospital high rise building in former Germany and the first project by the well-known architect, specializing in hospital design, Ernst Kopp, in which he implemented innovative functional and communication solutions. [2]

2. History

In June 1950, the Polish Parliament changed the administrative division of the country. The Zielona Góra Voivodship was established with its capital in Zielona Góra. [3]

According to the tendency that was observed at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s, each voivodship capital, including Zielona Góra, was to be expanded. At that time, in every area of social life, including architecture, there was a fixed set of values and symbols. Urban planning and architecture were to be adapted to the propaganda needs of the new social-political formation. A decision was made to build an elegant building, the seat of the Voivodship Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party. A characteristic feature of architecture at that time was socialist realism in all fields of art.

The central part of the town was to be rebuilt and elegant office and public buildings as well as residential districts were to be built. In Zielona Góra, the spatial development plans included the communication line on Bohaterów Westerplatte Street. In this area, by the decision of the Presidium of the Municipal National Council in Zielona Góra and the Voivodship National Council in Poznań made in the mid-1950's, a Voivodship Administration building was to be built. The building was to have 4 conference rooms, a conference room for the Voivodship National Council, 18 departments, a library, an archive, office rooms, common rooms, workshops and garages. It was assumed that about 1,300 employees would work in the building, and the total cost of its construction would amount to 610 million zlotys at that time. By the standards of the time, the building was to impress with its splendour and become a showcase of the town (the cubature of the building was to be 61,000 m³). However, at the beginning of 1951 the idea for the purpose of the object was changed. At that time, the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party passed a resolution on the expansion of the network of seats of party committees, which were to be located in elegant buildings. For this purpose, the state budget for the year 1951 was changed considerably to cover the construction costs of the Polish United Workers' Party buildings. The Central Office for Architectural and Construction Projects was entrusted with the project. The team headed by Mikołaj Kokozow (one of the outstanding Polish architects of the 1950s) designed a building reflecting the tradition of interwar

architecture that linked constructivism and so called quasi-classicist modernism. (This architect also designed the Skra stadium on Noakowskiego Street in Warsaw). To a certain extent, Mikołaj Kokozow managed to deviate from the clear style of socialist realist architecture. However, the committee evaluating the project recommended making small changes in it to bring it in line with the socialist realist style. [4] The investment was partly funded by individual people who bought donation certificates.

However, the building of the Voivodship Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party was built as much smaller than the initial idea for the seat of the Voivodship Administration. The total area of the building was 2,783.6 m², and its cubature amounted to 12,605 m³. The construction of the building was completed in August 1953 and at that time it became "the party house".

From 1953 to 1989, meetings of the Voivodship Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party were held in the building. Celebrations of public holidays and other events were also held there. After the transformation of 1989 and the dissolution of the Polish United Workers' Party, the building ceased to be the seat of the party in the voivodship. On 9 November, 1990 the Sejm of the Republic of Poland passed a law that ultimately led to the takeover of the property of the former Polish United Workers' Party by the State Treasury. The real estate that belonged to the party (including the building of the Voivodship Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party in Zielona Góra) was taken over mainly by local governments. On 13 March, 1991 the Zielona Góra municipal authorities set up a municipal company called the "Business Centre" and donated the building to it. The municipal company called the "Business Centre", which manages the building, also founded in order to find business partners for local companies. At present, the building houses the headquarters of companies and banks, and it is also a place where various training courses and conferences are held.

3. Architectural analysis

The former seat of the Voivodship Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party in Zielona Góra, later the "Business Centre", is a brick building, with plastered walls, four-storeys and a basement, and it is covered with a flat roof.

The building was built on a plan similar to the letter H and it has a compact body. The main axis of the building is oriented on the south-west-north-east, parallel to Bohaterów Westerplatte Street, the main street of the town. The front elevation faces south-west towards the square, which is now used as a car park.

The elevations were designed as identical. The basic articulation of the walls is an arrangement of pilasters and cornice strips. An important horizontal accent is a high plinth, protruding from the face of the wall and crowned with

a cornice. Between the third and fourth floors there is an extended cornice strip, whereas the crowning cornice is a single narrow strip. The pilasters are simple in form with the heads and bases marked only with a single line. The fourth floor, in the form of a superstructure, is devoid of detail and decorations. In the south-east and north-west part of the main body, it is slightly higher than the fourth floor of the side wings. In the plinth part there are small rectangular window openings arranged irregularly. On the first, second and third floors there are two-level double windows. On the fourth, top floor there are two-level windows, single windows and two-level, double windows. Most of the original windows with wooden frames have been replaced with plastic ones. Rectangular window openings have simple profiled frames, with the exception of the window openings of the top floor, which are devoid of decorations. Moreover, the windows on the first floor are decorated with horizontal pediments and under-window panels, which are also to be found under the windows on the ground floor. The main entrance is located on the south-west façade. Two runs of wide, elegant stairs made of granite slabs lead to it. The first flight of stairs leads onto a wide terrace running through the entire width of the front elevation, surrounded by a sandstone balustrade with straight single-bar balusters. On the four outer posts of the balustrade there are nine-armed steel lanterns. The square in front of the building is paved with granite blocks and it is now used as a car park.

The front elevation has thirteen horizontal axes from the first to the third floor. There are twenty-one narrow, rectangular window openings on the top floor. The outermost axes are blind. The entrances are located centrally on the façade - on the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth axis, they have lintels with the lint marked in plaster. The doors are wooden, double and glazed in their upper part. Above the doors, on the level of the first floor, there are port-fenêtre windows with external decorative steel balustrades with short plates.

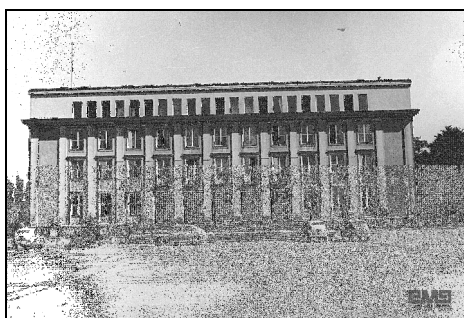


Fig. 1. The south-west front elevation, a photograph from the 1960s, the collection of the Museum of the Lubusz Region in Zielona Góra



Fig. 2. The south-west front elevation, a photograph from 2018, author: W. Eckert

The south-eastern elevation, parallel to Bohaterów Westerplatte Street, has nine-axes in the main body. The windows on the top floor are larger than the windows on the other floors. In the side wings there are two axes on the level of the first, second and third floor. On the fourth floor there are groups of three narrow rectangular window openings. The internal elevations of the side wings, perpendicular to the main body, have four axes on the level of the first, second and third floor with a blind outer axis. On the level of the fourth floor, there are five window openings. In the retracted main body of the building, in the outermost axes, there are entrance doors with low landings with several steps.

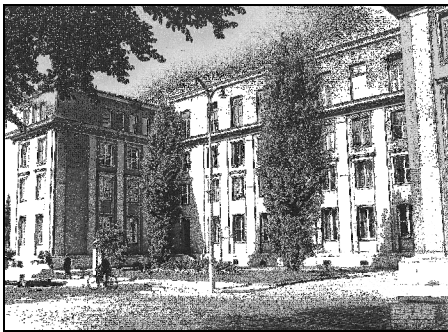


Fig. 3. A south-east view, a photograph from 1960s, the collection of the Museum of the Lubusz Region in Zielona Góra



Fig. 4. A south-east view, a photograph from 2018, author: W. Eckert

The north-eastern elevation has thirteen-axes. The outermost axes are blind. There are twenty-one narrow, rectangular window openings on the top floor. On both sides of the façade, there are entrance doors with stairs with a large platform and a steel balustrade.

The north-west elevation, which is the elevation facing the utility yard, has nine axes in the main body. The windows on the top floor are larger than the windows on the other floors. In the outermost axes of the main body there are staircase windows, which are offset vertically in relation to the other window openings. In the side wings there are two axes on the level of the first, second and third floor. On the fourth floor there are three narrow rectangular window openings. The internal elevations of the side wings, perpendicular to the main body, have four axes on the level of the first, second and third floor, with a blind outer axis. On the level of the fourth floor, the west wing has five window openings, and the east wing has three. In the eastern part, in the corner, a one-level garage with a flat roof has been added, which is adjacent to the south wall of the side wing. There is a complex of modern, one-level garages adjoined to the west wing. The square in front of the north-west elevation is paved with concrete slabs; it is used as an internal car park.

The original layout of the interior has been mostly preserved, but on the ground floor the layout has been disturbed by a modern complex of commercial stalls. On the first and the second floor, there are office rooms, which are laid out along a central corridor. The conference room, accessible from both wings, occupies the entire third floor in the main part of the building.

The floor of the hallways and corridors is paved with contemporary gres tiles, and on the fourth floor there is a parquet floor. The original door woodwork has been preserved in some parts of the building. The reinforced concrete staircase paved with terrazzo has a steel balustrade with wooden handrails. On the inside, there are still visible wall and ceiling decorations in the form of geometric shapes marked in the plaster.



Fig. 5. A donation certificate for the construction of the Party House from the 1950s, the collection of the Museum of the Lubusz Region in Zielona Góra

Fig. 6. The Conference Hall interior, a photograph from 2018, author: W. Eckert

4. Conclusions

The building at 23 Bohaterów Westerplatte Street is an example of socialist realism, which was a dominant style in Polish architecture in the years 1949–1956. The main assumption of this doctrine was that architecture should be "socialist in content and national in form". The former so-called Party House was designed in quasi-classicist style and it is decorated with quasi-historical detail. The division of the elevations is symmetrical and balanced with sparingly used, harmonious decor of quasi-classic provenance, i.e. simple pilasters, simple horizontal pediments above the windows, and recesses below the windows without ornaments, etc. The way of using and interpreting classicist solutions and architectural formulas results in a monumental, solemn form of the building. This impression is strengthened by the wide stairs within an elegant balustrade, as well as by the layout of the square in front of the building.

The building is characterized by a spacious, functional layout. Wide corridors and staircases ensure efficient communication inside the building. The interior design, which is a consistent reference to the design of the facade, is distinguished by attention to detail.

It should be emphasized that this building is one of the few objects in the town that are fully representative of the assumptions of socialist realism in architecture. At the same time, the architecture of this building is on a high artistic level.

In terms of history and urban development of the town, the building is of momentous and multidimensional significance. It is one of the first post-war buildings in the town. It is an important point of the two main communication lines of Zielona Góra - Bohaterów Westerplatte Street and the route from the Marshal's Office to the town centre.

The former is a street set out in the 1950s in the place of a former dirt road (German: Kapellenweg, 1945–1956, Topolowa Street). Planned as the main thoroughfare, it was intended to become an exquisite route with the most important public, commercial and service buildings. At present, on this street there are buildings constructed in different styles. There are also detached houses from the early twentieth century, blocks of flats from the 1950s and 1960s, commercial and service pavilions and high rise buildings from the 1970s as well as a modern shopping gallery, among which the seat of the Voivodship Committee of the former Polish United Workers' Party stands out with an elegant shape and a spacious square.

Moreover, this building is located on the axis running from the seat of the Marshal's Office through Bank Street and Bohaterów Westerplatte Street. This axis was formed after the Second World War to connect two important buildings belonging to the authorities. Plac Bohaterów and the square in front of the building of the Voivodship Committee of the former Polish United Workers' Party created a space for official state meetings, such as celebrations, demonstrations or parades. Design plans of a communication route with a similar layout can be found in urban plans from the late nineteenth century. At that time, the present Plac Bohaterów was planned to be the central part of the axis running from Sulechowska Street (German: Züllichau Strasse) to the area of today's F. Chopin Street (German: Lindenberg), where a new church was to have been built. [5]

The building and the square have become a permanent feature of the cultural landscape of Zielona Góra. They are part of post-war history and an important element of the continuity of the cultural heritage and history of the town.

In the 1950s and 1960s a number of new buildings were built in Poland in towns located in the former German territories. Some of them are interesting examples of the architecture of their time. One of them is the Party House in Zielona Góra. It is worth learning about the history and architecture of these buildings. Then it will be possible to make an objective analysis of their cultural values and as a result place them under heritage protection.

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Przesłano do redakcji: 04.04.2018 r.

Przyjęto do druku: 28.09.2018 r.