

## HOW TO BRING A BUILDING BACK FROM RUINS

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### Abstract

This paper is about the renovation of the baroque palace in Żagań. The journey starts at what was once a Medieval castle and finishes in the XIX century at the villa of Żagań Princes. Now the building is a XIX century villa maintained in a baroque style. The castle was built in the Middle Ages by Silesian Piasts and rebuilt three times, first by prince Wallenstein, then by prince Lobkovic, and finally, in the XVIII century, by princess Talleyrand. It remained the property of a French citizen until the 1960s, with its condition slowly decaying. In 1965, it was almost totally destroyed. Then the first renovation and revitalization works were initiated, lasting almost twenty years. The second renovation took place in the years 2007-2013, co-funded by the European Union. However, as a result of some cost cutting, the palace now requires a further, third approach to renovation.

Keywords: renovation, baroque palace, rainwater pipe system, chimneys

### 1. HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

The Palace in Żagań is a building that is maintained in the baroque climate. It is currently a XIX-century old estate of Żagań Dukes (Fig. 1). The history of the building is very interesting. Over the hundreds of years of its existence, it underwent three main reconstructions and two renovations. It will soon probably be subjected to yet another, third renovation.

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The location of the building is also remarkable, as it is surrounded by a 400-hectare park with an over 70-hectare island. The palace-park complex had once been more developed. The park contained, among others, a Pheasant House, a Summer Palace, etc. Nowadays, only a single building referred to as "Młynówka" remains, situated on the Carp Pond.



Fig. 1. View of palace from the north (fot. J. Mazur)

The castle was built in the Middle Ages, as a classical four-bastile fortress. It never, however, served a strictly defensive function. Even at the beginning, it was more of a representational castle than a fortified stronghold. In 1628, the reconstruction of the old castle into a new residence was initiated. It was designed in the style of *palazzo in fortezza*. At this time, the castle was changed into a palace, the number of bastiles was reduced to three, and a four-wing construction was created (Fig. 2). The building began to lose its defense functions.

Up until XVII, the body of the building did not undergo any changes. In these years, only its decor and function of the rooms changed. Such a state remained until Dorothée de Talleyrand decided to change the appearance of the palace. It was during her times that the cloisters were walled up and the moat in front of the East Wing removed. In the 40's of the XIX century, the South Wing was taken apart and two entrances into the courtyard created in its place. An orangery was situated beneath the entrances.

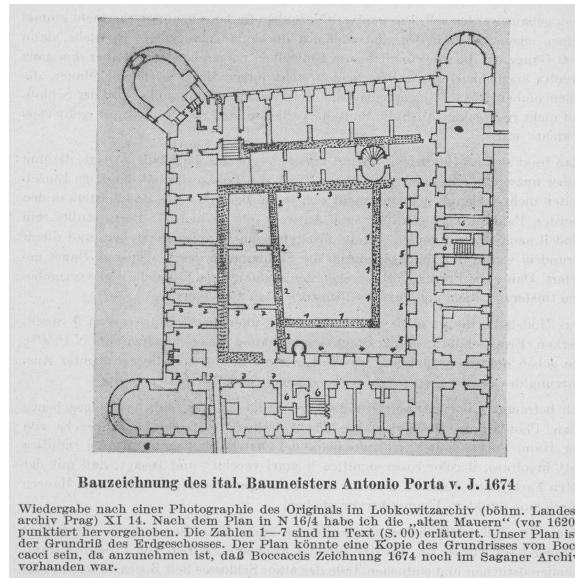


Fig. 2. Floor plan of the ground floor of the palace in Żagań from 1674 [1]

The palace survived the period of the Second World War in relatively good condition, as the Duchy of Żagań continued to belong to France this entire time (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. South elevation of the Palace in Żagań (fot. M. Świątek)

The palace was not taken care of until the 60's when, at the initiative of Edward Gierek, the Duchy of Żagań was bought out from France.

## 2. ARCHITECTURE OF THE BUILDING

The elevation of the building is in a simple vertical form. It was based on vertical, rusticated selvedges and a pattern of window openings in rusticated frames; their horizontal counterweights are the cornices. The crowning of the decorations are the ornamental reliefs of faces composed into the keystones of the windows and the ornamentation of the crowning cornice. All of these elements suggest the fortress nature of the building (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Characteristic elements of the palace façade (fot. W. Sokołowski)

## 3. RENOVATION WORKS IN THE YEARS 1965-1983

Upon the Duchy of Żagań, as well as the actual palace, being taken over by Polish authorities in 1965, its management was handed over to the Polish Armed Forces and its reconstruction initiated. Adam Stawczyk, the current director of the building, became responsible for its reconstruction. In order for renovation works to go more smoothly in a town with so many historic buildings and monuments, a local conservator was appointed. The historic conservator of Żagań continues to remain as an institution independent of the province (voivodeship) to this day.

Despite the fact that the legal problem of commencing renovation works disappeared, financial problems and those connected with the availability of



construction materials arose. However, thanks to the determination of the director, who arranged for the majority of the materials when dealing with other, more significant investments, or "half legally", it was possible to carry out the works on a more or less regular basis.



Fig. 5-7. Photographs of the palace roof taken in 1972 (fot. M. Świątek)

During what was almost 20 years, the roof of the palace, which had undergone nearly complete destruction, with the still remaining fragments covered with sheet metal, was replaced (Fig. 5-7). The sheet metal covering was replaced with plain-type ceramic pantiles which lasted until 2007. A new facade was created and the walled-up windows opened up and equipped with new frames and panes. The individual rooms were renovated and adapted to serving as a cultural facility, and a cinema was opened in the palace. Some of the materials used for the decor of the halls were derived from other undertakings of such kind. For example, the materials used to finish the walls of the Crimson Room or the Kurzeme Room were ordered by way of renovating the Wawel castle.

After many years, life was successfully returned within the palace walls. Of course, the building left much to be desired, but considering the times, the renovation was sufficient for making it available to users from the outside.

It was at this time that plans for revitalizing the park and further renovation of the palace were prepared, remaining in the director's office until Poland joined the European Union. They were then returned to, preparing for the following stage of renovation works.

### **3.1. Renovation of 2007-2013**

In the years 2007-2013, the roof was once again redone, worn windows replaced, the Crystal room remodeled, and revitalization works carried out on the Palace Park.



Fig. 8. View of the park following renovation (fot. W. Sokołowski)

The project was co-financed from European Union funds. The revitalization works made use of the above-mentioned design, prepared when Adam Stawczyk was the director. The park was returned to its prior state from the XVI century. Self-sown trees and shrubs were cut down, the old layout of paths returned, and new plantings carried out (Fig. 8).

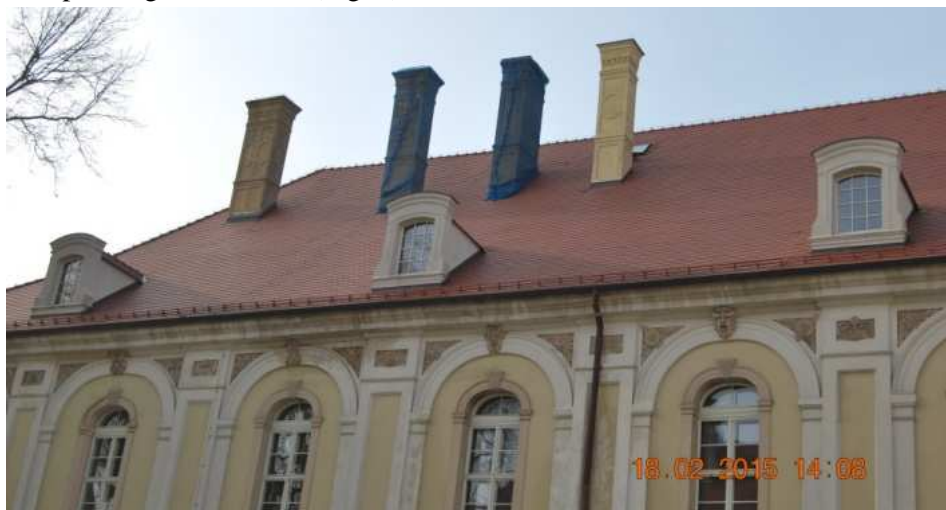


Fig. 9. Technical state of chimneys not subjected to renovation works (fot. W. Sokołowski)

Work on the palace included replacing the roof cover, installing new windows, renovating the facade from the East, installing new rainpipes and gutters, as

well as renovating the courtyard. A lift able to carry loads of up to two tons was also installed.

The park design did not account for lighting, which poses a significant hindrance to its use. Curbs were also not made along the paths of compacted sand, resulting in their erosion and degradation. What is more, the following year, drainage of the paths was carried out improperly by digging up ditches, which damaged the structures of the compacted soil, leading to further degradation of the paths due to the constitutive materials being washed out.

The execution of the palace renovation was also not free of mistakes. When negotiating the price of the works, the renovation of the chimneys, 19 of which are located on the inside slopes of the roof, was excluded from the design plans, which made it impossible to accept the courtyard and make it available for use. Moreover, some of the chimneys are in a state of technical failure, whereas in the case of others, only the plaster needs to be replaced (Fig. 9).

What is more, in the area of the courtyard, the system for draining water from the roof was implemented incorrectly, resulting in water damage to the newly redone facade (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10. Deteriorating east façade (fot. W. Sokołowski)

The rainwater pipes were spaced out incorrectly ( $>20$  m), with improper selection of their diameters, which, according to calculations based on the surface of the catchment area, should be between 150-180 mm (Fig. 11). Moreover, the connections of the downspouts with the gutters, as well as their connections to the rainwater drainage system, leave much to be desired (Fig. 12 and 13).

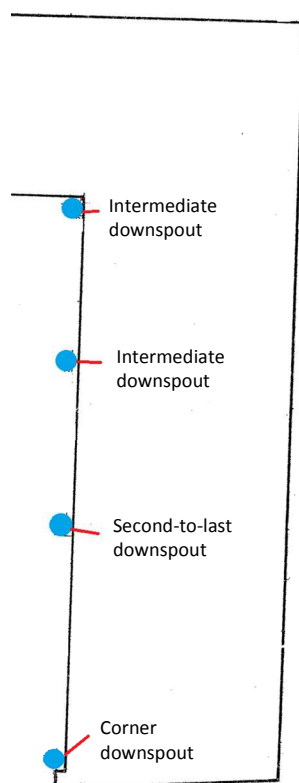


Fig. 11. Accepted spacing and diameters of downspouts on the east façade

#### 4. CONSLUSIONS

The many-year renovations carried out on the palace in Żagań have led to its heyday, saving it from the ruins that it had been 1965. However, some of the works were carried out incorrectly (roof drainage system), while failure to complete others (repair chimneys), has led to further deterioration. As a matter of fact, the title of the article ought to read "How to bring a building back from ruins and, once again, attempt to bring it to ruins". Not stopping the progressing deterioration of the facade by redesigning and repairing the system of roof drainage and failure to redo the chimneys can lead to such a situation very quickly. Another important element of the renovation works on this palace is installing a lighting system within the palace-park complex (preferably solar-powered), as well as assessing the effectiveness of the park drainage system and, if possible, bringing the fountains back into use.





Fig. 12, 13. Existing connections of the downspouts on the east façade  
(fot. W. Sokołowski)

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## JAK WYPROWADZIĆ BUDYNEK Z RUINY?

### Streszczenie

Referat przedstawia historię Pałacu Książęcego w Żaganiu oraz jego remontów, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem ostatnich dwóch rewitalizacji przeprowadzonych w latach 1965-1983 i później w latach 2007-2013. Na początku swojej historii obiekt był średniowiecznym zamkiem, który pełnił jednak bardziej funkcję reprezentacyjną niż stricte obronną. Wybudowany został przez ród Piastów Śląskich. Zamek był trzy razy przebudowywany. Pierwsza przebudowa zaczęła się w 1628 roku i finansował ją książę Albrecht von Wallenstein. Wtedy to przeprojektowano zamek na styl *Palazzo in fortezza*. Kolejna przebudowa nastąpiła w 1670 r. i prowadził ją książę Euzebiusz von Lobkovic. Utworzono wtedy pałac w formie czteroskrzydłowego obiektu ze skrzydłem

parawanowym od strony południowej. Obiekt w jego dzisiejszej formie możemy dopiero datować na XVIII wiek, kiedy to Dorota de Talleyrand zdecydowała się wyburzyć skrzydło parawanowe, zamurować krużganki i zlikwidować część fosy od strony wschodniej. Przedstawiono również zakresy wykonanych prac rekonstruktorskich oraz ich pozytywne i negatywne strony.

Słowa kluczowe: renowacja, pałac barokowy, system odwodnienia dachu, kominy

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