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Restoration of the Market Square in Opole as the creation of a new vision of the city's history

Introduction

In 1945, as one of the cities of the so-called “Regained Territories”, Opole experienced an interruption to its historical continuity. The new geopolitical situation in which the former German city joined Poland was associated also with the administrative, social, and identity issues. Opole, like many other cities, was severely damaged during World War II. Therefore, one of the most important tasks facing the new Polish authorities was to rebuild the city and repair the war damages. The restoration process started right after the war and continued until the end of the 1950s. One of the most crucial areas in terms of the spatial, transportation and historical structure of Opole was the Market Square.

The Market Square in Opole is located on the right bank of the Odra River, when heading east from Pasięka Island and Ostrówek – the area where the first Opole’s settlement was established (Fig. 1). Even though the Market Square is aligned along a northwest-southeast axis, customarily the frontages are named after the cardinal directions. The market square has the shape of a slightly irregular rectangle with an area of almost 6 hectares (ha). The eastern and western frontages (in fact, the south-western and north-eastern frontages) are the longest – they are approx. 97 and 100 m long, respectively, with eight tenement houses in each. The shorter frontages: the north and south (in fact, north-west and south-east) measure 60 m each and are comprised of four tenement houses each. The Opole Town Hall serves as the mid-marketplace block, and its provenance dates back to medieval times. Its present form follows on from both the aftermath of the

19th-century neo-renaissance alteration and the rebuilding after its collapse in the 1930s. The Opole Town Hall building survived the war in relatively intact condition.

As a result of the World War II, according to estimates, the tenement houses of the Opole Market Square were destroyed in about 80 per cent. The restoration of this area aimed to preserve the compositional coherence of the Old Town area, recreate the downtown infrastructure and provide a number of new apartments. In the context of Opole as one of the cities with changed national affiliation in 1945, the restoration of the Market Square also had a significance in terms of ideology, identity and national propaganda. It was supposed to testify not only to the resourcefulness of the local authorities but also to the fact that Opole was an eternally Polish city, which returned to Motherland in 1945.

The appearance of the Market Square after its restoration differs significantly from how it presented itself before World War II. Unified baroquized buildings largely replaced the 19th-century tenement houses of varied styles. The apparent differences between the pre- and post-war appearance of the Opole Market Square make one pose questions about the identity objectives of the restoration process, values associated with specific architectural styles, and attempts to create an entirely new vision of the history of Opole, in which “Polish” elements are exposed in order to legitimise the city’s inclusion within the borders of Poland and to constitute a completely new, post-war identity of the city.

The history of the post-war restoration of the Opole Market Square has been the subject matter of historical and non-academic publications. In this regard, one can refer to the monograph book about Opole, published in 1975 [2], or the publication entitled *Opole. Dzieje i tradycja* [Opole. History and Tradition], published in 2011 [3]. Those issues related to the city’s post-war restoration,

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Fig. 1. A fragment of the map of the city of Opole from the *Przewodnik po mieście Opolu*, issued in 1948. The area of the Market Square is marked in red (source: [1])

Il. 1. Fragment planu Opola z *Przewodnika po mieście Opolu* z 1948 r. Obszar Rynku zaznaczono kolorem czerwonym (źródło: [1])

including the Market Square, were also encompassed in many illustrated books devoted to the city. The aspects of the subject matter discussed in this article were also presented in publications dealing with the post-war restoration of the cities in Poland. In this context, the publications of Monika E. Adamska [4], Bohdan Rymaszewski [5] or Waclaw Ostrowski [6] can be mentioned.

However, none of the publications mentioned above present the comprehensive and exhaustive history of the restoration of the Opole Market Square. The process was not considered either in the context of the correlation between the restoration and political, ideological, or identity matters. The only exception is Rymaszewski's publication, in which the author outlines the context of the de-prussization of architecture concerning the reconstruction of old town areas in the Polish lands, including Opole among other cities in which this process took on a similar character [5, p. 105]. However, the interdependence between restoration and architectural styles with politics, ideology, and identity is omitted in the other publications.

This article aims to fill this research gap by tracing the history of the restoration of the Opole Market Square and proposing a new interpretation of this process as an attempt to create a new vision of the city's history and establish its post-war identity. Due to the fact that nowadays, there are no rudimentary studies fully describing the rebuilding of the Market Square in Opole, the article can be considered a presentation of basic research on the post-war restoration of this area. The article is based primarily on the analysis of archival materials stored in the State Archives in Opole and the State Archives in Katowice and the local press. The source materials are complemented by the academic and non-academic literature, both on the subject (concerning the history of Opole) and cross-sectional information (covering the subjects related to the post-war restoration of Polish cities). The article is divided into four main parts. The first one presents the history of the

Opole Market Square from the end of World War II until its rebuilding in the early 1950s. Following the aforementioned part, the restoration process is presented, and the pre- and post-war appearance of the Opole Market Square is compared (based on archival and contemporary photographs). Finally, in the last part of the article, some light is shed on the restoration process, which is interpreted as an attempt to use architecture to create an entirely new perception of the history of the city.

The Market Square in Opole from the end of the World War II until the beginning of restoration

As a result of the post-war division of Europe, Opole was incorporated into Poland within the so-called "Recovered Territories". From 1945 to 1950, it constituted the district (powiat) capital as a part of Śląsko-Dąbrowskie Voivodeship with the capital in Katowice. This situation thus accounted for the degradation of the pre-war status of Opole, which in the interwar period played a double role as the capital of the Opole administrative district (Regierung) and the Upper Silesian Province. Opole's rank as a district city influenced the plans and investments made during the first five post-war years, including decisions on rebuilding the city and repairing the war damage.

The Opole Market Square was one of the most damaged areas in the city. The Chronicle of Opole presented this area as [...] *one terrible rubble with single buildings sticking out of it* [7, pp. 9–11]¹. Only 6 out of the 32 tenement houses survived the war – numbers 1, 2, 3, and 10 in

¹ The wartime destruction of the Opole Market Square is presented, inter alia, in the publication entitled *Opole 1945 i teraz* [Opole in 1945 and now] [8], the photographic material of which is available on the Fotopolska.eu website: https://fotopolska.eu/384,zrodlo.html?galeria_zdjec=&zrodlo=384&s=0

the western frontage and 24 and 25 in the southern frontage. Since its early construction, the historical centre has played essential functions in the structure of Opole, both representative, residential, and trade. Therefore, its destruction was severe for the city on many levels, not only in the context of potential residential apartments but also in relation to the structural and functional cohesion of the city [5, p. 94]. Due to the city authorities' limited financial and administrative capacity during the first five post-war years, the commencement of rebuilding the city was a demanding undertaking. The city's budget allowed only makeshift renovations of damaged buildings located in the historical centre; inclusive of securing the façades and vaults, roofing, or adapting the ground floors for housing purposes [9, p. 64]. At the same time, due to financial difficulties, the renovations were carried out on buildings that were damaged to a relatively small extent, while significantly damaged buildings were not rebuilt in the first post-war years [10, p. 1]. The short-term actions were also carried out on the interiors of the blocks near the market square – temporary extensions were removed from them to lower the housing's density and ensure adequate sunlight and ventilation of the apartments [11, pp. 33, 34]. It is worth mentioning that during that difficult period, one tenement house was also rebuilt in the Market Square; it was tenement house no. 16, located at the corner of the eastern frontage and Osmańczyka Street (rebuilt at the turn of 1948 and 1949) [12, p. 33]. As part of short-term undertakings, the demolition of tenement houses, for which there was no chance for rebuilding and whose deteriorating technical condition posed a threat to both residents and passers-by, was also carried out. For these reasons, the houses of the northern frontage were demolished: no. 15 (pulled down in August 1945) [9, p. 169] and no. 11 (pulled down in 1946) [9, p. 288].

Despite numerous difficulties and issues related to the restoration, its schedule, and financial and logistical resources of the city were crucial for the authorities and, undoubtedly, between 1945–1950, the city's decision-makers were engaged in the process. At the end of the 1940s, the Opole Reconstruction Committee made arrangements regarding the dates of the reconstruction of residential houses based on the degree of their destruction: the residential houses destroyed in 75–80% (i.e., houses in the Market Square) had to be secured in 1949, and rebuilt in 1950–1958 [11, p. 39]. In the case of the Opole Market Square, the Opole Reconstruction Committee estimates turned out to be fairly accurate.

Restoration of the Opole Market Square (1951–1955)

The dynamics of the restoration process changed in 1950. At that time, a new Opole Voivodeship was created due to the merging of lands previously belonging to the Wrocław and Śląsko-Dąbrowskie Voivodeships. Consequently, Opole was promoted to the rank of the voivodeship capital². The new administrative position offered the city a chance

for autonomy and decision-making and gave rise to hopes of receiving funds with which the city authorities could solve the problems it had been struggling with since the end of World War II. The most crucial of them ranged from completing the city's reconstruction process to finding a partial solution to the housing problem. These closely dependent issues also related to the Opole Market Square, which, as was already mentioned, could not undergo reconstruction in 1945–1950. It is worth mentioning that the issue of rebuilding the Old Town together with the Market Square was also one of the propositions of the election programme for the National Front Committee, which stressed that [...] *by the end of 1957 all buildings within the Old Town would be rebuilt* [14, p. 1].

The project of rebuilding the Market Square in Opole was made in the *Miastoprojekt-Południe* by Stanisław Kramarczyk, Jan Olpiński, Czesław Thullie and Marian Skalkowski³. Jerzy Mączyński cooperated with the chief designers and prepared, for example, execution designs for tenement houses at 28 and 29 Rynek. Architectural designs were assessed by the Department of Conservation and Protection of Immovable Monuments at the Ministry of Culture. The restoration process on-site was supervised by the main investor – the Directorate for the Construction of Labour's Housing Estates (*Dyrekcja Budowy Osiedli Robotniczych – DBOR*) [15, p. 3]. The following bodies were also involved in the rebuilding of the Opole Market Square: Opole conservation authorities, Culture Department of the Bureau of the Voivodeship National Council in Katowice [16, p. 16] and the group of historians “under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture”, who were to conduct research in Opole, based on which the technical documentation for the restoration of the Market Square was to be prepared [17, p. 4].

In the process of preparation of the restoration projects of the Opole Market Square, the architects could use data comprising the history of the architecture of the Market Square from several sources. Hence, it was possible to draw information from the preserved buildings and architectural elements because some of the tenement houses, despite damages, had their gable walls remaining, often with façade details. During the design work, the architects worked closely with art historians, studying historical engravings and photographs and examining the historic substance of the tenement houses [15, p. 3]. Moreover, even before 1950, the Market Square was subjected to an inventory to determine the artistic and historical values of individual tenement houses and assess which of them should be reconstructed [18, pp. 1–10]. The detailed information in the inventory leads to the conclusion that pre-war documents or iconographic materials were used during its preparation. The documentation includes, among other things, dates of alterations or dates of the last conservation of selected tenement houses, precisely defined dating of some of their parts, or information about the end-use of the

² See: [13].

³ In the literature to date, Skalkowski was misleadingly introduced either as the sole author of the project of rebuilding the Opole Market Square or as the chief designer. See: [4, pp. 55, 56].

tenement houses. The decorative elements of the façades had also been elaborated on in the inventory. One may find information about the gables with “beautiful” (26 Rynek) or “delicate” (31 Rynek) proportions, richly shaped window trims, reliefs, and cartouches with inscriptions.

The restoration projects of the Opole Market Square carried out by Miastoprojekt-Południe can be divided into several categories. The first of them is the collective housing design projects presenting groups of neighbouring tenement houses (nos. 13–15 in the northern frontage [19] and nos. 17–23 in the eastern one [20]) or even the entire frontages – as was the case with the southern frontage (nos. 26–32) [21]. In addition to these collective designs, individual projects for tenement houses acknowledged as “historic buildings” – namely those of the most significant historical and artistic value [22] – were also prepared. Designs of details of individual tenement houses were also created, showing gables, portals, details of fittings, and ornaments, which were to be placed on the façades of tenement houses [23].

“The restoration of the Market Square has finally begun” – with these words from the city’s chronicle dated 1951, the beginning of the restoration process of the Opole Market Square was announced. At that time, in the Miastoprojekt-Południe studio, designs of the tenement houses on the southern (nos. 28–32) and northern (nos. 13–15) frontage [24, p. 58] were made. First, the rebuilding of the southern and eastern frontages began, which took place in 1952 [25, p. 15]. The southern frontage was the first to be completed in a building shell state (1953) [25, p. 39]. The next step was to rebuild the northern frontage [17, p. 4]. In 1954, the northern frontage (nos. 11–15) and the eastern one (nos. 17–23) were completed [25, p. 64]. During the restoration in 1954, the historic buildings in the Old Town were also re-inventoried. This group includes, among other things, tenement houses 12 and 13 Rynek (northern frontage), 30 and 31 Rynek (southern frontage), and tenement house no. 25 (eastern frontage, at the corner of the Market Square and St. Wojciech Street) [25, pp. 52, 53]. The western frontage was the last one to be completed. In 1953, the press reported that [...] *the issue of rebuilding the fourth part of the Market Square had not yet been solved* [15, p. 3]. Although it can be learned that the projects concerning this part were largely developed at that time, the final shape of the frontage in terms of functionality (location of institutions such as Dom Chłopa [The Peasants’ Home] or Dom Literata [The Writer’s Home] was, at that time, the subject of discussion [15, p. 3]. Ultimately, the rebuilding of the western frontage was completed in 1955 and was reported in the press by the publishing of a photograph of the frontage with the caption: [...] *the western part, put into service a few days ago* [14, p. 1]. Thus, the restoration of the Market Square according to the designs made in Miastoprojekt-Południe was completed at the end of 1955 [26, p. 172]. The “project of the reconstruction of buildings forming the borders of the Market Square in Opole” by Stanisław Kramarczyk, Jan Olpiński, Czesław Thullie, and Marian Skalkowski was granted the 3rd-degree award in the department of monument conservation, given by the Town Planning and Architecture Committee for 1956 [27, p. 170].

The restoration of the Market Square was to increase the aesthetic value of the Old Town by replacing the destroyed buildings with entirely new ones and filling gaps in the blocks. The rebuilt tenement houses near the Market Square were also to help solve the housing problem that Opole was facing at that time. The tenement houses were [...] *to preserve the historic character of the 17th- and 18th-century façades* [24, p. 58], while the interiors were to consist of the most modern utilities, providing access to sewage, gas or electricity installations [17, p. 4]. The press mentioned their adequate insolation, and the comfort and convenience they were supposed to provide to new residents. Furthermore, the new residents of the tenement houses near the Market Square were decided in advance. Following the postulate of the return of the people to the city centres, they were to be “labour people” – workers employed at industrial plants in Opole [15, p. 3]. The modernity of the rebuilt tenement houses gave access to the sewerage system, electricity and completely new spatial solutions that also introduced a dissonance between the “historic” exterior and the modern interior. While in the ground floor service facilities of the tenement houses elements such as historic vaults were preserved, the spatial distribution of the residential part could bring to mind new prefabricated blocks with unified layouts of rooms. This procedure aimed to fulfil the housing capacity standards to accommodate as many people as possible in new apartments [28, pp. 146–149].

The Market Square before and after restoration – a comparative study

Despite the declared diligence and meticulousness that was to be characteristic of the process of designing the restoration of the Opole Market Square, the forms of individual tenement houses differ significantly in appearance from how they looked before the war. The heterogeneity and diversity of the pre-war market square housing structure, preserved mainly in a historicised form, were replaced by the homogeneity of the neo-baroque array.

A comparison of the contemporary appearance of the market square frontages with their pre-war state reveals how far the inventiveness of architects and decision-makers went. Namely, the most significant metamorphosis can be observed in the case of the eastern and northern frontages. Before the war, both were mainly structured from classicist or historicised tenement houses. The buildings differed in terms of the stylistic solutions used (in the northern frontage, attention is drawn to richly ornamented tenement houses nos. 11 and 14, in the eastern frontage tenement house no. 19 can be distinguished). Furthermore, they differed in terms of height (one can notice three to five storeys in the eastern frontage, four to five storeys in the northern frontage) and in terms of their location within the Market Square (some tenement houses had roof slopes facing the front of the Market Square, while the front-facing gables formed the vast majority of the buildings’ frontages) (Figs. 2, 3).

The project for the tenement houses on the eastern frontage (nos. 17–23) was made by Miastoprojekt-Połud-

Fig. 2. Eastern frontage of the Market Square in Opole before 1945.
From the right: fragment of tenement house no. 24, tenement houses nos. 23, 22, 21, 20, 19, 17 and 16 (source: [29])
Il. 2. Pierzeja wschodnia Rynku w Opolu przed 1945 r.
Od prawej: fragment kamienicy nr 24, kamienice nr 23, 22, 21, 20, 19, 17 i 16 (źródło: [29])

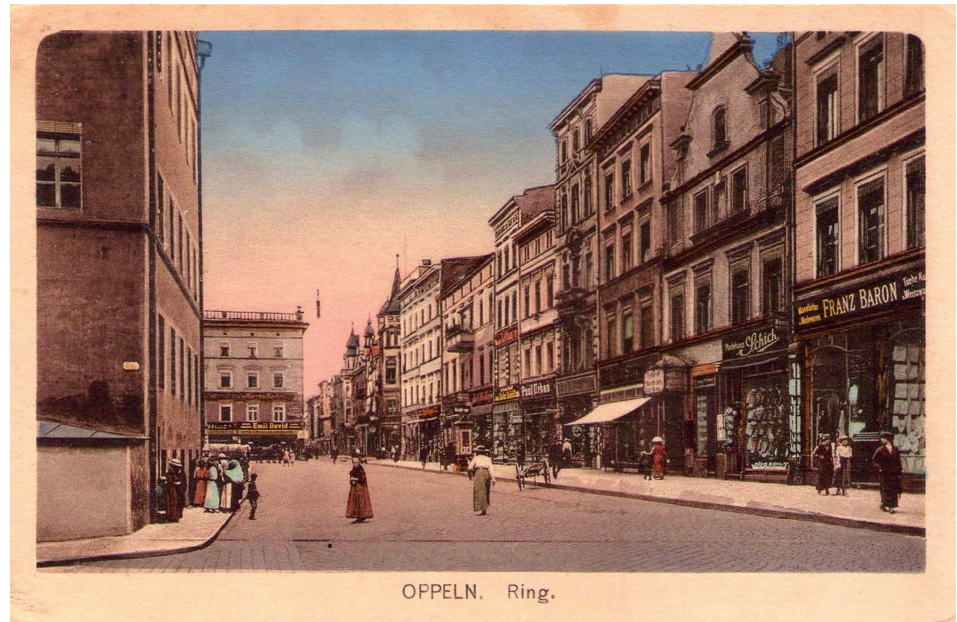


Fig. 3. Northern frontage of the Market Square in Opole before 1945.
From the left: tenement houses nos. 11–14 and a fragment of tenement house no. 15 (source: collection of the Museum of Opole Silesia)
Il. 3. Pierzeja północna Rynku w Opolu przed 1945 r.
Od lewej: kamienice nr 11–14 i fragment kamienicy nr 15 (źródło: zbiory Muzeum Śląska Opolskiego)



nie at the end of 1952 [20], and the northern frontage (nos. 13–15) in 1951 [19]. The project did not include adjacent tenement houses – in the case of the eastern frontage nos. 16, 24 and 25, and in the case of the northern frontage units nos. 11 and 12. The façades of the tenement houses of both frontages lost their historicising character in the rebuilding process and were subject to both baroquization and unification. The new, baroque façades of tenement houses differed in the arrangement of details, such as windows, some portals, and finally, volute gables. However, all these elements were simplified, which gives the impression that these details were more or less accidentally “glued” to individual façades. At the same time, it is worth noting that these façades that had undergone the process of baroque overhaul before the war were the ones that, at the same time, were most faithfully reconstructed;

this relates to the tenement house no. 23 in the eastern frontage and 13 in the northern frontage (Figs. 4, 5).

In the case of the northern frontage, tenement house no. 11 is a compelling example. Located at the corner of the Market Square and Koraszewskiego Street, the place was formerly the hotel “Pod Czarnym Orłem” [“Under the Black Eagle”] before the war. This tenement house had perhaps the most decorative form of all the tenement houses on the Market Square; it stands out thanks to its extended gable roof and a corner oriel window on a polygonal plan, crowned by a soaring bell-shaped tented roof. It can be stated that in its case, after the war, the retroversion was applied. The baroque forms, by which this tenement house had been characterised before its neo style restoration at the beginning of the 20th century, were faithfully recreated [30, p. 4].



Fig. 4. The eastern frontage of the Market Square in Opole after the restoration. From the left: tenement houses nos. 16–21 and a fragment of tenement house no. 22
(photo by B. Szczepańska, 2021)

Il. 4. Pierzeja wschodnia Rynku w Opolu po odbudowie.
Od lewej: kamienice nr 16–21 i fragment kamienicy nr 22
(fot. B. Szczepańska, 2021)



Fig. 5. The northern frontage of the Market Square in Opole after the restoration.

From the left: tenement houses nos. 11a and 12–15
(photo by B. Szczepańska, 2021)

Il. 5. Pierzeja północna Rynku w Opolu po odbudowie.
Od lewej: kamienice nr 11a oraz 12–15
(fot. B. Szczepańska, 2021)

The façades of the tenement houses on the southern and western frontages during the restoration proceedings were carried in a similar manner and can be referred to as a replacement of diversity with unification and historicism with the baroque style (Figs. 6, 7).

The façades of the rebuilt tenement houses differed mainly in terms of the degree of development and the use of details. The exception to this process of unification and the baroque style application are three tenement houses on the western frontage nos. 1, 2 and 3, which were not damaged during the war and retained their pre-war forms (Fig. 8). Moreover, from the southern and western frontages, the tenement houses that were most faithfully reconstructed and matched their pre-war appearance, were also in the baroque style; in the southern frontage, these

are the tenement houses nos. 29, 30, 31 and 32, and in the western frontage, tenement houses nos. 4, 5, 6 and 7. The only exception is the baroque tenement house no. 27 in the southern frontage – its façade was rearranged and extended with a cylindrical oriel window and arcades on the side of Krakowska Street (Fig. 9).

The importance of the restoration the Opole Market Square in the context of creating a new vision of the city's history

Due to the process of restoration, the Opole Market Square was to regain its “old, historical appearance” [17, p. 4]. The often-cited reference point of “historicity” of the architecture of the rebuilt Market Square forces us to



Fig. 6. The market square in Opole before 1945. The western frontage and a fragment of the northern frontage with the “Under the Black Eagle” tenement house. From the left: fragment of tenement house no. 3, tenement house nos. 4–10
(source: [31])

Il. 6. Rynek w Opolu przed 1945 r. Pierzeja zachodnia i fragment pierzei północnej z kamienicą „Pod Czarnym Orłem”.
Od lewej: fragment kamienicy nr 3, kamienice nr 4–10
(źródło: [31])

Fig. 7. The southern frontage of the Market Square in Opole before 1945.

From the left: tenement houses nos. 27–31 and 32 (source: collection of the Opole Silesia Museum)

Il. 7. Pierzeja południowa Rynku w Opolu przed 1945 r. Od lewej: kamienice nr 27–31 i 32 (źródło: zbiory Muzeum Śląska Opolskiego)



pose questions about what history this architecture was supposed to represent and how, in principle, one defines history in the context of the city that changed its national affiliation a few years earlier. The rebuilding process of the Opole Market Square discloses how history and references to it were used as political tools, manipulated in order to legitimise the geopolitical situation of that time and achieve political objectives. Furthermore, it was not the actual historical condition that was decided to be preserved, but a new vision of the city's history was created when rebuilding the Market Square.

A wealth of information on the subject of the identity and ideological significance of the restoration of the Market Square can be traced in the Opole press. One of the

articles on the restoration shows that archivists and historians were supposed to recreate, on the basis of iconographic materials, [...] *the historic beauty of the Polish and "Opole's" Renaissance and Baroque architecture* [32, p. 6]. In addition to recreating and restoring individual forms, the vital task was to reject other – in this case [...] *foreign Prussian influences grounded in Berlin's Pseudoclassicism from Schinkel's and Langhans' schools of architecture*; the same ones which, when Opole had been passed into the hands of Prussia, [...] *started to obscure the native Polish baroque distinctive of a particular hue found in Opole* [32, p. 6]. However, the negative attitude towards the 19th and 20th-century alterations of cities under Prussian and German rule in the case of Opole



Fig. 8. The western frontage of the Market Square in Opole after the restoration.

From the left: houses nos. 1–8 and a fragment of tenement house no. 9 (photo by B. Szczepańska, 2021)

Il. 8. Pierzeja zachodnia Rynku w Opolu po odbudowie. Od lewej: kamienice nr 1–8 i fragment kamienicy nr 9 (fot. B. Szczepańska, 2021)



Fig. 9. The southern frontage of the Market Square in Opole after the restoration.

From the left: tenement house nos. 27–31 and 32 (photo by B. Szczepańska, 2021)

Il. 9. Pierzeja południowa Rynku w Opolu po odbudowie. Od lewej: kamienice nr 27–31 i 32 (fot. B. Szczepańska, 2021)

was not a unique phenomenon. Similar postulates of removing “germanizing” elements of architecture were also spread during the reconstruction of the Old Town areas in Poznań, Olsztyn and Gdańsk [5, p. 105].

Concerning the southern frontage of the Market Square, one can find information that its tenement houses represented “the Opole’s past in a beautiful form”. At the same time, the cylindrical corner oriel windows of the Market Square’s tenement houses were claimed as characteristic of Opole’s architecture and resembling [...] *the distant history of Opole, when the population was building defensive watchtowers at the corners of the Market Square to protect it from enemy attacks* [33, p. 1]. In one of the publications written shortly after the rebuilding was completed, it was written that the market tenement houses were recreated [...] *with full care for the ornamentation appropriate to their style, which consisted of [...] Silesian folk motifs and scenes from the everyday lives of Opole’s townspeople and craftsmen* [34, pp. 18–20].

This type of narrative created a reinterpretation of history. The alleged “Polishness” of baroque forms and styles was, in the context of the Opole’s Market Square, an utterly artificial feature created for the needs of the propaganda narrative about the city’s return to the Motherland – Poland. It is widely acknowledged that Opole’s Market Square has undergone several renovations in its history. At the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, the market was rebuilt in the Renaissance style, the effect of which, however, was destroyed by fires in 1615, 1618, 1647 and 1682. A successive rebuilding after another fire that took place in 1739, imposed the baroque style on the tenement houses in the Market Square [2, p. 163]. Furthermore, simultaneously Opole changed its national affiliation. Until 1742, the city was ruled by the Habsburgs, while after the Silesian Wars, it came under Prussian rule. Therefore, the baroque rebuilding of the Market Square is historically associated with the times when Opole did not belong to Poland. Nevertheless, after the war, the history of the architectural transformations of the Market Square was rewritten in order for the baroque architecture to serve as proof of the historical “Polishness” of the city.

After the war, threads from the city’s history were eagerly exposed, indicating its ties with Poland. The highlighted style and character of the cylindrical oriel windows of Opole’s tenement houses were associated with the reign of the bishop Jan Kropidło. Interconnections between the buildings of the Opole Market Square and Jan Kazimierz Waza were also displayed; namely, the Royal Tenement House (1 Rynek) would serve as the king’s office, and the tenement house at the corner of St. Wojciech and Krakowska Street would house a pharmacy, the creation of which was also to be decreed by Jan Kazimierz [35, p. 1].

At that particular time, the choice for the baroque style in the process of rebuilding Opole’s Market Square was influenced by the negative attitude towards historicising architecture. In the mid-20th century, the narrative of 19th-century architecture in Polish art history was frequently described as secondary and epigonic. As Andrzej Olszewski wrote in relation to historicism, the capitalist development of cities and the enrichment of society, com-

bined with the ignorance of architects and constructors, turned architecture into mindless archaeology, suppressing “daredevils-innovators” and promoting imitation [36, pp. 277–280]. In light of these views, 19th-century architecture, represented by historicising bourgeois tenements, served as the manifestation of capitalism – the system that was perceived in a conclusively negative way during the times of socialism.

In the context of the criticism of capitalism and its architecture, it is also essential to bear in mind that Opole underwent a formal and social change within the Market Square. Local authorities saw workers and employees of local industrial plants as new residents of the historical downtown. Both the forms of tenement houses of the Market Square and their new inhabitants created an entirely new Market Square; one that functions in juxtaposition to the old bourgeois, capitalist and germanised city. In this new Polish town, [...] *the ruins of Art Nouveau tenement houses [...] gave way to the historic façades of tenement houses inhabited by working people* [34, pp. 18–20].

Conclusions

Several fundamental tendencies concerning the phenomenon of post-war reconstruction process of the Old Town areas in Poland can be distinguished. With regard to the cities of Lower Silesia, Mirosław Przyłęcki distinguished three such characteristics: the first one included two options; namely, the reconstruction of the destroyed buildings and architecture and the return to their pre-existing state before their destruction, or the reconstruction of earlier historical forms; the second one involved the construction of entirely new buildings with the simultaneous rejection of thoroughly modern forms and the preservation of selected historical elements, such as the scale and line of blocks or the forms of roofs; the third one included the construction of new building complexes with no regard to their particular historical condition and forms from before the destruction [4, p. 53]. These tendencies can be broadly extended to the entire territory of Poland because the architectural tendencies mentioned by Przyłęcki can also be found outside Lower Silesia. Restoration of the Market Square in Opole in this context falls into the first category distinguished by Przyłęcki, and includes reconstruction or rebuilding that aims at preserving the condition and style of the blocks before the destruction or recreating the furthest condition acknowledged as historic. Hence, in the context of Opole, the latter forms considered to be historic were those of the baroque style. The rebuilding of the Old Town areas in baroque forms was not limited only to Opole – it was similarly conveyed in Olsztyn [5, p. 114] and Lublin [5, p. 110].

After the restoration, the Market Square in Opole became a place whose architecture was to present a historical narrative in line with the ideology and politics of the time. By blurring the actual history of architectural transformations in this area, the complex of the rebuilt Market Square was set to form the creation of the history of Opole that would testify, through architecture, to the eternal Polishness of the city. In this process, historicis-

ing tenement houses from the 19th and 20th centuries were replaced with baroque tenement houses, which were to represent the Polish character of the city in the then binding narrative. The architecture of the rebuilt Market Square was to create an entirely new vision of the city's history, in the light of which the area became the heritage of the "Polish" Baroque, unchanged by the German rebuildings of the 19th or 20th century. In fact, this falsified the history of Opole's architecture, as the baroque rebuilding of the Market Square took place at the beginning of Prussian rule.

The attempt to establish the post-war new vision of the history of Opole based on the example of the city's

Market Square can be considered successful. Nowadays, the majority of the inhabitants do not realise how much the pre-and post-war Market Square differ and what influenced this state of affairs. However, the attentiveness to this process and its ideological and identity motives is critical to understand as it constitutes part of a broader process of appropriating architecture for political and ideological purposes, which took place in the so-called "Regained Territories".

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Abstract

Restoration of the Market Square in Opole as the creation of a new vision of the city's history

The article aims to present the post-war restoration of the Market Square in Opole as a process of creating the city's new history. The research subject included the tenement houses in the frontages of Opole's Market Square, which were destroyed in 1945 and rebuilt in the 1950s. The article analyses the process of restoring Opole's Market Square, which is presented in the context of Opole's changed national affiliation and the ideological and identity issues, therefore, ultimately impacting the form of restored tenement houses. The archival materials analysed during the research process were: written materials, kept in the State Archive in Opole, and design projects, kept in the State Archive in Katowice. The research is complemented by subject literature, in which the topic of Old Town restoration was present, historical publications concerning Opole and local press.

Our research established that Opole's Market Square's post-restoration image differs significantly from how it looked before World War II. The analysis of iconographical materials (pre-war postcards and photographs, as well as contemporary photographs) showed that, in the restoration process, the 19th-century tenement houses that differed from each other stylistically, became replaced with unified baroque-like buildings. The analysis of archival materials pertaining to the restoration of Opole's Market Square proves that this process was not only meant to restore the Old Town's spatial cohesion, reconstruct inner-city infrastructure and create new apartments, but also to present local authorities' resourcefulness and to show that Opole has always been a Polish city, brought back to its Motherland in 1945. Stark differences between the pre- and post-war image of Opole's Market Square provoke questions concerning identity in the context of restoration, values related to particular architectural styles and attempts to create a brand new vision of Opole's history, in which "Polish" elements were displayed to legitimise incorporating the city into Poland and to constitute the city's brand new identity.

Key words: architecture, urban planning, Recovered Territories, Opole, restoration

Streszczenie

Odbudowa Rynku w Opolu jako kreacja nowej wizji historii miasta

Celem artykułu było zaprezentowanie powojennej odbudowy Rynku w Opolu jako kreacji nowej historii miasta. Przedmiotem prac były kamienice tworzące pierzeje Rynku w Opolu, które zostały zniszczone w wyniku działań wojennych w 1945 r. i odbudowane w latach 50. XX w. W artykule przedstawiono proces odbudowy opolskiego Rynku w kontekście zmienionej przynależności państwowej Opola i związanych z tym kwestii ideologicznych i tożsamościowych, które miały wpływ na ostateczną formę odbudowanych kamienic. Podczas badań dokonano analizy przede wszystkim materiałów archiwalnych: piśmienniczych, przechowywanych w Archiwum Państwowym w Opolu, oraz projektowych, znajdujących się w Archiwum Państwowym w Katowicach. Badania uzupełniła literatura przedmiotu, w której poruszany był temat odbudowy obszarów staromiejskich, publikacje historyczne poświęcone Opolu oraz lokalna prasa.

W czasie prac udało się ustalić, że wygląd opolskiego Rynku po jego odbudowie znacznie różni się od tego, jak obszar ten prezentował się przed II wojną światową. Analiza materiałów ikonograficznych (przedwojennych pocztówek i fotografii oraz fotografii współczesnych) pozwoliła ukazać, że podczas odbudowy XIX-wieczne kamienice o zróżnicowanej szacie stylistycznej zastąpione zostały w dużej mierze przez zunifikowane barokizujące budowle. Analiza materiałów archiwalnych poświęconych odbudowie opolskiego Rynku wskazuje, że proces ten miał nie tylko przywrócić spójność przestrzenną obszarowi staromiejskiemu, odtworzyć śródmiejską infrastrukturę i zapewnić nowe mieszkania, ale także ukazać zaradność lokalnych władz i udowodnić, że Opole było miastem odwiecznie polskim, które w 1945 r. powróciło do Macierzy. Wyraźne różnice pomiędzy przed- i powojennym wyglądem opolskiego Rynku każą zadawać pytania o tożsamościowe znaczenie procesu odbudowy, wartości związane z konkretnymi stylami architektonicznymi oraz próby kreacji zupełnie nowej wizji historii Opola, w której wątki „polskie” zostają wyeksponowane po to, by legitymizować włączenie miasta do granic Polski i ukonstytuować zupełnie nową tożsamość miasta.

Słowa kluczowe: architektura, urbanistyka, Ziemie Odzyskane, Opole, odbudowa