

SEARCHING FOR A NATIONAL STYLE IN POLISH ARCHITECTURE AT THE END OF THE 19th AND BEGINNING OF THE 20th CENTURY

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The feeling of national distinctness, which in the 19th century throughout the world called for a need to create specific national styles in various countries, had a special character in Poland. Above all, this was caused by the country's political situation. Since 1792 Poland had not existed as an independent organised state. Divided into three partitions, it constituted part of its neighbouring powers: the European part with Warsaw as its capital was called the Polish kingdom and as such comprised part of the Russian Empire; the Southern part called Galicia and Lodomeria, with Cracow and the city of Lwow, was incorporated into Austro-Hungary; the western part with the City of Poznan became part of Prussia and was called the Grand Duchy of Poznan.

Immediately after partition, at the beginning of the 19th century, each part enjoyed considerable autonomy. However, since the strong urge to regain independence led to the outbreak of subsequent uprisings, after their failure the partitioning powers introduced increased measures aimed at denationalisation, depriving Poles of most of their autonomous rights. For the most part, this applied to Prussia and Russia, which carried out an anti-Polish policy as far as prohibiting Polish to be the language of instruction in schools, introducing strong censorship of the press and all publications and censorship in cultural and scientific institutions, as well as in higher education. As a result, in the last quarter of the 19th century there was no possibility of obtaining higher education in the fine arts in the Polish Kingdom. Future architects had to be educated abroad, which of course could not be without effect on their style. They brought a variety of artistic views from abroad, and the influence of foreign schools of art was clearly reflected in their work.

On the other hand, a great influence on the formation of the artistic image of Poland was exerted by Austrian, Russian and Prussian architects carrying out official government commissions. The process of Russianising the architectural landscape had a planned character, especially in the territory of the Russian partition. It included the building of new edifices, particularly Eastern Orthodox churches built in the Russian style, which

were alien to the Poles not only artistically but also from the point of view of faith. Throughout the 19th century thirty Orthodox churches were built in Warsaw alone, the largest of which was located in the city centre. In Saski Square, between 1894 and 1912 the Russian architect Leontij Benois erected the Orthodox cathedral of St Alexander Nevski, which dominated all of the city centre. The neoclassical Staszic Palace—formerly the seat of the Society of the Friends of Science—was rebuilt in the years 1892-5 by the Russian architect Wladimir Pokrowski into a gymnasium and an Orthodox church in the Byzantine-Russian style.

A similar phenomenon occurred in the Prussian partition, especially in Poznan, where the government constructed buildings stylistically alien to the city's architecture to emphasise the greatness of Bismarck's Prussia. In the years 1905-10 the Imperial Palace was built according to the design of Franz Schwechten. Its large, monumental shape was erected in the Romanesque style with typically German features and was perceived as a symbol of political dependence.

In a situation where essential national values and the nation's very being were threatened, where the influence of foreign art increased every year, the problem of creating a national style in architecture became the priority for Polish theoreticians, art critics and artists. Similarly to other countries, looking for a national style concentrated on researching two models—the country's own past and indigenous folk art. The examination of native features, which were distinct from the achievements of other countries and typical only of Poland, was connected with the development of research into the history of architecture and with work on the restoration of these monuments, while interest in folk art was strictly connected with the development of ethnography.

The first theoretical discussions on the subject of the necessity of creating a Polish national style started in the 1860s, but they did not yet have the character of programmatic statements and did not lead to any repercussions among architects. It was only at the beginning of the 1880s that interest in the subject grew both among theoreticians and among artists. During the first stage of searching for a national style, i.e. between c.1880-1908, efforts were concentrated on specifying one, appropriate, homogenous style from the past or one that had its sources in the folk art of one region of Poland and could be adapted to the contemporary needs of the country. In the second stage, which started towards the end of the first decade of this century and lasted to the end of the 1920s, artists concentrated on the creation of a national style which would be the synthesis of phenomena described as "homely" (*swojskie*), or vernacular, and could be perceived throughout the history of Polish art, folk art included.

The Gothic was the first style which was to inspire Polish artists. Reference to Gothic was connected with recalling the period of Polish history which was associated with the country's greatness, with timeless



1 Józef Pius
Dziekonski: St
Florian's
Church, Warsaw

Christian and chivalric values. Karol Matuszewski was the first theoretician to propagate this concept. He coined the term “Vistula-Baltic style” (*styl wislano-baltycki*), taking its name from the main Polish river and the sea. The term was to reflect the fact that Gothic monuments which contained the distinctly Polish elements that were being searched for were localised on the territory along the Vistula and on the Baltic sea coast. Matuszewski also saw Polish features in brick Gothic architecture, constructed on the lands that had been under the control of the Teutonic Knights, i.e. that were strongly influenced by the architecture of Northern Germany. In spite of this obvious inconsistency, the theory concerning the Polishness of brick architecture had many advocates and adherents. Over the next thirty years, i.e. until the outbreak of World War I, this Gothic style, based on the features of the architecture from the Little Poland (Malopolska) and Masovia (Mazowsze) regions, became almost obligatory for ecclesiastical architecture, especially in the territory of the Russian partition, where it

provided a counterbalance to the Russian style of Orthodox churches.

Józef Pius Dziekonski was one of the architects on whose work the Gothic style exerted a dominating influence. He was a titan of industry, author of over a hundred designs for Polish churches, who with iron consistency designed large brick churches, usually preceded by two-tower façades with complicated decorations referring to those of Polish Gothic churches. Dziekonski designed many village parish churches in such places as Kaluszyń (1889-93), Popowo Koscielne, and Zyrardów as well as some Warsaw churches, the most famous of which is St Florian's Church (1888-1901: fig. 1). Polish critics and historians have acknowledged this building to be the best Polish 19th-century edifice.

Many Polish neo-Gothic churches were designed in the workshop of Jarosław and Konstanty Wojciechowski. Other propagators of this style, who supported it not only in practice but also in theory, were Jan Sas-Zubrzycki and Stefan Szyller. In their theoretical works they analysed Polish Gothic architecture and identified its specifically decorative elements, in their opinion determining their "homeliness" (*swójskosc*). They considered some of these elements to be the so-called "double arches", i.e. the double window emerging in Polish churches on the axis of the façade. According to Szyller, another such "homely" motif was also the two-tower unsymmetrical façade, which followed the example of the most popular among Gothic churches—St Mary's Church in Cracow, where one of the towers was finished later, remaining asymmetrical. Among over one hundred churches erected by Szyller, over twenty were designed in the "Vistula-Baltic Gothic style", the most interesting of which was built in Dłutów, according to a design made in 1893. It is a village church with a small nave and two aisles, where most of the details follow patterns from Polish Gothic churches, e.g. the window frames are modelled on the south portal of St Catherine's Church in Cracow, while the front towers are unsymmetrical. The left tower, which is considerably higher than the right one, imitates Cracow's St Mary's church in being crowned with a lavish helmet bristling with pinnacles and bay windows. Neo-Gothic functioned as the national style until the outbreak of World War I. Afterwards it appeared only sporadically, above all in restoration designs for the churches destroyed during the war.

Contemporaneously with Matuszewski's work popularising the "Vistula-Baltic Gothic", the works of Franciszek Ksawery Martynowski were published (see primary source publications below). Martynowski was the first in Poland to see the possibility of using folk art as one of the sources of inspiration for the creators of the national style. Although his ideas were purely theoretical, and he saw the chance for the rebirth of Polish architecture inspired by folk art only in the remote future, they bore fruit very quickly.

A specific proposition to create a style based on one kind of Polish folk

art was given in 1886 by Stanislaw Witkiewicz. He was fascinated by the beauty of the Tatras and of Zakopane—a town situated in a mountain valley “discovered” in the 1880s which, thanks to its unique landscape and climate, quickly became fashionable among artists as a place to rest and seek inspiration. Witkiewicz devoted himself to studying the folk art of the Tatra mountain people. He came to the conclusion that these Górale (Highlanders) had inadvertently saved an art which used to be cultivated in all Polish territory, but had been subsumed by European styles. It found refuge in the mountains and in its pure form was preserved in this enclave until our times. All that remained for modern artists to do was to learn it, popularise it and treat it as an inspiration for their future work. The new style was to be called the “Zakopane” style and to include not only architecture but also other branches of art, including applied art. Witkiewicz thought that this new national style would not only provide a recipe for Polish national art, but also solve social problems—by reviving the national spirit, bringing equality to all estates.

The Zakopane style had as many supporters as opponents. For all practical purposes, Witkiewicz himself was its strongest advocate. He designed several outstanding wooden villas in Zakopane and its vicinity. These designs were based on the structure of mountain cottages and made use of decorative elements typical of the region, e.g. ornaments cut out in

2 Stanislaw
Witkiewicz: The
“Pod Jedlami”
villa



wood in the form of a stylised sun, mountain thistle, edelweiss and other mountain plants. Some of his most beautiful houses are the 1892-3 "Koleba" built for Zygmunt Gnatowski, the 1896 "Zofiówka" belonging to the Dolinski family and the 1897 "Pod Jedlami" built for the Pawlikowskis (fig. 2).

The Zakopane style proved to be very suitable for interior designs and furniture. Efforts to introduce it on a larger scale into brick architecture proved fruitless. The Tatra Museum (1912) in Zakopane and the railway station in Sylgudyszki, Lithuania, which were both designed by Witkiewicz, as well as an apartment house at 30 Chmielna Street in Warsaw by Jarosław Wojciechowski are some of the few, rather unsuccessful examples of the implementation of this style in brick. Attempts to introduce elements of the Zakopane style into Art Nouveau designs proved much more interesting. The building of the School of Industry in Cracow, which was designed in 1912 by Sławomir Odrzywolski, may serve as an example here. It is worth adding that Art Nouveau was not very popular in Poland. Since it was treated as a foreign style, most artists preferred to use it together with Polish folk art, not only from the mountain region, but from other parts as well.

After 1904 the Zakopane style gradually started losing its importance on a countrywide scale, but in architects' circles designing villas for health resorts, holiday centres and mountain huts for tourists, it remained popular even throughout the twenty years between the two World Wars.

The Zakopane style was the first fully developed attempt to create a national style supported by theory. Nevertheless it was burdened with many weaknesses, above all the impossibility of transforming its forms to brick architecture. Although many artists were discouraged by the all too evident logical faults of its theoretical foundation and by having to stretch its uses, Witkiewicz's obvious merit was in having pointed to folk art as a valuable source of inspiration for artists. Interest in folk art bore fruit in a number of outstanding paintings, sculpture and crafts. To a large extent, achievements in the latter were made possible by the work of the Society of Polish Applied Art which was established in 1901. The Society, which was the initiator of many systematic research projects on folk art and the organiser of many competitions, played an important part in the formation of 20th century art in Poland.

Folk art had a much smaller impact on architecture in the first period of the formation of the national style in Poland. However, notable efforts at using the inspiration provided by the art of the region of Cieszyn Silesia were made by L. Konarzewski, who at the beginning of the century erected a chapel in Istebna, and Józef Witkiewicz was inspired by the folk houses of the Mazury region. The introduction of decorative elements which originated in folk art was also characteristic of the next stage in the search for a national style which, as will be mentioned later, started after 1908.

It is relevant here to return to the 1880s when, besides the birth of the “Vistula-Baltic” Gothic, the search for new sources of inspiration also encompassed historicism. One of the facts that contributed to such a development was the increasing interest in Renaissance and Baroque monuments, as well as work undertaken between 1875-79 in restoring the Sukiennice, the old Wool Merchants Market Hall, one of the most popular Cracow monuments. In 1890 surveys were also undertaken to prepare the future restoration of the Wawel Royal Castle, whose Renaissance forms had a strong impact on contemporary architects. The 1880s saw the start of buildings whose creators introduced elements of the Renaissance attic or Wawel cloisters, treating them as examples of native origin. While the previous styles were created on the basis of theoretical works, the “Polish Renaissance” style emerged on its own, without any theoretical basis.

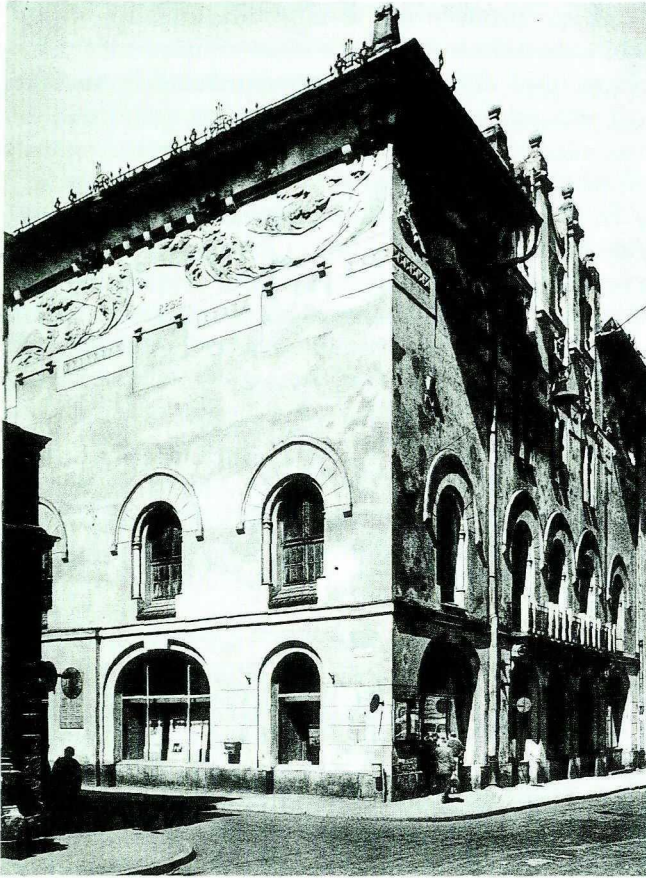
In Cracow these motifs appeared in the work of Tomasz Prylinski, Tadeusz Stryjenski and Jan Zawiejski while in Warsaw the leader was Stefan Szyller, a keen advocate and propagator of the Polish Renaissance as the period when artists most deeply reflected the beauty of Poland by adapting European styles to their own needs.

Buildings in the Polish neo-Renaissance style were eclectic compositions, where only a few or sometimes only one decorative element referred to the Sukiennice attic, the Sigismund Chapel in Wawel Cathedral or to the cloisters of Wawel Castle. The Sukiennice attic appeared e.g. in the eclectic building of the Slowacki Theatre in Cracow erected in the years 1889-93 according to the design by Jan Zawiejski and in the art nouveau Old Theatre in Cracow rebuilt by Franciszek Maczynski and Tadeusz Stryjenski in the years 1903-6 (fig. 3). It also decorated many Cracow and Warsaw apartment houses, e.g. the one at 7 Długa Street in Cracow erected by J. Pokutynski before 1908, or the houses erected by Stefan Szyller in Warsaw at 4 Podwale Street in 1905 and at 19 Krakowskie Przedmieście in 1908. One of the chapels in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, built from Renaissance mannerist plans, served as a model for Tadeusz Stryjenski and Franciszek Maczynski while designing the 1905 castle chapel in Zywiec. One of the most interesting examples of a consistent application of many different Renaissance motifs in one building is the architectural setting of Warsaw’s Poniatowski Bridge, which was built according to Stefan Szyller’s design in the years 1907-14.

The style inspired by the Polish Renaissance functioned for a long time. It also remained among the repertory of forms used by architects in “national style” designs during the twenty years of the inter-war period. Furthermore, the second stage of Renaissance inspiration brought much more interesting and consistently implemented ideas.

In the Grand Duchy of Poznań, the year 1896 brought the publication of Zygmunt Czartoryski’s book entitled *O stylu krajowym w budownictwie wiejskim* (On the Native Style in Village Constructions). The author

3 Tadeusz
Stryjenski: Old
theatre in
Kraków,
1903-06



propagated ideas of re-animating the traditions of old Polish village dwellings, which would counter the flood of Prussian architecture in the Great Poland (Wielkopolska) region. Although Czartoryski's formulations were very general and did not give any specific recipe for a "national style", they caused the emergence of new village dwellings, which in a more or less convincing way adapted the forms of Polish late Baroque and above all classical palaces. Initially, at the turn of the century, palaces were really eclectic compositions with only a few native elements, such as the four-column front portico. After 1903 the "native style" crystallised, mostly in the work of Stanislaw Borecki and Roger Slawski. Notable among their buildings are Borecki's Mankowski palace in Winna Góra (1910), and Slawski's palaces in Skoraszewice (1908) and in Dłon (1912). These palaces were large buildings featuring a picturesque Baroque classicist shape with forms referring to already existing buildings in Great Poland (Wielkopolska). The construction of the most interesting buildings in the "native" style merged in time with the rebirth of the idea of the Polish manor house and

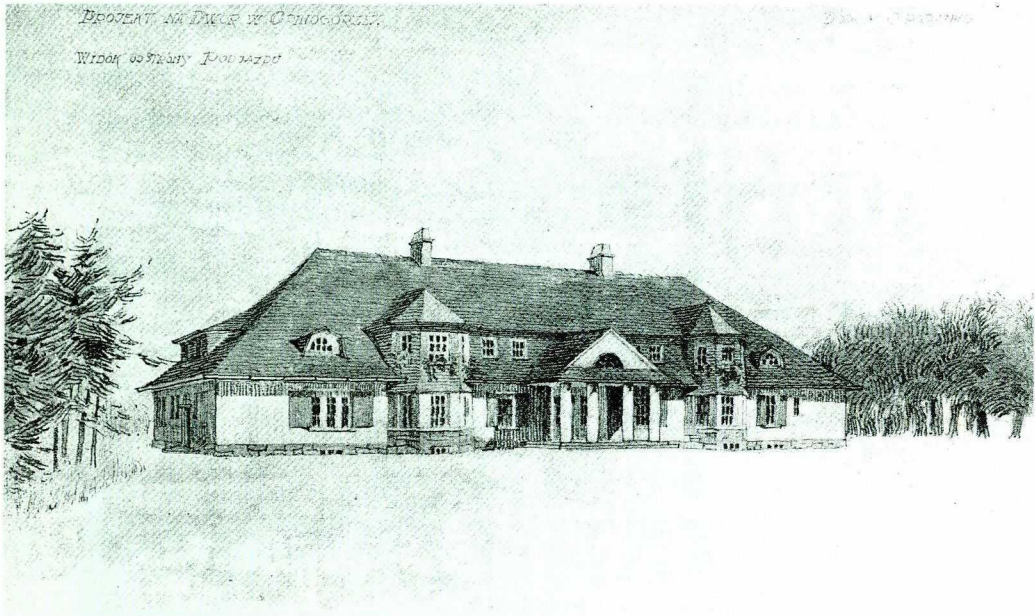
with inspiration from Baroque and Classicist forms, also on the territory of the Polish Kingdom.

Around 1908, the idea of C.F.A. Voysey's garden-city was popularised through the writings of Hermann Muthesius. Concepts of building detached houses of the cottage type were also very well known. Both of these contributed to the formation of a new concept of city buildings based on the idea of the Polish manor (*dwór*). It was not a phenomenon that was clearly defined from the point of view of style. Usually a manor was a country dwelling belonging to the gentry of average or below average affluence, which over the centuries had undergone various stylistic changes, while nevertheless maintaining its character. It was a comparatively small brick or wooden house that was, however, much larger than a peasant home. In the Baroque period, manors were often built on the alcove plan, often devoid of rich decoration but, especially since the 18th century, conspicuous for the decoration of the main entrance, which consisted of an often not very large porch of four pillars supporting a triangular gable. The columns were usually decorated in a primitive way and had a considerably enlarged entasis.

The idea of reviving the Polish manor aroused great interest among Polish architects. Due to their simplicity and sparing decoration, manors were in no danger of returning to the eclectic, overloaded forms that were still being erected even ten years before, and as inspiration gave an opportunity to create not only a national, but also a modern style. Moreover the idea of reviving the old traditions of the gentry, close to the hearts of every Pole brought up on the poetry of Adam Mickiewicz and the prose of Henryk Sieniewicz, proved very appealing.

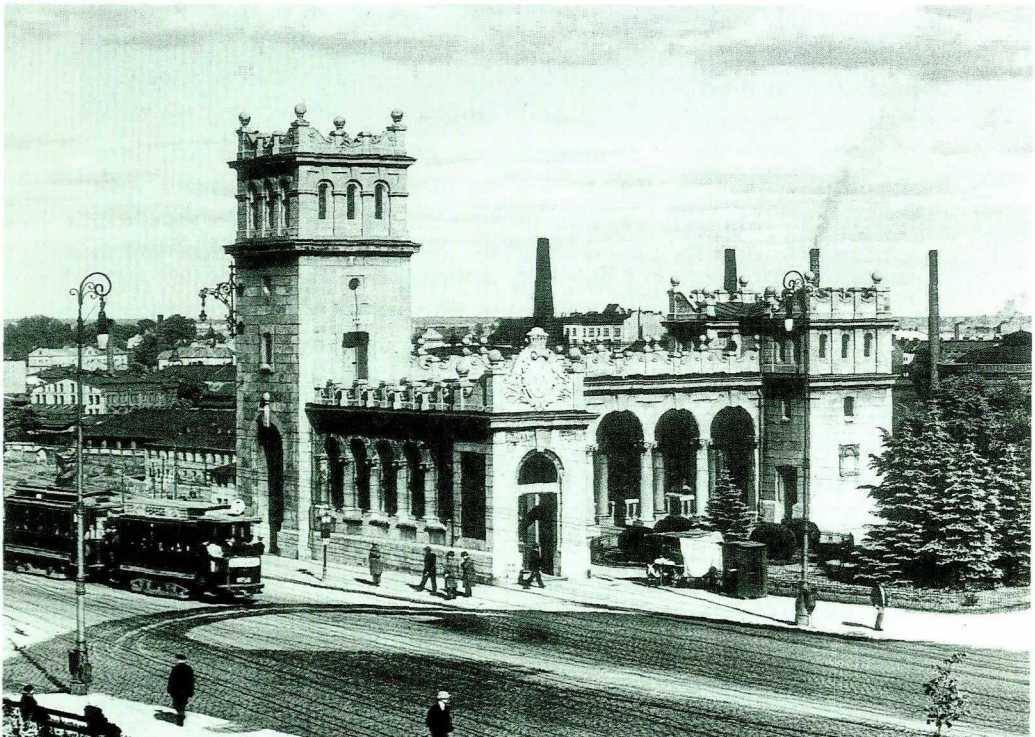
Thanks to the already mentioned Society of Polish Applied Art, three competitions aiming at popularising the idea of the Polish manor were organised. In 1908 there was a competition for the design of the manor in Opinogóra, in 1910 for the Polish manor for the Rome exhibition, and in 1913 for the manor in Niegowici. The rich crop of ideas produced by these contests contributed to the crystallisation of the type of detached house surrounded by a garden that dominated the designs of villas and houses built in Polish suburbs for practically all of the twenty year period between the two World Wars (fig. 4).

The years immediately preceding the outbreak of World War I brought a new, though for the time being only theoretical approach to the problem of national style. The search for the most relevant historic styles which would best reflect the modern "Polish spirit" was abandoned with the realisation that there was no period in Polish history when art on our territory had developed in a way that was independent enough from the rest of Europe to be revived as a homogenous style. More and more often came the realisation that only some elements of construction and decoration could be said to be uniquely Polish. Although they were usually of secondary



4 Józef Galezowski: Design for the manor at Opinogóra, 1908

5 Stefan Szyller: The Poniatowski Bridge, Warsaw



importance, it was those elements that had made Polish architecture different and "homely". Theoreticians and architectural historians concentrated their search on identifying those elements in the hope that they would inspire architects to create a new, synthetic Polish national style.

The greatest number of theoretical works on this topic was written during the war, when many architects had no work due to the break in building activities. It was then that most of the works by Stefan Szyller (cf. fig. 5), who took a very active part in the discussions on this topic, were published, as well as several publications by Jan Karon Sas-Zubrzycki. The outstanding architect, Oskar Sosnowski, was also very active in the theory of architecture. Most importantly, it is impossible to overestimate the role played in the formation of a new vision of a Polish national style by the work of Stanislaw Noakowski. He was an architect who designed very few buildings in his lifetime, but who drew a great deal. His drawings were an excellent reflection of the beauty of Polish monuments. He also created many sketch visions, showing a picturesque atmosphere with typically Polish landscapes and buildings. After the war he played a very important role, above all as a lecturer in architecture at the Warsaw Technical University. Through these lectures, which he illustrated with chalk drawings on a blackboard, he imbued students with his ideas of Polish architecture.

This new approach to the problem of national style found its comparatively earliest expression in religious architecture. Even before the outbreak of war, new churches were built whose structure was a synthesis of all styles, including, of course, the yearned for "homeliness". Churches were built on the traditional, Gothic plan. They usually had one nave and two aisles, a transept and towers in the front, but these Gothic forms were only found in the lower parts of the buttresses because higher up the articulation of the walls was already modern. The windows and doors had Renaissance and Baroque frames and the gables and helmets of the towers adopted picturesque Rococo and late Baroque forms. Asymmetrically laid out chapels were attached to the main body of the church and decorated in different styles, mostly Renaissance or Baroque. They were partly plastered, from time to time revealing "old" parts of brick and stone walls. Care was taken for all the details to have typically Polish, usually regional sources. The result was churches which greatly resembled village parish churches that had frequently been expanded and rebuilt. It depended on the architect's talent whether the final result was merely an eclectic, many-styled building or an outstanding, synthetic, highly modernised work, which was not overloaded with detail.

Excellent examples of such a style are the competition designs for two parish churches: by Zdzislaw Maczenski for Limanowa, awarded the first prize in 1909 in a competition organized by the architectural branch of the Technical Society (fig. 6) and by Kazimierz Skórewicz for Zagloba near Lublin which won a prize in 1907. Another example of an outstandingly

6 Zdzislaw
Maczenski:
Design for the
Church at
Limanowa, 1909



new approach to historic forms, capable of simultaneously synthesising them and drawing out their most important features was the work of Oskar Sosnowski, especially his design for the parish church at Makoszno near Nieszawa, built in 1911.

The outbreak of World War I put an obvious stop to building activity, but did not stop the continuity of the development of Polish architecture. During the war many architects concentrated their activities not only on writing theoretical works devoted to the history of Polish architecture, but also on ideas for rebuilding parts of the country that had been destroyed during the war. This work was undertaken with especially great enthusiasm since, thanks to political changes in Europe, Poles could have realistic hopes of independence; this was finally gained in 1918.

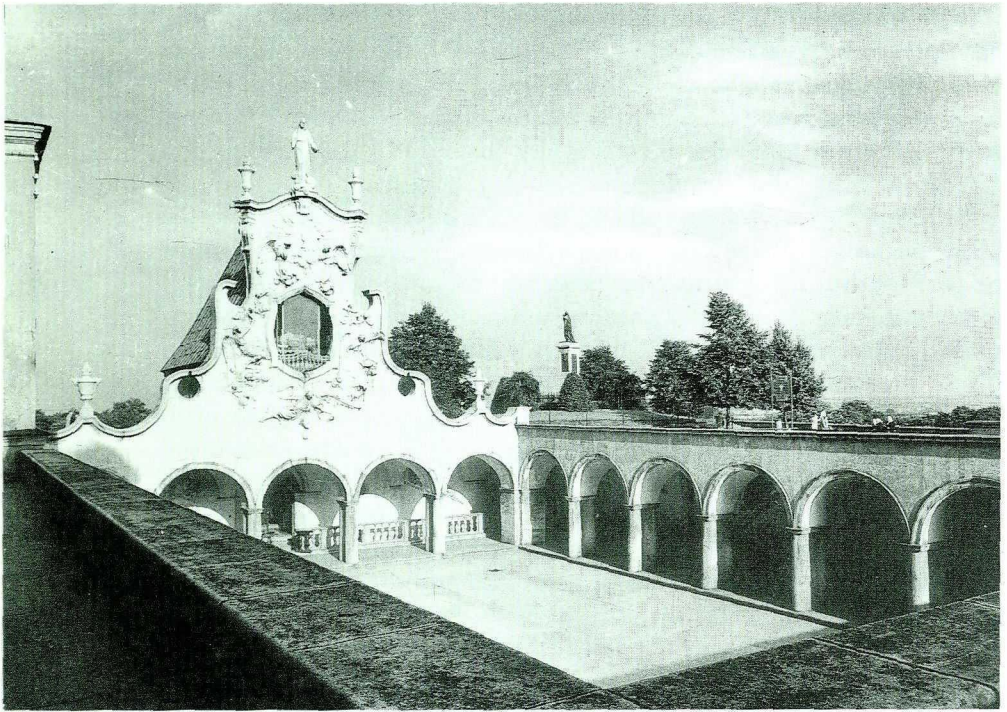
After the end of the war, all of Europe turned to traditionalism. The phenomenon was very strong in Poland, where problems connected with the formation of modernist architecture became marginal. Tasks involved

with the necessity of restoring the most precious monuments that had been damaged during the war and with the rebuilding of Polish towns and villages were of foremost importance. The “manor style” (*styl dwórkowy*), as the national style in secular architecture came to be called, and the “homely style” (*styl swojski*) in religious architecture dominated Polish construction enterprises during this period.

Although Polish art history still makes use of these terms to refer to the phenomenon which took place in the architecture of this period, one must be aware of their tentativeness. In reality “the national style” of the twenty interwar years in Poland was a phenomenon of great complexity. Architects made use of elements from all, mostly modern periods, and of folk art. These were not, however, direct quotations of specific styles, but rather references to ideas about them. Such a romantic approach to the past, often coupled with contemporary attitudes to composition formed by modernism, in effect produced an unusually colourful mosaic of works, in which a broadly conceived idea of Polish architectural tradition was the only common denominator. It is interesting to note that tendencies to underline regional features were almost completely abandoned during this period, so as to erase the differences resulting from the over a hundred-year-long division of the country. Even before the war the “homely style”, a dominating role in religious architecture linking many elements from different sources into one, frequently simplified and modernised composition. Stefan Szyller was the architect who put the results of this theoretical research into practice. In spite of a certain overloading and perhaps too strong a striving to achieve a picturesque effect, his designs for the churches in Zajaczkі near Czestochowa, Wojkowiec-Komorno near Bytom, Czestochowa and Kowle in Wolyn are outstanding examples of this “homely style” under discussion.

The “manor style” consists above all of small free-standing houses in classicising forms, sometimes with Baroque elements, whose distinguishing element is a four-column portico with a gable. The most famous manor was erected in 1923 according to a design by Kazimierz Skórewicz in Sulejówek near Warsaw and was presented as a gift from Polish soldiers to Marshal Józef Piłsudski. The first President of free Poland, Gabriel Narutowicz, also lived in a manor built by Marian Kontkiewicz. Whole manor districts were built in Polish cities, eg. Zoliborz Oficerski (the Army Officers’ section of Zoliborz) or Zoliborz Urzędniczy (the Clerks’ Section of Zoliborz) in Warsaw. Much larger buildings were also built, for which the Polish manor idiom was not adequate. Some of these were inspired by Renaissance architecture, eg. Romuald Miller’s designs for the railway stations at Gdynia, Radziwiłłów, Pruszków and Grodzisk, or Roger Sławski’s 1922-29 design for the Collegium Chemicum.

Baroque architecture was another source of inspiration. The style of religious architectural designs can frequently be identified with the already

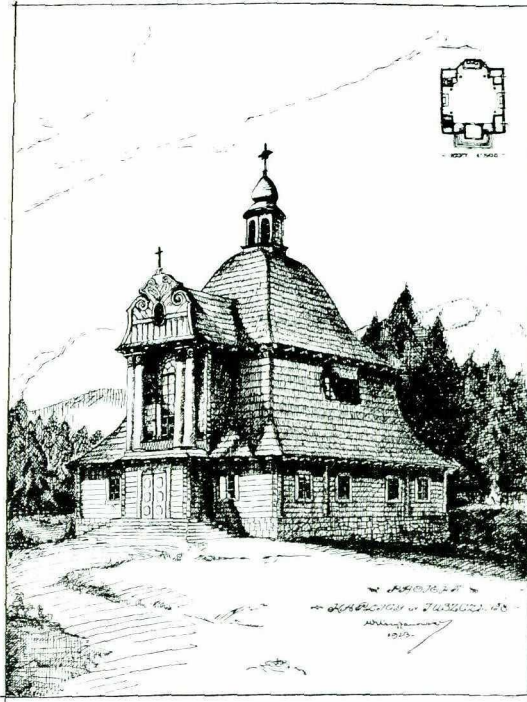


7 Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz:
Spowiednica
Stolu Panskiego

mentioned “homely” style, although often their designs were strictly inspired by Baroque architecture, for example, in the 1922 church at Goniadz and the 1927 church at Przeprusna Góra near Legonice, both designed by Oskar Sosnowski. An exceptionally interesting building inspired by neo-Baroque was built in 1920 by Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz on the site of the Jasna Góra Monastery in Czestochowa. It is the so-called “Spowiednica Stolu Panskiego” (fig. 7), i.e. a complex of cloisters designed for the confession of the large number of pilgrims coming to the monastery. The architect succeeded in deceiving the French writer, Georges Cattai, who in his book *Baroque et Rococo* (Paris 1973) describes the work as an example of Polish 18th century Baroque.

In secular architecture the Neo-Baroque appeared in designs for public utility houses, e.g. in the 1922-23 design for the Stefan Batory Gymnasium in Warsaw by Tadeusz Tolwinski, as well as in designs for large-scale village buildings, e.g. the 1929 design for reconstructing the Tarnowski Palace in Dzików or the building of the Zamoyski Palace in Adampol near Wlodawa according to the design of Jan Koszcyz-Witkiewicz (1923-7).

It is also worth mentioning that the architecture of large-scale Polish country houses was inspired by the “Polish” type of Classicism from King Stanislaw-August’s reign (1764-95), especially the palaces erected in that period. An outstanding example of such architecture is the palace in



Korczewo on the River Bug rebuilt according to the design of 1928 by Stanislaw Noakowski, or the palaces erected by Stanislaw Galezowski.

Some of the more interesting, though frequent phenomena were attempts to refer to the tradition of Polish wooden architecture, which was not, however, part of folk tradition, but was connected with religious and defensive architecture. Seventeenth century churches of the Masovia (Mazowsze) region inspired Stefan Styller in his design for the parish church in Porzadzie (1926), while 18th century architecture was the starting point for Waclaw Krzyzanowski when he was designing the parish church in Juszczyn (1923; fig. 8). Fortified watch-towers built on the eastern borders of the Polish Republic in the 17th century inspired the designers of military barracks and border posts for the Border Guard Corps.

Obviously, there were also other styles that developed in Poland in the twenty year inter-war period. The architecture of European Classicism, a style that crystallised around 1910, was often referred to in the most elegant state architecture. It was propagated mostly by architects who had graduated from the Imperial Fine Arts Academy in Petersburg, had begun their careers in Russia before the revolution and were under the strong influence of that country.

Various trends in modernist architecture were also developed. Among these, the work of Jan Koszczyc-Witkiewicz deserves special attention. He

was quite consistent in his search for a national style, treating the past and folk art only as starting points for totally modern designs. Especially in the 1920s, he created many buildings of a modernist shape, whose ornamentation bears traces of the decorative art based on Polish folk art which was flourishing at the time in Poland. His most interesting designs are those for Warsaw's University of Economics, where cubic forms come together in a harmonious whole with allegorical decorations and "faceted" ornamental motifs. A similar attitude to national style can also be seen in Oskar Sosnowski's design for St Roch's Church (1927) in Bialystok and in the work of Bruno Zborowski.

The problems connected with the national style in Poland are best described by the word "search". Unlike, for example Russia or Finland, the variety and multitude of concepts, ideas and initiatives did not lead to the crystallisation of one, clearly defined and generally accepted national style before the outbreak of World War I. There were many reasons for this situation. The search for a national style in this period was still characterised by 19th-century historicism, which was committed to the rebirth of a single, most appropriate style. Over the centuries, Polish art was strongly influenced by foreign trends. Nevertheless, it added some specific features to imported styles, which though secondary and usually resulting from a barbarisation of form, gave it significant distinguishing characteristics. There was, therefore, no epoch which could unreservedly be referred to as specifically "native", nor any which could be totally rejected as one "foreign to the Polish spirit". All of them were equally good. Polish folk art, interesting and varied as it was, had many common features with the folk art of other Slavonic countries, and secondly, due to its very nature, could not in itself create a new style in art, but only serve as an inspiration.

On the other hand, one must realise that until 1918, due to the political situation, there was no homogenous environment for artists in Poland. Architects in each of the partitions were usually educated in quite different universities, had professional contacts with dissimilar foreign circles, and in general were subjected to different influences. They belonged to different art societies and their chances to compare each other's creative efforts were infrequent. Moreover, the various art groups often competed with each other. Such was the case especially between Warsaw and Cracow. Such a situation was not conducive to solving the difficult problem of what Polish national architecture should be like.

These circumstances changed radically after the country regained its independence. Artists' groups could achieve more homogenous ideas and consolidate their efforts in search of a national style. Thanks to a well-grounded theoretical basis, there was more awareness of the past and of the specific conditions of Polish art. At the same time, there was the possibility of comparing the situation in Polish art with that of other nations. The renaissance of the Polish state favoured the rebirth of many romantic

historicist visions, referring to glorious pages from the past and the realisation of cultural themes immortalised by literature. Thanks to that, a “national style” could be created, which can best be characterised as a multi-form, romantic, “national historicism”, which gave birth to many buildings linked by one common feature. Every Pole associates them with the architecture he has been familiar with from his surroundings, which are close to his heart and which remind him of the greatest periods in the history of his country.

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