A Tower of Tangled Histories: The Upper Silesia Tower in Poznań and the Making of an Unromantic Poland, 1911–1955

Patryk Babiracki

Ever since it was completed in 1955, Warsaw's Palace of Culture and Science has been the most recognizable building in the Polish capital. This domineering and deeply symbolic Stalinist structure has been central to several interconnected historical narratives, not just those about Warsaw, but also about Poland, communism, and the Cold War. For instance, the strictly national story often conflates Warsaw with an imagined essence of "Polishness," expressed through the Romantic ethos that finds special meaning in the history of daring but doomed uprisings and the near-sacred nature of the national suffering; in it, the Palace symbolizes Soviet imperial dominance and, as "Stalin's finger," constitutes an alien, hegemonic space.[1] The narrative about communism often locates the Palace firmly on one side of the rupture between Stalinist imagination and everything that preceded it, a development that Vladimir Papernyi described in the Soviet context as

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1. On the Romantic myth, see Marcin Król, *Romantyzm: piekło i niebo Polaków* (Warsaw, 1998); Andrzej Walicki, *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism: The Case of Poland* (South Bend, 1994); Maria Janion, *Niesamowita słowiańszczyzna: Fantazmaty literatury* (Kraków, 2017), 12; Stanisław Sławomir Nicieja, "Legenda Kresów Wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej," in Andrzej Stawarz, ed., *Dziedzictwo i pamięć Kresów Wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw, 2009), 7–20; Czesław Miłosz, *Native Realm: A Search For Self-Definition*, trans. Catherine S. Leach (New York, 2002); on the Palace, see David Crowley, *Warsaw* (London, 2003), 42; Magdalena J. Zaborowska, "The Height of (Architectural) Seduction: Reading the 'Changes' through Stalin's Palace in Warsaw, Poland" in the *Journal of Architectural Education* 54, no. 4 (May 2001): 205–17; Grzegorz P. Bąbiak, "Pomniki władzy w krajobrazie Warszawy XIX i XX wieku: Od Soboru Newskiego do stalinowskiego Pałacu Kultury," in Zuzanna Grębecka and Jakub Sadowski, eds., *Pałac Kultury i Nauki. Między ideologią a masową wyobraźnią* (Kraków, 2007), 31–50; Patryk Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power in Poland: Culture and the Making of Stalin's New Empire, 1943–1957* (Chapel Hill, 2015), 3–5; and Michał Murawski's anthropological study, *The Palace Complex: A Stalinist Skyscraper, Capitalist Warsaw, and a City Transfixed* (Bloomington, 2019).

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a "victory of Culture Two over Culture One."[2] Finally, as an embodiment of the Soviet-imposed, state-sanctioned creative principle of socialist realism, the Palace came to symbolize either the repressive nature of the regimes behind "the iron curtain," or, in a subtler enunciation, a distinct version of Enlightenment modernity; contrasted with freedom, it has conveniently maintained the binary opposition that defined the very nature—and the memories—of the Cold War. [3] Clearly, the Palace captured a great amount of intellectual and emotional energies. Like Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior and Stalin's monumental Palace of the Soviets planned to be erected in its place, or the French capital's iconic Eiffel Tower, it embodied a contentious, massive political project, which captured firmly, if unpredictably, the imagination of people across—and even outside—the political community it was meant to shape.[4]

The trouble with the Palace, though, is that it embodies a rather Warsaw-centric understanding of history, also characteristic of Cold War concerns and sensibilities. But what if we interrogated a different kind of Polish space? The contingent nature of these potent narratives and the limitations of these binaries become clearer when one travels to another part of the country and examines a different kind of verticality, also associated with the socialist era, and with hegemony. The building in question is the Upper Silesia Tower in the western Polish city of Poznań, the capital of the "Great Poland" region. Here I focus on the historical vicissitudes of this structure, also known during various moments of its twentieth-century existence as Pavilion no. 4, 9, or 11. Standing centrally on the grounds of Poznań's International Trade Fair, the pavilion became the fair's symbol; not unlike the Palace of Culture and

2. Vladimir Papernyi, *Architecture in the Age of Stalin: Culture Two*, trans. John Hill and Roann Barris (Cambridge, Eng., 2002), esp. xxi-xxiv, 47, 116–17.

3. Anders Åman, *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe during the Stalin Era: An Aspect of Cold War History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992); challenges to this binary thinking include Giles Scott-Smith and Joes Segal, "Divided Dreamworlds? The Cultural Cold War in East and West," in Peter Romijn, Giles Scott-Smith, Joes Segal, eds., *Divided Dreamworlds? The Cultural Cold War in East and West* (Amsterdam, 2012), 1; Greg Castillo, *Cold War on the Home Front: The Soft Power of Midcentury Design* (Minneapolis, 2010), xv; György Péteri, "Sites of Convergence: The USSR and Communist Eastern Europe at International Fairs Abroad and at Home," *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, no. 1 (January 2012): 3–12; Susan E. Reid, "The Soviet Pavilion at Brussels '58: Convergence, Conversion, Critical Assimilation, or Transculturation?" *Cold War International History Project* working paper #62, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/WP62_Reid_web_V3sm.pdf (accessed July 29, 2020); Serge Guibault, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago, 1983); David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy During the Cold War* (Oxford, 2003), 613; Yves Cohen, "Circulatory Localities: The Example of Stalinism in the 1930s," trans. Stephanie Lin, *Kritika: Exploarations in Russian and Eursian History* 11, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 11–45.

4. Murawski, *The Palace Complex*, esp. 53; Konstantin Akinsha and Grigorij Kozlov with Sylvia Hochfield, *The Holy Place: Architecture, Ideology, and History in Russia* (New Haven, 2007); Karl Schlögel, *Moscow, 1937* (Cambridge, Mass., 2012), 554–57; Richard Anderson, *Russia: Modern Architectures in History* (London, 2015); Miriam R. Levin, *When the Eiffel Tower Was New: French Visions of Progress at the Centennial of the Revolution* (South Hadley, Mass., 1989); Joseph Harriss, *The Tallest Tower: Eiffel and the Belle Epoque* (Boston, 1975).

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Science in Warsaw; over time it also evolved into visual shorthand for the city itself. I suggest that the building embodied a Poland defined not through the outbursts of armed struggle associated with the Romantic myth, but around values such as industriousness and steady hard work, themselves products of the entangled Polish-German past.

The fair was one of the few places behind the "iron curtain" that welcomed thousands of foreigners from all over the world during the Cold War for the remarkable period two or three weeks, and later even longer.[5] Indeed, the fair was a battleground of the global conflict, and local authorities, Polish government, and Soviet exhibitors who interchangeably used the building to showcase Polish and Soviet goods injected the building with an extra political charge. More importantly perhaps, the building, erected in 1911, referenced German history and simultaneously harked back to the Prussian period of the western Polish past. By re-appropriating it after World War II, both Poles and Soviets engaged with the region's unique political culture that combined elements of Prussian imperialism with local Polish economic, social, and intellectual struggles against it. Understanding how this complex regional political tradition that the building embodied was channeled nationally and internationally by the Poznań fair, I argue, can put into relief Poland's contested identities, thereby also contributing to a discussion of present-day alternatives.[6] Thinking about the subsequent re-appropriations of the Upper Silesia Tower in the context of intertwined regional pasts, national narratives,

5. Recent work on the fairs includes: Péteri, "Sites of Convergence"; Katherine Pence, "'A World in Miniature': The Leipzig Trade Fairs in the 1950s and East German Consumer Citizenship," in: D.F. Crew, ed., *Consuming Germany in the Cold War* (New York, 2003), 21–50; Mary Neuburger, "Kebabche, Caviar or Hot Dogs? Consuming the Cold War at the Plovdiv Fair 1947–72," *Contemporary European History* 47, no. 1 (2012): 48–68; Cathleen M. Giustino, "Industrial Design and the Czechoslovak Pavilion at EXPO '58: Artistic Autonomy, Party Control and Cold War Common Ground," *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, no. 1 (2012): 185-212; Tomas Tolvaisas, "America on Display: U.S. Commercial and Cultural Exhibitions in the Soviet Bloc Countries, 1961-1968," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers University-New Brunswick, 2007; Robert Haddow, *Pavilions of Plenty: Exhibiting American Culture Abroad in the 1950s* (Washington, D.C., 1997); Tanja Scheffler, "Die Leipziger Messe während der DDR-Zeit. Franz Ehrlichs Perspektivplanungen," *Leipziger Blätter*, Sonderausgabe: 100 Jahre Alte Messe (2013): 42-46; Shane Hamilton, "Supermarket USA Confronts State Socialism: Airlifting the Technopolitics of Industrial Food Distribution into Cold War Yugoslavia," in Ruth Oldenziel and Karin Zachmann, *Cold War Kitchen: Americanization, Technology, and European Users* (Cambridge, Mass., 2009), 137–65; Austin Jersild, "Socialist Exhibits and Sino-Soviet Relations, 1950–60," *Cold War History* 18, no. 3 (2018): 275–89; Izabella Agárdi, "Socialist Work on Display. Visualizing the Political at the 1948 Budapest International Fair," in Yannis Yannitsiotis, Dimitra Lampropoulou and Carla Salvaterra, eds., *Rhetorics of Work* (Pisa, 2008), 1-26; Susan Reid, "The Soviet Pavilion at Brussels '58."

6. "Alongside history's reconstructive work," Paul A. Kramer recently wrote, "history can also serve as a mode of critical social thought. Such critical histories reconstruct past worlds, in part, in order to problematise, destabilise and denaturalise particular social formations, by embedding them in currents of time and change. It is an enterprise that necessarily registers the ways in which politics is temporally mediated." See "Bringing in the Externalities: Historians, Time Work and History's Boundaries," *History Australia* 17, no. 2 (2020): 293–94.

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and international histories also complicates, I believe, the east-west binary we inherited from the Cold War.

In approaching the pavilion as a concretization of larger cultural trends, I am drawing on the work of Karl Schlögel. The historian has sought to validate the significance of direct sensory experience of spatial environment to scholarly pursuits, while simultaneously underscoring the methodological promise of working backwards from material objects to ideas. Schlögel reminds us that "true interest in things begins when we take them seriously, truly see them, appreciate them, as objectivations of the spirit, of human labor, of historical agency."[7] For Schlögel, "there is no abstraction without a body behind it, and no body or hieroglyph can be read without the abstraction that has congealed in it: what Max Weber called 'bureaucracy' has a real existence; Weber's—or, for that matter, Marx's—concepts can be 'seen.'"[8] So it is, I suggest, with the Upper Silesia Tower, a product of ideas that animated Prussia at the turn of the twentieth century. Stalin's destruction of Moscow's old verticalities brings out the violent ruptures of Soviet history. Scholars who have written about the Upper Silesia Tower likewise emphasized both the cultural tensions between Poznań and Warsaw (as a large city and as national capital) as well as those between Poznań and its Prussian legacy.[9] By focusing on re-appropriations of the Tower, I wish to underscore the little-known continuities in Poland's history between the early- to mid-twentieth century.

The key to understanding the history of the Upper Silesia Tower, and the novel optics I aim to present, is the distinct history of Poznań and of the Great Poland region, and their unique roles in Polish history. Two aspects are especially important. The first is the region's strong regional identity, bound up in a love-hate relationship with Prussian power.[10] The second is the region's uneasy relationship with different parts of Poland, and Warsaw in particular. As a result of the eighteenth-century partitions of Poland-Lithuania, the Great Poland region was incorporated into Prussia and, in the nineteenth century, also became a battleground of Otto von Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* against the Poles. The dark shadow of persecution certainly loomed large over Poznań between the wars. But Poznanians simultaneously sympathized with the German penchant for order while also internalizing the values that helped them successfully compete with Prussians in the nineteenth century, such as entrepreneurship, trade, efficiency, industriousness, and hard work. Paradoxically, even though they staged the only successful uprising against foreign rule in the country's history—the Great Polish Uprising of 1919, which

7. Karl Schlögel, *In Space We Read Time: On the History of Civilization and Geopolitics*, trans. Gerrit Jackson (New York, 2016), 225–26.

8. Ibid. For other historical approaches to the lives of buildings, see, Victor Buchli, *An Archaeology of Socialism* (New York, 2000) or Yuri Slezkine, *The House of Government: A Saga of the Russian Revolution* (Princeton, 2017).

9. Anna Moskal, *Im Spannungsfeld von Region und Nation: Die Polonisierung der Stadt Posen nach 1918 und 1945* (Wiesbaden, 2013); José M. Faraldo, "Medieval Socialist Artefacts: Architecture and Discourses of National Identity in Provincial Poland, 1945–1960," *Nationalities Papers* 29, no. 4 (December 2001): 605–32.

10. Barbara Wysocka, *Regionalizm wielkopolski w II Rzeczypospolitej 1919–1939* (Poznań, 1981); Moskal, *Im Spannungsfeld von Region und Nation*.

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brought the region back into the fold of the Polish state—Poznanians had little sympathy for Warsaw's revolutionary-Romantic ethos. On the contrary, the rivalry between Józef Piłsudski and his arch-enemy Roman Dmowski destabilized the country, fueling a conflict that, as historian Jochen Böhler argued, bore characteristics of a civil war.[11] Great Poland residents challenged Piłsudski politically throughout the 1920s.[12] They also felt (and were perceived to be sharing) more with Germans than with fellow Poles from Russia and Austria-Hungary; in the eyes of many, the cityscape of Posen / Poznań (and the Tower) expressed these contradictory identities and sentiments.[13]

The Upper Silesia Tower at the East German Exhibition of 1911

The Upper Silesian Tower embodied many ideas driving the political culture of early-twentieth-century Prussia. The Tower was conceived for the 1911 East German Exhibition of Industry, Business and Agriculture (Ostdeutsche Ausstellung für Industrie, Gewerbe und Landwirtschaft), which took place in Posen, a town of 160,000 located on the eastern outskirts of the Prussian Empire. Posen was historically and ethnically Polish, but since the 1870s, Poles living in the province had been subjected to policies of cultural "Germanization" and economic harassment by the Bismarckian state. Germans were generally reluctant to settle in Prussia's less developed eastern provinces, despite the Prussian government's incentives to do so; Posen's ethnic composition discouraged them even more. Among the goals of the 1911 Exhibition were to show the superiority of the achievements of the Prussian economy in the empire's hinterlands, but also to demonstrate that Prussian political power in the ethnically Polish lands was alive and well—and thus to create a positive image of the area to potential settlers. Other western governments often used such exhibitions to boost nationalism and promote imperialism at that time.[14]

Lasting from May 14, to October 1, 1911, the East German Exhibition spread across three and a half hectares on the outskirts of the city and featured

11. Jochen Böhler, *Civil War in Central Europe, 1918–1921: The Reconstruction of Poland* (Oxford, 2018), 123.

12. Antoni Czubiński, *Poznań w latach 1918–1939* (Poznań, 2004), 149–58.

13. Visiting Poznań before World War I, Władysław Studnicki is said to have quipped that "If [Tadeusz] Kościuszko suddenly showed up here, you would have made him immediately a director of a bank." See Witold Molik, "Jak wygląda 'poznańska ciemnota.' Życie kulturalne w Poznaniu na przełomie XIX i XX wieku w opiniach publicystów warszawskich," *Kronika Miasta Poznania* 80, no. 1 (2012): 94–106, esp. 94, 96, 104, 105. See also Böhler, *Civil War*, 181.

14. Beate Störtkuhl, "Architektura wystawowa jako metoda narodowej prezentacji. Wystawa Wschodnioniemiecka (1911) i Powszechna Wystawa Krajowa (1929) w Poznaniu," trans. Joanna Czudec, in Jacek Purchla and Wolf Tegethoff, eds., *Naród, Styl, Modernizm* (Kraków, 2006), 241–42. For broad studies of exhibitions, see Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916* (Chicago, 1984); Alexander C. T. Geppert, *Fleeting Cities: Imperial Expositions in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (New York, 2010); for an excellent bibliography, see Alexander C. T. Geppert, Jean Coffey and Tammy Lau, "International Exhibitions, Expositions Universelles and World's Fairs, 1851–2005: A Bibliography," available at: *https://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/fmi/astrofuturismus/publikationen/Geppert_-_Expo_bibliography_3ed.pdf* (accessed July 6, 2020).

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twenty-five large and sixty small pavilions. Some belonged to various branches of industry; others included a model German settler village that featured eight furnished "workers' houses" built in the German style and a church designed to illustrate the ideal Prussian order. Also included was an African village, by far the most exotic element of the Exhibition and a typical feature of such events at that time.[15] Organizers also set up a miniature copy of the city's old town fashioned in the German style.[16] Politically and economically, the East German Exhibition was about imperialism to its core.

The Exhibition's central and most spectacular element was the Upper Silesia Tower (see Figure 1). Fifty-two meters high, it literally towered over the fairgrounds and over Poznań. Its palpable presence also derived from its sheer mass and distinctive look: a wide hexadecagonal base (58 meters across), the iron (1,500 tons of it) and glass structure narrowed down through a staircase-like pattern at the base into a mushroom-like top. The Tower amazed "at nighttime lighting," when "it turned into an illuminated crystal tower, whose luminescence was further amplified by moving searchlights."[17] The base functioned as exhibition hall for a consortium of Upper Silesian heavy industries, which commissioned the building, and which also provided a few guidelines for the Tower's appearance.[18]

The building was designed as *architecture parlante*; to explain its purpose through its form, it laid bare the iron framework. After fulfilling its purpose at the Exhibition, it was to be turned into a water tower (the top floor functioned as a restaurant during the Exhibition; thereafter, it would hold a water tank). The Tower—acclaimed by leading architects like Walter Gropius and inspiring stars of modernism such as Bruno Taut—was advertised by the Exhibition's organizers as a monument to the remarkable industrial but also creative energies of the Prussian empire's eastern provinces: "New architectonic forms that the Upper Silesia Tower undoubtedly represents, can appear only in areas where a struggle such as ours is taking place," noted one official publication referring to the cultural-economic "struggle" against the Poles.[19]

Simultaneously, the Upper Silesia Tower formed part of a broader effort to recast Posen as a German space. The Prussian authorities tried to achieve this by opening up the city's streets and its western entrance in order to decrease overcrowding and thus attracting more Germans from other provinces. They also added an ensemble of new government buildings at the westernmost entrance to the city, thereby creating a representative "ring." More than a dozen major architectural additions included the Grand Theater (1910), the

15. Geppert, *Fleeting Cities*, 117–28.

16. Störtkuhl, "Architektura wystawowa," 243; Jan Skuratowicz, "Architektura Targów Poznańskich przed 1920 rokiem," *Kronika Miasta Poznania* 64, no. 2 (1996): 96–108. See also *Ostdeutsche Ausstellung für Industrie, Gewerbe und Landwirtschaft, Posen 1911. Offizieler Katalog* (Posen, 1911).

17. Störtkuhl, "Architektura wystawowa," 243.

18. *Der Oberschlesische Turm: Festschrift den Besuchern des Turmes gewidmet* (Berlin, 1911).

19. Störtkuhl, "Hans Poelzig—architektura przemysłowa w Luboniu i Poznaniu," *Kronika Miasta Poznania* 80, no. 3 (2012): 122–23,125.

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Figure 1. The Upper Silesia Tower in 1911 (courtesy of the Adam Mickiewicz University Library, Poznań).

building of the Colonizing Commission (1912–14), the Royal Academy (1905–10), as well as several banks, squares, and parks. Key to Posen's political facelift project was the Royal Castle, a heavy-set, neo-Romanesque structure that became Kaiser Wilhelm's provincial residence in 1910, only a year before the East German Exhibition.[20] As Beate Störtkuhl noted, the Tower's architect, Hans Poelzig (1869–1936), managed to reconcile his modernist vision with the political symbolism of the Germanic past by recomposing the familiar,

20. Zenon Pałat, *Architektura a polityka. Gloryfikacja Prus i niemieckiej misji cywilizacyjnej w Poznaniu na początku XX wieku* (Poznań, 2011); Elizabeth A. Drummond, "Posen Or Poznań, Rathaus Or Ratusz: Nationalizing the Cityscape in the German-Polish Borderland," in Jeffry M. Diefendorf and Janet Ward, eds., *Transnationalism and the German City* (New York, 2014), 37–53.

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monument-like form of the Tower with newly available, modern materials such as iron and glass, which received an even more novel reiteration through the architect's skillful use of light.[21]

The Upper Silesia Tower, therefore, invited interplay between tradition and modernity, conservative politics and progressive art, the function of the building and its form. Perhaps this should not be surprising: Poelzig, one of Germany's most influential architects, was also someone who held an ambiguous place in the country's modernist trends. He belonged to a generation of architects who realized they were seeing the dawn of a new era. Grouped in the Deutscher Bund für Heimatschutz (or simply Werkbund, founded in 1907), they rejected both thoughtless, "historicist" borrowings from the past as well as superficial architectural innovation through decorations more generally—thus dismissing, for instance, the then-popular Art Noveau. Instead, Poelzig sought to develop a new architectural language from newly-available modern materials such as steel and glass, but with a continued interest in traditional forms.[22] For that reason, Poelzig was considered an expressionist, but arguably this label fails to capture fully his broad imaginary range, with works spanning the design of the Großen Schauspielhaus in Berlin to famous examples of industrial architecture, such as the I.G. Farben building in Frankfurt, a department store in Breslau, a project for the Palace of Soviets in Stalin's Moscow, and many more.[23]

Poelzig's goal was less to develop his own distinct style at all costs, like many other modernist visionaries of his time; rather, in the spirit of the Werkbund, he wanted to create beautiful buildings that functionally *and contextually* also made sense. His biographer Julius Posener wrote that "Poelzig was concerned to maintain continuity. This also explains why his work had less a sensational effect than that of Behrens or even Muthesius," and why Poelzig's contemporaries didn't quite get excited about his work.[24] Paradoxically, while Poelzig's interest in traditional form made him somewhat unexciting, his simultaneous recognition of the potential of modern building materials made him also a modernist, and vulnerable to Nazi attacks.[25] Arguably, the architect's commitment to traditional-modern syntheses was

21. Störtkuhl, "Hans Poelzig—architektura przemysłowa w Luboniu i Poznaniu," 125.

22. Jerzy Ilkosz, "Hans Poelzig and Max Berg in Wrocław," in idem., *Max Berg's Centennial Hall and Exhibition Grounds in Wrocław* (Wrocław, 2006), 26.

23. Julius Posener, *Hans Poelzig: Reflections on His Life and Work*, ed. by Kristin Feireiss and trans. by Christine Charlesworth (Cambridge, Mass., 1992); Matthias Schirren, *Hans Poelzig: Die Pläne und Zeichnungen aus dem ehemaligen Verkehrs- und Baumuseum in Berlin* (Berlin, 1989); Jerzy Ilkosz and Beate Störtkuhl, eds., *Hans Poelzig we Wrocławiu: Architektura i sztuka, 1900–1916* (Wrocław, 2000).

24. Posener, *Hans Poelzig*, 6, 8. On p. 17, Posener noted the reference to "timber framework. . .reinforced by the fact that the brick infill is laid in patterns that had often been used in half-timbered houses." But higher up, "on the restaurant level a very modern element is used, a window ribbon that goes around the whole building," a hardly "sensational" element, according to Posener, although unlikely to have "ever been seen before." What could have Poelzig meant by all this? Posener tried to guess: "'If only our ancestors,' the architect seems to be saying, 'had had steel girders instead of their wooden posts, they probably would have built something very much like this.'"

25. Ibid., 12.

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more than an expression of his personality. For nearly two decades, Poelzig lived and taught in Breslau, a city that before World War I, like Posen, lay on Germany's eastern frontier, where architects generally leaned in preference toward such hybrid designs.[26]

The Tower stood only within a fifteen-minute walk from the Royal Castle. The short distance made it easy to see the Tower as part of the newly unveiled imperial architectural ensemble meant to assert Prussian hegemony over Posen. The characteristic shape of the Upper Silesian Tower together with the imperial context of the Tower's creation shaped the Polish population's perception of Poelzig's building; Polish residents of Posen commonly referred to it as "the Prussian stamp" on the city.[27] These initial perceptions are consistent with subsequent stages in the building's life, which suggest that the Tower was variously liked or disliked, but never ignored. It thus functioned more than as a symbol, exercising its "architectural power" over the city, attracting and condensing its energies, not unlike the Palace of Culture and Science did later.[28]

The Upper Silesia Tower between Rejections and Re-appropriations

The Upper Silesia Tower survived World War I. Following the Great Polish Uprising of 1919, Posen became part of the newly independent Polish state. When the Poznań fair opened for the first time in 1921, it was the fairground's only permanent exhibition hall.[29] The Tower also lived an ambiguous afterlife in Poznań, a city where few Germans remained. Architectural and local historians have often focused on how the Tower represented an awkward legacy for the newly-Polish Poznań and the freshly independent Polish state. This was true especially during the Polish National Exhibition (*Powszechna Wystawa Krajowa*, or PWK) of 1929, which Poznań hosted and which aimed to showcase the unity and strength of the newly resurrected Poland. In touting national strength through selected exhibits, it was to be what the 1911 East German Exhibition was to Prussia. In aiming to prove publicly the country's potential to become modern, the Exhibition shared much with events in underdeveloped parts of the world.[30] The PWK was organized with even more

26. Deborah Ascher Barnstone, "The 1929 Breslau Werkbund Exhibition: Constructing German Identity in Architecture and Urban Design," in Ascher Barnstone and Thomas O. Haakenson, eds., *Representations of German Identity* (Bern, 2012), 132.

27. Jerzy Müller considered the Tower to "have a remarkable iron construction and a good interior" but be "pretentious and gloomy in interior design." See J. Müller, "Budownictwo," in Stanisław Wachowiak, ed., *Powszechna Wystawa Krajowa w Poznaniu w roku 1929*, vol. 2 (Poznań, 1930) 14. Władysław Czarnecki, Poznań's chief architect during the PWK, called the Tower's silhouette "ugly, heavy and unaesthetic." See *Wspomnienia architekta*, vol. 1 (Poznań, 2006), 90. See also Czarnecki, *To był też mój Poznań: Wspomnienia architekta miejskiego z lat 1925–1939* (Poznań, 1987); Filip Czekała, *Historie warte Poznania: Od Pewuki i Baltony do kapitana Wrony* (Poznań, 2016), 14.

28. Murawski, *The Palace Complex*, 9.

29. Andrzej Zarzycki, *"Na Przekór Wątpiącym i Zrozpaczonym": Cyryl Ratajski, 1875–1942* (Poznań, 1991), 67.

30. See Noah C. Elkin, "Promoting a New Brazil: National Expositions and Images of Modernity, 1861–1922," (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 1999).

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pomp than the 1911 event: on the space of fifty-six hectares (not including the numerous venues around the city that served the Exhibition indirectly), the event featured exhibits from all branches of Polish industry (state and private), as well as political, cultural, and national organizations, but also from various regions of Poland and from abroad.[31] Four and a half million people, including two hundred thousand foreigners, visited the Exhibition that served, in one scholar's words, as "a business card for national independence."[32] It was certainly the country's colorful microcosm, with all the implied possibilities, but problems as well: as the Exhibition's architect Jerzy Müller wrote, amidst the plethora of ideas and existing designs, deciding on an architectural order was no easy thing.[33]

Eventually, two main tensions defined the Exhibition. One involved discussions of how modern or neoclassical the Polish-looking buildings should be. Considerable attention drew four pavilions representing Poland's avant-garde, (such as the Pavilion of Natural Fertilizers designed by Szymon Syrkus). Many others aimed to bring comfort through their neoclassical style, associated with Poland's pre-partition years. The Upper Silesia Tower was peripheral to those conversations, but to the extent that it connected tradition with modernity, Poelzig's building joined the majority of the 112 pavilions in its attempts to reconcile the two extremes.[34]

The organizers also worried about the stylistic balance between Polish accents and Prussian legacies. Plans were made before the PWK to replace the Tower altogether with a structure that would be even more awe-inspiring. One project proposed building an enormous tower (a "Polish Eiffel Tower") crowned by an enormous crane that would transport guests from the nearby train station directly onto the fairgrounds. Another scenario envisioned a seventy meter-tall tower with a viewing terrace. It was only after they were unable to secure funding for either project that the organizers accepted the Upper Silesian Tower as it was. This was not unlike the committee at the Paris Exposition of 1889, who chose Gustave Eiffel's wrought iron structure over far more extravagant designs.[35]

Instead of destroying Poelzig's tower, Poznań tried to de-emphasize it visually. Throughout the 1920s, architect Roger Sławski did the most to accomplish this goal. Sławski himself represented a continuity between the Prussian past and the Polish present, as he had been the only Polish member of the 1911 East German Exhibition (organized, after all, in a city that had

31. Maciej Roman Bombicki, *Poznańska PeWuKa wizytówką niepodległości* (Poznań, 1996), 125, 136–43.

32. Ibid.

33. Müller, "Budownictwo," in Wachowiak, *Powszechna Wystawa Krajowa*, 63. The author adds that the classical tradition with simplified elements of the Empire style became the compositional key for the Exhibition—as a style that "has good traditions in Poland, as something that has been experienced and that is familiar, evokes a sense of attachment, thus amplifying a sense of constancy."

34. Barbara Zwolanowska, "Architektura Powszechnej Wystawy Krajowej w Poznaniu w roku 1929," *Rocznik Historii Sztuki* 11 (1976): 177–225, esp. 205–10.

35. Czekała, *Miasto nie do Poznania*, 38. On these plans, see Marcin J. Januszkiewicz and Adam Pleskaczyński, *I haj vivat Poznańczanie: Co o Poznaniu wiedzieć wypada* (Poznań, 2001) 203–4; on Paris, see Harriss, *The Tallest Tower*, 10–16.

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Figure 2. The Upper Silesia Tower in 1929 (courtesy of the Adam Mickiewicz University Library, Poznań).

been mostly [57%] ethnically Polish).[36] Since the early 1920s, Sławski had designed several exhibition halls that counterbalanced the visual presence of the Upper Silesia Tower. Intervening rather aggressively, Sławski built two long halls in neoclassical style in front of the Tower, significantly de-emphasizing it from the eastern, main-entrance side of the fair.[37] Several buildings designed specifically for the PWK, together with two obelisks in front of the Upper Silesia Tower at the main entrance also helped relativize the building's overarching presence (see Figure 2).[38] Moreover, in 1929, Sławski's newly-built Central Hall, located close to the Tower, became the representative entrance to the Exhibition; another tower had been added to its top, which helped to further diminish the presence of Poelzig's work.[39] The red brick was cleaned and brightened up; Sławski had a shiny new copper roof added, while transforming parts of the "gloomy" Prussian construction by painting it white, blue, and red.[40]

The Upper Silesia Tower was to be re-appropriated, decentered, but not destroyed. The usual scholarly focus on the architectural acrobatics meant to de-emphasize the building's presence at the fairgrounds may have obscured the significance of the fact that the Tower actually *stayed*. Only a few architectural historians have reflected on the significance of re-appropriations of Prussian buildings by Poznań's government, supported

36. Störtkuhl, "Hans Poelzig—Architektura przemysłowa w Luboniu i Poznaniu," 121.
37. Beate Störtkuhl, "Architektura wystawowa," 250.
38. Störtkuhl, "Architektura wystawowa," 250.
39. Grzeszczuk-Bendel, "Powszechna Wystawa Krajowa 1929," 25.
40. Müller, "Budownictwo," 71.

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by the city's residents.[41] Others have mentioned in passing that in putting Prussian buildings to new use, Poznań departed from practices in other parts of Poland, especially Warsaw, where people were more eager to destroy the architectural legacies of the Russian past.[42] Skuratowicz writes that Polish city planners consciously continued the Prussian development tendencies in the interwar era most, concluding that "as no other of Polish cities, Poznań remained true to itself, absorbed its unwanted past, assimilated it and developed into a new, although still traditional whole."[43] Consistent with that trend was the eventual preservation of the Upper Silesia Tower. It is not that there was *an active* interest in preserving things because they were Prussian; rather, the phenomenon that Gregor Thum called "the anti-Prussian impulse" in the context of post-World-War II Wrocław (former Breslau), whose German-Polish trajectory was very different, after all, was not as strong.[44]

Behind this impulse to re-appropriate was undoubtedly pragmatism. Poznań perennially suffered from a lack of not just residential buildings, but also administrative office space; the Upper Silesia Tower may have resembled a "Prussian stamp" on the city, but it worked fine as exhibition space during exhibitions and fairs, and the restaurant on its second floor offered a handsome view. Jerzy Müller decried the Tower as "gloomy" and "grotesque" but all the same acknowledged it as a "great specimen of the avant-garde of German

41. Exceptions include architectural historians Teresa Jakimowicz, "Wstęp: Dziedzictwo i balast historii," in Jakimowicz, ed., *Architektura i urbanistyka Poznania w XX wieku* (Poznań, 2005), 12, and Jan Skuratowicz, "Architektura Poznania w latach 1918–1939," *Kronika Miasta Poznania* 64, no. 4 (1996): 25. Moskal likewise notes that architecturally speaking, Poznań was only "superficially" polonized. See Moskal, *Im Spannungsfeld von Region und Nation*, 83. Also: Stephen Paul Naumann, "In Sight But Out of Mind: The Construction of Memory at Three Once Stigmatized Sites in Berlin and Poznań," (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 2012); Florian Znaniecki and Janusz Ziółkowski, *Czym jest dla Ciebie miasto Poznań? Dwa Konkursy: 1928/1964* (Warsaw, 1984), 206–7.

42. Störtkuhl, "Architektura wystawowa," 248, 251. See also Kazimierz Ruciński, "Rzut oka na budownictwo miejskie w Poznaniu," *Architektura i budownictwo* 4 (1929): 199–237. On the other hand, when it came to new designs, throughout the newly independent Poland "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," writes Malgorzata Omilanowska in "Searching for a National Style In Polish Architecture at the End of the 19th and Beginning of the 20th Century," in Nicola Gordon Bowe, ed., *Art and the National Dream: The Search for Vernacular Expression in Turn-of-the-Century Design* (Dublin, 1993), 111. During the partitions, Russian buildings in Warsaw functioned as monuments to the tsar; the most bombastic case was the Aleksander Nevsky Orthodox Cathedral at the Saski Square, which was taken apart during the interwar era. See Bąbiak, "Pomniki władzy;" Agnieszka Haska, "Rozebrać czy zostawić? Sobór pod wezwaniem Św. Aleksandra Newskiego a Pałac Kultury," in Grębecka and Sadowski, eds., *Pałac Kultury*, 51–58.

43. Skuratowicz, "Architektura Poznania w latach 1918–1939," 26.

44. Gregor Thum, *Uprooted: How Breslau Became Wrocław During the Century of Expulsions*, trans. Tom Lampert and Allison Brown (Princeton, 2011), 360. Other cities architecturally contesting their Polish and German histories after World War II included Szczecin/Stettin and Gdańsk/Danzig; in both, authorities and inhabitants settled on a range of hybrid forms. See Jan Musekamp, *Zwischen Stettin und Szczecin: Metamorphosen einer Stadt von 1945 bis 2005* (Wiesbaden, 2010); Jacek Friedrich, *Neue Stadt in altem Gewand: Der Wiederaufbau Danzigs 1945–1960* (Cologne, 2010).

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modernism."[45] It also mattered that Poznanians saw themselves as competing with Warsaw; preserving existing infrastructure, rather than destroying it, gave the regional center an advantage over the nation's capital.[46] Sentiment encouraged preservation, too. While the ostensible Germanic architecture dominating the city center was an unpleasant surprise and an alienating factor to the numerous migrants from other parts of Poland who saw the city as very "Prussian," it made the residents of Poznań simply "feel at home" (*u siebie*).[47]

But "home" meant more than everyday familiarity. Indeed, I suggest that Poznanians' connection with the Prussian past and Germanic urban space had deeper roots. Poznań residents had a conflicted relationship to their city's Prussian imperial past. The partitions evoked memories of persecution, but also sentiment for a set of values that many thought to have become the region's greatest strength, not just during the Prussian partition, but also in its aftermath. Prussian rule over western Poland certainly engendered systematic cultural persecution and legal harassment of the ethnic Polish population. Eager to consolidate the German Reich, Bismarck had suppressed Polish culture and economic interests. Ethnic Poles put up fierce resistance to the *Kulturkampf*, but in contrast to the revolutionary upheavals of Poles in Russia or loyalist politics of their counterparts under Austrian rule, "Prussian" Poles used the institutions of the Prussian Rechtsstaat, mobilizing their skills and entrepreneurship to compete with Germans economically and preserve their property. In 1872, one journalist described how Prussian Poles carried out this struggle: "if you are a shoemaker make better shoes, if you are a blacksmith do a better job on the cart. . . if you are a Polish housewife make better and cleaner butter, have better vegetables, linen, fruits, and butter than the Germans have. In this way you will save yourself and Poland. . .learning, work, order, and thrift, these are our new weapons."[48] Struggling for their rights within the small margin of economic freedom guaranteed to them, Poles in the Prussian partition shared little with the tradition of armed struggle preferred by Poles in the Russian empire.[49] Indeed, Jan Skuratowicz notes that

45. Müller, "Budownictwo," 71.

46. Moskal, *Im Spannungsfeld von Region und Nation*, 40.

47. Jakimowicz, "Wstęp. Dziedzictwo i balast historii," 3; Czarnecki, *To był też mój Poznań*, 10, 23–24; Omilanowska, "Searching For a National Style In Polish Architecture," 106; Antoni Czubiński, *Poznań w latach 1918–1939*, 56; Maria Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki*, vol. 1 (Warsaw, 1988), 291. On similar sentiments with regards to the Palace of Culture and Science, see also Crowley, "The Ruins of Socialism: Reconstruction and Destruction in Warsaw," in Michael Minkenberg, ed., *Power and Architecture: The Construction of Capitals and the Politics of Space* (New York, 2014), 209, and Murawski, *The Palace Complex*, Chapter 5, esp. 170.

48. Piotr Stefan Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland, 1795–1918* (Seattle, 1974), 229.

49. Jakimowicz, "Wstęp. Dziedzictwo i balast historii," 8. Interestingly, in the interwar era Poznań Poles showed little interest in erecting monuments to the otherwise unquestioned national heroes, which Warsaw excelled in. As Skuratowicz writes, "The memory of heroes was celebrated in churches and at cemeteries." See "Architektura Poznania w latach 1918–1939," 14.

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it was due to Poznań's "good experience" with the 1911 exposition that the city decided to reactivate the fair in 1921.[50]

As a result of this concerted effort, the Polish inhabitants of Prussia earned a reputation for higher living standards and an excellent work ethic. According to historian Piotr Wandycz, "the Prussian Pole developed characteristics that distinguished him from his countryman under Austria or Russia. He was better educated; he was disciplined, hard-working, and enjoyed a higher standard of living; he could compete on nearly equal terms with the Germans."[51] That strategy of economic mobilization, coupled with educational initiatives became known as "organic work," a term that captured the idea that society itself is a living organism whose various parts must be systematically cared for and developed, in order to remain healthy. Organic work started to develop in Prussian Poland after disappointments with Napoleon's politics (and his eventual defeat); by the end of the century, ethnic Poles from the other two partitions, disillusioned with their own strategies, adopted organic work in order to struggle against Russia and Austria-Hungary by strengthening the Polish inhabitants of those lands.[52] The Poles in Prussia fought "fire with fire" by resorting to economic means; as they depended on outdoing Prussians with their own methods, they developed a value system that served their cause. This struggle made a lasting impact on local identities: well into the years of Polish independence, these Prussian values and highly developed Polish stereotypes of Poznanians lived on.[53]

Thus, Prussian rule left deep scars on the Poznań region, but postmortem, the empire also became a source of its perceived strength. The Upper Silesian Tower, at once centrally present and shunned, embodied these contradictions of the region's relationship to its own past. As early as 1921, the Tower was an "unquestioned symbol of the fair."[54] Like so many other regional exhibitions of this era, the PWK of 1929 reflected a power tug between the national and the regional.[55] Surrounded as it was in 1929 by pavilions showcasing the Polish ability to effect progress through systematic, hard work (and contrasting with the Polish government's pavilions that showcased such familiar themes as armed struggle, Piłsudski, and victimhood), the building was hardly out of

50. Ibid., 24.

51. Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland*, 229.

52. Stanislaus A. Blejwas, "The Origins and Practice of 'Organic Work' in Poland: 1795–1863," The Polish Review 15, no. 4 (1970): 23–54. According to Wojciech Puchta, the PWK in Lemberg (Lwów) in 1894 reflected the region's growing commitment to "organic work." See *Powszechna Wystawa Krajowa we Lwowie w 1894 roku* (Wrocław, 2016), esp. 266–67.

53. Symptomatic is an essay competition that sociologist Florian Znaniecki organized in 1928 around several questions related to one large inquiry: "What does the city of Poznań mean to you?" Znaniecki and Ziółkowski, 114. See also 297–325 for results of the 1964 contest, which are very similar to the original competition from 1928. The responses reaffirmed Poznanians' self-identification with the Polish-German past, and outsiders' perceptions of Poznań residents as different from Poles elsewhere, in positive and negative ways. See also Moskal, *Im Spannungsfeld von Region und Nation*, 36.

54. Skuratowicz, "Architektura Poznania w latach 1918–1939," 10.

55. See Marta Filipová, "Introduction: The Margins of Exhibitions and Exhibitions Studies," in Filipová, ed., *Cultures of International Exhibitions, 1840–1940: Great Exhibitions in the Margins* (New York, 2015), 4.

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place during the PWK of 1929.[56] A respondent to a 1964 essay competition (and a sequel to the 1928 contest designed by sociologist Florian Znaniecki), a lawyer from the pre-1918 generation, born in the Great Poland region, explicitly tied the physiognomy of the original tower to the unique character of the city itself: "Its massive silhouette is connected to the earth and is 'functional;' as such, it related to the concrete, solid and economic character of the city and its residents."[57] The Tower, then, embodied local self-definitions that differed from Warsaw's dominant Romantic myth; in its second life as *architecture parlante*, it simultaneously, if briefly, symbolized a different, pragmatic kind of Poland on a national and international stage.

The Re-Appropriations of the Upper Silesia Tower under Socialism

After World War II, the partially destroyed but eventually renovated Upper Silesia Tower lived an active afterlife. The building re-assumed its central function in the context of the revived Poznań International Trade Fair. The fair had been taking place annually since 1925, with a break during the war, when Germany used the fairgrounds as an aircraft factory that also became a site of Allied bombings. Starting in 1947, the authorities in Poznań and Warsaw began to revive this institution largely on economic grounds; however, as the central government in Warsaw gradually took over the fair and introduced the centralized, Soviet-style economy in the climate of the escalating Cold War, the authorities increasingly used the fair for propagandistic goals. In 1947–50, and especially after the Stalinist break, in 1955, Poznań became an important east European hub of global interactions. As the fair's central exhibition pavilion, the continually re-appropriated Upper Silesia Tower simultaneously reflected the contested meanings of Polish socialism and shaped the public understanding of the relationship between Poland and the world. Three characteristics of the building especially came to impart new meanings during the subsequent stages of Poland's postwar development.

The first to re-appropriate the Tower after the war, in 1946–47, were the local authorities. This could be called "pragmatic" appropriation, since it arose strictly out of the need for usable exhibition space in the aftermath of the war. The bombings destroyed 83% of the fair; damage to the Tower was estimated at only 57%, and planners still disagreed on whether it should be rebuilt or demolished (see Figure 3).[58] As after World War I, several proposals were put forth, some of them quite bold, envisioning a new structure that would tower over Poznań and outdo the Warsaw's tallest building in height, the headquarters of the Prudential insurance company, built in 1933. In the end (and possibly for that reason), however, Warsaw withdrew funding for these extravagant proposals. The engineer Leonard Tomaszewski of the Urbanism Bureau of the Department of Urban Planning and Expansion

56. Moskal, *Im Spannungsfeld von Region und Nation*, 92.

57. Znaniecki and Ziółkowski, 205.

58. At 57%, it was the least damaged building at the fair. See Andrzej Sakson and Andrzej Skarzyński, eds., *Raport o stratach wojennych Poznania, 1939–1945* (Poznań, 2008), 144, 146.

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Figure 3. The Upper Silesia Tower in 1945 (courtesy of the Adam Mickiewicz University Library, Poznań).

recommended reconstructing the Tower into "a central monument of the fairground," by which he meant turning the building's inner core into office space.[59] At the national exhibition in 1946 (called "Apparel and Home") and at the first postwar international fair in 1947, however, the partially reconstructed Tower served as an exhibition pavilion for Polish goods. A patched-up carcass of its Prussian self, set in Poznań, the Tower was to speak to Poland's economic future under Warsaw's scrutinizing gaze. With its multiple connotations, the Tower meant different things to different people. Although its rebuilding had pragmatic and uncontroversial origins, the Tower's significance became contested in the context of the slowly changing function and structure of the fair.

For Poznanians, the re-appropriation of the Tower was part of the process that revived the fair, while the postwar fair promised to revive the local tradition of private entrepreneurship. Half destroyed, half reconstructed around Poelzig's original rotund structure, it linked Poznanians to the hope

59. Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu (henceforth: APP), syg. 775–22, kk. 4, 35. See also Moskal, *Im Spannungsfeld von Region und Nation*, 114–16.

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that their city would continue in its pre-war role as economic powerhouse; as a regional capital with venerable traditions of economic organizing, it could radiate the regional idea of Polishness to the nation at large. In this capacity, Poznań could use the fair to rival Warsaw, some thought. The Upper Silesia Tower, in its half-destroyed, half-reconstructed form showed Polish export goods, the fruits of a new system, but with its inner core intact and based on Poelzig's original shape, it was still recognizable; it still pointed to the local tradition. To many Poznanians, it was still theirs.

But the Tower's local significance assumed new meanings as Warsaw's government officials developed their own ideas about the best future for the fair. Slowly, they embraced the fair as an asset to the increasingly centralized, state-owned economy. Poznań was to attract foreign investors and businessmen, and to showcase the fruits of Poland's new socialist economy to the world. By 1949, it would also become an integral part of that self-same centralized economy owned and managed by the Polish state. In 1946–47 neither the country's political nor its economic future seemed preordained. Though socialist, Poland was not yet a mono party-state. Private enterprise was still legal.[60] But some signs indicated that Warsaw's, not Poznań's vision was gaining sway. Dark clouds began to gather over private industries early after the war; they were still an officially permitted, but increasingly marginalized sector of the Polish economy. The fair's organizers nervously took notice. In a show of remarkable independence from Warsaw (compared with later years), in 1946 the fair authorities confided in US diplomats from the American consulate in Poznań that "they wanted to develop Polish industry as much as possible" by acting as a "mediator" between state enterprises and private firms. They told the US vice-consul Edward Symans that, "if private industry is not permitted to develop, the functions of the fair will degenerate into propaganda vehicles showing the activities of the state operated or controlled industries."[61] This is exactly what happened during the subsequent two years. Scholars have seen the integration of the Poznań fair into the national economy as the final victory of the Warsaw center over the recalcitrant western region that not only accommodated subversively hybrid Polish-German identities but also dreamed of challenging the national capital.[62] It is hard to deny that after the war Warsaw was putting Poznań back in its place.

It is also true, however, that while subordinating Poznań and its fair the Polish government in Warsaw was simultaneously re-appropriating regional traditions in the service of national goals. After some deliberation, the communists chose to organize the fair in Poznań (as opposed Warsaw or Wrocław) because Poznań was cheaper and the city's infrastructure was in

60. In Poland, limits on private trade were imposed in 1946, but by 1947, 20% of gross industrial output was produced by companies that were not state-owned. See Ivan T. Berend, *Central and Eastern Europe 1944–1993: Detour from the Periphery to the Periphery* (Cambridge, Eng., 1996), 73.

61. "Results of the Home Furnishings and Clothing Fair Held at Poznan from September 21–30, 1946," National Archives and Records Administration College Park, MD (henceforth: NARA), RG 84 entry UD 3124 box 1, unpaginated material, 1–2.

62. Moskal, *Im Spannungsfeld von Region und Nation*, 116

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relatively good shape.[63] But the fact that Poznań's fair tradition was closely associated with an ethos of a superior work ethic also mattered, something that officials and promotional materials often mentioned. Moreover, the authorities in Poznań and the government in Warsaw saw the revival of the Poznań Fair as a first step to the anticipated organization of the Second PWK in 1954.[64] Poznań was dangerous only as a center of regional power; as a highly developed region with a long tradition of trade, it was useful for mobilizing the nation for the Herculean effort of postwar reconstruction, and also for projecting a less ideological, more pragmatic face of Poland abroad.

Crucially, the communists also saw themselves as continuers of "organic work." Top party official Stefan Staszewski told journalist Teresa Torańska in an interview that "after the war we entered a period with a very large scope for organic work: building, rebuilding and creating new values which would serve the nation." He claimed correctly that this was why "so many people decided to collaborate with the communists."[65] This context is key to understanding the significance of the partly-destroyed, partly-reconstructed Upper Silesia Tower standing smack in the center of the Poznań Fair in 1946–47, when the Tower connected two different cultural contexts: the local traditions of industriousness and efficiency, as expressed through individual hard work and trade and the national aspirations of Polish communists whose ultimate vision relied on party-controlled labor for the socialist state.[66] Linking the two in the immediate postwar years was the uncontroversial, thoroughly constructive impulse behind "organic work." Hence the Tower, steeped in ambiguities, focused new political energies and symbolized a new beginning, but it did not quite mark an abrupt end of the culture that created it. To rephrase the motto of socialist realism, the guiding principle in Stalinist art, one could say that in 1946–47 the Tower was national in content and regional in form.

The second stage in the Tower's appropriations began in 1948, when the USSR took over the Tower, which was simultaneously the central building of the Poznań Fair. I call this the neo-imperial appropriation, because just like in 1911, the Tower was redefined around its hegemonic role: "Of all the pavilions at the Poznań International Fair, the Soviet pavilion stands out, with its size

63. Archiwum Akt Nowych (henceforth: AAN) syg. 195–3327, k. 5.

64. As late as 1949, Bolesław Szmidt described his plans of preparing Poznań for the second PWK, using areas in and around the city center as exhibition grounds. See "Rozbudowa Międzynarodowych Targów Poznańskich," *Kronika Miasta Poznania* vol. 22, no. 1 (1949): 50. See also AAN syg. 195–3327, k. 54.

65. Teresa Torańska, *"Them:" Stalin's Polish Puppets*, trans. Agnieszka Kolakowska (New York, 1987), 133. The postwar period saw renewed historical discussions of "organic work:" see Stanislaus A. Blejwas, "Organic Work as a Problem in Polish Historiography," *Slavic Studies* 19 (1974): 197.

66. On the (partially unsuccessful) takeover by the Polish state of working-class institutions and cultures, see Padraic Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945–1950* (Ithaca, 1997), esp. chapters 4 and 5. On 238–39 Kenney argues that "the mobilization of labor transformed labor relations, replacing tradition and experience with a new work ethic of individual competition against norms and other workers." On the appropriation of Hungarian ideas of work into the socialist ethos at the Budapest Fair, see Agárdi, "Socialist Work on Display."

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and wealth of exhibits," declared the official fair pamphlet in 1948.[67] The Tower stood near the main entrance, without the obelisks formerly put up to obstruct its view, right between the chief row of large exhibition halls and adjacent to the fair park. The Poles vacated the Tower and offered it to the Soviets partly out of deference and partly in order to lure them to the fair; during the process, the building received new accoutrement made of Soviet posters, slogans, and flags.[68] A one-time temple of German imperial prowess, the Upper Silesia Tower now functioned as a shrine to the USSR.

The fully reconstructed and enlarged ground floor formed an "aesthetically decorated" round base, draped in red, with the six-meter-tall inscription "USSR" facing the main entrance of the fair.[69] From the center of the base, a circle of sixteen original twenty-meter steel-frame pillars protruded upwards, which in the building's earlier lives supported the top floors. Now, each pillar supported only a Soviet republic flag attached at the top and a red star affixed to its front side; union and republic emblems were mounted to two rings spread between the poles. In the center of the circle stood another framework bearing sixty four flags of various sizes; "lit up from below," informed one Soviet report, it "resembles a giant torch made of flags, crowned with a pole bearing the state flag of the USSR."[70] The Tower dominated over the city, just as it did in 1911; as one Soviet official reported back to Moscow in 1949, "the design of the tower, extending it to the height of forty meters tall, makes it possible to see the top part of the pavilion from all points in the city" (see Figure 4).[71] Throughout the 1930s and 1950s, Soviet architects responded to shifting party lines, but they also carefully tailored the USSR's exhibition pavilion styles to different audiences at home and abroad.[72] Moving into the partially reconstructed Upper Silesia Tower automatically blunted the choices between whether to opt for conservative or modern designs. And yet, the Tower was, again, hardly out of place; indeed, in its final form, the eclectic verticality captured the two dominant characteristics of what Vladimir Papernyi understood to be a Stalinist incarnation of what he had called "Culture Two."[73] But in Russia, Culture One and Culture Two alternated, and the latter "established itself in a peculiar way: by destroying the kindred and by decorating the hostile."[74] In its function as Soviet pavilion, the Upper Silesia Tower smoothly absorbed the Prussian verticality; as in other east European fairs, it came to embody the hegemonic power of the Stalinist Soviet

67. *Pawilon radziecki* (Warsaw, 1948), 4.

68. The building was slated for complete disassembling, but the Poles invested funds for its temporary renovation just to give the space to the Soviets: AAN syg. 195–3329, unpaginated file, p. 2 of letter dated January 24, 1949.

69. APP, syg. 775–10, k. 88.

70. Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Ekonomiki (henceforth: RGAE), f. 635, d. 216, l. 45

71. RGAE, f. 635, d. 216, l. 45.

72. Reid, "The Soviet Pavilion," 2–3; Vladimir Papernyi, "Hot and Cold War in Architecture of Soviet Pavilions (1937–1959)," in Rika Devos, Alexander Ortenberg, and Vladimir Papernyi, eds., *Architecture of Great Expositions 1937–1959: Messages of Peace, Images of War* (Abingdon, Eng., 2015), 81–98.

73. Papernyi, *Architecture*, esp. xxi-xxiv, 47, 116–17.

74. Ibid., 1.

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Figure 4. The Upper Silesia Tower / Soviet Pavilion in 1949 (courtesy of Archiwum / MTP Grupa).

state.[75] The dissimilar logics in Poznań and Stalin's Moscow extend beyond single buildings. The eclectic architecture of the Poznań fair differed from the Soviet capital's All-Union Agricultural Exhibition (VSKhV), which the Stalinists reconstructed completely around the principles of "Culture Two" before its opening in August, 1939 (and which initiated the international Stalinist trend to build "national in content and socialist in form)."[76] Finally, the absorption of Prussian architecture throughout Poznań contrasted with Moscow's architectural war with itself.

In a historical twist, the material again twined with the ideological: once thought to be a monument to Bismarck, "the Iron Chancellor," the Tower now served to celebrate the real and invented successes of Joseph Stalin, "the Man of Steel." On the inside, four-meter-tall portraits of Lenin and Stalin hung on both sides.[77] Propaganda about the first socialist society filled the interior of the pavilion. The fair's internal report informed that "upon entering, the visitor sees, above all, the portraits of great Soviet people, hanging in the upper parts of the internal dividers."[78] Enormous, "aesthetically made" photographs

75. From 1950 on, the Soviets used the central pavilion at the Leipzig Fair, which had received a makeover to disassociate its massive, neoclassical structure from Nazi times. See Tanja Scheffler, "The Technical Fairground in Leipzig in the Period of National Socialism," trans. Elisabeth Reschat, in Harald Bodenschatz, Piero Sassi, and Max Welch Guerra, eds., *Urbanism and Dictatorship: A European Perspective* (Basel, 2015), 178, and idem., "Die Leipziger Messe während der DDR: Zeit"; Neuburger, "*Kebabche*, Caviar or Hot Dogs," 52.

76. Papernyi, *Architecture*, 146–171; Greg Castillo, "Peoples at an Exhibition: Soviet Architecture and the national Question," in Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko, eds., *Socialist Realism Without Shores* (Durham, 1997), 114.

77. RGAE, f. 635, d. 216, l. 46.

78. APP, syg. 775–10, k. 88; the same was true of 1948—see "Pawilon radziecki," p. 14.

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depicting the views of the capitals of the Soviet republics covered the windows; "they soften the impression of the enormous hall and allows eyes to rest." There was the book exhibit, with a special section devoted to Stalin (whose seventieth birthday was loudly feted throughout the USSR that year.)[79] On the Tower's central pillar, "we can see numerous photographs of Soviet kindergartens, scientific institutes, libraries, culture parks, theaters, cinemas, and multiplicity of billboards, visualizing the achievements of the struggling proletariat."[80] Gone were the ambiguities of "organic work": once a showcase of Prussian industrial might and then of economic potential of the independent Polish state, the Tower now unequivocally served as a sanctuary of socialist labor.

With its domineering height, the Tower fit well into the Soviet Stalinist spectacle of superlatives. The vast majority of the Soviet exhibits arrived by train, taking up 149 freight cars and weighing 1,311 tons, making the Moscow-curated show heavier and more voluminous than all the other foreign participants combined.[81] Charts and graphs illustrated the rising output and impressive production plans, while "portraits of political leaders and heroes of [socialist] labor" put faces on the alleged feats. The physical objects on display included tools of socialist labor and its fruits. "The most impressive," informed the fair report, "are the enormous machines of the metal industry: for instance, a six-table carousel machine tool, or a 324-spindle cotton spinning frame, as well as of the electro technical industry, such as generators."[82] On display in the Tower were radio transmitters and receivers, transformers, calorimeters, printing machines, camera equipment, air compressors, pumps, motorcycles, telephones, meteorological and optical equipment, and samples of metals, chemicals, and synthetic rubber. One could see a rich collection of medical equipment; large assortment of linen, wool, cotton raw materials, and textiles; machines for sowing, making butter, and milking cows, and a collection of elegant furs. The pavilion also featured "splendid" exhibits of the grocery industry that included sausages, canned meat and fish, jams, wines, cheeses, sugars, and chocolates.[83] A French diplomat saw "countless samples of all kinds of products everywhere."[84] The Soviet exhibition around the Tower, whose centerpiece was the fifty-meter-tall oil rig, was also about outshining the competition while showing socialism in action. The storyline was that in the first socialist state industry worked for the people, and the Soviet people knew how to work.

Nearly one million people attended the 1949 fair, which was a remarkable event, given how suspicious Stalinist orthodoxy was of anyone maintaining international contacts at the time. Within two years, however, Stalinism also brought it to a screeching halt.[85] Socialist and capitalist approaches to trade

79. APP, syg. 775–10, k. 88.
80. APP, syg. 775–10, k. 89.
81. APP, syg. 775–9, k. 55.
82. APP, syg. 775–10, k. 88.
83. APP, syg. 775–10, kk. 88–89.
84. Centre des archives économiques et financières, Savigny-le-Temple (henceforth: CAEF), B-53261, French government report from XXII MTP, p. 5 of the document.
85. The Presidium of the Government decided on October 14, 1950 to cancel the 24th Poznań fair.

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Figure 5. The Upper Silesia Tower in 1955 (courtesy of Archiwum / MTP Grupa).

failed to mesh and the Cold War, now at its height, discouraged any attempts to work out any differences personally at the fair. The Poznań event shut down for four years, with most of its buildings serving as storage for equipment for local events. The worldwide political-economic transformations occasioned by Stalin's death shook the Poznań fair out of its four-year slumber only by 1955, which was also when the Upper Silesian Tower received a makeover that reflected these changes.

This third re-appropriation of the building could be called "aesthetic" because it redefined the Tower's symbolism around the universalizing principles of architectural modernism. In charge of redesigning the Tower was Bolesław Szmidt, the chief architect of the Poznań fair. His new vision captured the possibilities of Poland's future by engaging with layers of the building's past. In 1954–55, Szmidt enlarged the base of the old Upper Silesian Tower while replacing the top floors with a giant steel-grid spire of his own design. In its life as a "Prussian stamp" the Tower weighed on Poznań before the war; now, the visually-light, rocket-shaped structure seemed to lift the city as it shot up into the skies (see Figure 5). In 1955, the Tower still served as a Soviet pavilion. Some have made analogies between its spire and those on Moscow's Stalinist skyscrapers (coincidentally, their cousin, Warsaw's Palace of Culture and Science, was completed the same year). The Tower evoked strikingly angular, industrially- inspired utopian sculptures of early Russian

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constructivists such as Vladimir Tatlin; by referencing the early Soviet avant-garde, it rejected the building's hegemonic past. Architectural historian Piotr Marciniak suggests compellingly that together with the enormous openwork model of the globe next to it, the building expressed the internationalist aspiration of Poznań as well.[86] The new Tower also resembled a rocket, thus referencing the contemporaneous fixation on the space race. The spire beamed with optimism toward the future possibilities of mankind. Antenna-like, it broadcast to the world that Poland had backtracked from the Stalinist dead-end and that was ready to embrace a modernity of a different kind.

Szmidt used the building to re-engage aesthetically with the city's Prussian past. Some see Szmidt as aiming to break with the city's Prussian tradition with the new spire. By preserving its location and the original foundations, they suggest, the architect wanted to accentuate solely the visual symbolism of the international fair.[87] Yet one can see this the other way around: the central element of the Tower was actually brand new; what remained were the less spectacular but unique elements, such as the foundations and the iron framework. Szmidt rejected only those aspects of the building that came to be associated with imperial domination; in a meaningful move, as he tried to create a new vision of the future, Szmidt literally relied on the physical remnants of the Prussian past.

This appropriation reflected Szmidt's architectural philosophy. In his 1981 book, *The Order of Space*, Szmidt offered a rare clue to the philosophical meaning of his designs. One of the dominant themes is the need to achieve harmony between the multiple tensions of an architectural work: its function and form, but also the old elements and the new. "The whole point," Schmidt argues, "is to be able to use anything that has its own natural beauty, not to struggle dogmatically against chance, but to find in [chance], whenever possible, unconventional motifs that can break the tension and forcedness" of a given work.[88] Throughout, Szmidt references the architect Frank Lloyd Wright, known for his attention to the harmony between buildings and their environment. He also cites Eugene Raskin's remarks about the beauty of "contradictory conventions" achieved by the juxtaposition of old and new forms.[89] The ultimate task of space was social: it is "knowing the secret of the natural environment, developing the elements of the region, equipping this milieu with the power of resistance against socially-harmful interactions [oddziaływań]."[90] If we treat this as a mature enunciation of Szmidt's philosophy from thirty years before, then his synthetic reconstruction of the Tower could be a deliberate nod to the city's aesthetic Prussian history.

86. Piotr Marciniak, *Doświadczenia modernizmu: Architektura i urbanistyka Poznania w czasach PRL* (Poznań, 2010), 270. This was at a time when Constructivism was being slowly "exhumed" in the USSR as well. See Elidor Mëhilli, "The Socialist Design: Urban Dilemmas in Postwar Europe and the Soviet Union," *Kritika* 13, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 641; also: Stephen Bittner, *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw: Experience and Memory in Moscow's Arbat* (Ithaca, 2008).

87. Marciniak, *Doświadczenia modernizmu*, 270.

88. Szmidt, *Ład przestrzeni* (Warsaw, 1981), 154.

89. Ibid., 171–73.

90. Ibid., 347.

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Certainly, linking Szmidt's 1980s and early-life approaches in this way may seem anachronistic: a backwards projection of his generation's reaction to the alienating abstraction of the International Style and budding postmodernism, especially its most eclectic forms.[91] This is true only to some extent, for the architect's concern with coherence and context predate the first postmodern experiments in the 1960s United States. In a 1949 article published in Poznań's quarterly magazine, Szmidt described at length his architectural vision for the Second PWK planned for 1954. The key rule for designing expositions, he noted, should be that of "architectural unity." The task of the architect is to introduce "motifs, modular connections, and imaginative solutions [*ujęć barwnych*]," that will connect everything, ensuring common order [*ład*].[92] Crucial in this effort was artful integration of the exposition with the existing natural forms and the cityscape. "The Parisian expos. . .would be a chaotic collection of unsynchronized and uncoordinated structures," he wrote, "were it not for the ribbon of the Seine, tying together all of the exposition grounds in a fantastic panorama; for the magnificent viewing axis [*oś widokowa*] stretching from Trocadéro to the Ecole Militaire; were it not, finally, for the rich presence of trees in the riverside boulevards."[93] Szmidt further identified the numerous "inherent advantages" of Poznań's terrain that one could use to achieve a similarly harmonious effect. It is that willingness and ability to synthesize the existing and potential elements of space that, I believe, can help us understand Szmidt's approach to the Upper Silesian Tower. Indeed, it also puts into relief a certain affinity between Szmidt's philosophy and that of Hans Poelzig himself.

Nearly two decades ago, Polish scholar Magdalena J. Zaborowska noted that "if. . .Warsaw is the 'central focus in Polish symbolic space,' then the centrally located Palace, no matter how controversial in its origin, can serve as the main architectural symbol through which the Polish capital and the whole culture continually (re)define and (re)imagine themselves."[94] In this essay, I argued that the Upper Silesia Tower in Poznań embodied a different kind of Poland, one that intermittently came into a national and international spotlight, but one that has been largely overshadowed by a set of ideas associated with the country's Romantic past.

Though it is little known, the ideas embodied by the Tower competed with those that the Palace symbolized at different times throughout the twentieth century. The Tower reflected the Poznań region's ambiguous relationship to the prevailing conceptions and most visible traditions of the independent Polish state. It did so because it symbolized the positive, constructive legacy of the Prussian empire, with its capital in nearby Berlin. The values that the Tower embodied carried no resonance with the dominant Polish Romantic ethos of violent struggle and suffering; instead, it pointed to less spectacular

91. Heinrich Klotz, *The History of Postmodern Architecture*, trans. Radka Donnell (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), 128–130.

92. Szmidt, "Rozbudowa Międzynarodowych Targów Poznańskich," 42.

93. Ibid., 42.

94. Zaborowska, "The Height of (Architectural) Seduction," 212; citing Wojciech Tomasik, *Inżynieria dusz*: *Literatura realizmu socjalistycznego w planie "propagandy monumentalnej"* (Wrocław, 1999), 67.

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values such as efficiency and hard work. I tried to show how authorities, architects, and exhibitors in Poznań, Warsaw, and Moscow engaged with this early legacy of the building by having it speak, sometimes very subtly, to these different moments in the entangled Polish-German past. I aimed to demonstrate that just as the building's original Prussian elements fused with new, Polish and modernist ones, so the regional identity defined around "organic work" spread throughout the country, in order to twine, after World War II, with the more familiar ideas that enabled the consolidation of state socialism.

A modest case study, the essay nonetheless speaks to a couple of broader problems in the historiography. The first concerns the popular, and to some extent, scholarly understanding of Poland today. "Indeed," wrote Norman Davies in 1984, "since the oppressive hothouse conditions which fostered Polish Romanticism in the first place have continued in many respects to the present day, the Romantic tradition still reigns supreme in the Polish mind."[95] The Romantic narrative of Polish history has been variously challenged and occasionally marginalized since 1984, but its momentum today remains still quite strong.[96] Moreover, the question of whether Poland should be defined primarily around the history of its armed struggle for independence or through systematic, constructive work continues to be hotly contested today. To some extent, at stake is the question of historical agency: to what extent can Polish people shape their own history and to what extent are they permitted see themselves as heroic victims of the world?

The second issue can be framed even more broadly, in terms of the historiography of the Cold War. In cultural history, the global conflict has often been conceptualized as a struggle between two forms of western modernity: the Soviet kind, associated with collectivity, rationality, and equality and a package of freedom, individualism, and consumerism energetically championed by the United States. This neat division takes us only so far, some have argued compellingly, by pointing out the ways in which people both east and west shared dreams and ideas and also took advantage of modernity's possibilities in the same way. Here, my goal was to show how the Tower's eclectic history blurs the operative contrast between east and west, but in a different way. Both elements co-existed behind the iron curtain, to some extent reflecting the geographies and regional and imperial tensions that pre-dated the Cold War. Furthermore, I show that Polish communists readily appropriated even the more controversial regional legacies, ultimately in order to bolster the country's state socialism. In that sense this micro-historical essay could also be seen as a contribution to the conversation about the lesser known regional forces that shaped the Cold War.

95. Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland* (Oxford, 1984), 148. Davies himself has been an energetic impresario of Poland's Romantic myth.

96. Tim Gosling, "Hungary and Poland Tighten Grip on 'National Narratives,'" *Balkan Insight*, July 29, 2019, *https://balkaninsight.com/2019/07/29/hungary-and-poland-tighten-grip-on-national-narratives/* (accessed July 10, 2020). The Romantic myth has been challenged by works examining Polish antisemitism, which do not square neatly with images of Polish heroism and victimhood. For a broader reappraisal, see Brian Porter-Szűcs, *Poland in the Modern World: Beyond Martyrdom* (Malden, 2014).

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