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The operations of building companies in Wrocław in the 2nd half of the 19th century

One of the problems of Wrocław around 1850 – which in fact is rarely noticed by researchers – due to the fact that other issues are most often studied – is the issue of planned housing development and building societies closely connected with it which were established in those times¹.

The lack of apartments is the syndrome of economic activation of Germany after 1840, which process was described by Thomas Nipperdey as modernization, emphasizing that it was not stimulated by the society but from outside [12, pp. 67–92]. As the historian put it: *the stagnation and backwardness had [...] their benefits: new technologies could be adopted* [12, p. 79]. It should be stressed that it allowed for the use of a number of solutions – including those in the scope of residential building – which was already developed and proven in the countries where the process of industrialization began earlier.

In respect of social housing, it is known that the English patterns were used in Europe at first, and the “Society for Improving the Conditions of the Labouring Classes” established in London in 1844 was presented as an example of a building organization in its new meaning [compare: 7, p. 413 and next]. It was those newly organized building societies which were established in Prussia in the 1850s and 1860s that brought a lot of hope for building development.

However, whereas the operations of the English company, just like “Vereeniging ten behoeve der Arbeidersklasse” (V.A) (Association for the Working Class) established on Nov. 11, 1851 in Amsterdam, were in fact charity operations, there were two types of societies which need to be distinguished in Prussia in respect of operations and assumed objectives. The first of them would include the societies which conducted primarily commercial operations and wanted to acquire building

areas to be later divided into plots for sale. Some of the societies did not, however, deal only with selling newly divided plots as they employed architects who designed buildings to be constructed and then sold to private persons or institutions. It is significant, however, that many of those societies were established on the initiative of the representatives of building professions (Bremen and Hale 1851, Lündenscheid 1853, Heilbornn 1854, Stuttgart and Szczecin 1859, Żagań and Królewiec 1861, Nuremberg 1862, Zgorzelec 1864).

The other group included the societies which operated as cooperatives, however, in a different way than in England or the Netherlands – where the initiative originated in the community of philanthropists – in Prussia they were established primarily on the initiative of the persons who were united because of the necessity to acquire a relatively inexpensive apartment. It is known that the first cooperative of that kind in the German speaking area was established in Hamburg (1862).

In the 1840s, along with the development of railroads, there was a noticeable growth of interest in Wrocław suburbs as building areas, and it was not only the construction of residential houses that intensified at that time – the first factory buildings which later developed into future industrial building appeared already in the 1st half of the 19th century [compare: 3, pp. 245–276]. Furthermore, retail and wholesale trade grew dynamically in the city; a lot of corporations of merchants, joint-stock companies, and credit institutions were established. Consequently, the demand for projects of buildings for institutions and organizations whose operations would be connected with economy grew too.

The economic boom resulted in a considerable growth of the city population over the whole century, which was connected to a large extent with an influx of people from whole Silesia². There is no doubt that the decisions made

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¹ Building Bank Company was mentioned e.g. in the paper by Grzegorzczuk [5, p. 175]; next information regarding that issue is mentioned in the article: Grzegorzczuk, Tomaszewicz [8, p. 181 and next], as well as in the paper by Tomaszewicz [19, p. 40].

² The sevenfold growth in the number of Wrocław population during the 19th century is comparable to the growth in the population of such European metropolises as London, Paris, Amsterdam, Brussels, Rome, Buda-

by the city authorities then contributed to the building boom [compare: 10, p. 9 and next]. The growing demand for specialists qualified in various areas of building made the builders living in the Silesian towns and villages look for work in Wrocław. Although an intensified building movement was noticeable already in the middle of the 1850s, the real building explosion occurred much later – in 1872–1877. The boom in that area, though with varied intensity, which lasted for more than a dozen years, resulted in an influx into the city of a quite large group of architects who after graduation – most often from the Academy in Berlin – permanently settled in Wrocław³.

It should be noted that at the same time an increased demand for building plots, whose value – except for 1870 – still grew, became evident. And so in 1869, 636 plots were sold for the total sum of 10,136 thousand thalers. In 1870 – despite a decrease in the demand caused by the Franco-Prussian War – 568 plots were sold for the total sum of 8,274 thousand thalers. However, already in 1871, 623 plots were sold for the total sum of 12,438 thousand thalers, and in 1872 as many as 1,541 plots for the total amount of 85,623 thousand thalers. The average price of property which in 1869 was 15,937 thalers reached 23,116 thalers already in 1872⁴.

The possibility of making decent profits on trading in land at that time provided favorable conditions for establishing building joint-stock companies. The first one that we know of was Wrocław Building Society (*Breslauer Bau Gesellschaft*) established in 1858. Today it is difficult to determine if the idea of establishing the society was originated by the builder Hermann Melhorn who in 1856 purchased with his wife Laura the so called Red Farm (buildings with a horticulture farm of the area of 60 ha.) There is no doubt that the area of former horticulture farm located in Przedmieście Oławskie, bordering on the land owned by the rail and as such was not attractive for wealthy dwellers of Wrocław, could be fully and easily used for building cheaper houses or workshops. Anyway, soon the Wrocław city council came up with an idea of using that area for building cheap residential houses. The founding prospectus which was published on November 6, 1858 provided that the advocates of that idea included not only the representatives of the financial high society (such as banker D. Gordan, merchants H. Hammer and C. Keitsch) or members of the city council (D. Bülow, C.L.J. Pulvermacher, C. Studt) but also the representatives of the ruling elite with the head of the province Eduard Hans von Schleinitz⁵.

The whole area was purchased from the Melhorns (1862) with the raised funds and then divided into plots,

some of which were assigned for sale. The funds which were gathered in this way were supposed to be used for investing in building cheaper houses and workshops which would allow for a cheaper and faster construction of houses affordable for less wealthy members of the Society. Unfortunately, because of quarrels and disputes between its members the noble ends were never achieved and the remaining area was also sold [compare: 15, pp. 1–3].

The Wrocław Saving and Building Cooperative (*Breslauer Bau-Spar-Genossenschaft*), which was established by 44 persons on Feb. 14, 1868 based on the rules of the cooperative movement, had a much greater influence on the development of building of cheap residential houses in Wrocław. At the moment of its establishment, the cooperative members – in the number of 161 – raised the capital of 52 thousand thalers⁶.

The establishment of that special cooperative was preceded by almost a two-year-long discussion initiated in the “Schlesische Zeitung” already in 1866 about various forms of financing social building⁷. As a result of great interest generated by the idea of establishing a housing cooperative, a specially appointed seven-person board began to work on the statutes of the cooperative at the beginning of 1867⁸.

It is significant that the citizens of Wrocław who had been permanently living abroad also joined the discussion on the housing cooperative movement; for instance Doctor Lunge from Southsfield sent the materials on English cooperatives to the newspaper. It is known that a special brochure was published on the basis of these materials with a presentation of the methods of raising funds and their management⁹.

The first elections to the supervisory board were held in March 1868. Gustav Meyer was elected its Chairperson and one of the originators – the merchant Carl Schierer – was elected his Deputy. The other members of the supervisory board included notary Gustav Brier, inspector of the office Carel Laffleth, and merchant Moritz Zwettels. The positions of experts were held by the carpenter Robert Hanke and already mentioned Carl Schierer¹⁰. The cooperative inaugurated its actual operations by constructing a simple one-story semi-detached house in Huby, which was then a village, opposite the school, near the office of the factory owner Stache who personally was very interested in that investment. The building was designed by Ernst Nowack, and Joseph Morave was the director of works¹¹. It is significant that the investment resulted in the growth of interest in that area especially among builders who not only executed the orders assigned to them but also often acted as building entrepreneurs themselves e.g. August Böbang or Edmund Schilling¹².

It should be noted also that the cooperative aroused great interest in the community of Wrocław builders.

pest. London had a population of 1.117 thousand in 1800, 2.685 thousand in 1850, and 4.510 thousand in 1900. The population of Paris was respectively: 547 thousand in 1800, 1.053 thousand in 1850, and 2.630 thousand in 1900; Amsterdam: 220 thousand in 1800, 156 thousand in 1850, and 733 thousand in 1900; Rome: 163 thousand in 1800, 175 thousand in 1850, 465 thousand in 1900. Figures per M. Wagenaar [20, p. 23].

³ That problem was mentioned in the article: Grzegorzcyk, [6, pp. 9–31].

⁴ “Schlesische Zeitung”, Jan. 19, 1873, No. 31.

⁵ Apart from those mentioned, the founders also included Robert Tulf, regency counsel, Johann Sigismund von Dallwitz, and count Zieten.

⁶ Compare: “Schlesische Zeitung”, May 9, 1868, No. 215.

⁷ Compare: “Schlesische Zeitung”, Oct. 18, 1866, No. 490.

⁸ Compare: “Schlesische Zeitung”, March 1, 1867, No. 100.

⁹ Compare: “Schlesische Zeitung”, March 30, 1867 No.168; April 5, 1867, No. 256.

¹⁰ Compare: “Schlesische Zeitung”, April 1, 1868, No. 155.

¹¹ Unfortunately the building design was not found.

¹² On the basis of documentation in ABMA, Vol. 1995–2005.

Its members included such reputed masters as: Carl Bröbbling, Herrmann Donat, Louis Ehrlich, Otto Fiebigger, Louis Hentschel, Friedrich Illner, Berthold Lange and Carl Schmidt, the sculptor Albert Rachner and such building entrepreneurs as Albert Nickel, Alois Seppelt, Gottfried Stojan [compare: 11].

Whereas both institutions mentioned above were interested primarily in the areas near Wrocław located east and south of its borders, the limited partnership “Matthiasfelder Bau-Commandit-Gesellschaft”, established on May 16, 1869, postulated in its founding prospectus the beginning of building expansion in the area of Przedmieście Odrzańskie which was considered *terra incognita* by a lot of inhabitants of the city [compare: 14, p. 1]. The area of that suburb – as described in the founding prospectus – was ignored despite the fact that it provided fresh air, good drinking water, and the best land for construction sites. The newly opened Dworzec Nadodrze railway station and relatively short distance to the city center provided additional advantage of that part of the city. According to the originators of the project the city hall was only 15 minutes away.

The founding capital of the partnership was supposed to be raised from the sale of 500 shares with the value of about 100 Rhine thalers. It is significant that not only was the buyout of the shares for money admitted but the shares also could be paid back by supplying materials or performing construction work. The capital of 50,000 thalers raised in this way was to be used for the purchase of area of about 98 acres. It was planned to design a square of the area of about 9.8 acres in the center, which in the future would be used as a shopping center. The remaining area around the square was to be divided by a grid of new streets with residential houses [14, p. 1]. In the opinion of the project originators the sale of plots for construction sites or independent buildings should generate substantial profits.

The possibility of achieving considerable profits – which at that time was possible by trading in land – was favorable for establishing building companies. There is no doubt that the prestige of two companies established at the beginning of the 1870s grew significantly – the Silesian Real Estate Trade Society (*Schlesische Immobilien Actien Gesellschaft*) (Oct. 31, 1871) which evolved from the “Union for Elimination of the Lack of Apartment” (*Verein zur Behebung der Wohnungsnoth*) already operating in 1871¹³ and the Wrocław Building Bank (*Breslauer Baubank*) (est. Aug. 23, 1872). Both institutions were established on the initiative of the financial elite of Wrocław. The members of the Silesian Real Estate Trade Society’s supervisory board included the municipal judge David Friedländer, the merchant C.H.L. Kärger, and Wrocław biggest bankers – August Schmie-

der, Siegmund Sachs, Julius Schotländer and August Moser. The “core” of the board of the Wrocław Building Bank – apart from Emil Dickhut, director of Breslau-Schweidnitz-Freiburger Railway – was composed of the representatives of Wrocław high society bankers: Cohn (Gebrüder Guttentag), Siegmunt Levy (S.L. Landsberger), Edmund Oppenheim (Heymann Oppenheim), Salo Sackur (Gebrüder Sackur) Julius Schweitzer (Oppenheim & Schwetzer) and Felix Korab – royal legal advisor, attorney, and notary, as well as royal building advisor – Carl Lüdecke.

There is no doubt that the operations of both of those institutions were similar. First of all they tried to acquire the building areas located near newly laid out streets. Next, the areas were divided into plots and sold to the burghers. However, not all plots were assigned for sale. The companies usually developed the plots in the most attractive locations of the city on their own by building groups of townhouses with highly representative architecture.

To a large extent the financial success of both of those companies was determined by the founding capital as it should be emphasized that their establishment coincided with a huge economic boom which took place in the 1870s in the new German Reich. It was caused by a few factors: a large amount of five billion Francs that was paid to the German state treasury as a contribution imposed on France after the Franco-Prussian War which was won by Prussia (1870–1871), the growth of the internal market as a result of political unification of Germany, and finally the protection of domestic industry by protective customs tariffs, monetary reforms effected in 1871 and 1873 as well as the nationalization of railway in 1873–1878.

The building operations in Wrocław between 1872 and 1877 which were three times greater than over the next six years testify to fact that it was a period which was especially favorable for the growth of building¹⁴. It was typical not only of Wrocław because the building movement in Poznań was as dynamic [13, p. 272 and next].

The operations of Wrocław entrepreneurs focused mainly on construction of residential houses as high profits were expected from renting apartments, commercial space, and shops.

In this context it is impossible to ignore one more – as one might presume – rather significant issue, namely the explosion of building in the 1870s witnessed competition in the broad meaning of that word. Investors were interested mainly in the whole clusters of plots and not individual ones. A house located in the city center was a kind of advertising opportunity for its owner. The palace façades, representative staircases, conveniently laid-out interiors, stucco decorations of the salons – all this was the reason why they were called tenement palaces. It should be assumed that the highly representative architecture of

¹³ The Union operated already in 1871, however, its members did not agree on the nature of its operations. Some of them wanted the Union to operate as a joint-stock company and it can be assumed that Schotländer was their leader; the other group, on the other hand, opted for establishing a cooperative. It should be assumed, however, there must have been other reasons for the split as the members of that union were also among the founders of the Wrocław Building Bank.

¹⁴ In 1872–1877, the Building Police granted on average 370 building permits annually, whereas over two years preceding that period – in 1870 and 1871 – 183 building permits annually, and in 1878–1885 – about 151 building permits annually. Those building permits regarded both new projects and extension of already existing buildings, compare: Honigmann [9, p. 258].

those townhouses was supposed to not only demonstrate the high status of their owners but also attract clients longing for comfort and luxury, especially because they were built for rent. The grandeur and splendor of those profitable townhouses could be then considered one of the symptoms of competition.

It is significant that wherever the building complexes were representative, architects and builders were willing to build their own houses too¹⁵.

The first known commission executed by the Silesian Real Estate Trade Society which marked the beginning of its building operations included the development of the area of the so called Mysi Staw (*Mäusetzich*). This fairly large plot located between the penitentiary complex and Eichborn's garden and bordering to the north on the plot owned by Johann Gottfried Selenke's foundation was a large area used by cuirassiers as a drill square. That area was transferred to the city on the basis of the resolution from Jan. 13, 1866 which obligated the army to return to the city all its undeveloped plots located within the borders of Wrocław. Apart from the areas mentioned above, the city acquired also new plots at Wierzbowa Street 14, Mennicza Street 20, and Wszystkich Świętych Street, Basteigasse Street which does not exist today as well as Purkyniego Street 35. The city authorities paid the army a compensation in the total amount of 965 thousand thalers for the area described above. It was agreed that the area of former horse riding arena and Mysi Staw – a municipal building depot since 1871 – would be used for residential purposes. The development plan for the whole area, which included designing a large square with streets going away from it, was approved at the meeting of the City Council held on April 24, 1871. The newly designed streets marked the borders of the blocks which were divided into 77 building plots for sale. Apart from the square, which the city assigned free of charge for the construction of the Silesian Museum of Fine Arts, this whole area, together with the area which was also put up for sale of former city stables (*städische Marstall*) at Świdnicka Street, was bought for 1,220 thousand thalers¹⁶ by Julius Schottländer, representing the interests of the Silesian Real Estate Trade Society, which at the moment of signing the agreement (March 23, 1872) was in organization. The extraordinary haste of the future shareholders – which, as it seems, was evident with that transaction – sheds special light on the reason why the company was incorporated, testifying to the fact that the financial elite in Wrocław fully realized the possibility of earning decent profits from that undertaking. According to the agreement which was concluded with the city authorities, the square and the streets as well as the water supply system and sewers had to be laid out and then paved by the Silesian Real Estate Trade Society (SRETS) on its own.

In September 1872, Friedrich Barchewitz – who was commissioned by the Society to execute the project –

extended the development plan of Mysi Staw [1]. The residential complex designed by him – which does not exist anymore – was composed of two parts, one located to the north of Muzealny Square and the other to the west of Muzealna Street. Both of its flanks visible from Muzealny Square presented a great tenement palace. However, if one looks closely at their plans, it is clearly visible that the whole design was composed of separate enclosed units. All of them were designed with three internal axes, and three of them additionally had side wings. The individual stories of each unit had one or two apartments with traditional interior layouts; the front axis had representative rooms, whereas the back one had bedrooms and auxiliary rooms. Both axes were separated by a hall connected directly with the landing which was invariably located along the back axis. The architect designed the additional – utility staircases – only in side wings. The annex of the complex designed in this way provided a square on the remnant of former Eichborn's garden.

The design of both façades of Barchewitz complex was based on three sections: lower, middle, and upper course; basement being the lower section. The middle section included the ground floor and the next two floors with a uniform brick cladding. The slightly higher top story was distinctively articulated by smaller order pilasters. The main expression feature of the building was the material – a combination of red clinker brick and architectural detail applied in plaster. This way of composing façades inspired by north Renaissance became particularly fashionable in Wrocław architecture in the 1880s.

Whereas SRETS developed the area of former Mysi Staw on its own, it divided the area of former horse riding arena into plots and sold them.

The next important objective of the Society – aimed at strengthening its reputation as a building tycoon in Wrocław – was to develop the area of former city stables.

It was a fairly big square, stretching south of the houses at Ofiar Oświęcimskich Street (*Junkerstr.*) to Kazimierza Wielkiego Street (*Schloßohle*). The square's irregular shape – defined from the north by existing houses and Kazimierza Wielkiego Street from the south – was a challenge for the architect because – as it can be presumed – the city authorities wanted a street (later *Königstr.*, today Leszczyńskiego Street) connecting Świdnicka Street with Kazimierza Wielkiego Street to go across that land. There is no doubt that the decision to purchase that area was based on its location – the townhouses built in that key point of the city – close to the center at Świdnicka Street, one of the busiest streets in the city, must have been profitable.

The Society's supervisory board did not commission the execution of the project to a specific architect but a competition for the development of that plot was announced in local newspapers in September 1872. The competition – for which 36 proposals were submitted – was resolved at the end of March 1873. Although the jury of the competition with Carl Lüdecke, Wilhelm Grapow and Alexander Kaumann liked most the projects by Friedrich Barchewitz, who was at that time a member of the

¹⁵ Good examples include the houses of C. Schmidt at Muzealny Square, C. Schlick or Henry at Podwale Street.

¹⁶ Compare: "Schlesische Provinzialblätter", 1872, p. 269.

Society, it was only after he won the competition that he was appointed director responsible for the building investments of the company¹⁷.

The architect divided the plot into two parts with Leszczyńskiego Street going diagonally across its whole area – one triangular in shape and the other irregular. Along the north side of that street, Barchewitz designed a complex composed of single townhouses which he “fit” into the existing houses. He designed the houses in the new complex with two and three internal axes and wherever possible with side wings. The ground floor served commercial and utility purposes, whereas the other stories were designed for apartments, offering – for those times – medium standard. The architectural complex laid out in this way presented a uniform whole.

The design of the building located opposite Leszczyńskiego Street was to a large extent determined by the triangular shape of the plot on which the plan of the building was based. Barchewitz designed the building by combining three single corner townhouses. It was no coincidence that the architect used the corner townhouses; actually it was a smart move of the builder who was trying to develop the plot as well as possible. According to the applicable construction law the undeveloped area of corner plots could be smaller than that of other plots. Whereas the ground floor of such a building designed in this way served only commercial purposes, its upper stories could be used in a number of ways. The part at the junction of Leszczyńskiego Street and Kazimierza Wielkiego Street – unlike the other two where apartments were planned – was designed as a hotel. That hotel had a lot of rooms laid out along its front axes – in most cases accessible from a representative hall. The rooms were connected with one another – providing suites with any number of rooms.

The front façades of the whole complex – both from the north and from the south of Leszczyńskiego Street, as well as along Świdnicka Street and Kazimierza Wielkiego Street – had a similar design with characteristic features of Classical Italian Renaissance. The fountain at the junction of Kazimierza Wielkiego Street and Leszczyńskiego Street was an additional element of the whole complex, which surely was supposed to emphasize its representative character.

An effort of the architect to impart a uniform character to the complex, which is visible at first glance, resulted in the lack of a strong landmark and the whole design seems to be slightly monotonous. Unfortunately, even the strong accent – a group of sculptures placed from Świdnicka Street: a figure of Silesia with her arms outstretched over the allegory of commerce and industry sitting at her feet – did not change it. It seems that when designing that complex, Barchewitz did not make the most of its great location, and by laying out the streets “diagonally” across the whole area he failed to design a strong urban and architectural development. Undoubtedly, however, that special layout of Leszczyńskiego Street provided an unobstructed

access to the complex without the necessity to use the narrow and inconvenient St. Doroty Street.

Another investment of the society designed by Barchewitz demonstrated a much more monumental façade. In this case, the extremely convenient location of that design was very important. The building was erected in such a way that one of its sides was located at Kościuszki Street (*Tauenzienstr.*), another at m. J. Piłsudskiego Street (*Gartenstr.*), and the façade was facing Legionów Square (*Sonnenplatz*). The façade of that 3-storied house, featuring an attached projection within 3-axis side parts, had evident divisions. The ground floor with accented rustication provided a base course for the next three stories. The first and second floors with a much more delicate rustication, were articulated by rectangular windows with decorative frames. The 4th story, which was much higher than the other ones, was divided by Corinthian pilasters placed on candelabrum pedestals with recessed balcony windows under column arcades in between them. Additionally, rich sculptural decorations (putti, sculptures, medallions, frieze with a garland, front projection and a group of sculptures with Silesia crowning the façade) added to the effective play of light and shadow.

It was actually the last representative complex designed by the company. Its later designs included simple houses built at Hercena Street 7–11 (*Forckenbeckstr.*); after their construction the company stopped its building operations and focused exclusively on speculation with land.

There is no doubt that the company became the leading real estate trader in Wrocław primarily because of Julius Schottländer – a man of exceptional knowledge of the market and its boom¹⁸. Although his underlying objective was to multiply the capital of the company, he also operated his private business, including real estate trading. He was perfectly organized and not only used his gift of anticipation and helped the company in purchasing the area of Mysi Staw but also acquired in 1877 a part of the colony of villas in Borek established by Quistrop – the entrepreneur from Berlin. After the land which was bought from the neighboring farmers was joined with Borek, 27 ha he donated to the city as green areas – provided that the city at its own cost would connect Borek to the system of water supply and sewers, it was connected to it.

It seems that the already mentioned Wrocław Building Bank (WBB) established at the same time as the Wrocław Building Union incorporated in 1871, the registered cooperative (*Breslauer Bau-Verein eingetragene Genossenschaft*) – were much less successful in that field.

WBB, headed by Benno Milch, was from the beginning of its operations more oriented to speculation with land. Although Eduard Kieselich who was a builder worked for that enterprise, its designs actually did not present an advertising character, and in fact, to a large extent, they were executed as incidental commissions such as e.g. modernization of the complex (1877) at Skargi Street 22 (*Alte Taschenstr. 21*). It is significant

¹⁷ Information on the competition was published in “Schlesische Zeitung”, Jan. 15, 1873 No. 23, April 6, 1873 No. 163 and “Breslauer Zeitung”, April 4, 1873, No. 159; as well as [4].

¹⁸ A perfect description of J. Schottländer was presented by Ziątkowski in [21].

that apart from buying out different areas and then selling building plots with profit, the company offered all services connected with building houses, suburban villas, pavilions, gazebos [compare: 5, p. 175].

It is then surprising that it was in that company where the idea of building Wrocław “Wilhelmsstadt” (1873) was born. It was supposed to be a complex of exclusive townhouses located between Powstańców Śląskich Street, Szczęśliwa Street, Ziębińskiego Street and Mała Street. The design developed by A. von Keller included dividing the whole area into 6 blocks. 4-storied, elegant houses were to be built along the streets with their back façades facing in a way inner fairly large yards which would resemble green oases accessible to all residents of a given block. It was also planned to create a wide arterial road which would go from Hirszfelda Square (*Höfchenplatz*) directly to Park Południowy. The idea became so attractive that the management of the company managed to attract the shareholders from its competitor SRETS to act together. The cooperation resulted in the purchase of the area popularly called Gajowice I (*Gabitz I*), in contrast to the area which SRETS had bought earlier near Grabiszyńska Street (*Grägschner Str.*) and Jęzmienna Street (*Luisenstr.*).

It seems that the cooperation must have been going well between former competitive companies as a similar area was also bought near former village of Rybaki. Whereas the structural fabric of Wilhelmsstadt was supposed to include picturesquely designed but still tenement houses, the vicinity along Piastowska Street and M. Curie-Skłodowskiej Street were going to be developed with villas. Contrary to popular expectations, no villas – except for several separate buildings – were built in this area. The only two villas at Grunwaldzka Street 98 (1872) and Liskiego Street 5/7 (1876) which have survived until today testify to the original idea of developing a peaceful and recreational district there. They both were designed by WBB [compare: 16, pp. 299–310].

The situations presented above unequivocally prove both the constant competition and great contribution of those institutions into planned development of the city. There is no doubt that the reason for establishing the co-

operatives, companies or building societies was the growing demand for all kinds of apartments: small and cheap, offering medium standard as well as grandiose suites and luxurious villas.

It is significant that at that time a similar situation could be noticed within the community of architects themselves – almost overnight – growing competition – was the reason why a great number of design offices were opened. The first such companies – mostly with two partners – appeared already in the 1870s. Among many of them was the design office incorporated in 1877 by H. Brost and C. Grosser which operated until 1894, Oesterlink & Hentschel established at the same time, or Gaze & Böttcher, operating since 1901 for over a quarter of a century. Sometimes the design offices operated as family businesses, for instance the Ehrlich brothers, Erich Grau and sons or the office operated by Eugen Halfpaap with sons Günter and Rolf which was established on the basis of Simon & Halfpaap. On the one hand, it was obviously the effect of the great demand for projects; on the other hand, however, it resulted from quickly growing competition between both builders of houses and their designers.

Summing up, it should be noted that although the massive development of building companies contributed to planned development of the city, and resulted in several quite interesting designs in the city, it also triggered the correlation between the commissioner and the contractor which in fact had existed for centuries. Consequently, that pattern of business operations gradually loosened up the relationship between the commissioner and the designer. At the moment when an intermediary appeared, the commissioner practically had no influence on the appearance of the house – he could only accept the ready-made products. The architect, in the case of intermediary, very often remained anonymous. Maybe it was not a problem for recognized architects who had worked for their reputation for many years, but it must have been a problem for young people whose decision to move to Wrocław from academic centers often determined the development of their future career.

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Działalność wrocławskich spółek budowlanych w II połowie XIX wieku

Jednym z problemów Wrocławia około roku 1850 – *nota bene* problemu, który tylko okazjonalnie, z racji omawiania najczęściej innych kwestii, zwraca uwagę badaczy – jest sprawa ówczesnej planowanej gospodarki mieszkaniowej i ściśle z nią powiązanych, tworzonych wówczas towarzystw budowlanych. Nie ulega wątpliwości, że był to wyraz aktywizacji gospodarczej Niemiec po roku 1840. Wraz z ożywieniem gospodarczym nastąpił w mieście przyrost ludności, a podejmowane wówczas przez członków zarządu miasta decyzje zaowocowały koniunkturą budowlaną. Uwidocznił się zwiększony popyt na działki budowlane, których wartość stale rosła. Można zauważyć, że w mieście pojawiła się konieczność wznoszenia nie tylko kamienic czynszowych dla zamożnych wrocławian, ale także budowy tańszych domów dla uboższych mieszkańców.

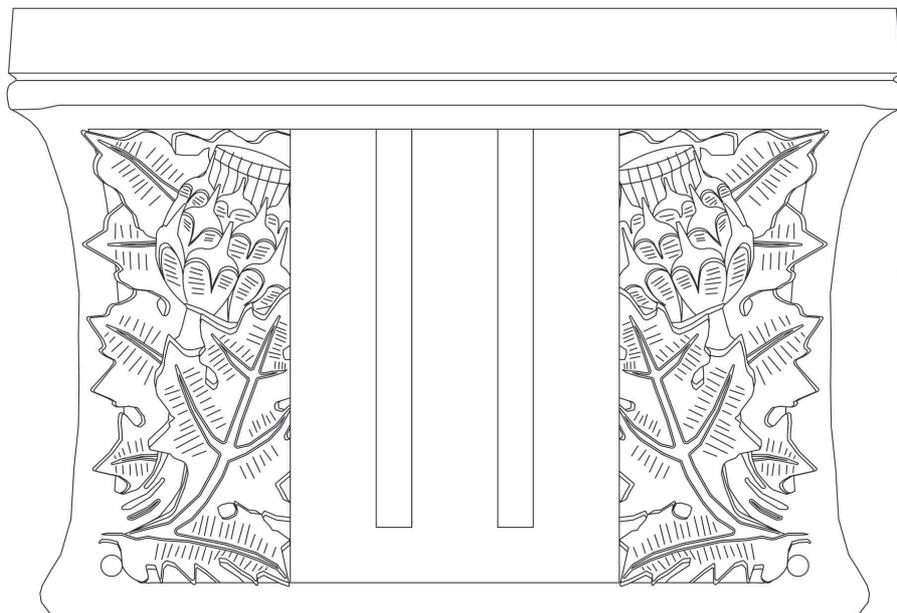
Znamienne jest, że wzorce czerpano przede wszystkim z doświadczeń angielskich, a jako przykład nowo pojętej organizacji budowlanej podawano „Society for Improving the Conditions of the Labouring Classes”, założone w Londynie w 1844 r. O ile jednak angielska spółka, podobnie jak amsterdamskie stowarzyszenie „Vereeniging ten Behoven der Arbeiderklasse”, prowadziła działalność na polu charytatywnej, o tyle na terenie Wrocławia prowadzono ją na dwa sposo-

by – pojawiły się dwie grupy stowarzyszeń o odmiennych celach. Do pierwszej z nich należy zaliczyć towarzystwa o zdecydowanie komercyjnym charakterze, które dążyły do pozyskania terenów budowlanych, następnie podziału ich na działki i sprzedaży (np. „Wrocławskie Towarzystwo Budowlane” – 1858, „Wrocławski Bank Budowlany” – 1871). Warto przy tym zaznaczyć, że część towarzystw nie zajmowała się li tylko sprzedażą nowo wytyczonych działek, zatrudniano bowiem architektów, którzy projektowali budynki, następnie realizowane i odsprzedawane prywatnym osobom bądź instytucjom (np. „Pole Maciejowe – Towarzystwo Budowlane – Komandytowe” – 1869, „Śląskie Towarzystwo Handlu Nieruchomościami” – 1872). Drugą grupę natomiast tworzyły towarzystwa, które działały na zasadach spółdzielni, jednak inaczej niż w Anglii czy Niderlandach, powstawały one przede wszystkim z inicjatywy osób, które jednoczyli konieczność zdobycia stosunkowo taniego mieszkania (np. „Wrocławska Spółdzielnia Oszczędnościowo-Budowlana” – 1868).

Naszkicowana w artykule działalność powyższych spółek jednoznacznie dowodzi nie tylko stałej rywalizacji, ale również ogromnego wkładu, jaki wniosły omawiane instytucje we współtworzenie planowego rozwoju miasta.

Key words: architecture 19th, social housing, building companies, Wrocław

Słowa kluczowe: architektura XIX w., budownictwo socjalne, spółki budowlane, Wrocław



Drawn by
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