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We rest!

Hotels, Motels and Health Resorts in a Socialist Reality and Landscape

ABSTRACT

Leisure for the working masses was one of the main propaganda slogans of the communist authorities. In Poland, as well as in other Eastern Bloc countries, tourism was the exclusive domain of the state. Recreational or spa qualities were decided exclusively by the relevant authorities and institutions, which determined the scale and nature of new investments. Residential and leisure investment policy was associated with traditional tourist destinations such as large cities, as well as the Baltic coast and mountain resorts. Holiday homes located in holiday resorts: by the sea, in the mountains and by lakes, were the realisation of the working class’s demand for leisure. The monopolist in the organisation of tourism in Poland was Union of the Tourism Industry 'Orbis', with a state-owned travel agency and a network of hotels in the largest cities. Already during the Gomulka era, the benefits of financing tourism were recognised. Costly investments in leisure and accommodation facilities became necessary, with the predominance of large hotels managed by state-owned companies. Every foreign tourist, especially those from outside the Iron Curtain, was desirable because of the foreign currency left behind. Hence the numerous investments made in the 1960s and 1970s. The main goal of the article is to outline the most important issues and to show the diversity of the processes related to leisure in a broad sense. The text discusses processes related to the development of the accommodation base and presents architectural solutions of hotel facilities located in Warsaw, Poznań, Kraków, Gdynia, Płock or Wałbrzych. The problem of motels as well as holiday homes and spas built in traditional tourist resorts in the mountains and at the seaside was discussed. The subject of hotel, tourist and spa architecture is also a starting point for discussions on broadening the area of research into the most interesting spatial phenomena in Poland located not only in large cities, but also outside the main centres. A separate issue is the manner of their recognition, as well as the problem of valorisation and protection of the recognised objects.

Keywords: architecture, hotels, tourism, leisure, spas, PRL

INTRODUCTION

Vacationing and leisure for the working masses was one the main propaganda slogans of the political authorities in communist Poland. Vacations were seen as one of the major strengths of the new state, as well as ‘a conquest of the working class’ won as a result of the transformation of the political system after World Was II.¹ New investments in the vacationing infrastructure, hotels and spas became a part of the social policy focused, at least in theory, on workers. This resulted in the construction of a number of facilities of varying quality and value in well-known towns and holiday resorts. A significant advantage of these projects was their location in the most attractive regions. The architectural solutions differed to a great extent, depending on the combination of many external factors. It is important to examine these solutions due to the numerous changes and conversions as well as demolitions during the intervening years..

The aim of this text is to outline the mechanisms connected to the functioning of this sphere of life in Poland during the communist era, in addition to presenting trends and phenomena relevant to the development and evolution of architectural forms. It is an attempt to discuss the complexity of construction activities of the time within the broad scope of existing needs and capabilities.

Space for vacationing and leisure, namely hotels, motels, health resorts and vacation houses are an interesting albeit poorly researched topic. Tourism and recreational architecture have not been reviewed, so far, in a separate monograph. It should, however, be noted that a number of texts have emerged on specific hotels.² Relevant information can be found in other studies, in the form of chapters published in books and in articles of a contributory nature.³ Moreover, architectural journals from the discussed period are also a rich source of knowledge.⁴ The author’s research on the broadly understood operation of tourism services, including hotels, motels, vacation houses and health resorts, was based mainly on archival queries and literature studies, as well as in situ examinations, which are important due to ownership changes, numerous conversions and even demolitions. Furthermore, an interesting source of information were guidebooks published during the previous system.⁵ Another key element for identifying the material resources of the tourism and hotel infrastructure is the analysis of the available iconographic data. In addition to drawings and photographs published in literature, accessed to archival illustrations found in research institutions and on websites

¹ Jarosz, D. (2001). Państwowe organizowanie wypoczynku: Fundusz Wczasów Pracowniczych w latach 1945–1956. *Polska 1944/45–1989: Studia i materiały*, 5, pp. 49–108.

² The first monograph on a hotel is dedicated to the Merkury Hotel in Poznań; see Krasicka, M. (2024). *Okna z widokiem na świat: Hotel Merkury w Poznaniu i luksus w PRL*. Wydawnictwo Miejskie Posenania.

³ Zachwatowicz, J. (Ed.). (1968). *Budownictwo i architektura w Polsce 1945–1966*. Interpress; Szafer, T. P. (1972). *Nowa architektura polska: Diariusz lat 1966–1970*. Arkady; Szafer, T. P. (1979). *Nowa architektura polska: Diariusz lat 1971–1975*. Arkady; Szczerski, A. (2015). *Cztery nowoczesności: Teksty o sztuce i architekturze polskiej XX wieku*. DodoEditor; Marciniak, P. (2018). *Konteksty i modernizacje: Studia z dziejów architektury i urbanistyki w PRL*. Wydawnictwo Politechniki Poznańskiej; Cymer, A. (2019). *Architektura w Polsce 1945–1989*. Centrum Architektury.

⁴ One of the main sources of information on the subject matter is the magazine *Architektura* published by the Board of the Association of Polish Architects between 1947 and 1991.

⁵ Błądek, Z. (2003). *Dzieje krajowego hotelarstwa od zajazdu do współczesności: Fakty, obiekty, ludzie*. Albus, p. 42.

containing systematically collected materials also proved invaluable. Some of these materials were also accessed on dedicated social media.⁶

The discussed topic is a somewhat neglected, though certainly important part of the twentieth-century heritage, which requires further research as well as identification and evaluation. Such research is also necessary to answer questions about the role of this subject matter within the Polish landscape and to consider the scope of its potential protection.

TOURISM, VACATIONING, AND LEISURE IN SOCIALIST POLAND

Tourism and vacationing in Poland during the socialist period were under the exclusive auspices of the state. Only relevant authorities and institutions were the sole determinants of the recreational quality of specific holiday and health resorts, whereas the maintenance and development of the actual facilities was the responsibility of specific state institutions and holidaymakers' – employers. The monopolist in the organisation of tourism was Zjednoczenie Gospodarki Turystycznej 'Orbis' (Association of Tourism Management), which operated a national travel agency of the same name. Already during the Gomułka era (after 1956) the authorities recognised the benefits of investing in tourism (including the need to build the required infrastructure). Moreover, all foreign tourists (especially from behind the Iron Curtain) were much desired for the foreign currency they left behind in Poland. Another participant in the development of tourist accommodation was Polskie Towarzystwo Turystyczno-Krajoznawcze 'PTTK' (Polish Tourism and Sightseeing Society), which became an investor in some major facilities, including in Chorzów, Kraków, Nowy Sącz, Płock, Sopot and Szczyrk.⁷

One cannot overlook the role of employers in organising their workers' tourism and vacations. The so-called social tourism played a huge role in shaping attitudes to the culture of travelling and vacationing, becoming one of the major accomplishments of the socialist state. The model featured a system of holiday referrals, and the vacations were organised by employers, who managed and invested in their own facilities.⁸

Apart from domestic tourism, another area was international travel. Up until 1956, holidays abroad did not practically exist. However, from the 1960s onwards, international tourism developed steadily, albeit the focus was rather on attracting foreign visitors. In 1963 alone, Poland was visited by approximately 140,000 people from other countries. Forecasts for citizens of Poland travelling abroad in the early 1960s predicted some 330,000 travellers, of which only several thousand sojourned to the West. In the 1970s,

⁶ This includes the online photographic databases Fotopolska and Bankfoto.

⁷ A considerable portion of the text is based on Marciniak, P. (2018). *Konteksty i modernizacje: Studia z dziejów architektury i urbanistyki w PRL*. Wydawnictwo Politechniki Poznańskiej.

⁸ Grabowski, J. (2010). Turystyka społeczna w wybranych zakładach pracy. In A. Stasiak (Ed.), *Turystyka społeczna w regionie łódzkim* (pp. 157–172). Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Turystyki i Hotelarstwa w Łodzi.



Fig.1. The most famous Polish hotels of the 1960s: Warszawa, 'Dom Chłopa' hotel, 1957–1962, arch. B. Pniewski, M. Handzelewicz-Wacławek (source: from the PAP collection /National Digital Archive, ref. pap_19641001_00J).

the regulations were considerably relaxed and in 1975 the number of arrivals was approximately 3.5 million, reaching nearly 9.6 million in the late 1970s.⁹

Apart from the facilities of major employers (primarily mines and metalworks), the organizing of vacations and leisure activities was also in the hands of Fundusz Wczasów Pracowniczych (Workers' Vacation Fund), which was established in 1945. In accordance with the contemporary doctrine, the fund was to promote and provide vacation places for the 'working class'.¹⁰ Shortly after World War II, the fund managed only seven vacation houses, but by 1945 it had fifty-four facilities situated in various parts of Poland. Over time, its resources significantly expanded, and by 1956 had reached 314 facilities with 37.4 thousand beds.¹¹

HOTEL ARCHITECTURE

In the aftermath of World War II, the priority in constructions was the rebuilding of housing. However, as time went by, the aforementioned prominent character of tourism, as well as the shortage of accommodation for vacationing workers and foreign visitors, made it essential to expand the existing tourist and hotel infrastructure. One of the first facilities was Dom Turysty PTTK (PTTK Tourist House) built in 1962.¹² It was designed by Warsaw architect Marek Leykam, one of the most original postwar designers, who accentuated the building with characteristic 'razorblades,' that is, vertical divisions of the façade. A major architectural feature of the building was its prominent form. With an unusual hexagonal shape overhanging the Vistula River valley, this small facility with 64 beds broke stereotypes and aligned itself with the modern trend of contemporary explorations in the field of new hotels.¹³

An expression of a new view on hotels constructed within historic neighbourhoods was Dom Turysty PTTK in Krakow designed in the late 1950s by Stanisław Spyt and Zbigniew Mikołajewski. Built between 1959 and 1963 on Westerplatte Street in the Old Town, it departed from the existing approach to architecture in historic surroundings. The intriguing composition consisted of two sections. With the front slightly recessed from the street, the five-storey building with a sculpted façade fitted into the historic context of the city centre. At the time of its construction, this was the largest tourist facility of its kind in Poland, providing nearly a thousand beds to visitors. Its extensive functional

⁹ All information is based on Sowiński, P. (2002). Turystyka zagraniczna w Polsce w latach 1956–1980. *Dzieje Najnowsze*, 34, pp. 135–145.

¹⁰ Jarosz, D. (2001). Państwowe organizowanie wypoczynku: Fundusz Wczasów Pracowniczych w latach 1945–1956. *Polska 1944/45–1989: Studia i materiały*, 5.

¹¹ Jarosz, D. (2001). Państwowe organizowanie wypoczynku: Fundusz Wczasów Pracowniczych w latach 1945–1956. *Polska 1944/45–1989: Studia i materiały*, 5, p. 91.

¹² Zachwatowicz, J. (Ed.). (1968). *Budownictwo i architektura w Polsce 1945–1966*. Interpress, p. 102.

¹³ Mokrzyński, J. (Ed.). (1973). *Urządzenia turystyczne*. Arkady; Mokrzyński, J. (1990). *Architektura wolnego czasu*. Nasza Księgarnia.

programme and relatively high standard (the rooms had individual bathrooms), made the complex very popular among visitors in Krakow.¹⁴

The shortage of hotel accommodation was especially acute in Warsaw, hence the urgent need to create a hotel base, which was essential for the functioning of the capital city. One of the first notable buildings was Dom Chłopa (Peasant House) built between 1957 and 1962 in Powstańców Warszawy Square (Fig. 1). Erected using public contributions collected by social committees, it was a continuation of a farmers’ initiative from before World War II. The shape of the building with an undulating roof reminiscent of wheat fields was the work of Bohdan Pniewski and Małgorzata Handzelewicz–Wacławek.¹⁵

A slightly greater openness to the world in the early 1960s resulted in an influx of international visitors. The authorities’ intention and practical need was to build a chain of hotels in every major city run by the state-owned Orbis enterprise, focused on serving tourists from abroad. For these cities, the new hotels often became a symbol of modernity, despite lacking any particularly refined architectural form. Still, in the conditions of the time, higher-class hotels intended for guests from the West served not only as accommodation, but in many cases became synonymous with socialist luxury.

The first of these hotels were built in the largest Polish economic, tourist and commercial centres, becoming from the outset a showcase of modernity and the technical capabilities of the time. One such hotel was the Cracovia in Krakow (Fig. 2). Designed by Witold Cęckiewicz and associates, it was built in a unique location near Kraków’s Błonia Park, opposite the National Museum. The location of the hotel was established in the general masterplan for Kraków and at the time of its construction in 1965 it was the longest (150 metres) and one of the largest and most modern hotel buildings in the country. This was the first time when prefabricated technology was used in the construction of a hotel (which later became almost a standard, as discussed below). The five-storey building offered 510 beds, as well as a restaurant, a conference room, and a casino. The adjacent Kijów Cinema at the rear of the hotel formed a single spatial complex with the hotel building.¹⁶ Its excellent proportions, interesting composition and characteristic staggered layout of the façade made the Cracovia one of the most distinctive buildings of its kind in Poland.¹⁷ Currently, discussions are underway about its future. The purchase from a private owner and the outcome of an architectural competition for its intended use as a cultural institution offer hope for the Cracovia’s second life.

A contrast to the Cracovia was the Forum Hotel in Krakow designed by Janusz Ingarden, located near the Vistula River. The exposed, one can even say brutalist structure housed 278 air-conditioned rooms with automatic controls and all the amenities typical of the



Fig. 2. The most famous Polish hotels of the 1960s: Kraków, 'Cracovia' hotel, 1966–1967, arch. W. Cęckiewicz with team (source: from the PAP collection/ National Digital Archive, photo: Henryk Hermanowicz, ref. pap_19891000_00G).



Fig. 3. Warsaw, hotel 'Victoria' 1976, arch. Z. Pawelski, L. Solonowicz, A. Dzierżawski, D. Fraser, K. Hultin, S. Kaim (source: from the PAP collection /National Digital Archive, ref. pap_19860116_004).

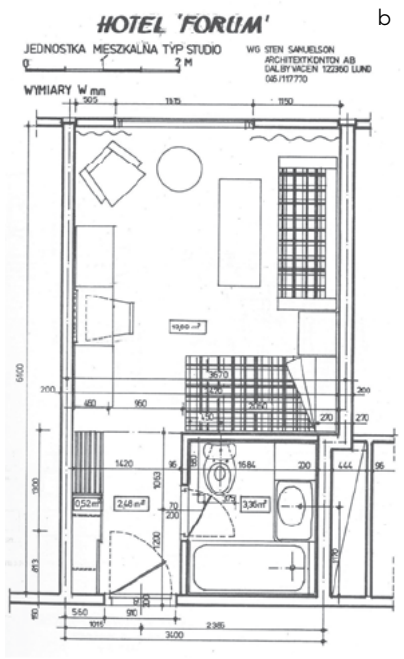


Fig. 4. Warszawa, Orbis 'Forum';1972–1974, arch. S. Samuelson: a) the shape of the hotel, photo Henryk Hermanowicz (source: from the PAP collection /National Digital Archive, ref. pap_19891100_03N); b) functional layout of hotel room (source: Z. Błądek, *Kształtowanie programów i funkcji hoteli miejskich*, Poznań 1987).

best hotels. The construction of one of the most modern hotels in Krakow, took ten years and was completed in 1989.

More such high-standard hotels were built in large cities and were targeted at wealthier, primarily foreign clients. The hotels, mostly belonging to the Polish state-owned Orbis chain, were extraordinary places within the austere socialist larger reality. Many accepted only foreign currencies, which effectively limited the number of Polish visitors. Almost all of the hotels housed Pewex stores, which offered goods that were unavailable on the domestic market. Over time, the hotels became a site of an emerging subculture, and the architectural entourage contributed in a way to a semblance of the West in Poland. The new architecture reflected modernisation trends and presented a new attitude and an openness to the world. Many of the solutions represented contemporary trends in hotel construction, which were apparent, for example, in Scandinavian projects.

Among the most famous hotels of the time was the Victoria in Warsaw (Fig. 3), which was part of the InterContinental chain. The hotel was built in 1976 on the site of the Kronenberg Palace, which had been demolished in the early 1960s. This was a problematic location facing Piłsudskiego Square, whilst ignoring the historical context of Małachowskiego Square. A team of Polish and Swedish architects designed a building that immediately became one of the most important monuments of the Gierek era, a symbol of luxury and openness to the world; one that was described in literature and appeared in numerous films and television series. Constructed by Swedish contractors using prefabricated technology, the building featured a covered arcade along the entire length of the façade and repeated rows of square windows of the then-fashionable reflective glass.¹⁸ At that

¹⁴ The former Dom Turysty is now Hotel Wyspiański; see Smaga, M. (n.d.). *Dom Turysty PTTK. Szlak Modernizmu*. Retrieved January 29, 2024, from <https://szlakmodernizmu.pl/baza-obiektow/dom-turysty-pttk/>

¹⁵ Szafer, T. P. (1979). *Nowa architektura polska: Diariusz lat 1971–1975*. Arkady.

¹⁶ Błądek, Z. (2003). *Dzieje krajowego hotelarstwa od zajazdu do współczesności: Fakty, obiekty, ludzie*. Albus, p. 42.

¹⁷ The building has been listed in the register of historic monuments since 2017.

¹⁸ Zieliński, J. (2011, January 25). *Hotel Victoria. Kultura Liberalna*. Retrieved May 4, 2018, from <https://kulturaliberalna.pl/2011/01/25/zielski-hotel-victoria/>

time, it was one of the few hotels that could accommodate royalty and government officials as well as foreign film stars and musicians. It is worth noting that the interiors created an atmosphere that differed completely from the local spaces in the dull reality of the Polish People's Republic.

The aforementioned Scandinavian themes are also evident in another Swedish development in Warsaw, namely the Forum Hotel (now Novotel; Fig. 4). This was built between 1972 and 1974 for the Orbis travel agency, based on the design of Swedish architect Sten Samuelson, a professor at the Lund Technical School.¹⁹ Like the Victoria Hotel, it was built by the Swedish Skanska Cementgjuteriet. At over one hundred meters tall, it was Warsaw's second tallest building at the time of its construction, after the Palace of Culture and Science. Facing Marszałkowska Street, it complemented and subordinated the buildings of the Eastern Wall, lending a cosmopolitan air to this part of the city.

Poznań, home to the annual Poznań International Fair, was a prime location for hotel construction. Although over the years, private lodgings compensated for the severe shortage of accommodation for visitors, private lodgings could not fill the hospitality gap. One of the first and most characteristic hotels associated with the city was the Merkury (Fig. 5). A greater openness to the world following the 1956 Poznań protests contributed to the construction of this distinctive building, designed by Jan Cieśliński, Jan Węclawski, and Jerzy Grochulski. Opened in 1964, it was the most modern hotel in Greater Poland. The building was designed as a two-part body, with a heavily glazed ground floor and a seven-story hotel section, in an unusual Y-shaped conFIGuration. The main entrance was covered with an expressive awning, and the exterior walls were clad with ceramic tiles in a unique checkerboard pattern. Unfortunately, the building's modernisation in the late twentieth century, in addition to adapting it to new hotel standards, altered the original rhythm of the windows in the façades, which led to a complete loss of its original character.²⁰

In subsequent years, the chain of hotels in Poznań was expanded with the Polonez and the Poznań, which were of a significantly larger scale, though lacking the elegance and sophistication of the Merkury. The technological domination of residential large-panel architecture supported by the premise of faster construction led to a dangerous tendency of also using the process in hotels. Both the Polonez and Poznań were built using this technology, although thanks to the designers, it did not completely impact on the final effect, allowing for the preservation of an original architectural form. The Orbis Poznań hotel (Fig. 6), whose design was developed by Jerzy Buszkiewicz and Józef Maciejewski at the Poznań-based Inwestprojekt office, was built in a downtown location after the demolition of the remains of former Prussian fortifications.²¹ This interesting and distinctive building, with a 21-story residential section in a windmill configuration, was

¹⁹ Błądek, Z. (2003). *Dzieje krajowego hotelarstwa od zajazdu do współczesności: Fakty, obiekty, ludzie*. Albus, p. 50.

²⁰ Pazder, J. (Ed.). (2008). *Atlas architektury Poznania*. Wydawnictwo Miejskie.

²¹ SARP Competition No. 490; see Basista, A. (2001). *Betonowe dziedzictwo: Architektura w Polsce czasów komunizmu*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.



Fig. 5. Hotel Orbis 'Merkury', 1964, arch. J. Cieśliński, J. Węclawski, H. Grochulski (źródło: Herder-Institut w Marburgu, Archiwum Fotografii, Kolekcja Orth, Nr. 206772).



Fig. 6. Orbis 'Poznań' hotel, 1978, arch. J. Buszkiewicz, J. Lenartowicz, J. Liśniewicz, J. Maciejewski (source: from the PAP collection / National Digital Archive, ref. pap_19890600_03A).



Fig. 7. Spatial solutions of Polish hotels in the 1970s and mid-1980s: a) Wałbrzych, hotel 'Sudety', 1971 (source: Herder-Institut Marburg, Bildarchiv, Sammlung Arczynski, Nr. 307959); b) Gdynia, Orbis 'Gdynia' hotel, mid-1980s (source: from the PAP collection / National Digital Archive, ref. pap_19891001_01X).



constructed of large-panel concrete. Prefabricated elements were also used for the lower section, which included dining areas and an outdoor parking lot.²² The second large hotel, the Polonez, designed by Czesław Nawrocki, was built at the same time along a post-fortification avenue, also using large-panel prefabrication. In the case of this hotel, located within the former Stübben ring, its height significantly exceeded the scale of the neighbouring buildings.²³

In the 1960s and 1970s, thirty-four new hotels were built for Orbis, which at the time owned 60% of the country's hotel accommodations. The vast majority of the new buildings did not depart from the model of a rectangular, high-rise residential section connected directly to dining facilities and service areas. Many such buildings were erected displaying rather typical, repetitive solutions. Some of the examples include the Orbis Hotel in Gdynia, with its famous 'Piekietko' club in the underground part of the building, the Rzeszów Hotel in Rzeszów, the Prosna Hotel in Kalisz, the Cuprum Hotel in Legnica, the Kosmos Hotel in Toruń and the Sudety Hotel in Wałbrzych (Fig. 7).

A certain distinctness could be observed in the style of hotels located in foothills and mountains, if only because of the need to blend in with the existing terrain. In Zakopane, the Kasprowy Hotel, designed by Yugoslav architects, displayed a dynamic, bold

²² In the early twenty-first century, the building was thoroughly modernised, and the façade was clad with metal panels. The designers of the modernisation were Wojciech Kolesiński, Andrzej Kurzawski, Mariusz Gramowski.

²³ Marciniak, P. (2010). *Doświadczenia modernizmu: Architektura i urbanistyka Poznania w czasach PRL*. Wydawnictwo Miejskie Poznań.

silhouette as a reference to the mountainous landscape. However, the scale of the building clearly departed from the character of local building traditions.

MOTELS IN SOCIALIST POLAND

The construction of motels was closely linked to the level of motorisation. Motels were known primarily in the United States and Western Europe, where they provided a place to rest during long journeys. At the beginning of the communist era, their construction was debatable due to the low car ownership. However, on the wave of the motorisation boom in the 1970s, such buildings also started emerging in Poland. The rapid growth of car transport required not only the development of an entire road infrastructure but also rest areas along the main national routes. The breakthrough came during the Gierek era of mass transport. While in 1946, with all but twenty–three thousand cars, there were practically no paved roads, in 1980 there were already about 180,000 km of roads serving 2.3 million cars. All this necessitated the intensive development not only of the road network, but also of the accompanying infrastructure.²⁴ One such flagship project, replicated in thirty–four locations, was the construction of ‘inns’ along the main national roads. The largest number of these was located in western Poland and they were known as the ‘Gościńce wielkopolskie.’ Designed in the mid–1970s by renowned Poznań architects Jerzy Buszkiewicz and Jan Kopydłowski, they were a reference to regional architecture, thus departing from the rigour of modern prefabrication (Fig. 8). Initially thatched, and later tiled, they became a characteristic feature of Polish roadsides. In addition, at the exits of some cities, small Orbis hotels also served this purpose.²⁵

STATE–OWNED VACATION HOUSES AND HEALTH RESORTS

The earlier–mentioned concept of vacations and leisure for the working masses of towns and villages became not only one of the achievements of socialism, but also an obligatory element of the socialist narrative. One of the first large urban leisure and recreation complexes was Wojewódzki Park Kultury i Wypoczynku (Regional Park of Culture and Recreation) in Silesia, whose construction was initiated by General Jerzy Ziętek. This multifunctional complex surrounded by greenery was located on a huge area of 535 hectares in Chorzów and Katowice. To this day, it remains one of the main recreation centres of the entire Silesian agglomeration. Construction began in 1951 on devastated post–industrial land and continued over a number of years, largely through community efforts. It is impossible to list all the offered attractions, but among the



Fig. 8. Examples of inns/motels built according to the design of architects J. Buszkiewicz and J. Kopydłowski from the mid–1970s: a) inn–motel located on the national road E8 (source: Herder–Institut Marburg, Bildarchiv, Sammlung Orth, Nr. 209387); b) Wielkopolska inn located by the E8 road, 1974 (source: Herder–Institut Marburg, Bildarchiv, Sammlung Orth, Nr. 208426).

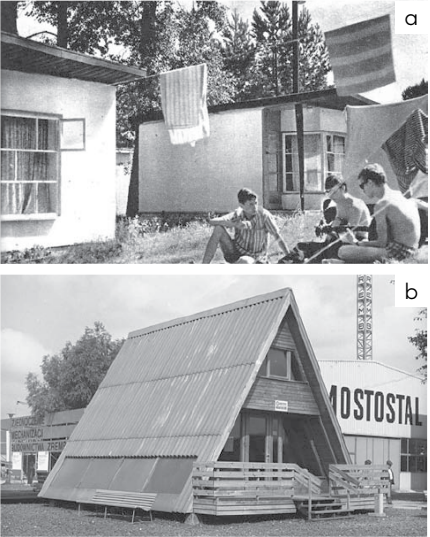


Fig. 9. Two types of camping cabins: a) camping cabins in the Water Station PTTK, 1970–1972 (source: fotopolska.eu); b) ‘Brda’ type bungalow at Budexpo exhibition in 1980 (source: from the collection of the National Digital Archive, photo by Rutowska Grażyna, ref. 40–3–166–3, public domain).

most popular were the amusement park, the zoo, the Silesian Stadium, the recently modernised planetarium, the rope park, and a whole range of other facilities.

A separate group of facilities were connected to mountain tourism locations and related auxiliary services. Some of these, especially those located in foothill areas, referred to regional forms, an example of which is Dom Turysty (Tourist House) in Zakopane designed by Wrocław architects Zbigniew Kupiec and Tadeusz Brzoza. Mountain shelters also made references to the characteristic features of regional architecture, where the designers based their work on the Zakopane style. The shelters were built not only in the Tatra Mountains, but also in a number of other places, often departing from the modernist paradigm in favour of exploring local identity. This was a notable exception, as modernism and the associated model of modern architecture had become almost the obligatory way to organise space.

One of the most original projects was the High–Mountain Meteorological Observatory on Śnieżka, the highest peak of the Karkonosze Mountains. Replacing an older building, the extremely original structure consisted of three circular overlapping saucers with diameters ranging from thirteen to thirty metres. Despite its futuristic shape, the new observatory blended in perfectly with the mountain panorama, proving that it was possible to combine avant–garde forms with the natural landscape.²⁶

Other tourist locations were mainly linked to the construction of holiday resorts by the largest employers: factories, power plants and mines. Some of these were small–scale premises in the form of rather short–lived plywood and wooden cottages of a somewhat sentimental value, which certainly earned a place in the memory of the holidaymakers of that time. A special example of such facilities was the Brda cottage, a small wooden building of American origin modelled on the Elizabeth Reese House. Starting in 1957, it became popular in Poland, mainly due to its low price and quick assembly from prefabricated elements. The cottages were predominantly built in state–owned holiday resorts, PTTK tourist sites and company–owned vacation resorts. In the 1970s, during the rule of Edward Gierek, private customers were also allowed to purchase Brda cottages, which led to their subsequent enormous popularity (Fig. 9).

Vacation houses were built in resorts largely by the sea and in the mountains, followed by forest and lake areas. These were built by major employers, as well as by the main organiser of vacation and sanatorium stays, namely the state–owned Workers’ Vacation Fund. The investment policy for recreation was linked to the traditional tourist sites on the Polish coast, the Masurian Lake District, the Bieszczady Mountains, the Tatra Mountains and the Beskids. The facilities included large vacation and health resort complexes, as well as smaller hotels and vacation houses. Decisions to build holiday and leisure accommodation were guided by the state’s declared care for workers, in addition to the limited number of health and vacation resorts. The construction of tourist facilities, namely hotels, motels, and sanatoriums, as well as sports and recreation centres, gave architects a great opportunity to implement original design solutions due to their location

²⁴ Wilk, H. (2017). *Między pragmatyzmem a oczekiwaniami: Społeczeństwo, władza i samochody w Polsce 1945–1970*. Instytut Historii PAN.
²⁵ Marciniak, P. (2022). Komunikacja, samochód i miasto: Metamorfozy socjalistycznej urbanistyki a historyczna przestrzeń ośrodków miejskich. *Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Poznańskiej: Architektura, Urbanistyka, Architektura Wnętrz*, 4, pp. 17–34.

²⁶ The building has been listed in the register of historic monuments since 2020.

and functional requirements. Some of these have become a permanent feature of the spatial landscape of coastal towns, for example the modernist Vacation House of the Central Council of Trade Unions (Bałtyk Sanatorium) in Kołobrzeg, designed by Halina Gurianowa and Edmund Goldzamt, built in 1964. It is interesting that also in this field attempts were made to push for standardisation and prefabrication, which in many cases had no economic justification.

A significant portion of the new vacation sites were direct investments by state-owned companies. One should note, however, that many tourist developments interfered with the existing non-urbanised landscape. A 1975 guide to construction activity in the mountains raised concerns about the risk of its getting out of control in small mountainous areas. The author also mentioned sites of particularly valuable landscape devastated by construction activity.²⁷

A notable example of an area designated for vacationing was Ustroń-Jaszowiec.²⁸ The decision to build new facilities in Ustroń arose due to the area's very limited accommodation offer, but also to the discovery of rich deposits of therapeutic mud in the region. Another crucial factor was the vast number of people, especially in Silesia, suffering from work-related chronic illnesses, estimated at approximately one million.²⁹ The numerous new complexes of buildings featured a highly diverse functional and spatial program, as well as a variety of architectural solutions based on strip, block, and cluster layouts. The point of departure for the subsequent projects was a detailed spatial development plan for the Jaszowiec vacation complex near Wisła, developed in 1962 by Jerzy Winnicki, Czesław Kotela, Irena Kotela, and Zygmunt Winnicki. A series of vacation houses of modernist provenance, for example Juhas, Barbara and Gawarek, gracefully integrated into the mountain landscape (Fig. 10).³⁰ Also in Ustroń-Zawodzie, an unprecedented, grand complex of seventeen multi-story pyramids was erected between 1967 and 1990, picturesquely scattered along the slopes of Równica Mountain. A health and vacation resort, designed by Henryk Buszko and Aleksander Franta, covered an area of 200 hectares. Despite its gigantic scale, this unique project, thanks to the architects' excellent concept and skill, became a permanent fixture in the panorama of the Silesian Beskids (Fig. 11a).³¹ Similar facilities were also built in Szczawnica, but fulfilling the functional program did not always guarantee seamless integration with the existing landscape. The Hutnik sanatorium, built in 1963 (Fig. 11b), and the later



Fig. 10. Ustroń-Jaszowiec, holiday house 'Gwarek', 1965–1973 (source: fotopolska.eu).



Fig. 11. Examples of Polish sanatorium designer in the 1960s: a) Ustroń-Zawodzie, sanatorium complex, 1967–1990, Dom Lecznico-Wypoczynkowy 'Narcyz' (source: KAW postcard, photo by J.Malinowski); b) Szczawnica, sanatorium 'Hutnik', 1963 (source: Herder-Institut Marburg, Bildarchiv, Sammlung Orth, Nr. 208517).

Nauczycielskie ZNP and Narcyz sanatoriums, dating from 1978, were decidedly more typical.

In some cases, the bolder forms were an expression of the architects' independence and courage. This was a particular challenge in the landscape of the Tatra Mountains. A good example is the Harnaś Hotel built in 1969 on the slopes of Buńdowy Wierch, designed by Leszek Filar, Przemysław Gawor and Jerzy Pilitowski. The spectacular building with its distinctive sloping shape, was a special place during the 'deep communist era,' offering a breath of modernity and the West, and where payment was accepted only in foreign currencies. Despite its strongly defined and dynamic form, it blended seamlessly with the Podhale landscape, and the view from the rooms, directed toward the Tatra Mountains, guaranteed a unique experience for those who stayed there.³²

CONCLUSION

The architecture of hotels and vacationing facilities from the communist era varies in terms of value. There exist some particularly outstanding locations that attract new visitors. However, the original standard of most of these facilities does not meet the expectations and needs of current users. Naturally, this necessitates modernisation and conversion. Of course, not everything can and should be protected, but it is too easy to lose the most valuable elements of this heritage. Once modernised, the buildings will irretrievably lose their original layout, character, and features. Unfortunately, the list of examples that have become a wasted opportunity to preserve the original character of valuable buildings is long.

So how can we protect hotels and tourist facilities? In many cases, it will be crucial to add them to regional inventories of historic monuments, whereas the most valuable buildings should be listed in the Register of Monuments. It should be key to correctly identify and evaluate buildings, bearing in mind that apart from their historical value, a significant number of them are important examples of architecture, although their rigid structural layout or the low ceilings of rooms sometimes prevents them from being adapted to new functions.³³ Most of these buildings function within the urban space and are subject to the laws of urban transformation, wherein change and even demolition are natural processes of structural transformation. However, decisions concerning conversion or potential demolition should be guided by the possibility of ensuring worthy successors. It is important for this process to be informed and as far as possible, controlled.

²⁷ Dębski, L. A. (1975). *Górskie osadnictwo wczasowe*. Instytut Turystyki, p. 7.

²⁸ Ciarkowski, B. (2021). Integralność a granice interwencji w modernistycznych zespołach zabudowy: Analiza przypadku dzielnic uzdrowskowo-wypoczynkowych w Ustroniu. *Ochrona Dziedzictwa Kulturowego*, 11, pp. 75–86.

²⁹ For example, arthritis which affected approximately one million people in Silesia.

³⁰ Winnicki, J. (1969). Jaszowiec – dzielnica wczasowa. *Architektura*, 2–3, pp. 42–47.

³¹ Ciupka, M. (2023). *Designing holidays in the Polish People's Republic: Socialist modernism in Ustroń-Zawodzie holiday complex, 1967–1990* [Master's thesis].

³² After years of neglect, it was thoroughly renovated and reopened in 2014; see Trzcionka, W. (n.d.). *Legenda Harnasia w nowej odsłonie*. Design Alive. Retrieved December 8, 2017, from <http://www.designalive.pl/legenda-harnasia-w-nowej-odslonie/>

³³ The author has posed these questions in the past; see Marciniak, P. (2014). Niewygodny zabytek czy zła architektura? O kryteriach i sposobach ochrony powojennego dziedzictwa modernizmu. In R. Hirsch & J. Sołtyś (Eds.), *Modernizm w Europie – modernizm w Gdyni* (pp. 157–160). Urząd Miasta Gdyni.

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