

## THE ROLE OF THE MODERN MOVEMENT SACRAL ARCHITECTURE IN THE IMAGE OF THE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS OF TARNÓW

### Abstract

For Tarnów, the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was like that of many other European cities, a time of transformation into a new, modern urban organism. Tarnów, even before the start of the Central Industrial District's ambitious plan, received the chance to transform and modernise in 1927, thanks to the efforts of the President of Poland; thus the decision to build the State Factory of Nitrogen Compounds was made. This was the beginning of the intense spatial development of the city, which bore fruit in the form of a model housing estate in the district of Mościce. By the late 1930s, Mościce was already properly marked in the plan of the city; the time then came for the symbolic signalling of the new district, in both senses – formal and spiritual. Thus the new district was marked by a silhouette of a sacral building erected in the spirit of Modernism; its integration into the panorama of the old town of Tarnów created the modern image of the 20<sup>th</sup> century agglomeration.

*Keywords: tradition, modernity, identity, composition of space*

### 1. Spatial development of Tarnów in the 20 years between the World Wars

For Tarnów, the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was like that of many other European cities, a time of transformation (from a traditional town) into a new, modern urban organism. The development and founding of new districts aimed to raise the economic status of the then poor region, but also to maintain the continuity of the city's cultural traditions. In the spirit of the Modern Movement, the architecture of churches – ones situated at the peripheries of Tarnów during the 20 years between the World Wars, and then immediately after World War II – became one of the more important factors marking the modern character of the newly built districts. The formalising of ideas, and the reborn Republic of Poland's ambitious state programs in sacral buildings, aimed at raising the economic and social prestige of the state. The government of the Second Polish Republic, along with President Ignacy Mościcki, expanded the industrialisation programme as a result of the economic revival of the country; this was embodied in the construction of the COP (Central Industrial District). The COP was the impetus to transform and modernise that part of Poland. However, prior to this ambitious plan's realisation, the decision to build the State Factory of Nitrogen Compounds in Tarnów-Mościce was made in 1927.

It was the beginning of an intense development of this part of Tarnów. Along with the construction of the industrial complex itself, plans to realise the housing estate for employees were conceived.<sup>1</sup> The completion of

the government's plan not only revived the poor region and diminished unemployment, but it also improved the workers' standard of living. The Governmental Office of Planning was summoned. The Offices of the Regional Plan of Development (which were called upon in the 1930s), were responsible for the regional urban designs<sup>2</sup>. Between the two World Wars, Poland's new generation of architects and urban planners were solving social problems, as well as those concerning habitation by caring for the high standards of the built flats. In 1934, as a result of the activities of the Polish Association of Housing Reform, the Society for Workers' Housing T.O.R. was summoned to focus on the construction of workers' estates and single family housing.<sup>3</sup> According to such patterns, the estate in Mościce was built, among many others.<sup>4</sup> The entire urban layout was constructed due to the principles of garden cities.

#### 1.1. The workers' housing estate in Mościce

The State Factory of Nitrogen Compounds in Mościce, and the housing estate linked to it, were constructed on the grounds of the old communes of Dąbrówka Infulacka and Świerczkowa, which were consolidated in 1929. Dąbrówka Infulacka once belonged to the church, but since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it has been in the hands of the princely

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<sup>1</sup> J.E. Dutkiewicz, *Tarnów. Rozwój miasta w latach 1787–1939*, Instytut Urbanistyki i Architektury, Warszawa 1954, p. 90. The author assumes that there were three stages of Tarnów's urban development during the 19th and 20th century: in the years 1787–1867, there was the election of the first autonomous town authorities (a time of building foundations for the development of the modern

town); 1867–1914 – the greatest period of development; and the third stage, 1914–1939 – urban development stagnated apart from the completion of the state urban and industrial layout – State Factory of Nitrogen Compounds in Mościce.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Minorski J., *Polska nowatorska myśl architektoniczna w latach 1918–1939*, Warszawa 1970, p. 19. TOR was founded as a corporation Ltd., summoned by the Ministry of Treasury, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Labour Fund and BGK [Bank of the Country Economy]. Its task was the design of single family houses and small volume flats in multiple family housing, meant for the working class. Architect R. Piotrowski was the head of the design atelier.

<sup>4</sup> T. Wróbel, *Zarys historii budowy miast*, Wrocław 1971, p. 303; T.O.R. completed multifamily housing also in: Warsaw (na Kole district), Poznań, Gdynia (Witomino), Zagnańsk and Janowa Dolina.



Fig. 1. Tarnów-Mościce, a two-family villa at the *Osiedle przyfabryczne* – housing estate at the plant, Białych Klonów St., 1927

Fig. 2. Tarnów-Mościce, villa at the plant's housing estate, Topolowa Street, 1927

Fig. 3. Tarnów-Mościce, seat of the Board of Directors of the Nitrogen Plants, E. Kwiatkowskiego Street, circa 1930

Fig. 4. Tarnów-Mościce, palatial villa, the *Dyrektorówka* (Director's House) at 9 Jarzębinowa Street, 1928. Designed by Konrad Kłos (photo by the author)

Sanguszko family. The Ujejskis have owned Świerczków since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. By May 1927, the construction of the estate for future employees commenced.<sup>5</sup> Mościce was to become a garden city, thus the designers were striving to achieve the highest standard, a model quality for the housing estate accompanying the works. The majority of buildings were designed by the Tarnovian architects and engineers. The estate's plans were drafted by the team including, among others, Z. Sajewicz and Wawrzyniec Wojtasiewicz, who was later – in 1933 – elected to the head of the Committee for the Building of the Church in Mościce.<sup>6</sup> Between Kwiatkowskiego, Czerwonych Klonów, Jarzębinowa, and Topolowa Streets twelve single and two-family houses were constructed for the directors and engineers of the works (Fig. 1). The architecture of the houses with garages, surrounded by their garden layout, received forms of the manorial style with the reduced architectural detail (Fig. 2). The layout of the entire estate is based on a rectangle – similar to a square, with the regular network of streets. The names of the streets themselves, which actually were tree-lined avenues, stem from varieties of planted trees. The axial composition of the layout, marked out by Głogowa Street, starts with the seat of the Board of Directors (a Modernist building) and terminates at the classicising palatial villa of the director of the works (Fig. 3). This villa, called *Dyrektorówka*, is situated in Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski Park at No. 9 Jarzębinowa Street. It was built in 1928, designed by Varsovian architect, Konrad Kłós, and is listed on the state register of monuments (as the only structure of the layout) (Fig. 4). Apartments for the officials and qualified employees were placed at the one-story, multi-family housing complex located between Ks. Indyka and Czerwonych Klonów Streets. The multi-family block of flats at 6 Czerwonych Klonów Street was designed by engineer, Antoni Kielbasiński.<sup>7</sup> Until World War II, subsequent housing estates were built by the cooperative – “Spółdzielnia Nasz Dom” in 1931; and the Functionalist estate, “Za Torem,” in 1934. The latter's estate was designed by the committee (summoned by director, Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski), and the houses were designed by Andrzej Miziewicz, Stanisław Hüpsch, Edward Mrowiec, and Edward Okoń.<sup>8</sup> When the need for housing was satisfied, public use buildings were constructed, such as schools, nurseries, sport facilities, and a cemetery. In 1950, the housing estate next to the works was finished (as construction was interrupted by the war.) On 17 December, 1979, the estate was listed as a unique urban layout of housing and social character.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> J.E. Dutkiewicz, ..., *op. cit.*, p. 90-94.

<sup>6</sup> M. Smoła, *Mościce. Kościół i ludzie, dzieje parafii pw. NMP Królowej Polski*, Tarnów 2011, p. 76.

<sup>7</sup> E. Łączyńska-Widz, D. Radziszewski (Ed.), *Tarnów, 1000 lat nowoczesności, przewodnik*, Warszawa 2010, p. 22.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 26.

<sup>9</sup> A. Niedojadło, S. Żurawski (Eds.), *Encyklopedia Tarnowa*, Tarnów 2010, p.308.

## 1.2. The sacral building in a housing estate's space

In the late 1930s, Mościce was already properly marked in the plan of the city; the time came for the symbolic marking of the new district, in both senses – formal and spiritual. Composition of the new space (dominated by a sacral structure of Modernist provenance) was aimed at integrating it into the panorama of the Old Town. Its architects and planners saw their task as not only tying it in with the local traditions, but also with the needs of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century modern agglomeration. Every sacral building plays an important role in the shaping of a housing estate, district, or town; it is the compositional centre and dominant architectural element. With respect to philosophy, it is a symbolic, spiritual gate to the sacred sphere. Searching in the surrounding urban space for a simple sign – a symbol – we can find it in a tower or a church. Such a sign is decidedly different from secular architecture. At the same time, it has to have a strict relationship with the surroundings – it has to be integrated. The task of architects is to integrate a sacral building into the space of a (new) district so that the local community identifies with their work. The identification of a building as a church is linked to Christian tradition, which is deeply embedded in the social consciousness. Traditional motifs, repeated through centuries – and thus recognisable – were considered symbolic by the society of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They are (still) associated with customs and cultures that are many centuries old. Next to Christian symbolism, the role of their artistic values is important. The traditional reception of a sacral building – which is always an exceptional work of architecture – was often lost during the introduction of new means of expression, ones supported by the modern European view of the world at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The criteria of time accepted in the sacral architecture of Tarnów – between the two World Wars, and just after the war – is suitable for providing objective evaluation as one witnesses its later development – after the Second Vatican Congregation. The churches completed in the years directly after the war were designed in the pre-war Modern Movement style. Their architecture and spatial composition continued the creative culture while drawing from new technologies and materials. Their vision of architecture, which was liberated after the Second Vatican Congregation, amounts to a more or less successful composition in an urban space.<sup>10</sup> If the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century marked the beginning of modern sacral architecture, it was only after the Congregation that a rift between tradition and modernity became visible. The period between the two World Wars may be understood as preparation for the coming changes. According to the majority of theoreticians of modern architecture, the breakthrough came with the construction of the “Notre Dame of reinforced concrete” by Auguste Perret in 1923. The church, 14 km from the centre of Paris, was built in the workers' town of Le Raincy. A similar situation occurred in the suburbs of Tarnów; the population flowed into town

<sup>10</sup> Sobór Watykański II, *Konstytucja o liturgii świętej*, [in:] *Sobór Watykański II, Konstytucja, dekrety, deklaracje*, Poznań 2002, p. 124-125.

because of the development of industry. The new buildings, inspired by Perret, were based on the traditional form of a basilica transposed into the new, ferro-concrete structure. Ecclesiastical architecture is enriched, above all, by the element of spirituality, both at the level of creative development of the work and of its reception. That, most likely, distinguishes it from the remaining public use buildings; owing to that condition, it may become a place's symbol.

## 2. Church of Our Lady Queen of Poland in Mościce

As previously mentioned, a dominating accent marking the newly established district of Mościce in Tarnów had its spiritual value. The new community, whose influx into town was linked to the founding of the nitrogen works, needed their own parish, which until then was in Zbylitowska Góra. The first masses were held in 1929 in a warehouse in the works themselves. Such a situation gave rise to the founding of a committee for the construction of a temporary chapel, which was ready by 1931. The Committee for the Construction of the Church was summoned in the same year, and it sought the support of the President – Ignacy Mościcki – himself. Its task was to commission the design of the church, raise funds, and find a suitable plot. The parish was erected on the 1 September, 1938.<sup>11</sup> Among the plethora of preeminent architects invited to design the church were: Professor Konstanty Jakimowicz, and another Lwovian architect, Kociemski (who designed their proposal in 1937), Czesław Boratyński (designed in 1939), Stanisław Gałęzowski and Władysław Pieńkowski (designed in 1941), Professor Włodzimierz Gruszczyński (designed between 1940–1945), Professor Bohdan Pniewski (designed from 1944–1945), and Stefan Świszczowski (designed in 1945). For various reasons, the designs of the above architects were not approved; finally, however, the design by Stefan Świszczowski won the approval of the Committee. However, the vicar then decided to return to the proposal presented by Stanisław Gałęzowski and Władysław Pieńkowski. For formal reasons – the architect did not meet the deadline – the design by Świszczowski could not be built. Finally, the design by the Varsovian architects, Gałęzowski and Pieńkowski, was presented in the Voivodship Office of Architecture in Cracow.<sup>12</sup> Even though the design hailed from the year 1941, and the means for construction were collected before the outbreak of the war, construction during the war was not possible at all. The idea was revived in 1946, and in 1948 (with great problems posed by the Communist powers), the completion started. The church, owing to the work and generosity of the local community, was completed in 1956.<sup>13</sup>

### 2.1. Sacrum and the structure of the work

The Church of Our Lady Queen of Poland in Mościce – even though it is based on the archetypes of composition and style hailing from before the Second Vatican Congregation – is a Modernist building. Excellent sacral buildings completed in Europe by Auguste Perret or Dominikus Böhm became the pattern for Modernist churches. Here, a Cubist composition of the volume, which itself is not oriented, has a traditional configuration and is crowned by a tower that is reduced in form. It is also integrated with the front elevation (Fig. 5). The building was designed as a three-aisle basilica with the choir (presbytery) closed by a semicircular apse (Fig. 6). On its sides, there are two large chapels of the transept, closed by shallow apses, slightly smaller than the middle one. The nave is spatially separated from the aisles by means of semicircular arcades, which themselves are supported by pillars. A shallow choir thus shifts the altar into the aisle, which is a typical solution used in Modernist churches. Above, there is a dome with a perforated lantern, with a crown and a lofty spire. The musical choir is supported on four reinforced concrete columns. The entire temple is covered on the inside by a coffered slab with wooden finish, which ties in with early Christian basilicas. The airy, perforated orthogonal divisions of the tower recall Perret's novel solutions in Raincy. On both sides of the tower, there are two blinds with semicircular tops. At the entrance to the church, there are visible hints at Romanesque traditions, but also at the original patterns of arcaded facades, which were so aptly developed in Dominikus Böhm's Expressionist buildings. Here the architects proposed three entrances with semicircular arches, where the middle one is the highest. Side elevations are marked by six slender windows with semicircular arches and filled by mosaic stained glass. The aisle, slightly higher than the naves, is lit by stripes of smaller windows with semicircular arches in white plaster (Fig. 7). Such solutions served to accentuate the horizontality of the layout. The undulating wall of the nave, joined with the chapel-rotund, has small rectangular windows filled by figurative stained glass. In the elevation of the aisle from the northeastern side, there is an alternating pattern of windows and niches. The sacristy is located at that side of the building. Also, in the choir's side chapels, there are semicircular windows, three on each side with mosaic stained glass. The motif of decorative divisions of reinforced concrete, which is used in the tower, was repeated in the interior on the coffered slab. In addition, the entrance door has square fields filled by religious and national symbols. The chapel of Our Lady of Fatima, built later, in 1961, is based on a circular plan, has two floors, and is lit by rectangular windows. The austerity of the brick elevations ties in with Gothic traditions. Brick is contrasted with the white tower, blinds, and window splays, and a simple, modest cornice crowns the chapels, aisles, and the nave.

Spatial development of this district of Tarnów – its structure so ambitiously completed according to the Modernist architects' garden city principles during the twenty years between the World Wars – needed a dominating

<sup>11</sup> M. Smoła, ..., *op. cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 104-106.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 113.



Fig. 5–8. Tarnów-Mościce, Church of Our Lady Queen of Poland, designed in 1941, 1948–1956, by Stanisław Gałęzowski and Władysław Pieńkowski: façade, chancel, side elevation, and view from the square at Topolowa Street.  
All photos by the authorCCCret

accent for the spatial orientation (Fig. 8). The church obtained and retained this function. Its compact geometrical volume, along with the reduced tower set against the park, fulfilled their role by tying in with both the religious and regional tradition. Thus, a symbolic structure was created. For Mościce, the new district of Tarnów, the Church of Our Lady Queen of Poland indeed became the symbol of modernity.

### 3. Modernist heritage in Mościce

Many years have elapsed since the architectural and urban planning actions that were taken in Mościce. The resulting housing estates and structures still serve the society today. The protection of this Modernist district's cultural identity should aim at preserving the layout of the housing estates, which originated because of industry, and made their division legible. The construction of new estates, and social and transport infrastructure linked to industry replaced the old western suburbs and villages near Tarnów. The axial composition and functional programme of the housing estate, based on the idea of a garden city, are filled with Modernist architecture. The criteria of protection stress its specific character and should retain the principles of the original composition and structures from the 1930s. Garden and park layouts are also subject to this protection, as are their views of the dominating church. The then new district of Tarnów was marked by the factory chimneys and industrial sheds in the areas that now require revitalisation. Yet the dominant compositional element – the church – has sustained its character by virtue of its architecture.

The retaining of the discussed housing estates' boundary legibility (on the verge of the cultures of the Old Town of Tarnów and the Modernist housing of the 1920s and 1930s), aims at emphasising the local identity linked to the development of industry. The inhabitants of Mościce are largely descendants of the preeminent staff of pre-war engineers, officials, and qualified workers who contributed to President Ignacy Mościcki's ambitious enterprise. This community appreciates the quality of solutions in which they live. Unfortunately, the conscious policy of the post-war authorities has distorted the composition of the Modernist estate by introducing different housing – first

Socialist Realist, then a nonentity style. In recent years, the housing estate next to the factory itself, even though listed, was not respected either. On the edge of the park, in close proximity to the palatial villa of the pre-war director, Kwiatkowski, the "Biedronka" discount centre was built. Mościce had its distinct history and architecture, and yet it has sadly lost its character due to the lack of adequate protective action. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, society faces the challenge of finding the necessary means to safeguard the heritage of traditional urban space. The protection of the exceptional value of architecture and urban planning from the period between the two World Wars should stress the fact that Mościce belongs to the Modernist heritage.

#### 3.1. Sacrum in urban space

Modernist sacral architecture in Tarnów, as it was showed in the case of the church in Mościce, leads its own dialogue of a dual kind: between history and modernity, in the building of an architectural form, and in the dialogue of the silhouette with the town. A similar dialogue takes place internally, in the recipient's or inhabitant's spiritual sphere. The makers of the examined work have excellently tied in with the tradition of church building and with the character of the Industrial Age (and its architectural forms.) Such a solution led to the synthesis and creation of new values between the housing estates, their public buildings and the exceptional structure, i.e. the church. Values of a good spatial composition (in the case of sacral architecture) should rely on the symbiosis of a sacral structure with its surroundings, and – through its uniqueness – on marking the presence of sacrum in urban space. The church as a type has always been a recognisable sign, and therefore it is important as an architectural symbol, a witness to the cultural continuity and identity. Also, in the panorama of the housing estates built in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the church as a type must retain its iconic character and relate to other elements of the modern urban structure. The silhouette of the discussed Modernist church, boldly inscribed into that vast panorama of the new districts of Tarnów developing before World War II, has announced the advent of new times with their sacral architecture after the Second Vatican Congregation.

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