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Książka stanowi kompleksowe opracowanie architektury i urbanistyki Łodzi szczególnego okresu – realizmu socjalistycznego. Autorka opisuje pejzaż miejski, na który mimo obowiązywania uniformizującej doktryny składają się różnorodne budynki oraz ich zespoły. Budowle reprezentacyjne, prestiżowe, takie jak Teatr Wielki czy Hala Sportowa oraz bardziej użyteczne, jak szkoły, przedszkola, biurowce. Łódź bowiem stała się w tym czasie ważnym ośrodkiem nie tylko przemysłowym, ale i naukowym, kulturalnym, administracyjnym, miejscem, w którym musiały powstać obiekty każdego typu, zarówno użyteczności publicznej, jak i mieszkaniowe. Obrazu zmian dopełnia prezentacja niezrealizowanych koncepcji oraz planów przekształceń układu urbanistycznego Łodzi w duchu realizmu socjalistycznego. Drobiazgowo analizy zostały wpisane w szerszy kontekst pozaartyistyczny architektury tego okresu.



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Wydawnictwo Nentor

Architecture and Urban Planning of the City of Łódź during the Socialist Realism Period

Abstract

The subject of Łódź urban architecture of the Socialist Realism period has not yet been taken up in a comprehensive manner. Difficulties of opinions and vitality of the issues made it difficult to carry out systematic studies and provide a balanced evaluation.

A political turnabout after the war brought about new perspectives of development for Łódź. In new political circumstances different to those before World War 2 the identity of the city was revamped and its monofunctionality was overcome. From the position of industrial centre the town was promoted to the rank of a metropolitan city, although the process was not based on democratic methods.

The constructions erected in the Socialist Realist period create a stylistically separate, characteristic group of buildings, apparently uniform enough, but after a thorough analysis revealing significant differences. They seldom follow faithfully the principles of Socialist Realism and much differ from iconic realisations of the Warsaw type. As a dominant form of the Socialist Realism residential constructions in Łódź we could regard „Socmodernism” – utilitarian, cheap, devoid of characteristic features and of details; and in public utility sector – „Socclassicism”, close to the interwar modernised Classicism understood as a principle and not a repertoire of forms. Totalitarian gigantomania and monumentalism, historical eclectic forms are seldom to be seen in the Łódź architecture of 1949–1955.

In the Socialist Realism period special emphasis was put on residential buildings. Socialist Realism housing estates were situated mainly in the northern and north-eastern part of the city, but not far away from its centre, within the reach of the ring railway.

According to the postulate of education in the spirit of new values a number of new educational institutions was built, both of lower and higher level. In the field of higher education, most new buildings were built for the Łódź University of Technology which was given the modernised building of S. Rosenblatt's factory and a new, huge edifice in the square between

Żeromskiego, Radwańska, Żwirki and Stefanowskiego streets. There were also new residence halls and university library built and auditorium halls extended.

In the period of Socialist Realism Łódź, a voivodship capital and administrative centre for textile and clothing industry in Poland, was given also a series of office buildings whose network had been underdeveloped. There was erected in Łódź at that time, among other buildings, the high-rise of the Textile Head Office, the complex of buildings of Presidium of National Council, the Party Edifice, office block of the Presidium of the Voivodship National Council. A majority of those buildings was erected in the city centre on the streets of Kościuszki, Zachodnia, Sienkiewicza and Wólczańska.

Certain animation was to be seen also in the field of construction associated with culture as the consequence of the decision to create artistic cultural Łódź. All efforts and funds were directed towards building of the working town's showcase – the Great Theatre.

Also a network associated with health service was developed in line with an ideologised vision of a „healthy” city. Four hospitals were built then and several others were modernised, district health centres were constructed as well as the Emergency Service Station. It is worth adding that at that time Łódź was given also several parks and greens.

On the whole, the architecture of the Socialist Realism period could be assessed positively, it enriched the cityscape with valuable buildings both with regard to their aesthetics and utility. Its majority belongs to the so-called ZOR (*Zakład Osiedli Robotniczych* – the Management of Workers Housing Estates) architecture that was distinguished by simple form, detail amounting to cornices, attics, occasionally *porte-fenêtres*, balustered balustrades and indispensable at that time typical bipartite windows. It is difficult, however, not to notice that a majority of decisions concerning the architecture of Łódź was of decreative character, political one, some times damaging, especially to its 19th-century architecture (rebuilding, building of additional floors over the existing ones, tearing down of old buildings, etc.).

The Socialist Realist architecture of Łódź is a perfect, and maybe even a model example of the architecture outside the capital city, less ideologically and propaganda committed, far from guidelines of the doctrine. It is architecture that, on the one hand, belongs to the doctrinally determined and stylistically separated period, while on the other it evades explicit categorisation. It is architecture suspended between a vision and reality, between theory and practice, between tastes of party secretaries and preferences of architects themselves, between politics and desire to remedy numerous architectural and urban planning problems. This architecture „between” that includes the most numerous but seldom seen group of buildings. Since so far it were mainly Socialist Realist monuments, symbolic buildings and/ or monumental layouts of important artistic values that have been treated with great interest by researchers.

Translated by *Grażyna Waluga*