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### **Postwar religious architecture in Warsaw (1956-1970)**

The emerging interest in religious architecture of communist Poland, recently called by young polish researchers the ‘Architecture of the Seventh Day’ (Cichońska, Popera, Snopek, *Architektura VII dnia* 2016), is focused on the esthetic and social dimensions of those projects. So-called modernism or ‘socmodernism’ that shaped polish cities after the II World War is already well known and generally esteemed or, at least, accepted. However, churches constructed during that period are widely considered as unwanted relics and therefore often underestimated. Churches dating from before 1989 are yet to be researched and understood. Sacral edifices of this epoch need to be revisited and re-evaluated, like the civil architecture was, in the past decade or so, by many scholars as well as non-professionals.

It is especially important to study churches constructed between 1956 and 1970. The former date marks a series of political events, called ‘Gomułka’s thaw’ (in reference to Edward Gomułka – First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party from 1956), that ended the era of stalinization in Poland, the latter refers to the beginning of Edward Gierek (successive First Secretary) decade. During the precedent period (1945-1956) construction of only one new church in Warsaw began. In two decades following the year 1970, thousands of building permits were granted to the Catholic Church by the authorities, which explains proliferation of religious architecture in the late communist period. Almost 4 thousands new churches were constructed between 1945 and 1989. This astonishing figure is clearly an exception in the Eastern Bloc. The sudden increase in permits (which coincided with major political crises and the election of Karol Wojtyła as pope John Paul II) caused a boom of demand for architectonic projects of churches. In result many of them were built by architects with no prior experience working for the church, which caused a visible decline of quality of the projects.

In contrast, churches built between 1956 and 1970 distinguish themselves by high artistic quality. Paradoxically, their form is more modern than that of the official architecture of the new, communist state. The same was observed by K. James-Chakraborty in a different

political context of West Germany (Reconstructing Faith, Architectural Review 1430/2016:84-90). During the communist period, all architectural agencies were state-owned with architects working in large groups, without real influence on projects or responsibility for them. The majority of constructions was based on standardized prefabricated elements, thus creativity was considerably diminished. In this context the Catholic Church, traditionally conservative institution, turned out to be the most innovative client on the market. Since working for the Church was a risky undertaking in a openly and fiercely atheistic state (destruction of the Catholic Church was one of the targets of security service), parishes and dioceses usually hired established and respected architects, who did not fear harassments from the authorities. Project of a church permitted its designer to escape from the world of social realism and to express his artistic ideas and creativity, which could not be realized in his main activity.

It is worth to note that in the beginning of the postwar period, the tradition of the religious architecture from before the WWII (Auguste Perret, Dominikus Böhm, Rudolf Schwarz) continues and it is only after 1956 that influence of modern occidental currents becomes visible. My aim is to analyze how this new architectural language was being adapted for the needs of the Catholic Church. I would also like to identify reasons and motivations of designers and the institutional client. A similar methodological approach was proven fruitful in 'Sanctioning Modernism: Architecture and the Making of Postwar Identities' (Kulic, Parker, Penick eds. 2014). One should not forget the complex social and political reality of the times, and take into account the multitude of actors influencing the architectural process. I would like to propose an analysis based on research on political, economic, social, theological and technical factors.