

Reading and Writing Architecture

Polish Architectural Magazines (1945-1989)

Piotr Marciniak

Associate Prof. Dr. Poznan University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture
piotr.marciniak@put.poznan.pl

Keywords: communism, journals, architecture, urban planning, Poland

Despite being very extensive, the literature that discusses Polish town planning and architecture, especially that of the post-war years is fragmentary and incomplete, i.e. there are no synthetic studies of this period and the materials are dispersed. During the time in question, over a dozen magazines were published that focused, to a lesser or greater extent, on matters related to urban planning and architecture. The first architectural magazines in communist Poland were printed soon after World War II, in 1947.¹ Their contribution to the recording of spatial phenomena in the People's Republic of Poland [Polish: Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, abbreviated as PRL], to the presentation of theoretical approaches and professional discussions, as well as to architectural education is of great and undeniable importance.

The Polish periodical press regarding architecture and urban planning was based on several major journals which developed spatial awareness and, to a great extent, influenced the opinions of researchers and designers (all of these magazines were, for obvious reasons, funded by state authorities who fully controlled their contents). There were also several professional and university magazines in addition to some less important titles. To date, many of these have constituted an important archival source and bear testimony to the past.

Today, from the point of view of researchers dealing with recent architectural history, the most important journals of the times were *Architektura*, dedicated to widely understood architecture and urban planning, *Miasto*, a bimonthly which focused on spatial and town planning, and the quarterly *Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki*, which featured scientific publications. Furthermore, a number of other magazines that are of lesser importance to architectural research provide valuable insights into the forgotten fragments of communist reality.

After WWII, one of the most influential magazines addressing the architectural circles in Poland, was the monthly *Architektura* [Architecture], funded by the Ministry of Culture and Art. Published from 1947 to 1991², it was the official press organ of the Polish Association of Architects [Polish: Stowarzyszenie Architektów Polskich, abbreviated as SARP], a professional organisation of architects and urban planners.³

Obviously, from the very beginning, the journal followed the planned economy programme and the ideological premises of the socialist system. The foreword to the first issue, which appeared two years after the war and was signed by the Board of the Association of Polish Architects, stated:

1 It should be noted that the origins of architectural magazines in Poland date back to 1875, when the weekly *Przegląd Techniczny*, published in Krakow, began printing regular features on the subject. In 1900, the monthly magazine *Architekt* was introduced and during the interwar period over a dozen titles were published, including the most authoritative one, *Architektura i budownictwo*; see *Architektura* 9-10 (1977): 3.

2 *Architektura* was revived in 1994 as *Architektura-murator* by the publisher Murator SA.

3 The history of architects' associations on Polish territory dates back to the 19th century and is 125 years old.

"And today, barely two years since we recommenced our work, we can already be aware of the path that history is laying out before Polish architecture. Therefore, it is good and it is right to attempt to define the role which has fallen to our architectural generation."⁴ The first editor in chief was an architect, Tadeusz Filipczak, who worked with a vast editorial staff of some of the most outstanding architects in Poland.⁵

In the beginning, the journal focused, to a major extent, on matters concerning the post-war reconstruction, but also wrote about competitions and the designing of the most important buildings erected in Poland at the time, for example the Ministry of State Treasury, the Central Statistical Office or the seat of the socialist party. It should be noted that, over the years, the form and contents of the publication underwent some considerable changes regarding its structure, layout and artwork. These transformations resulted, to a vast degree, from the changes in the social atmosphere marked by several turning points in the history of the PRL.⁶ From 1956, which saw the end of socialist realism in Polish architecture and placed the power in the hands of a new government, the magazine's orientation changed significantly by opening up to the achievements and experience of architects not only from the Eastern Bloc, but also from Western Europe and America.⁷ A series of texts appeared presenting the latest architectural works in the West, for instance in Sweden, Germany, the USA and the UK. *Architektura* became an important source of information about the latest trends and realisations, featuring numerous descriptions and examples, for instance descriptions of the national pavilions at the Brussels World's Fair, EXPO 1958. It also included reprints of texts and artwork from foreign magazines like *Baumeister* and *Bauwelt*, as well as Italian, British and American publications.



Fig. 1, Fig. 2

- 4 *Architektura* 1 (1947):1.
- 5 For instance Jerzy Hryniewiecki, Marek Leykam, Eugeniusz Wierzbicki and Adam Kotarbiński. The subsequent editors-in-chief were Jan Minorski, Tadeusz P. Szafer, Zygmunt Skrzydlewski, Andrzej Bruszewski, Andrzej Gliński and Ewa P. Porębska.
- 6 A major dividing line is 1989, when the first partially democratic elections were held. Actually, two basic periods are identified in the post-war history of Poland: the years 1945-1989, i.e. the communist period (the PRL), and the democratic period since 1989.
- 7 1956 was an important turning point for post-war Poland. This was when the Poznań June events took place. Workers, dissatisfied with the living conditions, organised a massive protest in the streets of Poznań. They were violently repressed by the communist authorities. Nonetheless, this led to the taking over of power by Władysław Gomułka's group who, in the initial period of their government, eased the social climate.

The 1960s were a time when *Architektura* clearly embraced new trends, especially modern architecture, despite the texts being imbued, to some extent, with the propaganda of success. Sections of the magazine were dedicated to the latest realisations, architectural competition results, interior architecture, theory, history and educational issues. These were accompanied by student columns and presentations, as well as an international review focusing on projects from across the world, both from the East and from the West. There were also interviews, discussions, architectural book reviews and texts about the new construction technology with an emphasis on industrialised construction and prefabrication.

In the 1970s *Architektura* started displaying a clearly defined structure and layout. In terms of contents it continued with presentations of projects and realisations, trends, historical research and student columns. An analysis of these contents clearly reveals veiled criticism of the weakness of centrally controlled economy and of the shortcomings of the technology and urban planning solutions used in Poland. Concurrently, the magazine became a nationwide forum for showcasing new designs, concepts, town planning solutions and competition projects. More room was also given to international experience and realisations, especially European ones, whilst articles regarding historical and theoretical research strongly influenced the development of the then prevailing architectural philosophy and practice.

This trend continued into the 1980s. The beginning of the decade was marked by yet another historical milestone in Poland, i.e. the emerging of the Solidarity movement.⁸ The general euphoria that accompanied those times was not without effect on the contents published in *Architektura*. The magazine gained greater independence and gradually detached itself from the official state and the policy of the socialist party⁹. It started featuring texts that criticised the achievements of the previous decades, the dictate of prefabrication and town planning focused on large housing developments as well as the decline of construction craftsmanship.¹⁰ The martial law, introduced in Poland in December 1981, coincided with a deteriorating economic situation, which caused a standstill in almost all activities of construction development. As far as *Architektura* was concerned, this had a direct effect on its contents. These focused primarily on very valuable theoretical reflections by Polish and international authors, on historical research (relating mainly to the 19th century and also to earlier times) and on professional discussions, as well as on presentations of architectural projects and competitions (albeit it must be stressed that the former were in the minority in relation to the latter). By now, both the texts and the discussions were in evident opposition to the official stance of the state and party authorities.

It should be noted that *Architektura* was not a comprehensive review of the entire architectural production in Poland. Neither was it a propaganda vehicle for the authorities. Its goal was to influence a specific independent architectural policy orientated towards presenting valuable and modern solutions. The presented cases were to describe reality, but also to provide a point of reference for new explorations. In its time, *Architektura* was quite an extraordinary construct due to its wide range of topics and the aforementioned independence, which made it possible to present international works and to not restrict them to socialist countries. Of course, it did not gain major popularity among foreign readers, with the exception of those from the Soviet Bloc,

8 In 1980, the Independent Self-governing Trade Union "Solidarity" emerged in Gdańsk under the leadership of Lech Wałęsa.

9 This was the Polish United Workers Party [Polish: Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, abbreviated as PZPR].

10 The critical texts included conclusions from national architectural conferences, e.g. „II Ogólnopolska Narada Architektów Gdańsk '84. Oświadczenie na temat Gdańsk 1984” [2nd National Conference of Architects Gdańsk '84. Statement Regarding Gdańsk 1984], *Architektura* 2 (1984) or seminars, e.g. "Czym przebić Kartę Ateńską. Blok w blok" [How to Overcome the Athens Charter? Box to Box], *Architektura* 4 (1980).

where it had numerous subscribers interested in publications with more extensive information on international architecture than those in their own countries.¹¹

The subject matter that *Architektura* dealt with was very wide. From the very beginning it provided a forum for the presentation of urban development plans, the most interesting achievements and competition projects. SARP's clever skilful policy towards the communist authorities provided it with a degree of autonomy, which later on turned into an actual contestation of the official party line. In 1967, in a survey of architecture in the first two decades of the PRL, Adam Kotarbiński noted: "The monthly, which depends, to a considerable extent, on the general situation in architecture, has been a reflection of the influences that officially prevailed in the professional milieu. Nonetheless, due to the high diversity of this milieu regarding the scope of work, interests and approaches to contemporary architecture, it could never adapt to its divergent requirements and continues to give rise to far-reaching reservations."¹² Despite this negative opinion and other strongly varied ones, *Architektura*, at present, is one of the most important iconographic and historical sources of information about planned projects and achievements. Furthermore, the consecutive numbers convey an image of how designs were created, how architects were educated and how technology evolved, in addition to the political and social climate, legal conditions and problems that architects had to deal with. *Architektura* was the place where they could publish their appeals and manifestos as well as papers on history of architecture, including the most recent one.¹³

Apart from being a patron to *Architektura*, SARP also issued a monthly in-house newsletter called *Komunikat SARP* [SARP Communiqué], which mainly dealt with topics submitted by its members. In the 1980s, this was succeeded by *Zeszyty Architektury Polskiej* [Journals of Polish Architecture], which constituted a forum for the presenting of projects, competitions and theoretical reflections. Both are significant sources of information despite being restricted to that regarding the SARP members only.



Fig.3

11 Adam Kotarbiński, *Rozwój urbanistyki i architektury polskiej w latach 1944-1964*, Warsaw: PWN, 1967, 132.

12 Kotarbiński, *Rozwój urbanistyki*, 131-132.

13 An important example of dealing with recent history is the attempt to review the architectural achievements of the PRL; see Andrzej Gliński, Zyta Kusztka, Stefan Müller, "Architektura polska 1944-1984," *Architektura* 1-6 (1984).

A completely different profile, regarding the scope of topics and ideology, was displayed by *Miasto* [The City]¹⁴, a monthly magazine published since 1950. It was addressed to urban and spatial planners and was created on the initiative of the Association of Polish Urban Planners [Polish: Towarzystwo Urbanistów Polskich] supported by the Institute of Housing Construction [Polish: Instytut Budownictwa Mieszkaniowego]. It aimed at being the first magazine to fill the gap in publications regarding town planning and municipal and housing management. In its publishing programme announcement it identified three major themes: urban planning (mainly studies on the socialist city), municipal management and housing policy. *Miasto* intended to play an important role in developing and propagating the method of socialist realism in town planning, based on the Soviet experience.¹⁵ Later on, the views presented in the magazine evolved towards more objective ones, which were, nonetheless, tinted with socialist ideology.

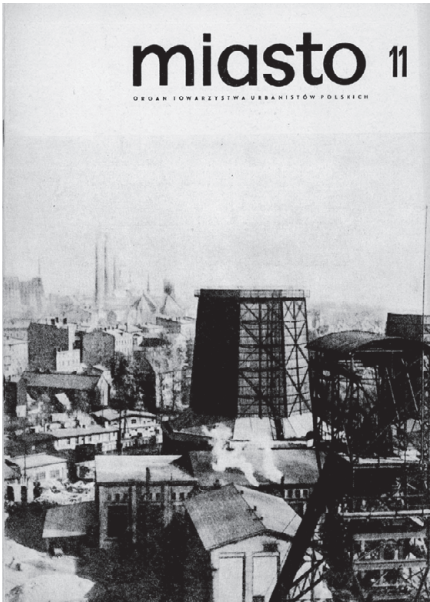


Fig.4

Miasto was the only periodical dedicated to spatial and urban planning. From the very beginning it focused on presenting the latest trends and achievements in these fields. At the same time, it was to “contribute to the deepening of studies on the nature of the socialist city and to make readers familiar with all the components that constitute the whole of municipal management.”¹⁶ In a summary of the first twelve issues of the magazine, Bronisław Malisz concluded that just the fact that it was being published proved that a certain type of inertia had been overcome in this field of periodical publications.¹⁷ *Miasto* aimed to make local authorities familiar with the new trends in Polish town planning. However, one must remember that it was founded when Stalinism was at its prime in Poland and that its intention was to promote the principles and ideas

14 The first two issues of *Miasto* appeared in 1950.

15 E.g. Wiktor Ostrowski, „Kształtowanie przestrzenne miasta socjalistycznego” [The Spatial Formation of the Socialist City], *Miasto* 1 (1952).

16 Editorial, *Miasto* 12 (1951): 1.

17 Bronisław Malisz, “12 numerów miasta,” *Miasto* 12 (1951): 3.

of socialist town planning, in addition to a planned abandoning of the hitherto accepted notions of towns and settlements. Apart from regular thematic reviews, every issue presented examples of urban planning from socialist and western countries, albeit the latter were shown from a very critical perspective.¹⁸ A vast majority of the texts published before 1956 were imbued with ideological propaganda and, apart from their artwork and historical information, they constitute an unreliable source of knowledge about town planning.

After 1956, *Miasto's* ideological orientation evolved towards the statutory problems of the Association of Polish Urban Planners, and of the Housing Council [Polish: Rada ds. Mieszkaniowych] as well. In the late 1980s, the published texts often challenged the publisher's official stance and it was stressed in the imprint that "the views published in *Miasto* will not always be compatible with the opinions of the Association of Polish Urban Planners".¹⁹ *Miasto*, in its later form, is undoubtedly a good source of information about its times and about the large urban planning projects undertaken in Poland's major cities.

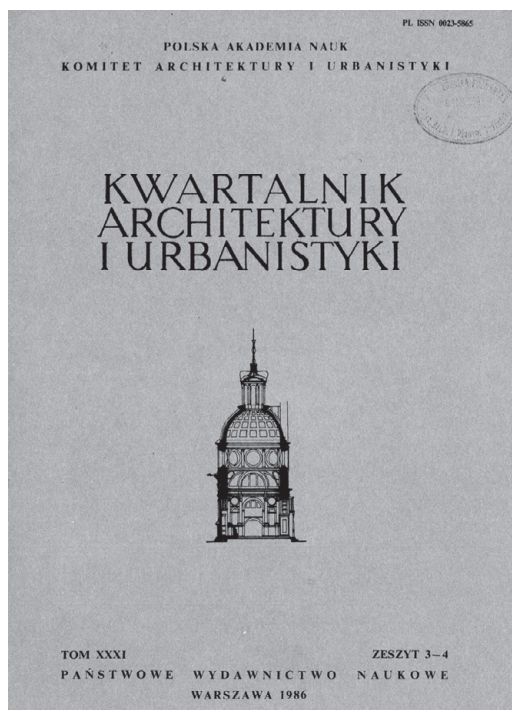


Fig.5

¹⁸ A text in *Miasto* which presented this approach was A.O. Konstantinov, "Hipertrofia głównych miast w ustroju kapitalistycznym" [The Hypertrophy of Cities in the Capitalist System], *Miasto* 2 (1952). The writers also criticised individual cities and countries, e.g. Paris in "Faszystowska operacja kosmetyczna Paryża" [The Fascist Cosmetic Surgery of Paris], *Miasto* 5 (1952), several American cities in K. Toeplitz, "Pani Manson i stu specjalistów" [Ms Manson and a Hundred Experts], *Miasto* 8 (1953) and London in J. Gorzyński, "Biznes i filantropia, czyli purytańskie rozwiązania kwestii mieszkaniowej w 1879r. w Londynie" [Business and Philanthropy, or Puritan Solutions to the Housing Issue in 1879 in London], *Miasto* 4 (1953). *Miasto* had a separate section called "Z krajów kapitalistycznych" [From Capitalist Countries] dedicated to this subject.

¹⁹ Information published in the *Miasto* imprint.

During the discussed period, another major periodical, *Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki* [Quarterly of Architecture and Urban Planning, abbreviated as *KAiU*] played an entirely different role. Published since 1956 by the Polish Academy of Sciences [Polish: Polska Akademia Nauk, abbreviated as PAN], or more specifically by the PAN Committee on Architecture and Urban Planning, and addressed to academic circles, it was intended, at the time of its founding, to complement the research activities of the PAN Institute of the History and Theory of Architecture and Urban Planning. It was also meant to become a publishing centre for authors writing about architecture and town planning. In the foreword to the first issue, Professor Jan Zachwatowicz wrote that the magazine would deal with a large range of issues, including history and theory of architecture and urban planning, methodology and classification, principles of spatial development, architectural and urban composition, as well as correlations between economics, technology and form in architectural and urban planning solutions, assessment criteria, architectural education and terminology.²⁰

A vast majority of subjects undertaken by *KAiU* focused on chronologically earlier issues, i.e. the period from the late 19th century. As a rule, in the issues before 1975, topics pertaining to contemporary architecture were mentioned only incidentally, usually in reports from international scientific conferences. Many of these texts referred to the reconstruction of historic town centres and were related to the international conference *Rozwój współczesnego miasta a problem jego ośrodka historycznego* [The Development of the Contemporary City and the Problem of its Historic Centre], which was held in Warsaw in 1956.²¹ Undoubtedly, this must have been related to the definition of “historic monuments” and “modern works of architecture” which, at the time, only started to include buildings erected before 1939.²² The profile of the magazine may have, in part, been influenced by the research interests of its long-term editor-in-chief, Professor Jan Zachwatowicz whose work, despite spanning a very long period of time, paid little attention to contemporary problems. The first texts that focused on the most recent architecture began appearing in *KAiU* after 1980. One of the first extensive articles of this type was dedicated to the question of housing in the Soviet Union and Austria, and to social realism in Polish post-war architecture.²³

Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki remains one of the most important Polish scientific magazines dedicated to the theory and history of architecture, despite the fact that the first texts which dealt with contemporary issues in a systematic way did not appear therein until the early 21st century. Nonetheless, the research devices used by the authors determine the exceptional value of its issues.

Another title worth mentioning in the context of this paper is *Stolica* [Capital City], issued between 1946 and 1989 in Warsaw.²⁴ It was an illustrated weekly magazine and a specific phenomenon, being entirely dedicated to one city. The first publisher was the Supreme Council for the Reconstruction of Warsaw [Polish: Naczelna Rada Odbudowy Warszawy] and, from 1955,

20 Jan Zachwatowicz, “Architektura i urbanistyka w Polskiej Akademii Nauk,” *Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki* 1 (1956): 3-6 (5).

21 The presentations given during the conference were published in *Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki* 5 (1960).

22 The first attempts to draw the attention of conservation officers to modern works of architecture were actually made in the 1970s. An important part in making the respective professional circles aware of this problem was played by the conference *Problemy ochrony architektury najnowszej (1850-1939)* [The Problems of Preserving the Most Recent Architecture (1850-1939)], held in Poznań in November 1970, on the initiative of art and architecture historians.

23 Jacek Gyurkovich, „Współczesne tendencje kształtowania zabudowy mieszkaniowej w ZSRR” [Contemporary Trends in Housing in the Soviet Union], *Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki* 4 (1977); Hanna Grabowska, „Współczesne tendencje kształtowania zabudowy mieszkaniowej Austrii na przykładzie Wiednia” [Contemporary Trends in Austria as Exemplified by Vienna], *Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki* 2 (1979); Krzysztof Stefański, “Architektura Polska 1949-1956” [Polish Architecture 1949-1956], *Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki* 1-2 (1982).

24 The predecessor of *Stolica* was the weekly *Skarpa Warszawska* published in the years 1945-1946 by the Office for the Reconstruction of the Capital City; see Krystyna Krzyżakowa, “My ze ‘Stolicy’”, *Stolica* 50/51 (2177) (24-31.12.1989): 3.

the publisher RSW “Prasa” (followed by Prasa–Książka–Ruch). *Stolica* contained numerous texts about the history and culture of Warsaw, in addition to recording the major events of the times (in a special section called “Notatnik Warszawski” [The Warsaw Notebook]). It also organised various social campaigns²⁵ and featured reminiscences of people connected with the city. *Stolica* remains an important source of information about the architecture and spatial issues of Warsaw. Similar subjects were undertaken by other titles, for instance *Życie Warszawy* [Warsaw Life] or *Ekspres Wieczorny* [Evening Express], albeit their publications displayed more traits of opinion journalism. Topics related to architecture and urban planning were also presented by such opinion-forming magazines as *Przegląd Kulturalny* [Cultural Review] (published in the years 1953–1963), *Kultura* [Culture] and *Polityka* [Politics], as well as regional or local magazines, for instance *Kronika Miasta Poznania* [Chronicle of the City of Poznań], *Kronika Bydgoska* [Bydgoszcz Chronicle] and *Odra*.²⁶

The list of titles that dealt with architecture and construction was much wider. In the PRL period, numerous professional newsletters were published, for example the monthly *Biuletyn Informacyjny* [Newsletter] of the Committee for Urban Planning and Architecture [Polish: Komitet ds. Urbanistyki i Architektury],²⁷ published from 1956 to 1964. It presented an extensive image of the operations of the architectural and construction services and the central departments. Large state-owned design studios, various unions and creative associations also published their own newsletters. There were also several magazines that dealt with the history of architecture, for instance *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki* [History of Art Newsletter], *Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej* [Quarterly of the History of Material Culture], *Ochrona Zabytków* [Preservation of Historic Monuments] or *Przegląd Zachodni* [Western Review]. Nonetheless, the limited number of texts dedicated to post-war architecture published therein reduces their significance as an important research source. On the other hand, scientific magazines published by the various schools of architecture²⁸ are a useful enhancement to the information provided by the major titles. Another interesting publication is the artistic magazine *Projekt* [Design]²⁹. Published from 1956, it was a bimonthly dedicated, in general, to visual arts and design. The latter did, however, include widely-perceived architectural and spatial phenomena, especially those of high artistic appeal, for example the theoretical works and designs of Oskar Hansen’s, monumental sculpture or outstanding architectural complexes.

It is also necessary to mention the challenges that accompanied the work of editors and contributors. In the times of planned economy, the regular issuing of magazines was very difficult owing to factors like paper shortages, the publishers’ organisational problems or censorship. Nonetheless, it seems that the authorities may have treated the (controlled) autonomy achieved by some of the writers as a vent which provided a plane for theoretical studies and presentations that channelled the need to mark one’s presence in social space. It may be assumed that, due to the strictly professional profile of the architectural and town-planning magazines, the work of censors did not determine their ultimate form and contents.

25 For example, the *Otwarte Szkatuly* campaign in 1969, when it published documents and reminiscences sent in by readers, or the *Homo Varsoviensis* Prize awarded from 1971 (http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stolica_%28czasopismo%29 [27.08.2013]).

26 *Kronika Miasta Poznania* is a quarterly published since 1923 in Poznań, first by Towarzystwo Miłośników Miasta Poznania and then by the City of Poznań; *Kronika Bydgoska* is an annual published since 1967 by Towarzystwo Miłośników Miasta Bydgoszczy; *Odra* is a monthly published since 1961 by Instytut Książki and Ośrodek Kultury i Sztuki we Wrocławiu.

27 In 1960 it became the Committee for Construction, Urban Planning and Architecture. It was dissolved in 1964.

28 Faculties of Architecture existed at the time in Warsaw, Krakow, Wrocław and Gdańsk, whilst Institutes of Architecture existed in Poznań, Gliwice, Łódź and Białystok.

29 The bimonthly *PROJEKT. Sztuka wizualna i projektowanie. Visual art & design* was published by Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza Prasa - Książka - Ruch w Warszawie.

As mentioned before, the list of press titles that were available in the market is far more extensive, but not all of them are of value to research on the architecture of the second half of the 20th century.³⁰ The major magazines of established renown that published high quality contributions are an invaluable source of information, especially because access to original archives and sources is greatly impeded due to their great dispersion and incompleteness, as well as the fact that many archives were seriously damaged in the early 1990s. Therefore, it is extremely important that it is possible to learn about original design concepts, professional discussions, writings and major realisations from the communist period³¹ from the professional magazines that were published at the time, providing architecture historians with extremely helpful tools and resources.

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³⁰ Books were also significant in this respect, published by state-owned publishing houses (private ones did not exist). The most important publishers were Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe and Budownictwo i architektura (succeeded by Arkady, in addition to many smaller ones. Notable examples of books on architecture include: Adam Kotarbiński, *Rozwój urbanistyki i architektury polskiej w latach 1944-1964* [The Development of Polish Urban Planning and Architecture in the Years 1944-1964], Warsaw: PWN, 1967; Edmund Goldzamt, *Urbanistyka krajów socjalistycznych* [Urban Planning in Socialist Countries], Warsaw: Arkady, 1971 and T. Przemysław Szafer, *Nowa architektura polska. Diariusz lat 1976-1980* [New Polish Architecture. A Chronicle of the Years 1976-1980], Warsaw: Arkady, 1981.

³¹ Systematic research on the architecture of the communist period was not conducted in Poland until the early 21st century.