Constructing a Capital “worthy of a Nation among nations”: Polish Architectural and Urban Planning Discourse on Warsaw in the Interwar Period, 1918-1939

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Contents

Abstract (English)

Although it occupied a relatively brief span of time, the interwar period (1918-1939) formed a crucial moment for Warsaw's urban and architectural development that merits further scholarly examination as a distinctive chapter in the city's history. At the close of the First World War, Warsaw's emergence as the capital of a new, modern nation-state, the nascent Second Polish Republic, prompted newly autonomous Poles to deeply re-evaluate the city against its new role as a political and administrative nucleus vested with supreme symbolic meaning for the new state. Although the newly established Polish capital struggled throughout the interwar period with chronic shortcomings in its basic development simply as a large urban center, more ambitious, aesthetically oriented discussions around Warsaw's ability to embody its status as the center of Poland's national prestige and authority nevertheless came to occupy a prominent place in its architectural and urban planning discourse. Professional opinions on Warsaw's urban layout and architecture in relation to its level of capital eminence, which were from the outset markedly negative, intensified in perceived urgency and were consolidated, through the key intervention of the authoritarian Polish state, into a full-blown public narrative of critique against the existing city by the mid-1930s. Throughout the remainder of the interwar period, architectural and urban planning discourse on Warsaw took on a new, bolder dimension, and evinced a remarkably strong receptiveness to the visionary, often sweeping urban regulation projects and architectural innovations of fascist Italy, which arguably provided model solutions for Poles as they idealized Warsaw's future radical transformation. The late 1930s witnessed the maturation of a wide range of ambitious, large-scale urban developments planned for Warsaw under the supervision of the Polish state, among which was a projected new city center that formed an unparalleled platform

for the shared ambition of Polish architects, urban planners, and politicians to transform Warsaw into an outsized symbol of Polish modernity, power, and order.

Abstract (français)

Bien que relativement brève, la période de l'entre-deux-guerres (1918-1939) a constitué un moment crucial pour le développement urbain et architectural de Varsovie et mérite d'être étudiée de manière plus approfondie en tant que chapitre distinctif de l'histoire de la ville. À la fin de la Première Guerre mondiale, l'émergence de Varsovie en tant que capitale d'un nouvel État-nation moderne, la Seconde République polonaise naissante, a incité les Polonais nouvellement autonomes à réévaluer profondément la ville par rapport à son nouveau rôle de noyau politique et administratif investi d'une signification symbolique suprême pour le nouvel État. Bien que la nouvelle capitale polonaise ait lutté pendant l'entre-deux-guerres contre des lacunes chroniques dans son développement de base en tant que grand centre urbain, des discussions plus ambitieuses et plus esthétiques sur la capacité de Varsovie à incarner son statut de centre du prestige et de l'autorité nationale de la Pologne ont néanmoins occupé une place prépondérante dans son discours sur l'architecture et l'urbanisme. Les opinions professionnelles sur le plan urbain et l'architecture de Varsovie en relation avec son niveau d'éminence capitale, qui étaient dès le départ nettement négatives, se sont intensifiées dans leur perception de l'urgence et ont été consolidées, grâce à l'intervention clé de l'État polonais autoritaire, en un véritable récit public de critique contre la ville existante vers le milieu des années 1930. Pendant le reste de l'entre-deux-guerres, le discours architectural et urbanistique sur Varsovie a pris une nouvelle dimension, plus audacieuse, et s'est montré remarquablement réceptif aux projets visionnaires, souvent radicaux, de régulation urbaine et aux innovations architecturales de l'Italie fasciste, qui ont sans doute fourni des solutions modèles aux Polonais lorsqu'ils ont idéalisé la future transformation radicale de Varsovie. La fin

des années 1930 a vu la maturation d'un large éventail de développements urbains ambitieux et à grande échelle planifiés pour Varsovie sous la supervision de l'État polonais, parmi lesquels le projet d'un nouveau centre-ville qui constituait une plateforme sans pareille pour l'ambition commune des architectes, urbanistes et politiciens polonais de transformer Varsovie en un symbole surdimensionné de la modernité, de la puissance et de l'ordre polonais.

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Introduction

On November 11, 2018, as part of Poland's state commemorations of the one-hundredth anniversary of the restoration of Polish independence, the nation's president, Andrzej Duda signed a document declaring the "restitution" of the Saxon Palace, a large, classicist edifice of eighteenth-century royal provenance that had enclosed, along with other buildings, the western flank of Piłsudski Square in central Warsaw before World War II.[1] Deliberately blown up in 1944 by Nazi soldiers in a sweeping, systematic campaign of destruction in the Polish capital following the collapse of the Warsaw Uprising, the palace, and its adjoining buildings, were never rebuilt in the decades following the city's obliteration in the Second World War, with the only remaining visible trace of the former complex being a tiny fragment of the palace's former colonnade that stands in solitude on the otherwise empty, western edge of the vast square as a deliberate "permanent ruin."[2] Duda's signed declaration, which framed the future rebuilt historic complex, among other things, as a "permanent monument to [Polish] independence" and "a symbol of the state's continuity," thus symbolically marked the beginning of a reconstruction campaign to resurrect this notable segment of Warsaw's pre-war urban fabric, dramatically wiped from existence over 70 years ago.[3]

Despite protests raised against the palace's reconstruction, notably those voiced in a press conference by two high-ranking Warsaw officials and the capital's head conservator, who cited, for one, the City of Warsaw's lack of direct involvement in the project (despite being the owner of the square), the Polish Sejm and Senate passed a bill on the reconstruction of the historic complex

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[1] Tomasz Urzykowski, "Prezydent Andrzej Duda podpisał deklarację odbudowy Pałacu Saskiego. 'Każdy będzie mógł załatwić tam swoje sprawy'," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, November 12, 2018, https://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,54420,24159938,prezydent-andrzej-duda-podpisal-deklaracje-odbudowy-palacu-saskiego.html.

[2] As relayed by Michał Murawski, Warsaw's total wartime destruction amounted to "84 percent of the buildings on the left bank of the Vistula River (where the core part of the city center and urban infrastructure was located) and 75 percent of the city as a whole," see Murawski, *The Palace Complex: A Stalinist Skyscraper, Capitalist Warsaw, and a City Transfixed* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2019), 36; Urzykowski, "Prezydent Andrzej Duda podpisał deklarację." .

[3] Ibid.

on August 11, 2021.[4] One of the provisions of this bill, which features in the guidelines of an architectural design competition launched for the historic complex's reconstruction in March of 2023, stipulates, with striking specificity, that the buildings be faithfully reconstructed "on the basis of their external architectural form as of August 31, 1939"—in other words, the final day before Nazi Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939.[5] On October 12, 2023, a winning design from the competition was announced.[6] A released digital rendering from the winning project proposal of the reconstructed suite of historic buildings as seen from Piłsudski Square indicates—as to be expected—a dutiful adherence to the aforementioned, state-decreed architectural instruction, faithfully reproducing the pre-war façades of the Saxon Palace, the Brühl Palace tucked away at its northern flank, and two tenement houses—of noticeably disparate dimensions and architectural styles—abutting its southern flank.[7] The row of historic buildings, virtually re-manifested on the empty expanse of Piłsudski Square as they would have appeared on August 31, 1939, thus clearly evokes a former Warsaw frozen in time, untouched by the unwanted cataclysm that befell the city beginning on September 1, 1939 and marked the beginning of its drastic transformation: first into ruin, then into a radically rebuilt socialist city under Poland's postwar Communist regime. The implied, deeper, message of the rendering (and the project more generally) is clear: this since-vanished version of the Polish capital is the one that naturally would have—and should have—continued to exist indefinitely, had it not been profoundly and unjustly interrupted by the work of foreign brutality.

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[4] Ibid.; Pałac Saski, "Rusza konkurs architektoniczny na odbudowę Pałacu Saskiego, Pałacu Brühla i kamienic przy ul. Królewskiej," https://palacsaski.pl/aktualnosci/rusza-konkurs-architektoniczny-na-odbudowe-palacu-saskiego-palacu-bruhla-i-kamienic-przy-ul-krolewskiej.
[5] Ibid.
[6] "Wyniki konkursu na odbudowę Pałacu Saskiego," https://palacsaski.pl/aktualnosci/wyniki-konkursu-na-odbudowe-palacu-saskiego.
[7] Ibid.

As much as the sweeping modern-day recreation of the complex of pre-war buildings on Piłsudski Square—whose realization would dramatically impact the appearance of Warsaw's historic center—effectively speaks to both the incontestable truth of Warsaw's immense destruction in the events of the Second World War and the understandable sense of weight placed on reviving historical memory in post-Communist Poland on Polish, rather than Soviet, terms, it ultimately eludes, in its static nature, other important historical processes. More precisely, what the faithful recreation of a Warsaw that, by implication, should have continued to exist after August 31, 1939, inevitably overlooks is the significant fact that by the time the first bombs fell on the city in September of 1939, architects and urban planners in the interwar Polish Republic (1918-1939) had already been engaged in a process of reimagining Warsaw on a far-reaching scale, fueled by an overwhelmingly negative assessment of the city as a hotbed of urban chaos and dysfunction that, in their perception, grossly undermined its status as Poland's capital. In the case of Piłsudski Square, interwar architects and urban planners viewed it, in truth, as unacceptably disorderly and in need of significant architectural modifications (they particularly loathed the irregularly sized, stylistically uncoordinated houses facing the square, which naturally included the two tenements adjoining the Saxon Palace that present-day authorities now wish to faithfully recreate), and were eager to modify the square's architecture extensively in order to render it more orderly and modern on their terms.[8] Thus, present-day plans to maintain the western flank of the square exactly as it appeared on the eve of the Second World War are no doubt strongly incongruous with the aims of interwar architects and urban planners, who fervently sought in their own time to wrest Piłsudski

[8] An architectural competition for a major redesign of Piłsudski Square (then named Saxon Square) was held between 1926 and 1927, with the top selected designs offering a range of bold proposals (though none were ultimately realized); among them was a project submitted by the avant-garde architects Maksymilian Goldberg (1895-1942) and Hipolit Rutkowski (1896-1961), who suggested the construction of a tall, modernist tower on the Saxon Palace's southern flank, see Maksymilian Goldberg and Hipolit Rutkowski, "Projekt Konkursowy nr. 14 Regulacji Placu Saskiego," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 3 (1927): 92-94.

Square, along with much of the rest of Warsaw, from what they perceived to be pervasive urban dysfunction and degeneration.

The fact that interwar Polish architects and urban planners were highly critical in their opinions of their own national capital and were keenly motivated to overhaul it comprehensively should be understood, for one, through the central role occupied by modernization processes in the wider geopolitical reality of the post-1918 east-central European region, which emerged out of the First World War with a cluster of fragile, newly formed nation-states assembled out of the dismantled Russian, German, and Austro-Hungarian empires, which included the Second Polish Republic. As Andrzej Szczerski has argued, after 1918, these fledgling countries were faced with the unique and urgent task of proving their right to sovereignty on the international stage and carving out their own "subjectiv[e]" viewpoint on the European continent as geopolitically important entities; goals that their governments and professional elites believed could be achieved through sweeping societal modernization in all its forms—which, naturally, included far-reaching urban reform and improvement.[9] Szczerski also suggests that the governments of the nascent east-European nations pursued modernization with an unmatched rigor, given that it provided them with an effective vehicle to legitimate themselves politically before their own national populations, whose continued survival, stability, growth, and cohesion they were now suddenly responsible for guaranteeing.[10] Martin Kohlrausch, meanwhile, has extended this argument into a specifically urban context, writing that "political legitimacy in the East Central European region came to depend increasingly on the successful modernization of urban space and on providing efficient

[9] Andrzej Szczerski, "Modernization and Avant-Garde in Central-Eastern Europe (1918-1939)," *Muzealnictwo* 59 (2018): 8, 9.
[10] Ibid., 9.

services to the rapidly expanding urban population."[11] Further, Kohlrausch has importantly emphasized the pervading sense of deep crisis in east-central Europe after 1918, with its acute economic turmoil, prolonged political instability, and extreme urban housing shortages that were more pronounced than in western Europe, which inadvertently "provided a particularly fertile ground for modernism," as the region's governments and their professional elites sought out deeply transformative and radical measures to mitigate impending societal collapse.[12] Within this context of crisis, the instilling of urban order, whose potential had become more all-encompassing and promising than ever thanks to the development of new, sophisticated planning techniques and the rise of urban planning as a discipline in its own right (as well as the development of modernist architecture) around 1900, signaled a particularly auspicious means for east-central European nations, with their "failed" nineteenth-century cities and critical housing conditions, to effect wider societal stability.[13] Thus, according to the logic of Kohlrausch's argument, the link between urban and national/societal order was, in the discursive space of the volatile post-1918 east-central European region, charged with particularly weighty meaning—a reality that, as will be shown in this thesis, was strongly confirmed in interwar Warsaw's case.

The highly self-aware rush of the governments of the new east-central European states to assert their political legitimacy on both a national and international level through modernization processes, and the unignorable, stability-threatening crisis of the east-central European region after 1918—which created a special salience for the promise of urban improvement—were not the only broader factors of significance informing interwar Warsaw's architectural and urban planning discourse, however. Strong professional, social, and political ambition also played a key role in

[11] Martin Kohlrausch, *Brokers of Modernity: East Central Europe and the Rise of Modernist Architects, 1910-1950* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2019), 45.
[12] Ibid., 19, 17, 38, 61, 49.
[13] Ibid., 64, 79, 55, 81.

discussions surrounding the Polish capital, and, as will be shown, with increasing, coordinated vigor as the interwar period wore on. As Kohlrausch has argued, once again in the broader post-1918 east-central European context, architects (and by extension, urban planners) active in this region were keenly aware of their outsized importance as a social group in their respective fledgling nation states, given the extremely important role they played in "nation-building."[14] This last notion manifested in the fact that east-central European national governments relied on architects' "expert knowledge" not only to conceive critical infrastructural and housing solutions (particularly in cities) for the state, but also to aid in the crucial task of shaping the nascent nation's projected image (through architectural expression).[15] Thus, after World War One, east-central European architects dramatically ascended in status; no longer were they merely technically and artistically skilled professionals, but an elite group with the alleged capacity to execute "deep, transformative change" on a societal and national level—a powerful technocratic conviction, which, as Kohlrausch adds, possessed the potential to err on the "darker side" in the form of social engineering.[16] For post-1918 Warsaw's architectural milieu, the sudden widening of the scope of possibility and meaning for its members' professional activities as a result of the creation of the modern Polish state—and the ambition-rousing prospect of exerting their own profound mark on the long-neglected capital as the first generation of architects working in independent Poland—was particularly salient, given that up until recently, it had not even been possible for Warsaw's architects to establish an architectural faculty in the city due to the repressive policies of tsarist rule.[17] This last group' quick embrace of its newfound elite status—and its accompanying sense of self-importance and exclusivity—during this new chapter of unprecedented professional and social

[14] Ibid., 19, 44.
[15] Ibid., 19, 44, 49.
[16] Ibid., 19, 93.
[17] Ibid., 71.

advancement was tellingly reflected, for one, in the rise of a particular residential enclave in 1920s Warsaw: the gated (and guarded) Profesorska (Professorial) Street situated on the lush terrains of the southern city center, lined by a cluster of intimate, elegant villas not only designed by Warsaw's architects, but largely for them as their personal residences, thus forming an island of exclusivity clearly testifying to the prestige of this tight-knit professional group.[18]

Outsized ambition also strongly characterized the highest ranks of interwar Polish politics, which began to exert a particularly direct and profound influence on Warsaw's urban and architectural discourse in the mid-1930s. As Jarosław Trybuś has noted, although from a developmental standpoint the Second Polish Republic "lagged behind other countries on this part of the [European] continent" (and also faced severe social and political issues stemming from its high numbers of ethnic and national minorities), it concurrently assigned itself, as the largest state in the region, a leadership position, and "aspired to the role of a Central European powerhouse nation."[19] This last aim the country hoped to achieve through a strong economic base (largely through the development of the new seaport of Gdynia and, later, the Central Industrial District [COP]), a modernized military, territorial conquests, a strongly developed sense of national unity among its citizenry, and aggressive urbanization, thus casting off the Polish republic's inherited, unbecoming situation as a geopolitically weak and predominantly "poor, agrarian country on the peripheries of Europe."[20] Such visions of Poland as a politically and militarily formidable, modern, and highly centralized state flourished under the authoritarian Sanacja (Sanation) regime that came to rule in Poland in 1926 and remained in power until the outbreak of the Second World War, with

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[18] Jerzy Stanisław Majewski, *Warszawa Nieodbudowana: Lata Dwudzieste* (Warsaw: "Veda," 2004), 165, 168.
[19] Jarosław Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała: Niezrealizowane Projekty Urbanistyczne i Architektoniczne Warszawy Dwudziestolecia Międzywojennego* (Warsaw: Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego (i inni), 2019), 19; according to a 1921 census, Poland's population comprised of 69.2% Poles, 14.3% Ukrainians, 7.8% Jews, 3.9% Belarusians, and 3.9% Germans, see Wiktor Marzec, "Landed Nation: Land Reform and Ethnic Diversity in the Interwar Polish Parliament," *Nationalities Papers* 51, no. 4 (April 11, 2022): 933.
[20] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 19, 350, 348.

its politicians, in a clear departure from the liberal parliamentary model that had previously characterized Polish politics, embracing more hardline, étatist tactics in realizing the government's sweeping ambitions for the country.[21] The extent of the Sanacja regime's ambition importantly encompassed Warsaw's urban and architectural matters, too, given the city's indispensable symbolic (and propagandistic) role, as national capital, in expressing Poland's "projected powerhouse state" identity, and its discursive importance as an urban "keystone" of the wider national unity and disciplined order that the regime aspired to foster in Polish society.[22] That the Sanacja regime had made Warsaw's ability to embody a powerhouse capital and a linchpin of national order an integral part of its ambitious political agenda became indisputably clear after 1934, when it intervened by force in Warsaw's municipal affairs—thereby signaling a new and unprecedently intensive chapter in the city's developmental discourse that numerous Polish architects and urban planners, themselves holding strong aspirations for Warsaw, keenly embraced, despite its clearly undemocratic origins.

Thus lying at a dynamic intersection of crisis and ambition, interwar Warsaw's reality was informed by two distinct forces operating in noticeably disparate realms: on the one hand, the need to secure, through modernization, the most basic functioning of the capital, whose glaring underdevelopment along modern standards posed a real threat to Poland's stability and legitimacy if left unaddressed, and, on the other, the increasingly mutual aspirations of a notable section of Poland's professional elite and the Polish state to drastically transform Warsaw into a sweeping, spectacular statement of the nation's (projected) prestige and power. In matters of both modernization and representation, Warsaw presented particularly onerous challenges even within

[21] The Sanacja regime was established through a military coup d'état led by the Polish legionary hero, Józef Piłsudski, that took place on May 12, 1926.
[22] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 351, 350.

the already difficult circumstances of east-central European cities after 1918. Not only did Warsaw demonstrate the worst urban excesses of the nineteenth century, when it experienced explosive population growth, speculative, uncoordinated development and a lack of building standards; it was additionally severely burdened by its former history of Russian rule, under which the city suffered a series of unusually repressive tsarist policies that deliberately sought to limit its outward growth and strip it of its official character.[23] As a result, Warsaw's urban dysfunction and its lack of official capital prestige after emerging from under tsarist rule were doubly damning: not only were they particularly acute even for an east-central European capital, but also formed, by association, a glaring, continual reminder of the city's (and nation's) lengthy former period of political and societal weakness, fragmentation, and servitude—none of which could hold any place in the capital of a newly restored Poland. Thus, in the very magnitude of its problems, both symbolic and physical, interwar Warsaw constituted an unparalleled "space within which to prove oneself—as a politician and as an architect," inviting, in this way, bold, visionary, and often radical, solutions.[24]

By the mid-1930s, matters concerning Warsaw's representational aspects, which were coherently voiced for the first time surprisingly early on with the emerging prospect of Polish independence during the First World War, had become a dominant theme informing the city's architectural and urban planning discourse, as will be shown in Chapter I. However, this was predominantly the result of the authoritarian Sanacja regime's machinations—and the eagerness of numerous Polish architects and urban planners to take advantage of them to further their own

[23] See Lech Królikowski, "Historia i Współczesność Planowania Rozwoju Warszawy," *Kwartalnik Historii Nauki i Techniki* 42, no. 2 (1997); and Jakub Frejtag, "Nowożytne Inspiracje w Warszawskiej Architekturze Gmachów Publicznych Pierwszej Dekady Niepodległości," in *Wolność-Niepodległość: Zbiór Studiów Interdyscyplinarnych*, eds. Joanna Farysej, Grzegorz Kucharczyk, and Karol Siemiaszko (Cracow: Pracownia Studiów Społecznych i Prawnych, 2019).
[24] Kohlrausch, *Brokers of Modernity*, 233.

goals—rather than an indicative sign that Warsaw's basic urban needs had been fully satisfied and that the city now had the means to focus on improving its capital prestige. In this state-sanctioned discursive space, architects and urban planners became newly empowered not only to lambast systematically Warsaw's shortcomings as a capital and call for drastic, far-reaching improvements, but—in convenient alignment with the Sanacja's agenda—demand major shifts in the city's legal structure to form a more centralized, dictatorial (and far less democratic) authority that could make these envisioned improvements a reality.

It is striking that around the same time that the interests of the authoritarian Polish state and Polish architects and urban planners in overhauling Warsaw into a worthy capital intersected on an unprecedented level, a string of articles, published mostly in the premier Polish architectural journal of the interwar period, *Architektura i Budownictwo* (*Architecture and Building*), began to appear that reported on—with no small sense of fascination—the urban planning and architectural developments of fascist Italy, and particularly Rome.[25] The presence of these articles is significant, for one, in light of the fact that although scholars have acknowledged the influence of Italian fascism on interwar Poland's architectural and urban planning milieu (particularly in terms of architectural style), it remains a topic yet to be explored in depth, and the *Architektura i Budownictwo* articles, as a collective, make such deeper exploration possible.[26] Secondly, as Chapter II will reveal, the articles make it clear that certain elements of the fascist Italian urban planning and architectural scene, from the displaying of ancient monuments on freshly demolished swathes of central Rome, to the fascist patron-dictator Benito Mussolini's sweeping decision-making powers and monarchical urban visions, to the synthesis of a modernist yet historically

[25] *Architektura i Budownictwo* was based in Warsaw and ran from 1925-1939.
[26] See Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 24, 187, 315 317; and "Styk Trzech Dzielnic Warszawy: Śródmieścia, Mokotowa i Ochoty w Okresie Międzywojennym," *Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki* 56, no. 3 (2011): 85.

oriented architectural style, deeply resonated with contemporary Polish observers. Evidently, fascist Italy (and especially Rome) presented, with its spectacularly proven results in effecting urban catharsis, modernization, and carefully curated displays of capital and national prestige, what were greatly relevant, and even model, solutions for Warsaw's case in the 1930s Polish architectural and urban planning perspective. That Polish professional elites saw such strong applicability in the distinctive fascist Italian approaches towards urban planning and architecture certainly gains deeper significance in light of 1930s Poland's increasingly nationalist climate and the Sanacja regime's growing focus on "[s]ubordinat[ing] public life to the interests of the state" through any means possible.[27]

Although interwar Warsaw's architectural and urban planning discourse was staunchly characterized by negatively motivated commentary emphasizing the city's numerous challenges and its serious underdevelopment by western European standards, it was also marked by a peculiarly auspicious element that had, by 1939, significantly informed plans for the Polish capital's future form. In connection with what Kohlrausch has described as interwar Warsaw's rare and singularly promising characteristic of being, as a consequence of its historic underdevelopment, "far more mouldable" and "fluid" in comparison to "the more developed western European major cities," the Polish capital boasted an unusually large stretch of unbuilt, state-owned terrain lying directly adjacent to its existing city center that not only presented enormous urban planning opportunities for raising a comprehensively new, modern district in Warsaw, but evinced the potential to reorganize the entire city radically.[28] As Chapter III will show, this swathe of land, which inspired promise in the eyes of Polish architects and urban planners as the potential linchpin of a vastly reorganized Warsaw that was auspicious not only in functional,

[27] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 348.
[28] Kohlrausch, *Brokers of Modernity*, 209, 208.

but politically symbolic, terms, ultimately became the site of the merging of the ambitions of the authoritarian Polish state and of Warsaw's architectural and urban planning milieu on an unparalleled scale, in the form of a sprawling, envisioned representational district heralding supreme urban order and national prestige. In its final imagined form, the planned district not only strongly suggested that Polish architects and urban planners had begun actively applying what they admired in fascist Italian architectural and urban planning innovations to their own projects as strongly relevant solutions (amidst the increasingly authoritarian and ideologically saturated political climate they found themselves working in), but signaled that Warsaw was being primed for radical urban—and even social—transformation.

In the English-language literature, the architectural and urban planning scene of interwar Warsaw is decidedly a scarcely examined topic. Alongside Kohlrausch's already cited *Brokers of Modernity: East Central Europe and the Rise of Modernist Architects, 1910-1950*, in which the interwar Polish capital features heavily as a case study, it is necessary to mention Edward D. Wynot Jr.'s broad, largely statistically based 1983 *Warsaw between the Wars: Profile of the Capital City in a Developing Land, 1918-1939*.[29] Wynot's study forms the only published monograph dedicated to the subject of interwar Warsaw in English to date, and, in its nature as an overview work of an ambitious scope that seeks to cover all aspects of the city, features only a chapter on its urbanization, which is factually rich but offers little in the way of historical analysis. The relevant Polish-language literature, meanwhile, though far more profuse, is not overwhelming in volume, with the bulk of existing publications having emerged within the past fifteen years. Collectively,

[29] Kohlrausch has also co-edited, along with Jan C. Behrends, the anthology *Races to Modernity: Metropolitan Aspirations in Eastern Europe, 1890-1940* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014), which features a chapter written by Kohlrausch on interwar Warsaw as a case study for radical modernist urban planning; Edward D. Wynot Jr., *Warsaw Between the World Wars: Profile of the Capital City in a Developing Land, 1918–1939* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1983).

this literature contributes well to the notion that architectural and urban planning discourse and developments in interwar Poland, and particularly Warsaw, were subject to notable political, nationalist, and social forces that ultimately shaped their outcomes in ways that warrant examining.[30] By far the most significant and in-depth work from this scholarship is Trybuś's (also previously cited) book *Warszawa Niezaistniała: Niezrealizowane Projekty Urbanisztyczne i Architektoniczne Warszawy Dwudziestolecia Międzywojennego* (*A Warsaw that Never Existed: Unrealized Urbanistic and Architectural Projects of Interwar Warsaw*), which deeply informs the present thesis.[31] In this seminal work, Trybuś succeeds not only in meaningfully situating the interwar Polish capital's proposed brand-new development schemes within the political and social context of 1930s Sanacja-ruled Poland (as well as the tense, broader climate of 1930s Europe), when these plans took on distinguishable shape, but makes the important argument that even projects to restore the city's historic fabric were strongly dictated by nationalist ideologies and were thus not politically neutral.[32] Similarly significant is Trybuś's assertion that both the interwar Polish "establishment" and a "significant portion of architects and publicists" shared in a "[f]ascination with the city as a spectacle, and therefore as a political instrument;" a notion particularly worth keeping in mind when the present study looks at why fascist Italian urban planning found the level of enthusiastic reception in 1930s Poland that it did.[33]

Polish-language biographies on interwar Polish architects have also explored the influence of political and nationalist forces on architectural design in interwar Warsaw. The most notable is

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[30] See, for example, Diana Wasilewska, "'Bezduszne Maszyny' i 'Obce Dziwactwa': Recepcja Architektury Modernistycznej w Polskiej Prasie Dwudziestolecia Międzywojennego," in *Teksty Modernizmu: Antologia Polskiej Teorii i Krytyki Architektury 1918-1981. T. 2, Eseje,* ed. Dorota Jędruch et al., (Cracow: Instytut Architektury), 37-52; and Anna Dybczyńska-Bułyszko, *Architektura Warszawy II Rzeczpospolitej: Warszawska Szkoła Architektury na Tle Przemian Kulturowych Okresu Międzywojennego* (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Politechniki Warszawskiej, 2018).
[31] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała.*
[32] Ibid., 17-18.
[33] Ibid., 316.

Grzegorz Piątek's recent examination of the life and work of Bohdan Pniewski (1897-1965), a Warsaw-trained architect who rose to singular prominence as a designer of monumental, classically inspired modernist buildings for the Polish state in 1930s Warsaw (and who notably continued to take important commissions in the capital even after the Second World War).[34] In his book, Piątek convincingly demonstrates how Pniewski's maintained sense of distance from the ideology of the internationalist avant-garde, and his signature flair for blending functionalism with boldly theatrical, monumental qualities and "allusions to past generations" in his designs, auspiciously corresponded with the representational and ideological goals of the authoritarian Sanacja government, who by the late 1930s had entrusted the architect with a spectacular array of state commissions.[35] Pniewski, whose name features recurrently in this thesis, thus stands as a singularly important figure in interwar Warsaw's architectural scene, with his designs providing perhaps the most lucid and unrestrained embodiment of the Polish state's aspirations for reimagining pre-1939 Warsaw's urban space.

It has been brought to light in both the Polish and English literature, on a final note, that Warsaw's massive destruction in the events of the Second World War presented, despite its harrowing circumstances, an undeniable sense of opportunity in the eyes of many Polish architects and urban planners.[36] After years of dreaming of a profoundly reimagined Warsaw in theory, those architectural and urban planning professionals who survived the war now faced the very real possibility of actually implementing their bold pre-war visions for the city, which they had

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[34] Grzegorz Piątek, *Niezniszczalny: Bohdan Pniewski: Architekt Salonu i Władzy* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Filtry, 2021).
[35] Ibid., 65.
[36] See Murawski, *The Palace Complex*, 44-45; Aleksandra Paradowska and Wojciech Szymański, "Towarzysz Architekt: Wizje Nowoczesności Mariana Spychalskiego i Nieukończony Projekt II RP," in *Socrealizmy i Modernizacje*, eds. Aleksandra Sumorok and Tomasz Załuski (Łódź: Akademia Sztuk Pięknych im. Władysława Strzemińskiego, 2017), 51; and Kohlrausch, *Brokers of Modernity*, 254, 264.

continued to clandestinely develop under the German occupation.[37] A number of these transformative plans, as Aleksandra Paradowska and Wojciech Szymański, as well as Kohlrausch, have pointed out, were eventually realized in the postwar reconstruction effort, thus cementing an important continuity between pre- and postwar Warsaw's developmental trajectory despite the rupture of the city's wartime obliteration and the establishment of a vastly different political, economic, and ideological system in Poland in 1945.[38] Although a comparative study of Warsaw's urban realities before and after the Second World War is not the focus of this thesis, it does aim to contribute to the broader discussion on drawing closer together the seemingly irreconcilable versions of the pre-1939 and post-1945 Polish capital. By examining the complex challenges, attitudes and aspirations surrounding interwar Warsaw's urban and architectural matters in-depth, it seeks to demonstrate how the Polish capital before 1939 was a site of deep flux, anxious to transform itself, and remarkably dynamic in its openness to sweeping new possibilities—thus forming the basis of a deep-seated drive to reimagine the city on an overarching scale that would, for the most part, materialize only after 1945.

[37] According to Kohlrausch, "[a]t least one third of the 700 architects organised in the Warsaw chapter of the SARP [Association of Architects of the Republic of Poland] did not survive the Second World War," 257; Ibid., 250-54; Paradowska and Szymański, "Towarzysz Architect," 51.
[38] Ibid.; Kohlrausch, *Brokers of Modernity*, 262.

Chapter I: Far from a Capital "worthy of a Nation among nations": Critical Perspectives on Warsaw in Polish Architectural and Urban Discourse in the Interwar Period

By the mid-1930s, Polish architectural and urban discourse on Warsaw was evincing a clear tendency to portray the city as an object of neglect, dysfunction, chaos, and thwarted potential. Architects and urban planners commenting on the city during this time felt that much of Warsaw continued to be mired in the legacy of its largely ill-perceived nineteenth-century past, and they complained that in its present form it still largely failed to live up to western European standards of modern urban planning. Warsaw's failures in conveying a sense of visual prestige and spatial orderliness were held under especial scrutiny. The heightened emphasis on these two aspects of the city can be understood through a particular notion that was clearly gaining traction among Polish commentators during this time: namely, that it would not suffice anymore for Warsaw merely to function as Poland's capital—i.e., as the center of Polish political power and a linchpin of national order—but that it had successfully to *embody* one through visual and spatial means.

Thus, Polish architectural and urban critics now assessed all of Warsaw's urban fabric, comprising both its prewar legacy and its numerous postwar developments from the 1920s, along loftier, evidently more symbolic questions of visual harmony, aesthetic prestige, and spatial order. Further, they strongly emphasized that Warsaw's buildings, streets, and neighborhoods were not autonomous entities, but in fact formed part of a much larger, important urban whole and should thus actively participate in serving its overarching interests. Assessed against these standards, Warsaw was a glaring failure. The capital ostensibly fell drastically short of adequately representing, through its urbanity, its status as a nucleus of power, prestige, unity, and order. Instead, as its commentators lamented, it reflected only unsettling levels of chaos, fragmentation, and a major lack of political ambition.

It is worth remarking that a number of the observations and critiques made through the burgeoning 1930s discourse had already been iterated significantly earlier, and under very different circumstances, in a 1915 brochure devoted to Warsaw's appearance entitled *Warsaw's Aesthetic Needs*.[1] However, not long after the brochure was published, a series of extraordinarily dramatic events descended upon Warsaw that, quite understandably, eliminated any justifiable space for discussing the city's visual shortcomings for a significant length of time. Thus the 1915 text, in its perhaps premature appearance, merits examination as a record of a new, dawning perspective on Warsaw that for the first time in the modern era assessed the city not as a mere economic hub of little political importance—as it had been for much of the nineteenth century under Russian rule—but as a metropolis of political and national significance that merited an appropriately grand urban legacy. In this way, the text becomes significant in that it creates a wider arc for interwar Polish discourse on the city by rooting its beginnings in the First World War, when the prospect of an independent Polish state was first beginning to emerge as a genuinely possible political reality, and not after.[2] Further, it serves as a useful comparison to architectural and urban commentaries on Warsaw from the 1930s, through which we can discern which concerns about the city endured throughout the interwar period and which ones did not, whether as a result of being resolved or simply having lost their relevance.

It is also important to note that the distinct discourse on Warsaw that emerged in the 1930s certainly did not arise out of any sort of empirically backed conviction that the city had now attained the right infrastructural, financial, and administrative conditions to begin actually transforming into the grand, magnificent capital it warranted being. In fact, over the entire course

[1] Alfred Lauterbach, *Potrzeby Estetyczne Warszawy* (Warsaw: Drukarnia Naukowa, 1915).
[2] Bogusława Małgorzata Bulska, "Statystyczny Obraz Miasta Stołecznego Warszawy w Początkach Niepodległości," in *Warszawa w Pierwszych Latach Niepodległości*, eds. Marian Marek Drozdowski and Hanna Szwankowska (Warsaw: Typografika, 1998), 174.

of the interwar period, Warsaw continually struggled to meet its responsibilities simply as an urban center, let alone a capital, as it failed to supply much of its population with basic municipal services, keep up with basic infrastructural demands, or provide adequate housing for its residents. The sense of crisis in the city's affairs would arguably be at its highest in the early postwar years, when enormous infrastructural gaps had to be filled and the new capital had to provide physical accommodations not only for it its range of new governmental institutions but for the large influx of new residents (e.g., civil servants, military personnel and members of the intelligentsia) who would be indispensable in keeping the fragile state afloat. By the 1930s, however, the situation still remained dire for much of Warsaw's population, particularly in terms of housing conditions. Clearly, then, the contemporary discourse that was focused largely on matters of prestige, power, and order in the city had come about as a result of other factors—namely political—that had little to do with Warsaw's average, everyday realities; it was focused instead on forging a radically new reality.

A Dawning New Perspective

In 1915, on the eve of Polish independence, in the same year that Warsaw saw a Russian retreat after nearly a century of rule over the city and the beginning of a three-year German occupation, the Polish art historian Alfred Lauterbach (1885-1943) published *Warsaw's Aesthetic Needs*.[3] While some of Lauterbach's observations and critiques in the brochure would vanish from discussion (or, as we will see in one notable instance, metamorphose into new, urgent concerns) as the interwar period wore on, a number of them would re-emerge as highly relevant points in the Polish architectural and urban planning discourse on Warsaw that took shape in the 1930s. Thus,

[3] Robert Blobaum, *A Minor Apocalypse: Warsaw during the First World War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017), 2, 5.

Warsaw's Aesthetic Needs serves as a compelling introduction to both Warsaw's general state and the opinions forming around it at the historical moment when the city was just emerging from a prolonged era of Russian dominance and was on track to regain its status as a national capital. The notion of assessing Warsaw not just as a regional center, but as a symbol of supreme national and political significance, was finally gaining legitimacy and significance as a discursive topic.

Lauterbach opened his brochure writing: "from an aesthetic perspective, Warsaw is among the most neglected cities of Europe. The causes of this are known. Political circumstances, which confined [Warsaw's] bureaucratic administration to singularly constricted bounds, had to exert their mark."[4] In this deeply politicized statement, in which he unambiguously linked Warsaw's unsightliness to the oppressive policies that Russian authorities had long inflicted upon the city, Lauterbach was already alluding to one of the main critiques of his text: that Warsaw's glaringly insufficient territorial size had exerted a negative impact on its aesthetic appearance, among other considerations. The city had in fact been systematically contained, often to an extreme degree, during its period of Russian rule. Beginning in the 1830s and up until the late nineteenth century, tsarist authorities had gradually enclosed Warsaw with a series of military structures largely along municipal boundary lines established in 1770, thus effectively halting Warsaw's outward expansion in virtually every direction.[5] By the 1880s, the Russians had opted to transform the entire city into a single military stronghold in order to ensure its "sustained defense" in the event of political disturbance, in retaliation for a major uprising that had broken out in Warsaw in January

[4] Lauterbach, *Potrzeby Estetyczne*, 5.
[5] Anna Dybczyńska-Bułyszko, *Architektura Warszawy II Rzeczpospolitej: Warszawska Szkoła Architektury na Tle Przemian Kulturowych Okresu Międzywojennego* (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Politechniki Warszawskiej, 2018), 33.

of 1863.[6] In a move to secure this new function for Warsaw, the Russians encircled the entire city with two concentric rings of fortifications.[7]

Together, these military structures established a vast "fortress belt" running along the city's perimeters that was multiple kilometers in width; due to security reasons, Russian authorities severely restricted building activity within the belt, and thus the city was essentially barred from expanding beyond its eighteenth-century boundaries and completely cordoned off from its outlying suburbs.[8] Warsaw's core population, meanwhile, skyrocketed from 260,000 to 884,000 residents between 1870 and 1914.[9] The combination of Warsaw's exploding population and its systematically enclosed, fortress-like character resulted in an extremely dense and overcrowded city (the densest in Europe by the outbreak of World War I, with an average of nearly four residents inhabiting one room) encircled by a several-kilometer-wide stretch of virtually undeveloped terrain, beyond which lay smaller settlements that possessed no infrastructural connection to the urban center.[10]

Given that, by 1915, Warsaw, though recently freed of the legal imperatives of its fortress system, remained administratively confined to an unchanged area of 34.5 km^2, it is understandable that Lauterbach reasoned in *Warsaw's Aesthetic Needs* that the "rational healing of housing, economic, hygienic, and aesthetic conditions cannot be achieved without a considerable territorial expansion."[11] In this particular case, Lauterbach's concern would in fact be swiftly resolved—the

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[6] Lech Królikowski, "Historia i Współczesność Planowania Rozwoju Warszawy," *Kwartalnik Historii Nauki i Techniki* 42, no. 2 (1997): 137; Dybczyńska-Bułyszko, *Architektura Warszawy*, 33.
[7] Ibid.
[8] *Materjały do Historii i Rozwoju Inwestycji na Przedmieściach m. st. Warszawy w Latach 1918-1928* (Warsaw: n.p., 1929), 4.
[9] Dybczyńska-Bułyszko, *Architektura Warszawy*, 34.
[10] Martin Kohlrausch, *Brokers of Modernity: East Central Europe and the Rise of Modernist Architects, 1910-1950* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2019), 217; *Materjały do Historii*, 4.
[11] Dybczyńska-Bułyszko, *Architektura Warszawy*, 34; Lauterbach, *Potrzeby Estetyczne*, 9.

following year in fact—only to shift into an entirely different problem of enormous gravity, as will be shown shortly.

Apart from its hopelessly inadequate territorial size, Lauterbach commented on Warsaw's serious lack of internal organization and visual harmony, which he attributed to an absent urban master plan, overly lax building regulations, and the legally unchecked interests of profit-hungry building speculators. Lauterbach asserted on the first page of his brochure that a city's appearance was largely reliant "on the configuration of its plan," and in his eyes, Warsaw formed a near-total failure on this front.[12] The lack of zoning in the city had created a chaotic mix of residential, commercial, and industrial buildings in its neighborhoods and allowed for "rash," uncoordinated building speculation, which together contributed to the "systematic aesthetic disfigurement of the city."[13] Meanwhile, an absence of building height regulations was cause for numerous concerns for Lauterbach. Among them was the raising of inordinately tall structures: "in Warsaw there already exist 9-storey (34.70 m) houses, whereas in Western cities the maximum building height does not exceed 20-25 m."[14] Such buildings not only stood as one of the city's "main aesthetic and hygienic plagues" due to their disproportionate height to the street, but they provided yet another opportunity for individual profiteering, given that "with the heightening of houses, land values go up, and consequently so do the prices of apartments."[15] Lauterbach was unequivocal in his opinions on the future of tall buildings in Warsaw, writing that "[f]rom our perspective it suffices to affirm the ugliness of the skyscraper," while voicing support for "the battle against Warsaw's unhealthy tendency to build ever-taller houses."[16] The proper direction for Warsaw's further

[12] Ibid., 5, 6.
[13] Ibid., 9.
[14] Ibid., 23.
[15] Ibid., 21, 22.
[16] Ibid., 22, 24-25.

development, he declared, had to be for both aesthetic and hygienic reasons horizontal rather than vertical.[17]

One other notable aesthetic concern of Lauterbach's regarding the lack of building height regulations was the overall visual irregularity it produced, which he scathingly summed up in the scene of a "measly single-storey house" "cozied up" to the "bare towering walls of a 'skyscraper.'"[18] Although Lauterbach's uncompromising antagonism towards "skyscrapers" would not be noticeably echoed by later commentators on Warsaw, the problem of glaringly disparate individual building heights giving a skewed, chaotic look to Warsaw's streets would remain an important issue for Polish architects and urban planners.

Lauterbach found Warsaw's architectural legacy to be aesthetically and symbolically problematic in numerous additional ways. Clearly the most urgent, and glaringly political, issue was the presence of Russian-style architecture in the city—the result of Russian authorities' nineteenth-century reconstructions of several Warsaw landmarks in the byzantine style and the raising of Orthodox cathedrals in highly visible places around the city.[19] Lauterbach compared these cathedrals to "poisonous mushrooms" and lambasted them as defiling the "purity" of Warsaw's "Polish silhouette" with their alien "bulging golden domes and Tatar colour-schemes."[20] Aside from their foreign aesthetic and clear aim to "efface and exterminate Warsaw's Polishness," such buildings, in their jarring strikingness, served as a visual means of reminding Poles of the "power of Russian statehood," thereby coaxing them into political submission.[21] Unsurprisingly, Lauterbach concluded that the continued presence of these structures in Warsaw should no longer

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[17] Ibid., 23.
[18] Ibid., 22.
[19] Edward D. Wynot Jr., *Warsaw Between the World Wars: Profile of the Capital City in a Developing Land, 1918–1939* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1983), 25.
[20] Lauterbach, *Potrzeby Estetyczne*, 29.
[21] Ibid., 28-29.

be tolerated, and he recommended the total elimination of these "monuments of bondage" from the cityscape.[22] "Polish Warsaw must be Western," he stated further, firmly placing Warsaw's proper orientation towards western Europe and away from Poland's politically formidable—but, in his view, culturally inferior—eastern neighbor.[23] Out of all of Lauterbach's concerns regarding Warsaw, his problem with the presence of Russian-style architecture in the city was arguably the one that was the most definitively resolved, given that by the late 1920s the cathedrals (most notably the mammoth Alexander Nevsky cathedral that towered over Warsaw's skyline) and the modified Russian facades had all but vanished from the cityscape.

Warsaw's western-style architecture, however, also proved problematic for Lauterbach in that its showy individualism contributed to the city's sense of aesthetic disarray while vesting it with a philistine, petty bourgeois appearance lacking any discernable sense of "Polishness" or political eminence.[24] Lauterbach decried Warsaw's ostentatious nineteenth-century apartment houses, whose numerousness had given the city a "grey, dull, petty commercial character" and a "false metropolitanism" that had drowned out its historically valuable buildings and obscured its "distinct, capital and Polish character."[25] He underlined the tasteless, competitive, and self-serving historicizing eclecticism of these buildings, writing:

> [i]n Warsaw every "income generating" house wants to outdo its neighbor, flexing its "original" façade ruffled with "impressive" towers, domes and pinnacles, doused in "rich" ornaments of manufactured origin. The result is that the streets that are devoid of calm and harmony, everything clashes with each other.[26]

[22] Ibid., 29.
[23] Ibid., 32.
[24] Ibid., 28.
[25] Ibid., 21.
[26] Ibid., 26.

Lauterbach acknowledged that such aesthetically jarring architecture was widespread in the latter half of the nineteenth century and had left its negative impact on "nearly every city in Europe and America," but he lamented that in Warsaw it was particularly pronounced, since its "entire building industry had been centered on rental and speculative houses."[27] In Lauterbach's eyes, the competitive, profit-driven nature of these houses had ruined Warsaw's newer squares, which he described as functionless "empty spaces between houses….intersections where tenements quarrel with each other with their arrogant façades and use their height to boast their revenue potential."[28] Meanwhile, the raising of "monumental" architecture—i.e., for large public institutions and governmental buildings—had ground to a near-complete halt since the mid-nineteenth century, further depriving the city of the desired official or stately appearance.[29] This could be explained by the fact that, as Jakub Frejtag has noted, following the defeat of the 1830 uprising Russian authorities gradually began to limit Warsaw's autonomous political functions, thus eliminating the need for official buildings normally required of a growing nineteenth-century capital city.[30] The small handful of modern public buildings that did go up in Warsaw in the early nineteenth century, such as the outsized Grand Theatre, designed by the eminent classicist architect Antonio Corazzi, would remain rare points of pride and admiration in the city among interwar architects due to their imposing, raw monumentality and enormous scale.[31]

Both Warsaw's overwhelmingly commercial/speculative character and its lacking sense of monumentality would remain highly relevant points of critique among Polish commentators in the

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[27] Ibid., 21.
[28] Ibid., 13.
[29] Ibid., 20-21.
[30] Jakub Frejtag, "Nowożytne Inspiracje w Warszawskiej Architekturze Gmachów Publicznych Pierwszej Dekady Niepodległości," in *Wolność-Niepodległość: Zbiór Studiów Interdyscyplinarnych*, eds. Joanna Farysej, Grzegorz Kucharczyk, and Karol Siemiaszko (Cracow: Pracownia Studiów Społecznych i Prawnych, 2019), 74.
[31] Ibid.; See for example Czesław Przybylski in his speech "Zagadnienie Urbanistyczno-Architektoniczne Warszawy," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 5 (1934): 147.

1930s, and they would even noticeably ramp up in intensity as the city's political and national significance was increasingly emphasized. As expectations rose for the city as a capital, and not merely as a metropolitan center, so would the sense of intolerance for its inability to convey its high status adequately through urban language.

Lauterbach certainly regarded parts of Warsaw as aesthetically valuable—namely the oldest parts of the city, with their picturesque perspectives—but even the city's most historic areas were often in need of refining in his view. Lauterbach was of the opinion that "[e]very square in Warsaw, with the exception of the Old Town Market Square, had been disfigured in the second half of the nineteenth century."[32] He commented that the square in front of Warsaw's Royal Castle, for instance, provided "indisputable value" in visual terms, but due to its awkward shape (the result of a nineteenth-century reconstruction) it currently presented itself as "insufficiently royal, insufficiently capital-like."[33] Warsaw's Theatre Square, meanwhile, with its impressive legacy of grand eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century architecture harking back to more splendid days in the city's history, had had its artistic purity marred by later structural additions to its historic buildings (notably an "ugly" clocktower tacked on to the classicist eighteenth-century Jabłonowski Palace in 1869) and the raising of a number of newer houses with "shoddy edifices" along one of its sides.[34] Thus, it becomes clear that Lauterbach was of the opinion that the small handful of areas in Warsaw that did possess significant symbolic and artistic value were not in an acceptable state and would have to be appropriately modified.

In sum, Lauterbach's *Warsaw's Aesthetic Needs* painted a gloomy picture of post-tsarist Warsaw as a forsaken, visually unimpressive city that lacked any discernable sense of political or

[32] Lauterbach, *Potrzeby Estetyczne*, 13-14.
[33] Ibid., 15.
[34] Ibid., 14.

cultural prestige, and which represented a mishmash of uncoordinated, conflicting elements rather than a functional, unified, and beautiful whole. While some of Lauterbach's comments would lose their relevance by the 1930s, perhaps most notably his concern over the city's alien, Russian-style architecture, others, namely those pertaining to Warsaw's spatial and architectural chaos, its inappropriately speculative, mercantile character, its dearth of monumental complexes, and its overall lack of an overarching urban vision, would remain crucial points among Warsaw's commentators in the 1930s. Though other essential critiques on the city would be added over time, *Warsaw's Aesthetic Needs* merits attention as a cornerstone text of a new era in Polish discourse on Warsaw, during which an unprecedented sense of weight, expectation, and fear would be placed upon the large and vibrant, but ostensibly undisciplined, Polish metropolis.

As a final note on Lauterbach's brochure, it is worth highlighting one of his general remarks on mitigating Warsaw's past wrongs: "the battle against [Warsaw's] ugliness should not shy away from radical means, even if they signify the limitation of individual rights."[35] The idea that Warsaw's fragmented, often incongruent individual interests would have to be ruthlessly disciplined for a single, overarching good, aesthetic or otherwise, would prove to be a popular—and increasingly relevant—piece of discourse for the city's critics in the interwar period.

Capital Realities

Soon after Lauterbach published his 1915 critique, however, Warsaw would witness two major events of such magnitude that its representational and aesthetic concerns would fade from the forefront for a time: first, an enormous expansion of the city limits in 1916, and second, the declaration of an independent Polish state in 1918 and the reinstatement of Warsaw as the national capital. Thus, in the years 1916-1918, Warsaw was violently pulled into new, demanding realities

[35] Lauterbach, *Potrzeby Estetyczne*, 25.

in which it had to secure its own basic functioning not only as a city, but as the capital of a newly formed, large European nation-state, in order for it to thwart the possibility of major political and societal disaster. Due to the extreme urgency of the new situational demands placed upon Warsaw, which primarily revolved around a need to develop an enormous amount of critical infrastructure and provide physical accommodations to both institutions and individuals in the city, it would be, as Anna Dybczyńska-Bułyszko observes, speed rather than ultra-rational planning that would be prioritized during these difficult years.[36] It is in this period that the gap between the ideals of urban theoretical discourse and Warsaw's actual physical conditions and financial possibilities was at its widest, though it would in fact remain painfully obvious all the way up to the outbreak of the Second World War.

The first major event to impact Warsaw's situation fundamentally—the expansion of its city limits in 1916—was enacted by decree of the city's occupying German Governor-General, Hans von Beseler.[37] As a result of the swift German-ordered annexation of vast swathes of its outlying suburbs in all directions, Warsaw's territory expanded from 3275 to 11,485 hectares, which more than tripled its previous size.[38] Virtually overnight, Lauterbach's Warsaw had turned into the central core of an incomparably vaster city. Although his wish for a "considerable territorial expansion" to cure the city's "housing, economic, hygienic, and aesthetic conditions" had been fulfilled, the physical circumstances presented a reality that was far removed from the ideals of theoretical, "rational" discourse. Warsaw's newly absorbed territories, despite technically providing desperately needed space for the city's outward expansion, presented problems of such an unimaginable scale that the Warsaw Magistrate sent an official memo to the German

[36] Dybczyńska-Bułyszko, *Architektura Warszawy*, 65.
[37] Marian Marek Drozdowski, *Warszawa w Latach 1914-1939* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1991), 78.
[38] *Materjały do Historii*, 7.

administration in 1916 clearly stating that annexation for the time being was unadvisable (the Magistrate's recommendation, however, would be ignored by the occupiers).[39] For one, the newly annexed territories far more resembled primitive, rural villages than proper suburbs.[40] This meant that they were in most cases entirely devoid of the modern services found in urban areas, such as sewage and water lines, and even paved roads, and they were disconnected from the urban core in virtually every sense. The alarming state of the newly annexed areas in 1916 was succinctly summed up in a Warsaw publication from 1929:

> If we add that the adjoined territories not only lacked water or sewage lines….that the existing roads and streets were nearly all dirt roads, that not only the streets but the courtyards of houses were unpaved, that the annexed suburbs (besides light railways) did not possess any mechanized communication with the inner city, and, finally, that there were no municipal facilities or institutions to be found in these areas, then it becomes plain that these terrains remained at an utterly primordial level of civilization.[41]

In addition, the newly incorporated territories were extremely sparsely built; despite exceeding Warsaw's former territory multiple times over in size, they added a mere 4057 buildings to the city's pre-annexation inventory of 7056.[42] Of those newly added buildings that were residential, an "[o]verwhelming number" were "shabby, wooden, ground-floor, one-room dwellings of the rural type" and thus were "almost unsuitable" for use in any potential "wider housing policy."[43] The paucity of housing in the annexed suburbs, meanwhile, reflected a disappointingly meager (and "predominantly" impoverished) added population: according to a

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[39] Samuel Szymkiewicz, *Inkorporacja Przedmieść i Utworzenie Wielkiej Warszawy w r. 1916* (Warsaw: n.p., 1930), 8.
[40] Wynot Jr., *Warsaw Between the World Wars*, 95; Irena Pietrzak-Pawłowska, *Wielkomiejski Rozwój Warszawy do 1918 r.* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1973), 37.
[41] *Materjały do Historii*, 11.
[42] Pietrzak-Pawłowska, *Wielkomiejski Rozwój Warszawy*, 86.
[43] *Materjały do Historii*, 20.

1917 statistic, Warsaw's former city limits housed a population of 738,093 residents while the newly added territories were home to a total of only 109,645.[44]

Given the realities stated above, it is not difficult to see how Warsaw's annexed terrain, though inarguably a necessity in the long term, presented an enormous financial strain and responsibility for the city, with little to offer in return—at least in the beginning—besides breathing space. Up until the outbreak of the Second World War, Warsaw's municipal authorities would be caught in an unending race to equip these neglected territories with the most basic infrastructure, a task that was made all the more urgent by the city's continually rising population.[45] The fact that by the 1929/1930 fiscal year three-quarters of the municipal budget was still being poured into suburb-related investments is a telling indication of the immense undertaking that was urbanizing Warsaw's new areas, and a confirmation that that city had no choice but to confront this extremely urgent reality regardless of its financial state.[46] Lauterbach's Warsaw had by utter necessity been left by the wayside, at least for a time.

The second major event to alter Warsaw's fate irreversibly was the proclamation of Polish independence and the reinstatement of Warsaw as capital of Poland in 1918. For the first time since 1793, Warsaw enjoyed full political sovereignty and control over its future development without foreign intervention, while gaining renewed symbolic importance as the political and cultural center of a revived nation-state. The challenges that arose with Warsaw's reinstatement of its capital status were innumerable. Among them, arguably one of the most immediately vital to securing the legitimacy and stable functioning of the capital (and by extension, the entire polity) was the need to physically house its new governmental and bureaucratic apparatus (e.g., state

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[44] Ibid., 37, 7.
[45] Between 1918 and 1939, Warsaw's population rose from 758,400 to 1,289,600 people, see Drozdowski, *Warszawa w Latach 1914-1939,* 492.
[46] *Materjały do Historii*, 36, 38.

ministries, congress, etc.) as well as the numerous inflowing members of the intelligentsia and military who would be responsible for running these institutions.[47] Thus, while in the early years of independence ministries scrambled to find makeshift office space in Warsaw in the absence of purpose-built structures (in some cases repurposing aristocratic palaces and even housing units), the influx of new governmental employees found themselves caught in a truly desperate search for housing in the already overcrowded capital.[48] Surviving correspondence in Warsaw's State Archives shows just how far-reaching the housing problem was for Poland's new elites, and it betrays a palpable anxiety over the potentially dire consequences of the state's inability to house its workers adequately in the capital. In a letter to the Ministry of Public Health from 1919, the Director of the Railway Ministry lamented that 59 of the ministry's employees did not have a permanent place to live in Warsaw and thus had to keep their families residing outside the city, which "negatively impacts their health and nerves as well as the quality of their work, which is so vital to us in the present times."[49] Pushing further, the minister stated plainly that a possible "mass exit" of employees (due to intolerable housing conditions) was an impermissible situation, and he urgently requested his addressee's help in "immediately" procuring adequate lodgings for the group of despondent workers.[50]

In another letter, sent from the Chairman of the General Counsel in Warsaw to the President of Ministers in 1920, the sender informed the president that an advisor in the General Counsel, Dr. Agenor Adamowski, had requested to be released from his present position due to his "difficult situation arising from an inability to find a suitable apartment for himself in Warsaw."[51]

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[47] Wynot Jr., *Warsaw Between the World Wars*, 179; Dybczyńska-Bułyszko, *Architektura Warszawy,* 68.
[48] Ibid., 82.
[49] J. Eberhardt, "List do Pana Ministra Zdrowia Publicznego w Warszawie," November 18, 1919, 1, *Korespondencja z Ministerstwami i Urzędami Mieszkaniowymi w Sprawach Mieszkań, 1919-1927*, Prezydium Rady Ministrów, Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN), Signature: 2/8/0/4.20/IV Rkt.20 t.1.
[50] Ibid., 2.
[51] Prezes Prokuratorji Generalnej, "List do Pana Prezydenta Ministrów," February 11, 1920, 1, *Korespondencja z*

The chairman implied that many more resignations from the General Counsel were likely to follow for the same reason, thereby "threatening the Counsel with the loss of a significant amount of its trained professional workforce."[52] Given the presumably high position of Dr. Adamowski and the fact that the letter had been sent directly to one of the country's most senior government figures, it becomes clear that the struggle to find housing was not restricted to the lower ranks of the civil service and was treated as an issue of the highest national importance.

Without a doubt, Poland's governmental authorities had to have been highly aware of how deeply the fragile, new state depended for its continued functioning on Warsaw's housing situation, and of the symbolic importance of physically concentrating the country's leading human forces in the capital. It would be remiss not to shed light on the fact that, particularly in the early years of the Second Polish Republic, the nation's elite were prioritized in receiving housing in Warsaw, which (unsurprisingly) points to deeply entrenched class divisions in Polish society.[53] That being said, the fact that even an individual of the status of Dr. Adamowski had not been able to procure housing in Warsaw speaks to the enormous chasm between the city's physical realities and its newly imposed expectations in serving as a modern national capital. Given the extremely modest possibilities of the immediate postwar years and into the 1920s, the act of physically vesting Warsaw with a sense of political legitimacy was largely limited to "enshrin[ing]" Poland's new elite in the new capital through housing and office space, and even that proved to be extremely challenging.[54]

Since housing had emerged as the top priority in postwar Warsaw, as soon as conditions allowed, the Polish government began taking measures to stimulate the construction of new houses

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Ministerstwami i Urzędami Mieszkaniowymi w Sprawach Mieszkań.
[52] Ibid., 2.
[53] Drozdowski, *Warszawa w Latach 1914-1939,* 326; Dybczyńska-Bułyszko, *Architektura Warszawy*, 80.
[54] Kohlrausch, *Brokers of Modernity*, 67.

as quickly as possible.[55] Here is where the sea of virtually empty land encircling the pre-1916 city provided a golden opportunity: the space needed for the new residential developments that would mitigate the burning housing crisis and put a roof over the heads of the military, governmental, and professional classes that had migrated to the new capital. Here is also where the urgent demands of physical reality would once again break with the ideals of rational planning discourse. Although a preliminary regulation plan of Warsaw had, at last, been drafted in 1916 and included plans for the newly annexed areas, it was sufficiently lacking in necessary detail for a trio of German city planning experts, commenting on the plan two years later, to make the explicit recommendation that "[b]ased on the experiences of German cities, we propose….a [*t*]*emporary* building ban in those districts earmarked for development for which detailed building plans have yet to be drafted [i.e., the whole of the annexed suburbs]."[56] But Warsaw was not a city in Germany; rather it was the capital of an impoverished, politically fragile nation, and its prevailing conditions demanded that new residential districts be raised whether modern rational discourse deemed the city sufficiently ready or not. The Polish state treasury, having taken ownership of large expanses of the land encircling the pre-1916 city, began swiftly parcelling it out to private housing cooperatives at extremely low prices as a way of incentivizing new residential construction, most notably in the case of the post-tsarist northern citadel that would soon be transformed into the residential Żoliborz district.[57] In some instances, these land transactions were made directly between the state and the private cooperatives, completely bypassing Warsaw's municipal

[55] Królikowski, "Historia i Współczesność," 144.
[56] Josef Stübben, Josef Brix, and Richard Petersen, *W Sprawie Zabudowania m. st. Warszawy: Opinia Rzeczoznawców o Pracach Sekcyi Regulacyi Miasta Wydziału Budowlanego* (Warsaw: Druk Rubieszewskiego i Wrotnowskiego, 1918), 19.
[57] Królikowski, "Historia i Współczesność," 144.

authorities in the process and forming yet another obstacle for the city in gaining more effective control over its new developments.[58]

Among the more notable residential developments that arose on the peripheries of Warsaw's city center, beginning in the early 1920s, were the new housing colonies in the Ochota and Mokotów districts to the south, Saska Kępa on the right bank of the Wisła river, and the aforementioned Żoliborz to the north.[59] These developments certainly constituted a modern response to Warsaw's city center's dense, unhealthy network of tenements in that they predominantly featured low-rise, often loosely built houses with private gardens lining quiet, intimate streets—adhering, in this way, to the then-fashionable, modern "garden-city" ideal formulated in western Europe at the turn of the twentieth century as a healthier alternative to the typical nineteenth-century, industrialized urban center.[60] Further, the new housing colonies, in their comprehensively planned layouts, could generally boast—as shown, for example, in extant photographs of the Staszic and Lubecki Colonies in Ochota—a greater sense of visual harmony and cohesion than that which could be found on a typical inner-city Warsaw street, with its customary row of individually built, architecturally varied houses of often noticeably disparate heights.[61] The architectural style of the developments, too, constituted a strong departure from the city center and its prevailing, heavy, late-nineteenth century eclecticism, with the houses in the new colonies predominantly featuring clean, simplified baroque and classicist forms, and often subscribing to the so-called "Manorial" architectural model popular in the early years of the

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[58] Agata Wagner, "Styk Trzech Dzielnic Warszawy: Śródmieścia, Mokotowa i Ochoty w Okresie Międzywojennym," *Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki* 56, no. 3 (2011): 65.

[59] Krystyna Guranowska-Gruszecka, "Modernistyczne Osiedla Warszawskie i Wybrane Zagadnienia Przebudowy Śródmieścia w Okresie Międzywojennym," *Studia KPZK*, no. 180 (2017): 236.

[60] Dybczyńska-Bułyszko, *Architektura Warszawy*, 22; Guranowska-Gruszecka "Modernistyczne Osiedla," 240; Kazimierz Saski, "Planowanie Miast w Polsce w Okresie Powojennym," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 6 (1926): 8.

[61] Jerzy Stanisław Majewski, *Warszawa Nieodbudowana: Lata Dwudzieste* (Warsaw: "Veda," 2004), 83; Guranowska-Gruszecka, "Modernistyczne Osiedla," 241, 242.

Second Polish Republic, which sought to evoke, with clear nationalist overtones, the typical Polish noble manor house of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[62] By and large, these refined residential enclaves served to house Warsaw's burgeoning middle classes, leaving the dire housing situation of the city's poorest strata almost entirely by the wayside.[63]

At first, these idyllic new housing settlements on Warsaw's peripheries met with encouragement in published opinion, with one 1925 article in the Polish magazine *Architekt*, for example, praising a newly built Officer's Colony in Żoliborz not only for its "novel" mixture of rural intimacy and metropolitan flair, but the impressive speed with which it had been built (170 houses in the span of two years)—a crucial consideration in light of the city's ongoing housing crisis.[64] Despite this initial enthusiasm, however, the colonies' reputability, stemming from their merit as a healthy alternative to Warsaw's overcrowded center and a contribution to mitigating the capital's housing crisis, was not to last in architectural and urban planning discourse. By the mid-1930s, these same residential developments would come under fire by a chorus of experts condemning them as yet another failed chapter in Warsaw's tragic urban history.

Embodying the Capital of Poland

As the 1930s dawned, the pervading sense of crisis that had previously loomed over Warsaw appeared to have subsided—at least on the surface. Some improvements to the capital had unquestionably been made. Warsaw was now physically better equipped to carry out its capital

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[62] Dybczyńska-Bułyszko, *Architektura Warszawy*, 21; Majewski, *Warszawa Nieodbudowana*, 92; Drozdowski, *Warszawa w Latach 1914-1939*, 354.
[63] Dybczyńska-Bułyszko, *Architektura Warszawy*, 80; although worker families faced the worst housing conditions in interwar Warsaw, very few cooperatives were established in the capital to build adequate, affordable housing for them in the 1920s and 30s; out of the scant few that existed in the 1920s, the most notable was the Warsaw Housing Cooperative (Warszawska Spółdzielnia Mieszkaniowa), established in 1921, Drozdowski, *Warszawa w Latach 1914-1939*, 285, 326, and Grzegorz Mika, *Od Wielkich Idei do Wielkiej Płyty: Burzliwe Dzieje Warszawskiej Architektury* (Warsaw: Skarpa Warszawska, 2017), 100.
[64] "Kolonja Oficerska na Żoliborzu," Architekt, no. 2 (1925): 2.

duties in the sense that its new elites had been properly housed (in large part in the housing developments on the city's peripheries) and a number of its ministries and institutions located permanently in new, purpose-built buildings.[65] Further, a new regulation plan begun in 1928 under the architect Stanisław Różański had been approved in 1931, thus giving an officially enforced, rational general "framework for Warsaw's [future] development" and inspiring hope for a more functional, organized, and beautiful city in the future.[66] Finally, and notably, shifting political conditions were also doubtless working in Warsaw's favor, at least on a symbolic and discursive level. The Polish government, having taken an authoritarian turn following a 1926 military coup by the legionary hero Marshal Józef Piłsudski (who established the Sanacja (Sanation) regime, thus effectively ending Poland's liberal parliamentary system), was now in an ongoing process of emphasizing Warsaw's importance as the capital of an increasingly centralized and unified nation-state, and it encouraged a renewed focus on the capital's representational and symbolic aspects.[67]

On the ground, however, Warsaw was still trailing far behind western European cities in many practical respects. Housing remained a critical problem for the majority of the city's population, while the gaps in basic infrastructure and municipal services remained immense despite the city's continual efforts to fill them. To make matters worse, building activity in the city came to a near-total halt in the early 1930s as part of a nationwide economic crisis (Poland had taken a major hit as a result of the Great Depression).[68] And yet, despite these stark realities, a distinct discourse on Warsaw was becoming ever more discernible among architects that clearly

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[65] The first new ministerial building to be constructed in Warsaw in the interwar period was the imposing Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education, completed in 1930. According to a 1931 article in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, the ministry had moved its offices nearly 50 times between 1917 and 1920. See Stanisław Woźnicki, "Gmach Ministerstwa W. R. i O. P. w Warszawie," *Architektura i Budownictwo* nos. 8-9 (1931): 281.
[66] Wynot Jr., *Warsaw Between the World Wars*, 163.
[67] Ibid., 48; Grzegorz Piątek, *Niezniszczalny: Bohdan Pniewski: Architekt Salonu i Władzy* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Filtry, 2021), 56.
[68] Drozdowski, *Warszawa w Latach 1914-1939*, 353; Wynot Jr., *Warsaw Between the World Wars*, 50-51.

emphasized matters of aesthetics, symbolism, spatial order, and prestige. Well over a decade after Lauterbach published *Warsaw's Aesthetic Needs*, Warsaw's shortcomings in embodying an aesthetically imposing and rationally organized metropolitan capital returned to a prominent, even urgent, place in discussion, and the city fell under an unprecedented—and, in one notable case, a carefully coordinated—publicized scrutiny. Even as the city's infrastructural conditions remained dismal in the 1930s and the urgent needs of many of its residents were not being sufficiently met, expert critics' publicized expectations for how the Polish capital should present itself in light of its supremely important status seemed to continually mount in scale and breadth. Concurrently, the same commentators' tolerance for the city in its present state and its past developmental "errors," which now extended beyond the legacy of tsarist rule and into the earlier, crisis years of Polish independence, appeared to be rapidly diminishing. Evidently, a new lens on the city was being fixed into place at this time that clearly provided worthwhile opportunities for both architects and the watchful authoritarian government.

In 1938, Stefan Starzyński, who had been serving as Warsaw's Commissary President since 1934, gave a sprawling speech entitled "The Capital's Development."[69] This complex and multifaceted text provides a telling overview of the extent to which Warsaw's infrastructural and housing conditions had developed over the course of the 1930s. In the speech, Starzyński presented a series of statistics that evoked the city's continued struggle to urbanize its terrain and ensure humane living conditions for its residents. Thus, "barely 40%" of streets and buildings in Warsaw were connected to the sewer network and 72.5% had access to municipal water, while 84.5% of dwellings had electricity and a mere 36.5% possessed a gas connection.[70] Only 62% of Warsaw's

[69] Stefan Starzyński, *Rozwój Stolicy: Odczyt Wygłoszony w Dniu 10 Czerwca 1938 r. na Zebraniu Urządzonym Przez Okręg Stołeczny Związku Rezerwistów* (Warsaw: Stołeczny Okręg Rezerwistów, 1938).
[70] Ibid., 18, 23.

streets had been paved to date.[71] The housing situation, meanwhile, remained stark, as 61.4% of the city's population was recorded as living in one- and two-room apartments, with the one-room apartments accommodating an average of 4 people.[72] Concluding this segment of his lengthy speech, Starzyński predicted that over 1 billion złoty was required to fulfill the city's most urgent basic needs.[73] Starzyński placed this enormous sum into perspective by stating that it would take 33 years for the city to invest this amount of money, given its current annual spending budget of 30 million złoty.[74]

Despite the nature of its real conditions, however, expectations for Warsaw as a city, and particularly as a national capital, had been clearly mounting in public discourse from the early 1930s, as had the sense of indignance over the city's continued failure to convey its significance properly as a center of political and social order, centralized power, and prestige. Commentaries on Warsaw began echoing some of Lauterbach's observations of old, and sometimes took them to new, damning levels, as was the case—to take one example—with his concern that Warsaw looked too much like a commercial hub and did not through its architecture convey any "higher" aspirations than profit. In 1933, the architect Edgar Norwerth, writing in the journal *Pion,* raised Warsaw's "petty commercial character" as per Lauterbach to an "atmosphere of rotten mercantilism" that could benefit from an injection of "even a few drops….of a revitalizing elixir," invoking the sense that Warsaw was not only unbecomingly petit bourgeois but was in a sickly state of social decay, which naturally was unacceptable for the capital of a modern European nation.[75] The well-known avant-garde architect Józef Szanajca, writing on Warsaw in the same

[71] Ibid., 16.
[72] Ibid., 21.
[73] Ibid., 28.
[74] Ibid., 29.
[75] Edgar Norwerth, "Budownictwo Wojskowe," *Pion,* no. 10 (1933), excerpt reprinted in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 1 (1934): 2.

publication in 1934 and again in 1935, displayed a similar sense of revulsion towards the city's obvious legacy of nineteenth-century capitalism. For example, Warsaw's nineteenth- and early twentieth-century residential architecture, already so reviled by Lauterbach, had become positively rotten for Szanajca, who described its cheaply ornamented, socially bankrupt, and profit-driven nature in sickening detail:

> [A]s time went on, the tacked-on decorations began to fall away, the tin corbels and cornices began to rust and flake off; the external mask was stripped off by time, revealing, all too glaringly, the interior void of soulless patchworks of aging building materials.[76]

In his scathing critique of Warsaw's prevailing atmosphere of bourgeois decay, Szanajca would also contribute to a new narrative that had begun to take shape among Polish architects in the 1930s: that the postwar housing colonies raised in Warsaw's annexed peripheries had in retrospect been a glaring failure and an irretrievably wasted opportunity for the city's rational development. For Szanajca, the colonies' lack of large-scale urban functionality and obvious pandering to pretentious elite sensibilities with their space-consuming "luxurious villas and little palaces," not to mention the greedy and irrational way in which they had been developed, were ultimately a mere replication of the pathological city center's old habits.[77] Szanajca summed up this unfortunate course of events with an unsightly metaphor, describing how the "squashed, overgrown, sclerotic organism" that was Warsaw's urban core had "begun brazenly to sprout new growths" in the peripheries after the war, only to foster more of the same urban dysfunction.[78] He would disdainfully describe the plan layouts of the new settlements, meanwhile, as "lace doil[ies] patterned in circles and checks, with a few ink blots," in reference to their unoriginal, neat

[76] Józef Szanajca, "Śródmieście Warszawy," *Pion*, no. 5 (1935): 4.
[77] Józef Szanajca, "Rozbudowa Warszawy," *Pion*, no. 7 (1934): 8.
[78] Ibid.

geometricity that lacked any wider functional sense—useless, outdated middle-class knickknacks.[79] Szanacja concluded that the city's building policy would have to be fundamentally transformed if the sins perpetrated by its housing colonies were not to be repeated in the future.[80] Radical change was in order.

Polish architects' commentaries on Warsaw would culminate in a spectacularly coordinated, mass critique of the city in the spring of 1934. Over the course of two sessions, a group of illustrious figures in the field of urbanism and architecture gathered "under the leadership of Minister Starzyński" (who, notably, would be installed as Warsaw's city president later that year) to present a series of collegial speeches under the thematic banner of "Greater Warsaw as the Capital of Poland."[81] All of the speeches would be promptly reprinted in the 1934 issue of *Architektura i Budownictwo* (Architecture and Building).

Before these speeches are examined, it is important to place them within the context of recent political events that would have a decided impact on a notable section of architectural and urban discourse on the city for the remainder of the interwar period. A mere month before these speeches were given, on March 3, 1934, the Sanacja regime had intervened in Warsaw's governmental affairs on an unprecedented level.[82] Intent on purging Warsaw's municipal government of political opposition in a bid to exert more direct influence over the city's affairs and further consolidate its power over Polish life, the regime dissolved Warsaw's current administration, which was dominated by political parties vehemently antagonistic to Piłsudski's camp, and replaced it with a "commissary" system made up of individuals loyal to the state.[83] The

[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Stanislaw Woźnicki, "Warszawa Jako Stolica," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 5 (1934): 138.
[82] Wynot Jr., *Warsaw Between the World Wars*, 124.
[83] Drozdowski, *Warszawa w Latach 1914-1939,* 342.

regime would install Stefan Starzyński as Commissary President of Warsaw later that year—a role he would retain for the remainder of the interwar period.[84] As head of Warsaw's new administration, Starzyński became, as Marian Drozdowski observes, a veritable "symbol of the authoritarian government," and he would serve as a key mouthpiece for the Sanacja regime's vision for the Polish capital.[85] Thus, after 1934 especially, Warsaw would be publicly touted not merely as a large city but as a national, unifying concern requiring all Polish citizens' care and attention. As part of this process, as scholars such as Martin Kohlrausch have noted, Warsaw's new regime was keen to co-opt Polish architects into this discourse to strengthen its air of legitimacy and soften its political undertones.[86] It was a "win-win" situation for both parties, given that the co-opted architects, meanwhile, would be given ample support to voice their burning opinions on the capital systematically, promote their sweeping urban visions, and advantageously push Warsaw's future development into an area of top national priority.[87]

Thus, an impressive array of architects presented a carefully coordinated vision of Warsaw in the 1934 speeches, which conspicuously framed the city's urban and architectural matters as being of unique national significance while evincing little restraint in emphasizing its present, humiliating shortcomings. Tadeusz Nowakowski, for instance, declared that "the city that is the nation's capital must be looked after by the State and all Poles…. Warsaw's development must cease to be Warsaw's concern alone and become instead a concern for all of Poland."[88] Kazimierz Tołłoczko opted for a sweeping critique when he exclaimed: "[w]hen one compares Warsaw with the capitals of other nations, one is overcome with shame and regret."[89] Czesław Przybylski,

[84] Ibid., 211.
[85] Ibid., 342.
[86] Kohlrausch, *Brokers of Modernity,* 219.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Tadeusz Nowakowski, "Przemówienie Dyskusyjne," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 5 (1934): 169.
[89] Kazimierz Tołłoczko, "Przemówienie Dyskusyjne," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 5 (1934): 169.

meanwhile, voiced his frustration over the city's stasis in his observation that the "general appearance of [Warsaw's] city center has changed little: as before, it is chaotic and uncultured and unworthy of the capital of a nation of powerhouse significance."[90] Comments like Przybylski's suggest the crystallization of a particular idea of Warsaw that would have proved compelling to both architects and the city's new political regime alike during this period: namely, that Warsaw had not caught up with Poland's ostensibly impressive evolution from a weak, divided postwar polity into the unified "powerhouse" that its authoritarian government was now framing it to be. Rather than embodying a linchpin of the vital order, stability, unity, and power that was now becoming so integral to Piłsudski's Poland's national identity, Warsaw only continued to form a painful (and ugly) reflection of the multi-layered chaos that had once (before Piłsudski) afflicted the nation at large. The eminent architect Marjan Lalewicz clearly conflated Warsaw's urban concerns with national strength and stability when he declared, "[for] what is our current manifestation but a voice that continually cries out for a new [urban] form to be wrested out of the prevailing chaos for Warsaw, a form worthy of a Nation among nations."[91]

To illustrate their arguments, the architects often gave examples of what they saw as manifestations of chaos in the capital, often—consciously or not—reiterating Lauterbach's earlier comments as they voiced their frustration that little had changed in the capital's appearance since Poland had regained independence. Przybylski, for instance, spoke of the continually anarchic appearance of Warsaw's neighborhoods in the same vein as Lauterbach, describing them as "chaotically built up, without regulations, executed in leaps and bounds in periods of speculation," before adding, disdainfully—and with a discernible hint of nationalist sentiment—that these faulty

[90] Przybylski, "Zagadnienie Urbanistyczno-Architektoniczne Warszawy," 148.
[91] Marjan Lalewicz, "Polityka Budowlana Warszawy—Stolicy Państwa," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 5 (1934): 168.

districts had been raised with the help of "*international* venture capital."[92] Notably, the reprint of Przybylski's speech in *Architektura i Budownictwo* featured a series of photographs of less-than-picturesque sections of central Warsaw's busiest squares and streets under the caption: "'Perspectives' of Warsaw's city center illustrating the current chaotic nature of the capital's construction."[93] These images, which appeared to satirize the practice of using photographs of the most picturesque areas of cities on tourist postcards, showed a lawless urban landscape of jagged streets, small, rural-looking houses abutting multi-storey nineteenth-century tenements, and unsightly provisional kiosks occupying prime locations at large intersections. In their visual rhetoric, these images strongly corresponded to Lauterbach's earlier-described scene of wretched little houses "cozied up" to the "bare towering walls of a 'skyscraper,'" evoking a strong sense of disarray and regulatory neglect. Certainly, by no means did they evoke the capital of a "powerhouse" nation, but rather a slum-like urban sprawl.

The speakers also echoed Lauterbach in their conviction that Warsaw seriously lacked a sense of monumentality, with the added regret that the opportunity to grace the capital with new monumental complexes had arisen with the reborn Polish Republic's need for new public buildings but was subsequently wasted due to the absence of an overarching vision. As Tołwiński recalled, "monumental public buildings [built in Warsaw since Polish independence] had been raised completely haphazardly," their scattered locations thus precluding them from making any grander unified statement that would have greatly bolstered the majesty (and legitimacy) of the Polish capital.[94] The eminent architect Bohdan Pniewski made a similar critique, averring that the buildings of institutions such as the Agricultural Bank and the Ministry of Transport stood in

[92] Przybylski, "Zagadnienie Urbanistyczno-Architektoniczne Warszawy," 147. Emphasis added.
[93] Ibid., 146-49.
[94] Tadeusz Tołwiński, "Warszawa—Jako Stolica," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 5 (1934): 154.

"completely incidental" locations, before offering, in his signature rhetorical style, an irresistible alternate reality: "[l]et us imagine that these buildings had been conceived together and built according to a unified concept, there would have been enough of them to create a grand layout of the likes of Place Vendôme [a monumental eighteenth-century square in Paris]."[95] Lalewicz also expressed regret over this lost opportunity, averring that, since regaining independence, Warsaw had not received "a single monumental accent or complex that would have rendered it a capital," and he suggested that this was not the result of inadequate finances but merely a lack of a coordinated effort.[96]

Clearly the speech-givers felt they had strong reasons, many of which were strikingly similar to Lauterbach's observations made nearly 20 years earlier, that Warsaw failed to give an adequate impression of a capital city, instead remaining plunged in a disorganized fragmentation that diffused any sense of its former or current political eminence. The city had to date, as Tołłoczko scathingly implied, merely served as a "marketplace" and a "roof over one's head;" a provincial, philistine economic hub ruled by conflicting individual interests, devoid of any higher national aim—just as it had been in Lauterbach's view.[97] Tołłoczko perhaps best encapsulated the architects' collective grievance with the city's stasis when he exclaimed militantly in the meeting's closing speech: "We are coming out to fight for the capital's beauty. Enough experiments! Enough indolence! A free capital—of free people—must rid itself of its decay, it must be beautiful."[98]

Warsaw's post-1916 districts and their new housing developments would also come under special scrutiny in the 1934 speeches, as the speakers unanimously reduced them to mere cautionary examples of the consequences of inadequately regulated urban growth, impulsiveness,

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[95] Bohdan Pniewski, "Przemówienie Dyskusyjne," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 5 (1934): 153.
[96] Lalewicz, "Polityka Budowlana Warszawy—Stolicy Państwa," 163.
[97] Tołłoczko, "Przemówienie Dyskusyjne," 169.
[98] Ibid.

and unconsolidated interests. The healthful idyll of Warsaw's new housing colonies, with their ample space, low-rise buildings and intimate street networks, and, above all, their promise to mitigate the capital's burning housing crisis in the earlier postwar years (at least for the middle and upper classes), were no longer points of admiration as they had been in the 1920s. Instead, the speakers now wholly condemned the developments as simply another fatal error in Warsaw's urban legacy and a cluster of "wasted opportunities."[99] Ironically, one of the main complaints that the architects now raised about Warsaw's postwar housing colonies was the speed with which they had been built—the same quality that, as shown earlier, had been lauded by commentators nearly 10 years beforehand, when the city's housing crisis was truly alarming for all levels of Warsaw society and demanded immediate action. Now that by the mid-1930s the housing crisis's urgency had subsided just enough as to no longer be perceived as a direct threat to the city's—and thus the nation's—functioning (i.e., Warsaw's most important classes had secured suitable lodgings), architects felt vindicated to critique the capital's peripheral housing developments against the ideal standards of modern, rational urban planning principles—aided, of course, by the convenience of hindsight.[100] In this newly carved out discursive space, wherein the postwar developments did not represent a crisis response any longer but were simply typical neighborhoods forming part of a larger urban concept (Greater Warsaw), architects such as Tołwiński could now reflect on them with a deep sense of regret:

> Rashly improvised building cooperatives, a spirit of speculation, people of good intentions, but insufficiently prepared for the task, undiscerning credit institutions—behold the catalysts behind the great action that consumed hundreds of

[99] Ibid.
[100] In reference to Warsaw's elites' obvious prioritization in receiving housing, Pniewski observed with derision in his speech that the main goal of Warsaw's postwar construction activity had been to "satisfy the housing crisis not so much *for* the suburbs but rather *in* them, for the so-called intelligentsia [my emphasis]," Pniewski, "Przemówienie Dyskusyjne," 153.

millions of złoty and huge swathes of government land in the northern and southern parts of the city without any….urban planning framework. The result: the dispersal of a few thousand residents among areas equivalent in size to pre-war Warsaw, and in unfavorable conditions, and the scattering of municipal investments throughout these enormous terrains.[101]

Tołłoczko similarly emphasized the rushed, uncoordinated nature of the early postwar building boom, arguing that "[i]n the first years of the reborn Nation's existence…. the capital's building expansion began under only one slogan: "a roof over one's head"…. And so we built these roofs—in large quantities—in any which way—and quickly [sentence breaks included]."[102] Przybylski, meanwhile, conceded that Warsaw's new outlying developments had arisen in too many places at once and in too "disorderly" a fashion to be properly regulated by the "magistrate's technical and administrative apparatus," resulting in a series of "negative" outcomes.[103] Lalewicz, in his speech, likened Warsaw's postwar building boom to a "purgatory," a difficult but highly necessary learning period for the city as it sought out its rightful path of development.[104]

Out of all the speakers, Pniewski's rhetoric was the most striking. Pniewski, who by 1934 was already well on his way to becoming the arguable "court architect of the II [Polish] Republic," paired his irresistible visions of the magnificent Warsaw that could have been, as shown earlier, with a particularly stone-cold commentary on the Warsaw that really was.[105] He was arguably the most ruthless in criticizing Warsaw's postwar building activities and its suburban developments, speaking as if the city's acute post-independence struggles had hardly ever existed. He painted with ease an image of greedy developers "hastily picking apart….land plots eagerly offered by the state and the municipality with the aim to build" on Warsaw's peripheries, and he felt justified in

[101] Tołwiński, "Warszawa—Jako Stolica," 154.
[102] Tołłoczko, "Przemówienie Dyskusyjne," 169.
[103] Przybylski, "Zagadnienie Urbanistyczno-Architektoniczne Warszawy," 149.
[104] Lalewicz, "Polityka Budowlana Warszawy—Stolicy Państwa," 163.
[105] Beata Chomątowska, *Lachert i Szanajca: Architekci Awangardy* (Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2015), 221.

wholly dismissing the new developments as "unfathomably chaotic" and "one-sided" (i.e., their only purpose had been to house people).[106] Pniewski was also the most explicit in his complaints that visual aesthetics, as an important consideration in themselves, had been grossly neglected in developing Warsaw's suburbs. He complained that "the fact that the government could have taken the [c]apital's appearance into consideration [as it helped develop its peripheries] is not talked about at all," and he expressed indignance that despite the "hundreds of millions" of złoty spent on raising new buildings, not "even the simplest measures" had been taken to ensure the city would not be visually marred by the new constructions: "to take one example, the use of uniform building materials."[107] Overall, Pniewski made it clear in his speech that Warsaw's visual appearance deserved to be treated as a top priority in its future development, and the city's outlying housing colonies provided, in his view, a powerful and regrettable illustration of what resulted when aesthetic regulation was left by the wayside in urban development.[108]

In sum, as the memory of the city's earlier crisis years faded and a new (authoritarian) political climate in the city began to set in that clearly emphasized Warsaw's role as the capital of an increasingly powerful and consolidated nation, Polish architectural and urban experts became empowered to place a renewed discursive focus on the city's representational and organizational aspects. In doing so, and with the help of a number of observations already put forth by Lauterbach nearly 20 years previously under very different circumstances, they would reach the unanimous conclusion that Warsaw was in a completely unacceptable state for the capital of a significant European nation, given that it failed to convey any higher sense of order, prestige, or political

[106] Pniewski, "Przemówienie Dyskusyjne," 153.
[107] Ibid.
[108] In arguing for the importance of aesthetics in his speech, Pniewski suggested "it would be easier for us to live and deal with our daily troubles if we cared more about a person's entire development [i.e., culturing them through good aesthetics] rather than directing our efforts exclusively towards putting a roof over his head and filling his belly," 153.

ambition. Rather, in its deeply ingrained developmental patterns, it only continued to foster chaos and disunity.

On a final note, the discussion participants also echoed Lauterbach in their call for solutions to Warsaw's immense problems. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Lauterbach suggested that potentially only "radical means" and a "limitation of individual rights" could redivert Warsaw onto a more rational and harmonious course of development. The 1934 speakers proved to be of a very similar mentality. Przybylski, in his speech, spoke of "creating such a legal framework in which individual interests would be wholly and uncompromisingly surrendered to the collective interest" with regards to urban planning policy, while Nowakowski called for the creation of "a kind of supreme authority over those who have hitherto acknowledged no one above themselves."[109] Others, namely Woźnicki (who wrote the introductory article to the speeches in *Architektura i Budownictwo*) and Pniewski, would put this in even plainer, unmistakable terms. Both would invoke a variation on the term "dictator"—the former in his call for a "certain type of urban-architectural dictatorship" for the capital, the latter in his conclusion that "a person of dictatorial powers" would be required to effect the necessary change.[110]

Conclusion

By the mid-1930s, a significant number of prominent Polish architects had publicly gathered around the opinion that Warsaw was a glaring failure both as a city and as a capital. In assessing Warsaw against the standards of fashionable urban planning principles, they deemed the city to be plagued by major, disconcerting shortcomings. In the architects' eyes, Warsaw presented an unsightly antithesis to a modern city, let alone a modern capital, due to its spatial and

[109] Przybylski, "Zagadnienie Urbanistyczno-Architektoniczne Warszawy," 146-47; Nowakowski, "Przemówienie Dyskusyjne," 169.
[110] Woźnicki, "Warszawa Jako Stolica," 138; Pniewski, "Przemówienie Dyskusyjne," 153.

architectural chaos, its lack of visual harmony and building hierarchy, its largely absent sense of monumentality, and its overall adherence to unhealthy, nineteenth-century patterns of urban development shaped by petty speculative interests rather than higher collective (i.e., national) concerns. Given Warsaw's urban shortcomings, experts agreed that the city in its current state was highly inadequate as a symbolic embodiment of the modern Polish nation, which even undermined its legitimacy. These architects' discourse on Warsaw thus suggests that they subscribed to the conviction, or at least touted it for their own professional interests, that architecture and urban planning possessed the capacity to wield direct and meaningful political influence on a national level.

Further, Polish architects' 1934 comments on Warsaw notably did not emerge from a vacuum, as many (though not all) of their main critiques had already been voiced nearly 20 years earlier by the art historian Alfred Lauterbach, who made a series of observations on the city's appearance during a time when the promise of a resurrected Polish state had not yet been actualized but was already on the horizon. Given that Lauterbach's comments on Warsaw were published in this more politically hopeful climate from a Polish perspective, they serve as an important early example of the modern urbanistic critique of the city, wherein expectations for it as a key symbol of Polish nationhood and a (potential) preeminent national political center were gaining actual relevance. However, this politically informed discourse, which was largely focused on the city's symbolic and representative aspects as expressed through its spatial organization and aesthetics, would be initially eclipsed, somewhat ironically, by Warsaw's actual reinstatement as the capital of an independent Poland in 1918. In the years to follow, Warsaw, steeped in dire physical and economic conditions, would be faced with the onerous responsibility of securing its new function as the physical headquarters of the Polish state and its centralized bureaucratic apparatus, as well

as for the numerous individuals who would be indispensable to running the new nation. Thus, it can be reasonably inferred that in light of the city's clearly spelled out priorities after 1918, conditions at this time were far from favorable for the continuance of a serious public discourse on aspects of the city that could arguably be categorized as "cosmetic" and not absolutely vital to ensuring the capital's—and hence the nation's—continued functioning and stability.

However, notable political shifts towards a more authoritarian model of governance in Poland, first on a state level in 1926 and later within Warsaw's municipal government in 1934, when the Sanacja government installed—via undemocratic means—a regime-loyal commissary city president to increase the state's influence over the capital's affairs, helped foster a new semantic environment that made such discourse not only acceptable, but seemingly urgent—even if in reality the city still continued to struggle seriously with its basic infrastructural and housing issues. Thus, in the spring of 1934, the authoritarian government, motivated by its vested interest in Warsaw's ability to convey a real sense of the state's political power, order, and prestige through its urban language, had co-opted a large number of prominent Polish architects—themselves eager to lobby for their own radical, sweeping visions for the capital—to censure professionally Warsaw in a series of speeches. In their strong, uncompromising language and bold calls for radical, even ruthless methods of change, these speeches suggest that interwar Polish architects were more than ready, given the right opportunity and resources, to rework much of Poland's capital from its foundations, and in an arguably dictatorial fashion.

Chapter II: Warsaw as the Polish Rome: Publicized Interwar Polish Receptions of Fascist Italian Urban Planning and Architecture

Interwar Polish architects and urban planners, who by the mid-1930s had systematically denounced Warsaw as falling acutely and unacceptably short of embodying its preeminent status as capital of Poland in urban and architectural terms, were keen to look towards other European cities for potential model inspiration as they dreamed of radically reimagining their national capital. Certainly, their gaze was fixed primarily towards the urban planning and architectural developments of western Europe as the standard to emulate, which was part and parcel of interwar Poland's broader attempt to forge an identity in line with that of its more advanced western neighbors and shed its peripheral nineteenth-century status.[1] The city of Paris, for one, occupied a prominent place in interwar Polish architects' and urban planners' discussions, given the frequency with which it was invoked as the preeminent example of urban splendor and bold technical visions, with its monumental squares, strictly maintained architectural hierarchy, grand, wide boulevards, and impressive nineteenth-century legacy of sweeping demolitions that had brought about pristine order to its city center. Even the watershed 1934 architectural discussions on Warsaw examined in the previous chapter did not neglect to shine a spotlight on the French capital. The architect Antoni Dygat, in a sprawling speech entitled "Rebuilding Paris as the Capital of the World," pontificated on Paris' radical nineteenth-century reconstruction under Baron Haussmann as an exemplary instance of far-reaching urban planning vision and collective organization culminating in spectacular effect, with the obvious implication that Warsaw's architects and urban planners should emulate Paris' ruthless but effective methods.[2]

[1] Andrzej Szczerski, "Sztuka i Architektura dla II Rzeczypospolitej," *Prace Historyczne* 147, no. 4 (2020): 880.
[2] Antoni Dygat, "Rozbudowa Paryża Jako Stolicy Świata," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 5 (1934): 139-45.

However, Paris was not the only foreign point of reference invoked in the 1934 discussions. In a later speech, the architect Bogumił Rogaczewski expressed awe for the "stunning effects" resulting from the more recent mass reconstruction of two other European cities: Milan and Rome, whose impressive transformations were taking place under the watchful supervision of Benito Mussolini.[3] Rogaczewski added that the success of the two cities' metamorphoses was no mere "accident," as he reminded his audience that "Milan is the city of the youth of the Italian nation's Leader and the cradle of fascism," while Rome was "his ultimate triumph."[4]

Notably, Rogaczewski's evident admiration for the changes sweeping over fascist Italy's urban centers did not make him an anomaly among interwar Polish architects. In fact, from the mid-1930s onwards, publicized Polish architectural discourse evinced a noticeable fixation on the architectural and urbanistic developments unfolding in Italy—and Rome in particular—under the auspices of the fascist government, with the visionary Mussolini at the helm. That interwar Polish elites would set their sights on Italy for architectural and urban planning inspiration is not entirely surprising due to the deep-seated cultural and nationalist ties that existed between the two nations. For one, many of Poland's finest architectural monuments, from the Renaissance period onwards, had been designed by architects of Italian origin.[5] Secondly, the Polish nationalist discourse that took shape in the nineteenth century notably had strong roots in the Italian Risorgimento of 1848-1871, which, as scholars such as Lidia Jurek have put forth, provided the Polish intelligentsia with a key framework for defining a modern Polish national identity and served as a model for attaining eventual Polish statehood, thus forging a deep-seated sense of mutual understanding and

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[3] Bogumił Rogaczewski, "Wytyczne do Realizacji Zamierzeń Regulacyjnych w Warszawie," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 5 (1934): 152.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Katarzyna Nowakowska-Sito, "Czy Polska Leży Nad Morzem Śródziemnym?" in *Miraże Natury i Architektury: Prace Naukowe Dedykowane Profesorowi Tadeuszowi Bernatowiczowi,* eds. Alina Barczyk and Piotr Gryglewski (Łódz: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2021), 609.

ideological affinity between the two nations.[6] Finally, within the more immediate political context of interwar Europe, as Katarzyna Nowakowska-Sito has argued, Poles may have made a deliberate, concerted effort to identify culturally with Italy as a form of geopolitical escapism, given Poland's tense positioning between its increasingly belligerent German and Russian neighbors. Along this logic, Poland, in dissociating itself from its neighboring cultures of "eastern [Russian] despotism and Germanic militarism" and actively identifying with the Latin culture of the "sunny" and seemingly "unoppressive dictatorship" that was fascist Italy, was able at least mentally to remap its position in Europe as a way of coping with its increasingly ominous political future.[7] Italy, with its unequivocally western European culture and ostensibly less menacing political climate, could thus offer for Poles at least a sense of spiritual respite as they found themselves hopelessly stuck in an unenviable physical reality.

If we look closely at the comments that interwar Polish architects were making on the architectural developments and radical, large-scale urban reorganizations taking place in Italy under Mussolini's patronage, however, it becomes indisputably clear that this discourse was not a mere act of escapism. Rather, publicized Polish commentary on Italy's architectural and urban planning activities from this period suggests that at least a section of interwar Polish architects held a genuine conviction that important new ground in modern architectural and urban design was being broken on Italian soil, and that the country's advances in these fields potentially held the key to the future of urban development on a more universal level. It is notable that, in producing this discourse, Polish architects were not reticent explicitly to attribute Italy's spectacular modernization successes to its fascist political system and Mussolini's exceptional (and plainly

[6] Lidia Jurek, *"Polish Risorgimento:" Visions of the Modern Polish Nation and their Italian Foundations* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012), 13, 14.
[7] Ibid., 608, 611, 618.

undemocratic) decision-making powers. Further, certain innovations materializing on Italy's architectural and urban planning scene arguably resonated with Polish commentators on a deeper level that clearly went beyond mere matters of modernization and related to more deep-seated questions of nationalist identity formation, ideological framings of national history, and displays of political might and ubiquitous authority—all of which, as in fascist Italy, would have occupied a prominent place in an increasingly authoritarian and nationalist 1930s Poland. The notion that Polish architects, no doubt influenced by broader sociopolitical mentalities taking shape in their country, were seeking urban and architectural solutions that often followed a logic similar to their fascist Italian counterparts' becomes even more apparent when we examine the former's commentary on Warsaw's urban development and the architectural trends crystallizing in Poland from this period. From here, we can posit that fascist Italian developments in the fields of architecture and urbanism, and particularly in Mussolini's Rome, exerted an influence on Polish architects as they conceptualized new urban projects for Warsaw in the 1930s, and, further, that the worldviews of authoritarian Poland's and fascist Italy's elites intersected in notable ways, even if fascism supposedly remained "the most unpopular sociopolitical idea" for the Polish populace in the interwar period.[8]

Cathartic Demolitions, Uncontested Visions

In 1936, the Polish architect Piotr Biegański professed in an article in *Architektura i Budownictwo* that "the changes that are coming about in the architectural and urban planning field of the past few years in Italy, and particularly on the premises of Rome, should be of interest to the entire artistic world," adding that some of these changes addressed problems that were not

[8] Ibid., 618.

exclusive to the "Eternal City" but were of "European-wide" concern.[9] For Biegański, this was particularly true for those European nations that "up until recently had been under the influence of the Italian school," and Poland, which "as recently as 100 years ago employed the caliber of [Italian] architects like G. Bernardo….D. Merlini, and A. Corazzi" "undoubtedly" belonged to this select group.[10] Biegański's article was a report on the latest urban project initiated by Mussolini in his radical overhaul of Rome's historic center: a soon-to-be-underway, "gigantic undertaking" that would dramatically alter the surroundings adjacent to St. Peter's Basilica.[11] Curiously, it was not the proposed new buildings of the bold urban scheme that most vividly captured Biegański's attention, but rather its planned large-scale demolitions, which would tear through a significant portion of the old urban fabric situated across the square from the basilica and create a wide, open thoroughfare. The architect related with excitement:

> In a few months, the triangle of city blocks situated between Borgo Vecchio and Borgo Nuovo, that is, between the streets leading up to St. Peter's Square in Rome, will cease to exist. A new, magnificent pedestrian artery will be laid out, connecting the Corso Vittorio Emanuele with the Piazza Rusticucci. A new perspective on St. Peter's Basilica will open up such that not even the creators of this urban layout would have seen.[12]

That Rome's sweeping demolitions would have presented in the eyes of 1930s Polish architects a particularly arresting—and enviable—example of urban catharsis is understandable given the severity with which they viewed the problems of their own capital, whose dense, nineteenth-century inner-city buildup and severe urban congestion arguably called for similarly drastic solutions.[13] Biegański may have had Warsaw at the back of his mind when, writing on

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[9] Piotr Biegański, "Rzym w Przededniu Otwarcia Perspektywy Na Kopułę Św. Piotra," *Architektura i Budownictwo* no. 6 (1936): 177.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid., 178.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Beata Chomątowska, *Lachert i Szanajca: Architekci Awangardy* (Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2015), 187.

Rome again a year later in 1937, he recounted with satisfaction how "hundreds of houses of no artistic value were demolished" in adapting the Italian capital's "ancient city center" to the "living needs of the modern city," thereby "removing [its] dirtiest and most unhygienic backstreets."[14] He was also clearly impressed by the numerous major arteries that now cut through Rome's old, chaotic center at Mussolini's behest—yet another urban element that Polish commentators viewed as seriously inadequate in their home capital, given that the entirety of Warsaw's central bloc was served by only two major thoroughfares.[15] Out of all of Rome's modern arteries, Biegański was particularly awestruck by the grand Via dell'Impero, a wide road that had been laid out between the Palazzo Venezia and the Colosseum, which he described with wonderment as a "bridge of modernity."[16] The noted avant-garde architect Stanisław Brukalski was similarly captivated by this thoroughfare, reporting that "the Roman Via dell'Impero—a beautifully asphalted road running amongst trees and lawns, is a great open space in the city center that allows one to look upon many magnificent monuments of architecture."[17] Continuing, Brukalski claimed that "[n]othing new was built in new Rome; simply by opening its center, a modern capital was created out of the vast chaotic city."[18] Clearly, systematically purging old city centers of much of their existing structures as a method of deep-cutting urban regulation—of which a key part was facilitating the well-ordered movement of human masses in the city—emerged as a highly enticing, if not thrilling, prospect in the eyes of certain interwar Polish architects, who reported on its spectacular effectiveness in far-off Rome with palpable excitement and awe.[19]

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[14] Piotr Biegański, "Architektura Włoch Mussoliniego," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 10 (1937): 375.
[15] Only a segment of a new planned third major road, the Aleja Niepodległości, running north-south, was constructed in Warsaw between 1934-1938.
[16] Biegański, "Architektura Włoch Mussoliniego," 374.
[17] Stanisław Brukalski, "Pole Mokotowskie," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 2 (1935): 43.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Jarosław Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała: Niezrealizowane Projekty Urbanistyczne i Architektoniczne Warszawy Dwudziestolecia Międzywojennego* (Warsaw: Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego (i inni), 2019), 187.

Notably, Polish commentators like Biegański were eager to suggest that the bold, uncompromising visions and innovative solutions materializing in Rome's urban landscape, so vividly exemplified by its large-scale demolitions, had been possible only thanks to the sweeping executive powers wielded by the fascist leader Mussolini. In his article on the regulation of the area around St. Peter's Basilica, Biegański described Mussolini as Rome's "guardian" and an "initiator" of "the most audacious ideas," whose efforts had catapulted the city back "to its most splendid age" after "years of total stagnation."[20] He contended further:

> One must admit that the audacity needed for carrying out this undertaking [opening a new perspective on St. Peter's Basilica] had to extend far beyond matters of everyday life and necessitated an individual of great authority to call for the reconstruction…. of St. Peter's. The initiator of this idea—Mussolini—possesses among the Italian public an ample amount of such authority.[21]

The notion that only a singular and exceptionally powerful overseeing authority could realize real, deep-cutting change in urban matters was evidently catching on in discussions on Warsaw as well, as previously shown in Chapter I in the case of the 1934 discussions (recall Woźnicki's and Pniewski's respective calls for an "urban-architectural dictatorship" and "a person of dictatorial powers"). Kazimierz Tołłoczko was yet another participant in the discussions who subscribed to the idea of a reigning urban dictatorship in Warsaw, arguing in his speech that even when in past instances an exceptionally visionary individual had turned up to solve Warsaw's urban problems, "neither sufficient time nor authority had been granted him to carry out his plans."[22] Tołłoczko went so far as to claim that the "financial means," "creative forces" and "energies" needed to turn Warsaw into a true capital already, in fact, existed; they simply needed to be

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[20] Biegański, "Rzym w Przededniu Otwarcia Perspektywy," 178.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Kazimierz Tołłoczko, "Przemówienie Dyskusyjne," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 5 (1934): 169.

effectively coordinated under the authority of "a goal-conscious executive will."[23] Concluding in even plainer terms, Tołłoczko averred that "[w]e must find a 'person.'"[24] In light of such comments offered by the likes of Tołłoczko, it is unsurprising, then, that Mussolini's Rome, which seemed to offer unequivocal proof of the magnificent, radical results that arose when a supreme authority's sweeping vision went uncontested, would have captured the special attention of interwar Polish architects. Even the fact that the intentions behind these sweeping, visually imposing urban and architectural visions arguably smacked of a certain megalomania was not, for some commentators, problematic enough as to outweigh the advantages—it was, perhaps, even necessary to their existence. As Biegański reasoned:

> Many people who are either disinclined towards Mussolini or opposed to fascism believe that this patronage stems from motives apart from a pure worship of art, seeing it as primarily undergirded by a desire to immortalize the fascist epoch among the most magnificent epochs of Rome. Even if this were the case, would this not be a discreditation of art, for did the patronage of popes come from any other motive?[25]

Given Biegański's comment, it becomes clear that interwar Polish architects were not averse to romanticizing the notion of a monarchical, illiberal "patron" presiding over a modern city's affairs, if only for their ability to effect impressive, deep-cutting, and swift results in urban space by nature of their unquestioned authority. Certainly, it was radical, sweeping results above all else that interwar Polish architects pined after as they looked upon Warsaw's chronic, unruly sprawl, largely unchanged since the restoration of Polish independence. In his no doubt momentous overhaul of Rome, Mussolini was unequivocally proving to this last group that a significant curtailing of

[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Biegański, "Rzym w Przededniu Otwarcia Perspektywy," 178.

individual freedoms—and perhaps even a return to paternalism—was necessary to executing truly transformative urban visions.

History on Display

Beyond the fact that they created large swathes of much-needed space in Rome's city center and signified an impressive, monarchical gest of urban ambition, Mussolini's demolitions, and the new thoroughfares that appeared in their wake, achieved something else that caught the attention of interwar Polish commentators. In flattening significant portions of Rome's historic center, Mussolini's urban planning works had unveiled perspectives onto long-obscured architectural monuments that attested to the city's glorious past (particularly the days of the ancient Roman Empire), thereby allowing them to re-enter the field of historical vision. Beno Opoczyński, writing in *Architektura i Budownictwo* in 1934, described the new Via dell'Impero cutting through Rome's center not only as a "street full of life and movement," but a "road of a ceremonious, austere, archeological character, running from the Colosseum to the Venetian Palace alongside the picturesque disarray of the remnants and remains of past architecture [i.e. ruins]."[26] This "double character" of the Via dell'Impero as both an ultra-modern, functional transit line and a stage for exhibiting markers of Rome's past political and cultural splendor was in Opoczyński's opinion undoubtedly a "contributing factor to its urbanistic success."[27] The architect Alfred Gravier, reporting on his impressions of Rome as a Polish delegate to the 13th Architectural Congress held there in 1935, was similarly struck by the way in which many of Rome's oldest historic fragments were now being displayed following their extraction from layers of later, less valuable constructions. Gravier described how the city's "ancient objects, forming something like islands

[26] Beno Opoczynski, "Konkurs na Pałac Liktorski w Rzymie," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 12 (1934): 387, 389.
[27] Ibid., 389.

in…. modern Rome, are treated like precious gems, cordoned off and yet embedded in the urban whole, enveloped in quiet and seclusion," invoking, with this statement, the shrine-like quality conveyed by these urban structures in their newly wrested-out form.[28] He marveled in particular at the newly restored Castel Sant'Angelo standing near St. Peter's Basilica, which had now been "cleansed of all of its surrounding ramshackle buildings" and sequestered from its surroundings by a terrace.[29] The resulting "superb overall effect" was, for Gravier, a strong indication of the "great care that the fascist regime puts into protecting monuments."[30]

Notably, a similar process of a "musealiz[ing]" "select relics of the past," as described by Jarosław Trybuś, was also underway in Warsaw in the interwar period, as the "modernizing [Polish] capital began intensively scrutinizing its history and forging a new narrative out of its material remnants."[31] Just as in Rome, the uncovering and restoration of select historic monuments occupied a prominent place in plans for Warsaw's development, and particularly after 1934 under the presidency of the authoritarian government-backed Stefan Starzyński and his urban vision of a "Monumental Warsaw."[32] In his famed 1938 speech "Warsaw's Development," Starzyński declared with no small satisfaction that "Warsaw, in contrast to other great and venerable cities of the world, which, as part of the nature of things, are witnessing a depletion of their relics, will for many years see a growing number of them."[33] By this time, Starzyński could boast that one of Warsaw's most important historic monuments had begun to return into view: thanks to the removal of a number of "flimsy houses," a portion of Warsaw's Old Town's medieval defense walls (which,

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[28] Alfred Gravier, "XIII Kongres Architektoniczny w Rzymie Sprawozdanie Sporządzone przez Delegata S. A. R. P., Członka Stałego Komitetu Międzynarodowego Architektów C. P. I. A. (Comité Permanent International des Architectes) Kolegę A. Gravier," *Komunikat SARPU*, no. 9 (1936): 18.
[29] Ibid., 31.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 211, 17, 163.
[32] Ibid., 204.
[33] Stefan Starzyński, *Rozwój Stolicy: Odczyt Wygłoszony w Dniu 10 Czerwca 1938 r. na Zebraniu Urządzonym Przez Okręg Stołeczny Związku Rezerwistów* (Warsaw: Stołeczny Okręg Rezerwistów, 1938), 72.

as Starzyński added, had "at one time defended the capital from invaders)," had been uncovered and made accessible to the public.[34]

Warsaw, of course, could not claim a lengthy, ancient history as Rome could. However, given the historic rift of Poland's late eighteenth-century partitions and the virtual disappearance of Polish political autonomy for the entire span of the nineteenth century, the notion that Poland's "ancient" pre-partition cultural legacy warranted a conspicuous return, after a century of obscurity, into Poland's collective remembrance formed an important ideological tenet in the revived republic's nationalist project.[35] As Warsaw had been the capital of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, it served from 1918 as one of the most important platforms for reviving the memory of Poland's bygone epochs, with the Polish government making concerted efforts to restore the capital's surviving pre-partition-era architectural monuments and place them on prominent display, such as in/at the Royal Castle. The architect Kazimierz Skórewicz, who led the restoration works of this venerable building, underlined the importance of excavating Poland's past as part of arousing its national consciousness in a 1924 article on the Royal Castle: "[a]s it rises from its imposed slumber, Poland must now uncover and unearth its cultural and artistic heritage handed down by history, from the dust and rubble, in order to become aware of the greatness of its own culture."[36] Although Poland's pre-partition-era cultural legacy was certainly not ancient, Skórewicz's dramatic mention of "dust and rubble" evoked the sense that it belonged to a period that was unfathomably distant and warranting a major rediscovery, even if Poland's "slumber" had, in fact, lasted only just over a century.

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[34] Ibid.
[35] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 215.
[36] Kazimierz Skórewicz, "Zamek Królewski w Warszawie na Tle Badań Architektonicznych i Archiwalnych 1915-1924," *Architekt*, no. 1 (1924): 1.

The actual process by which Warsaw's monuments were excavated and displayed was, as in fascist Rome, highly deliberate and ideologically informed.[37] It served, as Trybuś has argued, the construction of a particular, politicized historical narrative that sought to highlight the most glorious moments of the capital's (and Poland's) history as a way of promoting a collective sense of pride and societal cohesion, while purposefully omitting others that were associated with periods of weakness, fragmentation, and decline.[38] Thus, special attention was placed on restoring those monuments in Warsaw that clearly attested to its bygone epochs of cultural and artistic splendor, political strength, and military prowess, to the neglect—or even detriment—of structures from less illustrious periods (i.e., much of the nineteenth century). The strong subjectivity that lay behind approaches towards Warsaw's historic urban fabric in the interwar period is suggested, for example, by a 1936 letter from the architectural conservator Tadeusz Sawicki to Warsaw's city administration regarding its historic districts. In the letter, Sawicki wrote of the need for "extracting [historic Warsaw's] *appropriate* character [my emphasis]," thus implying that the conservation and restoration of Warsaw's historic fragments were to follow a careful process of selective extraction designed to present the capital's heritage in a particular light.[39] In the same vein, Starzyński himself was keen to propagate the strongly politicized idea that the most authentic (i.e., genuinely Polish)—and incidentally the most beautiful—version of Warsaw was buried under layers of (foreign-imposed) ugliness, whose removal was essential for both aesthetic and political reasons. In his famous 1938 speech "Warsaw's Development," he recounted how Warsaw's "beautiful architecture" had been obscured in the nineteenth and early-twentieth century by "grey, monochrome, servile tenements"—explicitly linking, with this last adjective, Warsaw's ugliness

[37] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała,* 17, 211, 215.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Letter from Tadeusz Sawicki to Zarząd Miejski-Wydział Techniczny-Dział Regulacji, June 12, 1936, Folder 620A-*Projekty Przebudowy Okolic Starego Miasta w Warszawie* 1936-38, K. 10, Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie.

with its bleak former period of political servitude to tsarist Russia.[40] Thanks to a special campaign currently underway in the capital, however, which was tasked with "clearing away ugliness, unveiling beauty, and restoring Warsaw's truly beautiful and noble character," Starzyński assured his listeners that the oft-heard but ultimately "false saying [that] 'Warsaw is ugly'" was becoming a thing of the past.[41]

It is worth noting that, given Warsaw's kaleidoscopic political history, the move to restore and exhibit its historic fragments in accordance with nationalist aims sometimes found itself running into problematic ambiguities and conflicting viewpoints along the way. A case in point was the architectural discourse concerning central Warsaw's Saxon Square, which was renamed in honor of Józef Piłsudski in 1929.[42] The vast square undoubtedly had illustrious origins that fit well with the narrative of Warsaw's past eminence, having initially formed the courtyard of an enormous private palace built by Poland's Saxon kings in the eighteenth century. However, by the early nineteenth century, the palatial baroque residence was falling into disrepair, and after being purchased by a Russian merchant was completely rebuilt in the 1830s and 40s in an academic neoclassical style that left no trace of its royal provenance.[43] Further, over the course of the nineteenth century, the square and its rebuilt Saxon monument gained new (ill-famed) significance as a public display of Russian dominance over Polish life, as tsarist authorities turned the palace into their military headquarters and erected a towering, Byzantine-style Russian Orthodox cathedral that engulfed the central section of the square and dominated over the surrounding urban landscape.[44]

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[40] Starzyński, *Rozwój Stolicy*, 71.
[41] Ibid., 71-72.
[42] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 185.
[43] Ibid., 164.
[44] Ibid.

Thus, following Poland's restoration of independence, Polish government officials and architects were left to grapple with a square whose size and location made it a natural choice to serve as Warsaw's most prestigious and representative urban space, but which needed to undergo a process of "physical and ideological" cleansing to reflect the desired image of the reborn Polish state.[45] However, Polish attitudes towards the square's existing architectural elements were not always univocal. For example, a certain ambiguity existed around the Saxon palace: while the building was often touted as an integral part of the square and holding undisputable symbolic importance (particularly since it now housed the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier), architectural opinion regarded it as artistically uninspired, if not downright mediocre, with its conventional, austere nineteenth-century classicist edifice that in no way recalled its far grander eighteenth-century predecessor.[46] Even more striking was the discourse surrounding the tsarist-built cathedral and its place in the symbolically revamped square. Although it was ultimately demolished in stages between 1920 and 1926, the surviving transcript of a 1920 poll of by architects, conservators, and government officials on the cathedral's fate provides an insightful array of diverse opinions on the politically charged structure.[47] The majority of the interlocuters, predictably, argued for the cathedral's demolition, framing it as a glaring symbol of Russian oppression against the Polish nation, an act of foreign vandalism and, in the words of one speaker, a "monument of violence," whose removal was a matter of the highest national importance.[48] Along the logic of this last notion, a representative from the Ministry of Art and Culture, a certain Mr. Wojciechowski, in his

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[45] Ibid.

[46] The architect Paweł Wędziagolski, for one, censured the Saxon Palace in 1927 as architecturally "worthless" and "the work of a third-rate author…. drawn badly and without intuitiveness," see Paweł Wędziagolski, "Uwagi do Projektów Regulacji Placu Saskiego," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 3 (1927): 83.

[47] *Ankieta w Sprawie Soboru na Placu Saskim w Warszawie-Przeprowadzona przez Sejmową Podkomisję Robót Publicznych przy Udziale Przedstawicieli Ministerstwa Robót Publicznych, Ministerstwa Sztuki i Kultury, miasta st. Warszawy, Koła Architektów, Związku Budowniczych Polskich i T-wa Opieki nad Zabytkami Przeszłości* (Warsaw: n.p., 1920).

[48] Ibid., 18.

speech, even warned that by keeping the cathedral intact the Polish state was communicating to its masses that its government lived in fear, thereby propagating, "to our enemies' delight," the idea that "Poland is a 'provisorischer Staat.'"[49]

On the other side, however, was a smaller but discernible group of speakers calling for the cathedral's preservation, who in some instances employed similar lines of logic as their opponents to argue for the opposite outcome. For a certain Mr. Hryckiewicz, for example, it was actually *in* Poland's national interest to preserve the cathedral as a didactic monument; as a "marker of foreign violence," it would help ensure that "after a century and a half of bondage…. our future generations, and first and foremost we ourselves, remember the sins of our forebears and do not repeat them."[50] Similarly appealing against demolition, the architect Stefan Szyller argued that in light of Poland's recent victory in gaining independence from Russia, the cathedral could now be viewed as an "eternal" homage to Poland's glory and triumph over its adversary: "[the cathedral] thus becomes a magnificent monument for us…. that despite the terrible repressions and mighty force [of Russia], which are embodied by the cathedral through its richness and enormity, the Polish nation demonstrated such strength of spirit that it rose up and prevailed, while those who oppressed it forfeited!"[51] For Szyller, then, the cathedral's meaning had been transformed through shifted political circumstances. Not only would it no longer undermine Polish nationhood with its physical presence, but it would serve to glorify it as a symbol of the vanquished oppressor, as it now "entered our [sovereign Poland's] history."[52] Considering the diversity of opinions offered by the likes of Szyller, Wojciechowski, and others on the cathedral's future in the square—and by extension its place in the restored Polish Republic's historical narrative—it becomes clear that its

[49] Ibid., 17.
[50] Ibid., 13.
[51] Ibid., 25.
[52] Ibid.

ultimate demolition was not as self-evident a choice as may be commonly perceived. Additionally, the discourse on the cathedral serves as further proof that the process of regulating interwar Warsaw's historic fragments and districts was, as in fascist Rome, not only a question of exhibiting its past, but of extracting and displaying a *certain curated version* of its past—one that, naturally, would serve the interests of the particular nationalist mythology in formation.

Communicating Cultural Continuity and Power

Importantly, interwar Polish architects and commentators were not merely struck by the fact that Rome's illustrious history was being musealized with such weighty importance in the Italian fascist regime's overhaul of the city. They were similarly transfixed by how the legacy of this history continued actively to inform, in some cases, modern urban regulation projects carried out in fascist Rome, and—as will later be shown—contemporary fascist Italian architectural currents, though in an admittedly more complex and compounded way than in the former instance. Polish observers interpreted fascist Italy's urban and architectural developments as symptomatic of its regime's clear, broadly ideological efforts to foster a sense of historical continuity between Italy's glorified past and its newly promising present, as it sought to cultivate the notion that the fascist era was a worthy and equal successor of Italy's most culturally illustrious and politically eminent bygone epochs. Such an approach would arguably have deeply resonated with interwar Polish architects—and particularly those co-opted by the authoritarian state—as they engaged in their own process of transforming Warsaw into a capital that had to be not only modern but distinctively Polish, connected to Poland's history and unique cultural identity in publicly visible, meaningful ways, and strongly reflective of the Sanacja regime's indisputable hold on Polish national life.

The notion that the Italian fascist regime was consciously employing urban planning to create a conspicuous sense of symbolic continuity between the epochs of Rome's cultural zenith (i.e., imperial ancient Rome and the Renaissance) and the present day attracted the attention of Biegański in his commentaries on two of the Italian capital's modern urban schemes. Writing on the modern Via dell'Impero, Biegański remarked that the fact that it ran from the "Palazzo Venezia—the seat of the head of Fascism" to the "Colosseum—an ancient monument of the Roman Empire" was anything but coincidental.[53] He continued:

> The tying of these three points—the Colosseum, the Palazzo Venezia and the via del Impero [sic]—into a single entity represents, as it were, an encapsulation of the leading tenets of fascism, which in this case, as in many others, seeks to remind Italians of the greatness of the ideas and traditions to which they are heirs, and of fascist Italy's present mission.[54]

Apart from this urban ideological statement that unequivocally legitimized, through spatial means, fascist Rome as the truest successor to ancient Rome, Biegański identified an even more literal method that the fascist regime had employed to extend Rome's illustrious past symbolically into the present; namely, the modern-day resumption of grand, uncompleted urban plans previously lost to history. In his aforementioned 1936 report on the planned urban regulation project that would create a wide boulevard leading up to St. Peter's Basilica, Biegański related how its lead architects, Marcello Piacentini and Attillio Spaccarelli, had "not been afraid to reach back to old projects and the ideas of those who had begun or continued building works by the basilica."[55] In fact, as Biegański elucidated, the regulation concept for the basilica that was ultimately chosen for realization, "the so-called 'Napoleonic'" concept, was "the only one that legitimately continued

[53] Biegański, "Architektura Włoch Mussoliniego," 374.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Biegański, "Rzym w Przededniu Otwarcia Perspektywy," 181.

the works that were interrupted by the death of Pope Alexander VII."[56] He thus concluded that "the urban planning of the Mussolini epoch is closely tied to the urban planning of Pope Sextus V, Alexander VII and Napoleon I," implying, with this statement, Mussolini's place among Rome's great historic patrons.[57]

The concept of reviving forgotten historic urban layouts formed a notable element of interwar urban planning discourse on Warsaw as well. Similar in nature to what was taking place in fascist Rome, Warsaw's unfinished and unrealized historic urban plans provided a compelling opportunity for Polish architects to reconnect Warsaw's—and Poland's—present metaphorically with its eminent pre-partition past, thus fostering a prideful sense of continuity between the legacy of the old Commonwealth and the new, post-1918 Polish Republic. That reviving historic urban plans offered a meaningful way of repairing the sense of historic and cultural rift between modern, independent Poland and its pre-partition predecessor was evident for the architects Antoni Dygat and Antoni Miszewski, who in 1933 supplied *Architektura i Budownictwo* with an overview of their ambitious urban regulation project proposal for a large swathe of military-owned land in a prestigious district of Warsaw. Revealing that their monumental plan was, in fact, "nothing other than" an unrealized urban street layout formulated during the reign of Poland's last king, Stanisław August Poniatowski, in 1771, the architectural duo explained their broader reasoning behind opting to revive the historic concept:[58]

> The [1771] date in itself indicates that [the concept] can be regarded as an urban testament to the capital of old, independent Poland. The reborn Poland of today should carry out this testament, thereby fostering the continuity of Polish architectural thought; as in all manifestations of the [Polish] nation's cultural life, the traditional continuity of

[56] Ibid., 179.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Antoni Dygat & Antoni Miszewski, "Rozplanowanie Terenów Wojskowych Przy Ul. Nowowiejskiej w Warszawie," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 10-12 (1933): 358.

art and culture should be underlined wherever possible. It is our duty to care for [this continuity of tradition], as too often has the thread of Polish culture been severed throughout history."[59]

While Dygat and Miszewski, in their description of their project proposal, went to particularly great lengths to delineate the symbolic significance of Poniatowski's urban plan for modern Polish nationhood, they were certainly not the only architects to take Warsaw's pre-partition urban layouts into account in envisioning the Polish capital's future development in the interwar period. To take another noteworthy example, the architect Antoni Jawornicki, arguing in 1926 for the benefits of a proposed northward extension of Marszałkowska Street (Warsaw's main north-south thoroughfare) through the historic Saxon Garden to Bank Square, emphasized that the extended road would not only greatly improve the area's traffic flow, but would help to restore the original proportions of the Saxon Axis—a partially completed (and since degraded) eighteenth-century urban layout in central Warsaw.[60] As Jawornicki explained, the proposed Marszałkowska street extension would cut through the Saxon Garden, which formed the central component of the historic axis, in such a way that it would restore the "fanlike shape" and "classic axial layout" that it had possessed in the eighteenth century, thus reinstating the original, symmetrical balance of the entire baroque urban composition.[61] Averring that the Saxon Garden was an "outstanding architectural scheme and should remain as such," the architect also suggested building a new architectural edifice along its newly reshaped western border (on the other side of the extended Marszałkowska street) that would visually close the Saxon Axis at its western extremity, thereby creating a definitive, "unified whole" out of the historic layout.[62] Clearly for Jawornicki, then, the

[59] Ibid., 358-59.
[60] Antoni Jawornicki, "W Sprawie Planów Regulacyjnych, Dotyczących Ogrodu Saskiego," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 4 (1926): 20.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.

extension of Marszałkowska street did not merely signify a functional solution for relieving the surrounding area's congestion problems; it also, importantly, represented a momentous opportunity to bring a sense of not only return, but completion, to one of Warsaw's most venerable pre-partition urban plans.

Moving beyond urban layouts and into questions of architectural style, contemporary Polish commentators also evinced significant interest in what they saw as the fascist regime's efforts to synthesize a new kind of official Italian architecture that, while unquestionably modern and functional, did not dutifully adhere to the avant-garde international style then flourishing in Europe.[63] Instead, as some Polish observers related enthusiastically, fascist-sponsored architects appeared to be on a quest to create their own nationalized version of modernism that both retained the spirit of Italy's distinct cultural legacy—ostensibly without dutifully mimicking past historical styles in the fashion of then-ill-regarded nineteenth-century historicism—and conspicuously embodied the strong authority and power of the fascist regime. Biegański, for one, demonstrated a strong receptiveness to what he identified as fascist efforts to foster new architectural currents that were a unique, meaningful expression of fascist Italian identity rather than a mere imitation of universal, pre-existing, functional avant-garde forms. Noting with enthusiasm in a 1937 report entitled "The Architecture of Mussolini's Italy" that a "precise form of expression" was now clearly taking shape in modern Italian architectural developments, Biegański relayed how Italian architects, in their quest to synthesize new architectural results, had not "blindly copied northern [avant-garde] forms," nor had they jostled to find senseless architectural 'tricks.'"[64] Rather, as Biegański averred, "work was begun from scratch, from the sharpening of the pencil and the search

[63] Biegański, "Architektura Włoch Mussoliniego," 368.
[64] Ibid., 368, 371.

for viable expressions of plastic concepts," leading to results that were in the author's view often "more profound than certain modernist canons."[65]

Also enraptured by the architectural developments unfolding under Mussolini was the Polish architect Jerzy Münzer. In a sprawling 1938 article entitled "Tradition and Rationalism in Italy's Architecture of Today," Münzer located the driving force behind Italy's noteworthy architectural innovations—as well as all of its modern creative output in general—in what he described as the fascist regime's central ideological mission to revive the greatness of Italy's cultural past in the present day through its modern achievements. As Münzer related in the opening paragraph of his article:

> Modern Italy is justifying its great claims and national ambitions with unparalleled creative works of spirit, mind, skills, and artistry, much like those with which Italy's bygone generations have enriched humanity. It also places, and with rightful pride, great emphasis on the fact that for centuries, Italian culture played a leading role in Europe. The magnitude of these past achievements not only forms the fundamental argument of fascism, but it is also the most important source of its creative forces.[66]

Münzer went on to emphasize, however, that Italian architects, in their quest to create architecture for the fascist present that was meaningfully connected to Italy's distinct, "splendid past," "naturally" could not rely on an "artificial reversion to old [architectural] forms," which would be a regressive move given the greatly altered conditions of modern life.[67] Instead, they aimed, as Münzer interpreted, to strike an ideal "compromise between the exemplary past and what modern life inexorably demanded" in their designs.[68] Despite the seemingly lofty nature of this

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[65] Ibid., 368, 377.
[66] Jerzy Münzer, "Tradycja i Racjonalizm w Dzisiejszej Architekturze Italii," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 11-12 (1938): 383.
[67] Ibid., 383, 386
[68] Ibid., 386.

architectural mission, in practice, as Münzer described it, it essentially entailed designing structures that were still recognizably modern and functional but which employed simplified, modernized classicist elements and proportions, with the clear intention of invoking the memory of classical Rome.[69] Regarding the physical results of these efforts, Münzer appeared to be most impressed by the newly synthesized style's application in monumental fascist government buildings, noting how the "massive and heavy architecture, based on [modernized] classical forms" of the structures effectively conveyed the "[s]trength and power of fascism."[70] He also expressed direct admiration for the designer behind a number of these monumental buildings, Marcello Piacentini, whom Münzer called "[t]he most prolific and popular architect of fascism" and whose works elicited in some cases "masterful proportions" and a "grand scale worthy of awe."[71] However, it is worth nothing that Münzer was not unilaterally taken with the results of fascist Italy's architectural experiments, and he observed in some examples what was in his view a too strong desire to retain original historic architectural forms without any deeper justification than mere pretension.[72] In such cases, these unmodified architectural "forms of past beauty" would merely stand as empty, meaningless gestures, as they failed to "awaken the spirit of the past that created these forms as a logical expression of its being."[73]

Taken in sum, Münzer's opinions on fascist Italy's architectural output to date were decidedly mixed, though he clearly believed that the enterprise, on the whole, showed notable promise. Similarly optimistic in the innovation potential of the fascist architectural mission, on a concluding note, were the Polish architects Jan Cybulski and Kazimierz Lichtenstein. Writing on

[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid., 384, 386.
[72] Ibid., 386.
[73] Ibid., 384.

their impressions of Italy in 1935, Cybulski and Lichtenstein did not conceal their enthusiasm for the fascist-built city of Sabaudia, an entirely new urban center raised on the drained Pontine Marshes lying south of Rome, whose architecture demonstrated, in their eyes, a "far-reaching evolution" and "a complete repudiation of outlived forms whilst retaining the spirit of Roman architecture."[74] For these two architects, as it was for Münzer, the ability to capture the "spirit" of a past epoch or culture, while, at the same time embracing the new possibilities of modern architectural techniques, clearly constituted a crucial factor in determining the degree of success of fascist Italy's architectural experiments.

Interwar Polish architects evinced such a marked interest in fascist Italy's architectural program because they perceived a deep relevance in it to their own quest to form a nationalized, distinctly Polish version of modernist architecture, which in the 1930s became a strongly evident concern in Polish architectural discourse and was particularly pertinent to official architecture in Warsaw (e.g., ministerial buildings), given the city's symbolic importance as the central seat of the Polish state. Modernism, which first appeared in Polish architecture in the mid-1920s in the form of internationalist, radical avant-garde functionalism, was unquestionably an influential force in interwar Poland, having catalyzed the shift away from the traditionalist architectural currents that had dominated in the earlier postwar years and established "[f]unctionalism, simplicity…. [and] rational approaches to form" as integral tenets of Polish architectural discourse henceforth.[75] However, as Diana Wasilewska observes, over the course of the 1930s this discourse, no doubt

[74] Constance Rignon, "Towards the Contemporary Development of Modern Architecture Inherited from the Fascist Regime: The City of Sabaudia," *SHS Web of Conferences* 63 (2019): 2; Jan Cybulski and Kazimierz Lichtenstein, "Wrażenia z Kongresu w Rzymie," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 9 (1935): 6.

[75] Agata Wagner, "Styk Trzech Dzielnic Warszawy: Śródmieścia, Mokotowa i Ochoty w Okresie Międzywojennym," *Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki* 56, no. 3 (2011): 69; Diana Wasilewska, ""Bezduszne Maszyny" i "Obce Dziwactwa": Recepcja Architektury Modernistycznej w Polskiej Prasie Dwudziestolecia Międzywojennego," in *Teksty Modernizmu: Antologia Polskiej Teorii i Krytyki Architektury 1918-1981. T. 2, Eseje,* ed. Dorota Jędruch et al., (Cracow: Instytut Architektury): 39, 40.

influenced by rising nationalist currents in the country, experienced a notable shift, as it began evincing a tendency to assess modernist architecture not only in terms of its ability to provide functional and rationalized solutions, but also its capacity to convey the distinct spirit of Polish nationhood through its forms.[76] Consequently, the modernist architecture of the radical, internationalist avant-garde, with its ostensibly "soulless," unadorned functionalism, lack of individuality, and "anti-aestheticism," would not satisfy 1930s Polish "yearnings for a modern yet monumental national style" wherein the "[s]oul, the [Polish] nation, and modernism" could coexist "in perfect symbiosis."[77] Instead, the concept of a "softened" modernism would come to stand as the new architectural ideal: one that was discernibly simple, functional, and rational, but at the same time able to convey a readable Polish national character.[78]

That the goal of synthesizing a modern yet uniquely Polish national architectural style was alive in the 1930s Polish consciousness is confirmed by architectural texts from the period. Bohdan Pniewski, for one, in his notable speech during the 1934 architectural discussions on Warsaw (examined in Chapter I), proclaimed that architecture should not only serve as a "dull utility" but would only "fulfill its mission" when it successfully manifested the "inner values of the Nation."[79] Three years later, in 1937, the Polish architect Jan Zachwatowicz, writing in an article that presented a brief overview of Poland's architectural history in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, concluded his summary optimistically; "[t]he last few years…. have inspired hope that Polish architecture will find its national expression, in which functionalism, construction and architectural form will continue down the path of evolution."[80] Similarly vocal about the growing significance

[76] Wasilewska, ""Bezduszne Maszyny,"" 39, 42, 50.
[77] Ibid., 52, 40, 49, 50-51.
[78] Ibid., 49.
[79] Bohdan Pniewski, "Przemówienie Dyskusyjne," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 5 (1934): 153.
[80] Jan Zachwatowicz, "Zarys Dziejów Architektury Polskiej," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 4-5 (1937): 103.

of attaining a national style in modern Polish architecture were two commentators (simply identifying as T.D. and S.Z.) writing in the following issue of *Architektura i Budownictwo*, who averred that discussions on "national architecture" had started to grow "ever louder and more serious."[81] The commenting pair stipulated, however, that "[w]e will not attain a national architectural style by way of aggressive twists and turns, nor does it seem that we will gain anything from foreign experiments. The only way to find one's own self-expression is through arduous exploration and by diligently working through one's own discoveries."[82] Here it is worth noting the striking similarity between these parameters, with their emphasis on inward-looking, isolated exploration as a means of achieving a genuine 'national' architecture, and Biegański's aforementioned admiration of what he identified to be the basis of fascist Italy's architectural innovativeness: a refusal to "blindly cop[y]" foreign models, and a commitment to synthesizing new architectural forms ostensibly "from scratch, from the sharpening of the pencil."

In practice, however, the "softened" modernist style that would ultimately give shape to Warsaw's official architecture of the 1930s arguably had little to do with Polish architects' idealized discourse on inward-looking discoveries of pure, intrinsically national forms. Rather, and in yet another notable parallel to fascist Italy, the representative structures raised in Warsaw in the 1930s largely adhered to a modernized neoclassical style, or alternatively what Filip Burno has called a "reductive classicism," which sought to invoke the heavy proportions, symmetry, monumentality and austerity typical of classicist architecture through simplified, rationalized forms.[83] The reason as to why Polish architects were keen to employ classicist principles in their

[81] T.D and S.Z, "Nowy Projekt Prof. Świerczyńskiego," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 6 (1937): 230-31.
[82] Ibid., 231.
[83] Filip Burno, "Constructions of Modernity in the "Electric State": Structures, Networks, Perception. Polish Architecture in 1926-1939," in *A New Beginning: Modernism in the Second Polish Republic*, trans. Marta Herudzińska-Oświecimska and Karl Wood, eds. Piotr Ruszkiewicz and Andrzej Szczerski (Cracow: Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, 2023), 82, 84.

modernist designs for Warsaw's official structures in the 1930s could be indicative, as Grzegorz Piątek has partly suggested in the case of Pniewski's architectural work, of a similar nationalistic reverence for classicism that existed in interwar Poland as it did in fascist Italy. According to Piątek, Pniewski, who was one of the most notable 1930s proponents of modernized classicist architecture in his designs for Warsaw, associated classicism, much like his fascist Italian counterparts, with a "period of greatness for his nation," and similarly aimed to "translate" it "into the language of twentieth-century forms."[84] Indeed, classicism, though obviously not native to Poland, had wielded a major influence on the country's architecture since the eighteenth century and was often associated in the interwar Polish perspective with a period of cultural zenith in Poland's history, having flourished under the illustrious cultural patronage of the aforementioned eighteenth-century Polish King Poniatowski.[85] It had also left a particularly visible legacy in Warsaw in a prominent array of monumental, early nineteenth-century public and governmental buildings, built during a brief period of Polish political autonomy in the early years of the Congress Kingdom of Poland (formed under the auspices of the Congress of Vienna in 1815), which saw Warsaw become organized into a modern, centralized capital. This last group of classicist structures, which included Warsaw's Grand Theater, the Palace of the Council of Ministers, and a large complex of financial institutions on Warsaw's Bank Square, were held in particularly high regard by the interwar Polish architectural milieu as monuments of exceptional artistic value and symbols of a politically and socially progressive, albeit brief, era in Warsaw's history.[86]

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[84] Grzegorz Piątek, *Niezniszczalny: Bohdan Pniewski: Architekt Salonu i Władzy* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Filtry, 2021), 59-60.
[85] See Alfred Lauterbach, *Styl Stanisława Augusta: Klasycyzm Warszawski Wieku XVIII* (Warsaw: F. Hoesick, 1918).
[86] In 1925, Alfred Lauterbach described the buildings, which were designed by the prominent architect Antonio Corazzi (incidentally of Italian origin), as the "[c]rown of Warsaw classicism" and "impressive" not only in their architecture and "grandness of composition" but in their "purposefulness," see Alfred Lauterbach, *Warszawa* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy "Bibljoteka Polska," 1925), 185, 183; the architect Czesław Przybylski evinced similar reverence for Corazzi's monumental structures, professing in 1934 that they formed the "only brighter [architectural] moment" in Warsaw's otherwise bleak and unruly cityscape, before adding pointedly that they had been built in the

Apart from its positive historical connotations, however, it was also classicist architecture's intrinsic sense of imposingness, solidity, monumentality, and pristine order—and its consequent ability to convey a readable message of power and authority through these qualities—that contributed to its attractiveness as a style of reference for interwar Polish architects as they devised Warsaw's new official architecture.[87] That this last group held the conviction that such qualities were desirable in modern architecture and could be effectively achieved through specifically classicist (simplified) forms is suggested, for one, by published architectural reviews of new buildings erected in Warsaw in the 1930s. A particularly notable example is a 1933 review (possibly written by the architect Stanisław Woźnicki) of the newly built headquarters for the Polish Teachers' Union in Warsaw. In the article, the reviewer placed special emphasis on the structure's "outstanding classic character" and was clearly impressed by the imposingness of its architecture, describing it as bearing "the mark of something like cool deliberation."[88] The reviewer also made it clear that the headquarters' streamlined classical architectural elements, which included a striking entrance arch of a decidedly Roman, triumphal quality, had provided the key to the building's "monumental character"—this last quality being without any doubt a laudable achievement in the reviewer's eyes.[89]

Notably, the reviewer averred further that the unmistakable monumentality of the new structure was ideologically well-suited to its purpose, in that it visually conveyed a readable sense of the (presumably vast) "scale and breadth of the Union that is headquartered [in the building]."[90] In this last statement, we can certainly find a parallel in Münzer's previously mentioned

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timespan of "1815—1831, when we [Poles] had relative freedom in our self-determination," see Czesław Przybylski, "Zagadnienie Urbanistyczno-Architektoniczne Warszawy," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 5 (1934): 147.

[87] Burno, "Constructions of Modernity," 80.

[88] S.W., "Gmach Związku Nauczycielstwa Polskiego w Warszawie," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 5 (1933): 133-34.

[89] Ibid., 133, 143.

[90] Ibid., 134.

observation on the "massive and heavy architecture" of fascist Italy's buildings effectively conveying an ideological message of fascism's "[s]trength and power," and we can interpret it as an indication that interwar Polish architects were similarly receptive to the notion of actively communicating concrete ideas (particularly those related to power and authority) through their own design projects. The Polish delegate Gravier, too, in his (previously mentioned) report on the 1935 Rome Architectural Congress, did not fail to recount that Mussolini himself, in a speech given during an architect's banquet held at his residence in Rome (in which Gravier participated), proclaimed that one of architecture's duties was to serve as an expression of "power."[91] Certainly, such a mentality around architecture would only prove increasingly relevant for Polish architects as the 1930s wore on, as they took commissions from a progressively more authoritarian and étatist Sanacja regime whose interest in creating public expressions of its infallible strength and dominance over Polish life was growing ever more coherent.[92] Within this new field of opportunity, Polish architects (at least those willing to cooperate with the government) would be tasked with the paramount duty of giving a cohesive, publicly visible form to the Polish state's desired image on an unprecedented, imposing scale. As will be shown in the next chapter, Warsaw, as the nation's capital and political nucleus of the Polish state, would form the principal—and doubtless the most spectacular—platform for these planned urban and architectural displays of might.

Conclusion

In the interwar period, and particularly from the mid-1930s, when Polish architectural and urban planning discourse around Warsaw's shortcomings as a national capital noticeably intensified following the Sanacja regime's forcible intervention in the city's affairs in 1934, Polish

[91] Gravier, "XIII Kongres Architektoniczny w Rzymie," 36.
[92] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 23, 351.

architects and commentators devoted a noteworthy amount of publicized attention to the urban planning and architectural developments occurring in fascist Italy, paying special regard within this commentary to Rome's radical transformations under Mussolini. When closely examined, these writings suggest that a number of elements of Italian fascist city planning and architectural design resonated deeply with the interwar Polish perspective, providing emulative examples for Polish architects as they themselves grew increasingly concerned with relieving Warsaw of its nineteenth-century disarray and transforming it into an impressive, stately, and modern twentieth-century capital worthy of a "nation of powerhouse significance."[93]

For one, Polish commentators evinced clear admiration for the sweeping, uncompromising nature of fascist urban planning, which, as they remarked in Rome's case, had ruthlessly cleared large swathes of the central city's dense, decrepit, architecturally worthless structural fabric and replaced it with modern, spacious communication arteries that visually traced impressive new urban perspectives. No doubt, interwar Polish architects would have been no stranger to fantasizing about an analogous solution for Warsaw's center, with its similarly cramped, dysfunctional nineteenth-century street network and lack of grand vistas, while conceding at the same time—as was done en masse in the 1934 Warsaw speeches—that such a radical urban regulation measure could be realized only through the initiative of an exceptionally powerful executive authority. Here, Mussolini, with his unchallenged legal powers and far-reaching vision for Rome, whose realization was unfolding with astonishing speed and effectiveness, easily provided an enviable example for Polish architects of the spectacular, large-scale transformation that could befall a city when its fate was placed in the hands of a singular, decidedly undemocratic but visionary overarching authority.

[93] Przybylski, "Zagadnienie Urbanistyczno-Architektoniczne Warszawy," 148.

Further, interwar Polish architects were struck by the way in which the Italian fascist regime, while strongly oriented towards deep-cutting urban modernization processes, also deftly employed Rome's urban transformation as a nationalist platform to highlight the Italian 'nation's' bygone epochs of political and cultural splendor, with the additional aim of instilling in the public consciousness the notion that modern Italy, under fascism, was rightfully continuing the glorious legacy of its (mythologized) past. Contemporary Polish commentators identified concrete elements of this process in their writings, namely the restoration and theatrical display of Rome's hitherto neglected and/or obscured monuments (particularly those of ancient Rome and the Renaissance), the conspicuous spatial connection of venerated Roman landmarks to buildings housing fascist headquarters, and the resumption of uncompleted historic urban layouts. Certainly, interwar Polish architects would have deeply understood the nationalist and political value behind these urban undertakings, as they, too, along with other members of the Polish elite, carefully deliberated on how to best present Warsaw's historic urban and architectural legacy from a nationalist perspective and sought ways, through their urban design proposals, to create potent symbolic connections between the capital's (and nation's) mythologized pre-partition past and its newly promising present.

Finally, interwar Polish observers appeared to relate deeply to what they viewed as fascist Italian architects' efforts to synthesize a new, official architectural style, which was to be modern and functional yet culturally distinct, and, perhaps most importantly, able to convey publicly to individual citizens (most notably in the capital) the ubiquitous presence of a powerful, authoritative, and paternalistic state. Much like their fascist Italian peers, a number of Polish architects, in an evident affront to the internationalist philosophy of the liberal European avant-garde, were by the 1930s on a similar quest to synthesize a modernist architectural style that could

ostensibly transcend its functionalist ethos to embody the (Polish) nation's distinct cultural identity. This last group was also evidently similarly attuned to the notion that architecture possessed a special capacity to convey, to great effect, broader political statements and ideologies within the sphere of everyday civilian life (such as in public urban spaces), as they sought to embody the iron-willed authoritarianism of Poland's ruling regime through their monumental and imposing, classically inspired architectural designs for Warsaw's official structures.

In sum, the interwar Polish architectural milieu viewed in fascist Italy's urban and architectural achievements, and particularly those pertaining to Rome, a spectacularly rendered (and enviable) reflection of many of its own, largely unrealized hopes and visions for Warsaw, providing further clout, as a consequence, to the widely touted idea among leading Polish architects that their capital would see real transformative results only through a less-than-democratic leadership model. It also becomes apparent that interwar Polish architects and their fascist Italian peers held a mutual, remarkably strong understanding of urban space as not merely a vital arena for wide-scale modernization, but a key platform for consolidating national identity and cultural memory, promoting sociopolitical order, and communicating the power of the interventionist state over the individual. In Warsaw's case, these considerations would continue to grow in strength and acquire striking new dimensions in the imaginations of the capital's architects as the 1930s wore on.

Chapter III: A Radically Reimagined Warsaw for the "Piłsudski Epoch": Architectural Ambitions, Authoritarian Dreams, and Monumental Visions of a New City Center for the Capital

By the late 1930s, though Warsaw continued to be mired by glaring basic infrastructural gaps and financial shortcomings, grand visions of the future city had begun, through the concerted initiative of Warsaw's influential Sanacja-backed municipal authorities and an array of ambitious architects and urban planners, to crystallize with full force. An impressive lineup of these visions was presented to the public, in model form, at a watershed exhibition entitled *Warsaw Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (*Warszawa Wczoraj, Dziś, Jutro*) on the eve of the Second World War in 1938 at the behest of Warsaw's city president Stefan Starzyński, thus offering Varsovians a spectacular glimpse of the investments that would transform Warsaw in the coming years into a truly modern and striking European capital.[1] Among the more notable future urban development projects showcased at the exhibition was an expansive modern square around Warsaw's new central rail station, vast exhibition grounds on the right bank of the Wisła river (for a planned General National Exhibition scheduled for 1944), a proposed regulation of the square in front of the Royal Castle, and an enormous new sporting park, complete with stadium, in the Siekierki district in southern Warsaw.[2] The largest and arguably the most prestigious of these urban visions, however, was *The Marshal Józef Piłsudski District* (*Dzielnica Marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego*), a vast, comprehensively planned representational district that would form Warsaw's new administrative, political, and cultural nucleus and serve as a potent, unparalleled expression of its

[1] Grzegorz Piątek, "Wystawa *Warszawy Przyszłości* (1936): Między Pokazem Architektury a "Jarmarkiem Dydaktycznym,"" *Miejsce: studia nad sztuką i architekturą polską XX i XXI wieku* 2 (2016): 147.
[2] Władysław Lewandowski, *Warszawa Wczoraj, Dziś, Jutro: Wystawa w Muzeum Narodowym: Odbitka z Nr. 2-3 "Kroniki Warszawy" 1938 r.* (Warsaw: Drukarnia Miejska, 1938), 16, 18; construction of the new central rail station began in 1933 and continued until the outbreak of the Second World War, in the events of which the station was completely destroyed (predominantly as a result of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944), Jarosław Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała: Niezrealizowane Projekty Urbanistyczne i Architektoniczne Warszawy Dwudziestolecia Międzywojennego* (Warsaw: Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego (i inni), 2019), 106, 132; Ibid, 24.

projected powerhouse capital status.[3] In its spectacularly modern yet monumental appearance, scale, and conceptual unity, the district was presented as the ultimate antithesis to the Warsaw that was so lamented by interwar Polish architects and urban planners for its fragmented chaos, lawlessness, and insufficiently capital character. The district would, in the words of the architect Stanisław Brukalski, "weigh heavily on the city's [Warsaw's] plan and change its fundamental course."[4]

A crucial aspect of the planned representational district's significance for Warsaw was its projected location. In its placement on the Mokotów Fields, a large stretch of mostly unbuilt terrain lying adjacent to central Warsaw, the district's creation auspiciously coincided with the fulfillment of another, major proposition active in interwar Polish architectural and urban planning discourse: namely, that Warsaw's city center be moved to an entirely new location in light of the conspicuous inadequacies of Warsaw's existing central core. Thus, the district's realization would concurrently signal a dramatic shift in Warsaw's center of gravity and, as a result, catalyze a fundamental, wide-scale reorganization of the city, which Polish architectural and urban planning discourse notably framed as auspicious not only in functional and rational, but politically symbolic terms. Polish architects and urban planners were also keen to emphasize the symbolic significance of the Mokotów Fields themselves, which as a result of their historical underdevelopment presented, in their breadth and auspicious location, a rare opportunity for the city to erect a large-scale, comprehensively planned urban layout within its post-1916 boundaries.

The envisioned district's design itself, meanwhile, formed interwar Polish architects' and urban planners' arguably most far-reaching opportunity to dramatically elevate Warsaw's capital prestige in a sweeping, systematically planned fashion and showcase the extent of their abilities in

[3] Lewandowski, *Warszawa Wczoraj, Dziś, Jutro*, 16.
[4] Stanisław Brukalski, "Pole Mokotowskie," *Architektura i Budownictwo* 11, no. 2 (1935): 43.

service of the Polish state. This became particularly true after Józef Piłsudski's death in 1935, in the wake of which the (still then vaguely defined) district's plans became, as Jarosław Trybuś has observed, strongly entrenched with political meaning, as Piłsudski's successors strove to discursively reframe the district as an "urbanistic monument" to the deceased Polish leader with the aim of employing it as a far-reaching display of the Sanacja regime's power and authority.[5] Undoubtedly, Polish architects and urban planners eagerly embraced the district's politically motivated, dramatically expanded semantic scope given that, for one, it provided further impetus—in offering Piłsudski's posthumous figure as a supreme, dictatorial organizing element—to their strivings to create a sweeping, conceptually unified statement of supreme urban order. Further, the district's reframing as a monument glorifying Piłsudski's personage and, by extension, the new era of prosperity and stability he had ostensibly safeguarded for the new Polish nation, offered its designers unprecedented latitude to envision the district on a far more ambitious, monumental scale of monarchical, epoch-making proportions. Against these new, ideologically informed guidelines that architects and urban planners were now compelled to follow in designing the district, the possibility that they deliberately looked to contemporary fascist Italian projects, with the latter's Polish-recognized abilities in effectively merging urban and architectural innovation with higher political and nationalist aims, comes into compelling focus.

Ultimately, the outbreak of the Second World War on September 1, 1939, put a definitive end to the plans for Warsaw's representational district, along with the other grand urban development projects presented at *Warsaw Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, whose realization would have doubtless markedly changed the face of the Polish capital. Later, at the war's conclusion in 1945, both the physical and political conditions of Warsaw had changed so

[5] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 255; Sekcja Zabudowy Miasta SARP-u, "Tezy Sekcji Zabudowy Miasta SARP-u," *Architektura i Budownictwo,* no. 2 (1935): 35.

drastically that reviving plans for the district in the postwar era would have been both pragmatically illogical and ideologically unthinkable, as devastating wartime destruction quite literally opened up the city's center (thus creating new urbanistic opportunities) and Poland fell under the control of a newly established Communist regime hostile to the pre-war Sanacja government. Despite these historical realities, the envisioned district lives on, in theoretical form, as arguably the greatest "missing link" in Warsaw's never-realized architectural legacy of "the first half of the 1940s" that fills the chronological gap between the seemingly vastly different realities of the pre- and postwar city.[6] In its radical negation of pre-World War II Warsaw's disorganized, fragmented, irrational cityscape, the planned district was, in important ways, an arguable reflection of what was to come in terms of urban transformation in the city's vastly different postwar reality.

A New Center of Gravity

More than one Polish architect and urban planner in the interwar period reached the conclusion that Warsaw's present city center was, on one hand, too small for the needs of a capital of a large European nation, and, on the other, so deeply flawed in an urbanistic sense that the possibility of comprehensively redeveloping it into an adequately functional, modern, and visually imposing central district was practically unfeasible. Certainly, the prospect of enacting any sweeping, ruthless transformations over the capital's densely built-up core, most apparently in the form of demolitions on the scale occurring in Mussolini's Rome, was precluded by Warsaw's administration's lack of financial resources and insufficient legal authority, thereby relegating solutions of this nature—though ideal from an urban planning perspective—to those of mere fantasy for the entirety of the interwar period.[7]

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[6] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 347-48.
[7] Beata Chomątowska, *Lachert i Szanajca: Architekci Awangardy* (Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2015), 187.

However, against the seemingly insurmountable problems of Warsaw's city center lay a unique opportunity: the possibility to construct an entirely new, comprehensively planned central district away from the old historic core, which would not only greatly enhance the capital's official character but reorient the entire city on a profound scale along new primary axes. The potentiality of this urban concept rested on a particular idiosyncrasy of Warsaw that gave it a unique advantage among the developed capitals of interwar Europe. Directly adjacent to Warsaw's city center from the south-west lay the Mokotów Fields (Pole Mokotowskie), a vast swathe of land incorporated within the city limits in 1916 that remained both virtually undeveloped and, as it happened, under the exclusive ownership of the Polish state.[8] This expansive, primely located, unparcelled territory signaled an unmatched opportunity for interwar Polish architects to radically reimagine Warsaw into a modern, well-organized and stately capital and counteract the city's unbecoming late 19th-century legacy on a sweeping, impressive scale.

A 1938 memorandum written by the Polish architect and Warsaw urban planning bureau employee Marian Spychalski, in which he proposed a number of modifications to Warsaw's existing 1931 regulation plan that were largely aimed at reorienting the city's future development "on the basis of a new city center," provides a telling glimpse into the practical reasoning behind Polish architects' support of relocating the Polish capital's nucleus.[9] For one, Spychalski pointed out that Warsaw's restored capital status had placed enormous new demands on its existing central district, whose limited size was physically unable to accommodate them in their entirety. Thus, vital new administrative buildings to house ever-expanding political and economic concerns, enlarged transportation systems for handling the growing volume of inner-city activity, and public

[8] Agata Wagner, "Styk Trzech Dzielnic Warszawy: Śródmieścia, Mokotowa i Ochoty w Okresie Międzywojennym," *Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki* 56, no. 3 (2011): 62.
[9] Marian Spychalski, *Zasady Budowy Warszawy*, April, 1938, Akta Mariana Spychalskiego, 17, Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN), Signature: 2/1536/0/2/17, 33.

spaces for accommodating "collective demonstrations for various occasions, especially those specially commemorated in the Capital," could not be "thrust" within the "old bounds of the existing center, badly and tightly built-up," without a "very expensive and painful operation, and with dubious results."[10] It is worth noting here that Spychalski's premise that Warsaw's central bloc was simply too small for the capital's growing needs was not new, having already been iterated a decade earlier in a 1928 treatise on the city's future development by the engineer Gustaw Taube, who already at this time presented the problem of the existing city center as a serious, high-stakes issue:

> It is the most densely built, and any supplemental construction, possible only in a limited capacity, would be unable to increase its capaciousness by a significant amount. It is the tasks relating to the city's core that stand before urbanism as the most difficult to solve and which hold the highest sense of responsibility.[11]

Aside from outlining Warsaw's central bloc's problematic limitations for the growing capital, Spychalski also averred that the city's center of gravity was already in the process of moving away from its "original" location naturally on its own, thus providing another key argument in favor of establishing a new nucleus in the Polish capital. Initially centered around Piłsudski (formerly Saxon) Square, which was situated in a historic, densely built-up northern portion of the inner city and described by the architect Romuald Miller as the "heart of Warsaw" and its "psychological center," it was now, according to Spychalski, moving southwest "in the direction of the main railway station."[12] The area around the station, Spychalski predicted, would eventually crystallize into the city's main commercial hub, while its true (yet to be built)

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[10] Ibid, 2-3; with this last metaphor, Spychalski invoked a commonly seen tendency in interwar Polish architectural discourse of describing the city as a living (and in Warsaw's case, usually diseased) organism.
[11] Gustaw Taube, *Racjonalna Organizacja Rozwoju Wielkiej Warszawy: Uwagi o Planie Regulacyjnym* (N.p: n.p, 1928), 4.
[12] Romuald Miller, "Sprawa Placu Marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego w Warszawie," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. no.7 (1934): 203; Spychalski, *Zasady Budowy Warszawy*, 19, 14.

administrative center—and the most conspicuous embodiment of Warsaw's capital status, with its "clear representational character"—would lie directly south of it on the free Mokotów Fields, along newly established communication axes that would move the city further away from its historic core.[13] Thus, Spychalski concluded that "[i]n terms of building up its central districts, as of yet only half of Warsaw exists; we stand before the task of building the other [administrative and official] half."[14] Continuing along the same line of thought, he declared:

> North of the Aleje Jerozolimskie [the east-west thoroughfare dividing Warsaw' city center into north and south] remains Warsaw from its period of non-existence as a capital and 19th-century urban planning neglect, centered on the Saxon Axis. To the south a new Warsaw is being built and will continue to be built, a Warsaw of a politically independent era, centered on the Aleja J. Piłsudskiego [J. Piłsudski Boulevard] axis.[15]

Based on the above, it becomes apparent that Spychalski did not rely on strictly practical argumentation in promoting the advantages of a brand-new central district for Warsaw; it was also, in accordance with his framing, strongly related to questions of political legitimization. Along Spychalski's logic, Warsaw, in shifting itself southwards, would literally be moving away from its bleak nineteenth-century past into a better, promising future—one that culminated in a new, ultra-modern district that was both entirely free of the urban-architectural pathologies of the nineteenth century and far-removed, in a spatial sense, from any associations with the city's (and nation's) past political servitude.[16] The new city center would thus serve as a striking, readable sign that Warsaw—as well as Poland—had entered a radically new, politically auspicious chapter in its history.

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[13] Ibid, 19-20; Stanisław Różański, *Plan Ogólny Zabudowania M. St. Warszawy* (Warsaw: n.p, 1931), 5.
[14] Spychalski, *Zasady Budowy Warszawy*, 20.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 235.

The site on which Warsaw's new central district would rise, the Mokotów Fields lying south of the existing city center, only added, thanks to their history, to the future district's sense of momentousness and providential ethos. For much of the 19th century, the vast, flat terrain counting over 200 hectares had served, as part of the former tsarist "fortress belt" encircling Warsaw, as a strict municipal building boundary limiting the city's southwest expansion, and thus remained virtually unbuilt upon.[17] As a terrain owned in whole by the tsarist Russian military (and used as a soldiers' training ground) until the First World War, the Mokotów Fields were transferred, following the restoration of Polish independence in 1918, to the sole possession of the Polish state treasury fully intact and unencumbered by any problematic, fragmented private ownership claims.[18] The auspiciousness of this unexpected twist of fate for the Mokotów fields, whereby historical circumstances had transformed them from a foreign-imposed mechanism stifling Warsaw's outward growth into an unprecedented opportunity for rational urban development, did not escape the attention of interwar Polish architects and urban planners. Spychalski, writing more generally at first on the numerous terrains that had formerly prevented Warsaw's extension from all sides, conceded that although they had "very negatively influenced the development and building activity" of the (nineteenth-century) city, they had "concurrently reserved these areas for well-organized development in the future," before specially emphasizing the singularly "enormous" developmental possibilities of the Mokotów Fields.[19] The architect Zygmunt Skibniewski, meanwhile, leaned strongly into the providential, almost miraculous, nature of the Mokotów Fields, writing in *Architektura i Budownictwo* in 1938:

[17] Ibid, 236; Wagner, "Styk Trzech Dzielnic," 61, 62.
[18] Ibid, 62.
[19] Spychalski, *Zasady Budowy* Warszawy, 12, 21.

By a strange turn of events we possess in the history of Warsaw, which from an urban development perspective has been rather wasted, an occurrence that places our city among the ranks of the fortunate capitals of Europe. Near the city center lies an unbuilt, massive swathe of terrain. It served as a training ground for thoroughbred horses on one side, and for tsarist soldiers on the other. With time the latter were triumphantly replaced by free Polish airplanes [following Polish independence, the Mokotów Fields housed an airport for a time]. As a result, today there lie vast fields practically at the gates of Warsaw's city center, overgrown with grass, free from buildings, unparcelled and belonging entirely to large institutions. An unheard-of occurrence!....[our] capital city, so crippled for so many years by its lack of autonomy, has received on the 20th anniversary of the November Days a magnificent gift—the free Mokotów Fields [sentence break included].[20]

Skibniewski's framing of the Mokotów Fields as a providential "gift" to the restored Polish capital, though strangely exaggerated and factually misleading given that the Mokotów Fields belonged to the Polish state from the outset of independence and were no secret to Warsaw's inhabitants, nevertheless offers a telling indication of the palpable political and national sanctity that came to enshroud the terrain in the interwar period. Certainly, the expansive grassy area's auspicious, almost mythical trajectory into Polish hands and its karmic symbolism meshed well with the enormous, hopeful potential it presented for interwar architects and urban planners as the "new tabula rasa of modern Warsaw," as the architect Marjan Lalewicz described it in 1934.[21] This last group, doubtless eager to design and realize a sweeping, rational urban vision of unprecedented dimensions on the "virgin terrains" of the Mokotów Fields, was keen to foster a sense of higher importance and urgency in its commentary surrounding the latter.[22] Taube, for one, stressed that the existence of such a large piece of undeveloped land so close to the city center was a "*situation that one does not come upon in any other capital city, and it is worth pondering whether these*

[20] Zygmunt Skibniewski, "Nowa Wspaniała Dzielnica," *Architektura i Budownictwo* 14, no. 11-12 (1938): 350.
[21] Marjan Lalewicz, "Polityka Budowlana Warszawy—Stolicy Państwa," *Architektura i Budownictwo* 10, no. 5 (1934): 166.
[22] Skibniewski, "Nowa Wspaniała Dzielnica," 352.

exceptional conditions should not be taken advantage of [original emphasis]."[23] He also emphasized that the Mokotów Fields' rational development into a brand-new urban district "would constitute an innovation hitherto unseen anywhere, a kind of singularity unique to Warsaw, promoting us [Poland] and our organizational abilities," before adding that even cities in the most developed countries were incapable of pursuing a similar enterprise "due to a lack of suitable terrain."[24]

Other Polish architects and urban planners, more specifically those writing from the mid-1930s onwards, contributed—indirectly in some instances and explicitly in others—to the heightened sense of urgency and significance around the untouched potential of the Mokotów Fields by emphasizing that Warsaw's opportunities to build a comprehensively well-planned district within its post-1916 boundaries were rapidly diminishing. As mentioned in Chapter I, over the course of the 1920s, a sizeable portion of the vast, largely undeveloped territories that had been annexed to Warsaw in 1916, such as the districts of Żoliborz, Ochota, and Saska Kępa, were rapidly built up with small-scale residential developments in response to the capital's glaring housing shortage, with little attention paid to their role in Warsaw's broader rational development. By the mid-1930s, Polish architects and urban planners had begun to criticize these housing colonies as having squandered much of the city's once enormous developmental potential, thereby placing more pressure and expectation on the still undeveloped terrain of the Mokotów Fields as a site for finally counteracting Warsaw's longstanding tendency towards fragmented, irrational growth. The architect Józef Szanajca, for example, warned in 1934 that Warsaw's remaining undeveloped land was "melting away like snow in springtime," and though he avoided singling out the Mokotów Fields by name, he stressed that "[a]t present it is already urgent and necessary to lay a firm hand

[23] Taube, *Racjonalna Organizacja Rozwoju*, 10.
[24] Ibid.

on the remaining unparcelled and undeveloped terrains [with the aim of rationally developing them]."[25] Spychalski, writing specifically in reference to the Mokotów Fields, employed a similarly cautionary and urgent tone, stating that if a deliberate, comprehensively planned action was not undertaken to move the city center in its entirety to the new southern terrain, the latter would be "gradually swallowed up, deluged by the progressive development of the steadily growing city"—in other words, it would fall victim to Warsaw's old, pervasive, haphazard growth patterns.[26] Raising the stakes even higher was Skibniewski, who framed the Mokotów Fields as being, "[i]n the face of many, regrettably unexploited opportunities," "probably the last chance to realize a great modern urban concept in Warsaw."[27] He also went on to vest the terrain's development with yet another higher—and evidently political—meaning, portraying the potential success of the undertaking (and conversely, its failure) as a telling reflection of the actual state of wider Polish society and its ability to gather around a single, organizational ideal:

> If we do not stand firmly behind this [urban development] together, if we do not forget about the animosities, or the partisan attitudes and agendas, and, more categorically, if we do not go to work in subordinating all elemental components in the name of the whole, then we will most likely lose the last battle for the architecture of New Warsaw.[28]

Thus, interwar Polish architectural and urban planning discourse endowed the prospect of developing the Mokotów Fields into a new, modern central district for Warsaw with a significance of not only a practical, but a strongly representational and politically symbolic dimension. The wide-scale realization of a new city center on the virtually untouched terrain would mark a radical, momentous move, both physical and symbolic, away from Warsaw's 19th-century legacy of urban

[25] Józef Szanajca, "Rozbudowa Warszawy," *Pion*, no. 7 (1934): 8.
[26] Spychalski, *Zasady Budowy* Warszawy, 21.
[27] Skibniewski, "Nowa Wspaniała Dzielnica," 350.
[28] Ibid, 356.

dysfunction and political weakness, and form the nucleus of a new, dramatically reorganized city that was powerfully communicative of its eminent status as the capital of a large, ambitious European nation. For Polish architects and urban planners, the providential tabula rasa of the Mokotów Fields doubtless emerged as the greatest—and by the late 1930s, ostensibly the last remaining—opportunity to design and enact a sweeping, centrally planned, and monumental urban layout for the Polish capital in the face of a hopelessly built-up city center—a true antithesis to the Warsaw of old.

An Urbanistic Monument to the "Piłsudski Epoch"

The actual design of Warsaw's new representational district on the Mokotów Fields, which first emerged as a faint concept in 1927 in planning works for the Polish capital and was etched loosely into its master regulation plan the following year, had, by the time of its official approval for construction on February 23, 1939 under the name of *The Marshal Józef Piłsudski District*, evolved significantly—not only in its level of detail, but in its appearance, scope and function.[29] Although the district remained identifiably modern in character over the course of its conceptual evolution, the new meanings and roles that it took on after Piłsudski's death in 1935, as Jarosław Trybuś has observed, decidedly impacted its design.[30] Piłsudski's posthumous figure even arguably became the single most important element dictating the form of the entire urban layout, which served not only the interests of architects as a unifying, organizational reference point, but those of Piłsudki's political successors, by providing an additional dimension to the district as a powerful symbolic expression of the political order established under the now-deceased leader's

[29] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 235; Grzegorz Piątek, *Niezniszczalny: Bohdan Pniewski: Architekt Salonu i Władzy* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Filtry, 2021), 191
[30] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 255.

rule.[31] The district's design, now guided by a highly self-conscious impulse to pre-emptively immortalize—through the image of a leader-figure—Sanacja Poland as a foundational era of Polish national revitalization, incorporated over the course of its maturation certain elements that were reminiscent of those observed with interest by Polish commentators in fascist Italian urban planning and architecture, as examined in Chapter 2. The design plans for the governmental district on the eve of the outbreak of World War II thus clearly revealed a vital intersection of the aspirations of Polish architects, with their unequivocal desire for urban order and monumentality for Warsaw, and those of an increasingly authoritarian Polish state, with its growing interest in publicly communicating its influence and power over Polish life as a supreme guarantor of national order.[32]

As hinted at above, Piłsudski's death did not lead to a reversion to democratic politics in the Second Polish Republic 9 years after he seized power in 1926; instead, in its last few remaining years, the polity only witnessed a further shift towards authoritarianism within its ruling camp. A mere three weeks before his demise, Piłsudski had managed to approve a new national constitution that markedly reduced the power of the Polish parliament while bolstering the authority of the "executive branch;" within this new constitutional framework, the nation's president was now vested with "the power to choose his successor, all ministerial posts, and one-third of the members of the senate" as well as the ability to dissolve parliament "at any point," while "votes could take place in the absence of the opposition."[33] Further, in the wake of Piłsudski's death, a new de facto ringleader eventually emerged in the figure of Edward Rydz-Śmigły, who had quickly filled

[31] Ibid, 290.
[32] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała,* 23, 314.
[33] Edward D. Wynot Jr., *Warsaw Between the World Wars: Profile of the Capital City in a Developing Land, 1918–1939* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1983), 49; Daniel Kupfert Heller, *Jabotinsky's Children: Polish Jews and the Rise of Right-Wing Zionism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 164.

Piłsudski's position as the General Inspector of the Armed Forces (Poland's highest military post) and was handed the Marshal's baton (buława) from President Mościcki in 1936, thus officially succeeding Piłsudski as Marshal of Poland.[34] Rydz-Śmigły's less-than-democratic political ambitions were made apparent in 1937 when he founded the Camp of National Unity (Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego), a political organization designed to supersede all Polish political parties and foster societal cooperation around the goal of Poland's "powerhouse development"—with the more clandestine aim, as Grzegorz Piątek writes, of discrediting all existing parties, gathering as many prominent personalities around Rydz-Śmigły as possible, and creating a "chieftain movement" that would "monopolize [Poland's] political and social life."[35] Finally, Poland's worsening international position as the 1930s wore on, marked by mounting tensions with its increasingly belligerent German and Soviet neighbors and the looming threat of war, undoubtedly only strengthened the government's orientation towards rallying the nation—in this case in the interest of national self-defense—around an authoritative leader-figure who embodied desired "common ideals" and demanded the subjugation of individual rights to a higher national good.[36]

By the time of Piłsudski's death on May 12, 1935, certain general aspects of the planned representational district on the Mokotów Fields had already been firmly established. On the broadest level it was clear that the district, as the new administrative and representational hub of Warsaw, would concentrate on its terrain many of the capital's most important governmental and public institutions. A projected list of the latter for the new district, provided by the architect Stanisław Różański in his commentary on Warsaw's master regulation plan in 1931, offers a telling

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[34] Paul Brykczynski, *Primed for Violence: Murder, Antisemitism, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Poland* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016), 162
[35] Wynot Jr., *Warsaw Between the World Wars*, 53; Piątek, *Niezniszczalny*, 128-29.
[36] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 313-14.

indication of the urban undertaking's ambitious scale as an overflowing display of cultural prestige: among the new planned public buildings were an opera house, an art museum, a national library, a music conservatory, a technical school, an exhibition palace, and anthropological and ethnographic museums, to name only a few.[37] Further, it was certain that the entire district would be centered around a brand-new major communication axis: a wide east-west boulevard—the widest in Warsaw—initially called Aleja Sejmowa (Parliamentary Boulevard), that would begin at the 18th-century radial street junction Plac na Rozdrożu (Plaza at the Crossroads) near the left bank of the Wisła river and run through the Mokotów Fields, towards the western Ochota district.[38] A final, defining element forming an irrefutable part of the district's plan by 1935 was the planned Temple of Divine Providence (Świątynia Opatrzności Bożej), a votive church of massive dimensions that would serve as the boulevard's focal point at its western extremity in the Mokotów Fields and form the architectural dominant of the entire district.[39] Initially, the temple's placement evinced a typical baroque urban layout mirroring the Plac na Rozdrożu—as indicated in a map of Warsaw's 1928 master plan, the votive structure was to sit at the center of a new, oval plaza that closed the boulevard at its western extremity and served as a converging point of several smaller, radial streets emerging from the north and south.[40] This design ultimately underwent fundamental changes, which will be addressed shortly.

Aside from these defining features, however, plans for Warsaw's new representational district were still decidedly vague on the day that a series of announcements, published in the second 1935 issue of *Architektura i Budownictwo* in the wake of Piłsudski's death, suddenly

[37] Różański, *Plan Ogólny Zabudowania*, 8.
[38] Ibid; Wagner, "Styk Trzech Dzielnic," 62.
[39] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 238.
[40] Biuro Pomiarów Wydziału Technicznego Magistratu m. st. Warszawy, *Plan m. st. Warszawy ze Skorowidzem Ulic* (Warsaw: Zakłady Graficzne B. Wierzbicki, 1928).

overlaid them with a paramount new meaning that fundamentally influenced the course of their future (and henceforth far more intensive) development. In a joint statement on the issue's first page, the Association of Architects of the Republic of Poland (Stowarzyszenie Architektów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, henceforth referred to as S.A.R.P.) and the Society of Polish Urbanists (Towarzystwo Urbanistów Polskich, henceforth referred to as T.U.P.), after acknowledging the recent passing of the "Creator and steadfast Executor of the programme for consolidating and securing our state existence," Piłsudski, and averring that his work in "shaping" the Polish nation now rested on "society's shoulders," announced the following resolution:

….understanding that the historic role assigned to Józef Piłsudski has not ceased to function in our collective life and that his Figure will continue to be the organizing center of [Poland's] civic thought and activity, we submit the following motion: to create in the Nation's Capital a visible sign and symbol of Him, who always strove to organize Poland's people around Her greatest well-being. This Symbol ought to become the fundamental idea upon which the urban composition of the Mokotów Fields will rest, as the new Center of collective life in the National Capital.[41]

This was immediately followed by the S.A.R.P.'s and T.U.P.'s christening of the Mokotów Fields as a sacred site meaningfully connected with Piłsudski's (militaristic) figure:

The Last Funeral March [the Marshal's final farewell military parade was held on the Mokotów Fields], in which the army bid farewell to its Founder and Commander, forever bound the Mokotów Fields, a place of tribute to nation and army, to the figure of Marshal Józef Piłsudski. The site from which the Marshal, both as a Living Person and an Immortal Soul, performed army inspections, should be sanctified and preserved.[42]

With these statements, Warsaw's planned representational district on the Mokotów Fields was swiftly subordinated to a higher, dictatorial ideal, newly ordained as a sanctified urban symbol of

[41] Stowarzyszenie Architektów Rzeczypospolitej Polski and Towarzystwo Urbanistów Polskich, "Dnia 12 Maja Zmarł Marszałek Józef Piłsudski," *Architektura i Budownictwo,* no. 2 (1935): 33.
[42] Ibid, 34; Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 234.

Piłsudski—and by extension, the militaristic societal and national order he embodied (in a public statement the following year, Starzyński forthrightly described the district as a "symbol of the law and order ushered in by the Marshal's government").[43] In another manifesto in the same *Architektura i Budownictwo* issue, the City Development Division (Sekcja Zabudowy Miasta) of the S.A.R.P. went on to frame the projected district in even more narrow, yet significant, terms, as an "*urbanistic monument* to Marshal Józef Piłsudski [my emphasis]," a figure whose deeds "opened…. a new chapter in our Nation's affairs" and ushered in "an era without precedent in the history of the Republic."[44] The organization's reasoning as to why Piłsudski warranted a memorial in the form of an entire urban district rather than a single structure (such as a statue), meanwhile, was backed by strong justifications. Stating that it was "impossible to find a monument of such physical dimensions that would prove able through its size to form an adequate measure of the greatness of Józef Piłsudski's contribution for the Nation," and dismissing—though without further explanation—historic attempts to memorialize great figures through individual structures as ultimate failures to be avoided, it concluded:

> [a]t the same time, we can see that the great urban layouts of Rome, Paris, and Versailles have stood the test of centuries, constituting the glory of those with whose name, will and deed they became associated.[45]

Thus, it was clear that the City Development Division of the S.A.R.P. saw precisely in the "great urban layout"—aside from its obvious appeal for ambitious architects yearning to transform Warsaw into an impressive European capital—an unparalleled platform for publicly entrenching a desired sense of great and lasting historical weight. In the context of Piłsudski's "urbanistic

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[43] Stefan Starzyński, "Przedmowa," *Warszawa Przyszłości* (Warsaw: Komitet Wystawy "Warszawa Przyszłości", 1936), 7.
[44] Sekcja Zabudowy Miasta SARP-u, "Tezy Sekcji Zabudowy Miasta SARP-u," 35.
[45] Ibid.

monument," this weight could be described as resting on the ideological conviction that a messianic figure (Piłsudski) had brought about—through military force—the beginning of an unprecedented, historically momentous era of restored glory and prosperity for the Polish nation, which would continue to endure (and demand national order, unity and discipline in exchange) long after his death.[46] It thus follows a compelling line of logic that the design of Warsaw's planned representational district, with its important new objectives to embody Piłsudski as an immortal authoritative figure and to pre-emptively historicize the present era as a defining (and enduring) chapter in Polish history, began displaying in its post-1935 iterations features that were strongly characteristic of the urban planning projects of fascist Italy, whose spectacular successes in mediating radical modernity with nationalist and political aims were so clearly recognized by Polish onlookers in the 1930s. That Polish architects may have consciously looked to fascist Italian urban planning and architectural trends in designing Warsaw's representational district from 1935 onwards is the most explicitly suggested already in the same 1935 *Architektura i Budownictwo* issue of manifestos, declarations and speeches newly rededicating the planned district to Piłsudski's memory, in an article by the architect Stanisław Brukalski entitled "The Mokotów Fields." It is telling, for one, that Brukalski's article, which suggested a number of general guidelines regarding the future district's design (stipulating, for instance, that it should "be so arranged so that it unites and rears society, so that it can be a place of pilgrimage and celebration"), was accompanied by six photographs that depicted—all but for one—major thoroughfares of Rome, with Mussolini's Via dell'Impero appearing twice from different vantage points.[47] Further, within the text itself, Brukalski asserted, with obvious implications, that when it came to designing

[46] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 260, 314.
[47] Brukalski, "Pole Mokotowskie," 42-43.

the district, Polish architects would not be "forced to resort to untried experiments," before describing the laudable qualities of the Via dell'Impero with evident admiration.[48]

The possibility that Polish architects and urban planners looked towards fascist Italy for inspiration when designing Warsaw's representational district after 1935 is only bolstered when certain aspects of the district's design in its later stages of evolution are examined against the commentaries of Polish observers on fascist Italy from Chapter 2. One such aspect was the chosen location for an enormous, monumental sculpture of Piłsudski in the district's plans.[49] The projected location of the monument, which incidentally also formed a clear example of one of the district's dictatorial organizing elements given its foreseen role as the dominant architectural feature of the district's eastern flank (in which case Piłsudski himself, in statue form, would quite literally be ensuring the surrounding area's urban order), evoked a symbolism that strongly recalled that which was identified by Biegański in the case of the spatial relationship between the Via dell'Impero, the Colosseum, and the Palazzo Venezia in central Rome.[50] Just as the visually unobstructed connection created by the new Via dell'Impero between the Colosseum and the Palazzo Venezia (Benito Mussolini's residence) formed, according to Biegański's interpretation, an unequivocal fascist statement that the fascist epoch was a rightful successor of the Roman Empire, the planned location of Piłsudski's future monument, which was to be at the center of the Plaza at the Crossroads, communicated a message along comparably interpretable lines that Piłsudski—and his epoch—was the legitimate "successor of pre-partition Poland."[51] This was achieved through the Plaza's symbolically strategic placement, as it was both the planned beginning point of the new

[48] Ibid, 43.
[49] Despite two official competitions held for the monument's design, in 1936 and 1938, no winning project was selected by the jury, see Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 306-13.
[50] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 304.
[51] Ibid, 257.

representational district's main axis (whose democratic-sounding Parliamentary Boulevard name was notably rechristened in 1935 to Józef Piłsudski Boulevard) and an intersection of two significant historic axes established by Poland's 18th-century king-patrons.[52] Thus, the anchoring of Piłsudski's likeness at the meeting point of these three crucial thoroughfares in the district's plans clearly framed the deceased leader as a linchpin between Poland's "splendid pre-partition history" and the auspicious independent Polish present.[53] In this way, Piłsudski would, on the one hand, be memorialized among the ranks of Poland's past illustrious pre-partition patrons (as a prominent marker on the historic axes), while on the other, his figure would signal the physical beginning of the district designed to embody his person and the new, ongoing era established under his rule, thus fostering a sense of continuity between the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the present day.[54]

Another aspect reminiscent of fascist Italian urban planning in the design plans for Warsaw's representational district after its 1935 rededication was the plans' active incorporation of "relics," which would serve as dramatic visual accents against the district's modern design and, on a deeper level, endow it with a sense of historical sanctity and permanence. One way in which this new consideration manifested itself was in the decision to restore and display select, historically significant objects attesting to Warsaw's eminent pre-partition past in the future district's vicinity, thus creating a visual effect that was arguably parallel to the one described by the Polish delegate Alfred Gravier as he gazed with wonderment upon the restored and theatrically exhibited relics forming sacred "islands" in fascist Rome's modernized center. A particularly

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[52] Piątek, *Niezniszczalny*, 190; Stołeczny Komitet Uczczenia Pamięci Marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego, "Uchwała Stołecznego Komitetu Uczczenia Pamięci Marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego," *Architektura i Budownictwo,* no. 5 (1935): 129.
[53] Stefan Starzyński, "O Pomniku Marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego w Warszawie" (Odczyt z 19 lipca 1935), *Architektura i Budownictwo,* no. 5 (1935): 132.
[54] Ibid.

notable historic object that was slated to undergo a musealization process as part of the district's development was the Ujazdowski Castle lying east of the Plaza at the Crossroads, a former seat of Warsaw's medieval rulers whose 17th-century façade had been starkly modified and visually obscured by later structural additions as a result of its reconstruction into a military hospital.[55] In June of 1935, it was announced by the Capital Committee for Honoring the Memory of Marshal Józef Piłsudski (Stołeczny Komitet Uczczenia Pamięci Marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego) that the venerable fortress, which was touted in the announcement as "Warsaw's oldest building," would be "restored in the future to its former [17th-century] appearance" and placed in full view via the removal of surrounding hospital buildings, thus providing an arresting "background" for Piłsudski's planned monument on the Plaza when seen from the west.[56] In view of this planned, theatrical unveiling of the Ujazdowski castle, it would be remiss not to recall Gravier's comments on Rome once again and his special mention of the Castel Sant'Angelo, with its recent restoration and liberation from its "surrounding ramshackle buildings" creating, in his eyes, a "superb overall effect."

Plans to musealize and visually tie monuments attesting to a glorious pre-partition past to Warsaw's new representational district were, however, generally limited at the outset due to the fact that such notable historic objects were scarce in the area of Warsaw where the district was to be built. Certainly, they were nowhere to be found on the Mokotów Fields themselves, given the latter's historical lack of development. Here is where, in the absence of existing historic objects, a further identifiable method for enhancing the district's sense of historical weight and endurance was employed, namely the incorporation of pre-emptively defined "relics," or "future ruins," as

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[55] Alfred Lauterbach, *Warszawa* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy "Bibljoteka Polska," 1925), 52; Stefan Starzyński, *Rozwój Stolicy: Odczyt Wygłoszony w Dniu 10 Czerwca 1938 r. na Zebraniu Urządzonym Przez Okręg Stołeczny Związku Rezerwistów* (Warsaw: Stołeczny Okręg Rezerwistów, 1938), 83.
[56] Stołeczny Komitet Uczczenia Pamięci, "Uchwała Stołecznego Komitetu," 129.

Trybuś has convincingly argued in his analysis of a series of late-1930s stylistic sketches of the district drawn by Bohdan Pniewski—the architect to whom, incidentally, the district's plans were handed in their entirety for further development in 1937.[57] In these sketches, Pniewski envisioned the western culmination point of Piłsudski's Boulevard, now a Field of Glory followed by a vast forum (announced into existence in the wake of Piłsudski's death by the S.A.R.P. and T.U.P. as a "Forum unto the Honor and Glory of Marszałek Józef Piłsudski") in place of the previous oval plaza, as monumental spaces punctuated by a dense array of ancient architectural tropes: eagle-topped columns, Roman triumphal arches, Egyptian pylons, and stone tribunals.[58] Aside from the clear military connotations of the architectural facsimiles (the tribunals, for instance, were for accommodating crowds of spectators for the planned army parades that would take place in the Field of Glory and the forum), Pniewski's particular treatment of them in the district's space served to deliberately evoke, according to Trybuś, the idea of ruins "on the verge," manifesting the architect's broader "desire to introduce into the realm of Piłsudski's District an implicit suggestion of the layout's antiquity, which would gain credibility over time."[59] Thus, Pniewski imagined the tribunals as heavily laden with haphazardly placed, "wild" foliage, giving them an overgrown, archaic appearance, and sketched his triumphal arches as scattered about the forum in evidently random, irrational fashion that clearly served to evoke an image of historical, incidentally built-up ruins—while also notably recalling, as Trybuś adds, the cluster of arches on the ancient Forum Romanum in Rome, which at the time was "regaining its splendor" under Mussolini.[60] In this way,

[57] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 315; the district's plans were transferred to Pniewski's workshop from the Planning Bureau of the Marshal Józef Piłsudski District (Biuro Planu Dzielnicy Marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego), led by the architect Jan Chmielewski, Ibid, 262, 260.
[58] Stowarzyszenie Architektów Rzeczypospolitej Polski and Towarzystwo Urbanistów Polskich, "Wniosek w Sprawie Realizacji Pomnika Urbanistycznego ku Czci Marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego," *Architektura i Budownictwo,* no. 2 (1935): 37; Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 270-71.
[59] Ibid, 315-16.
[60] Ibid.

Warsaw's representational district would boast, like the Via dell'Impero as described by Beno Opoczyński, its own "picturesque disarray of the remnants and remains of past architecture." The "disarray['s]" completely premeditated nature in the former's case, with its consciously established aim to "gain credibility over time," formed one of the district's most telling displays of confidence in the projected longevity and historical significance of the "Józef Piłsudski epoch."[61]

In light of the above, it was only logical that the envisioned architectural style of the planned district's myriad institutional and governmental buildings, whose visual uniformity would now be guaranteed under Pniewski's presiding eye, would follow suit in proclaiming the endurance and infallibility of the Piłsudski epoch. Thus, the buildings that were projected to line Piłsudski's boulevard, which had now come to include an enclave of foreign embassies, ministries, a new parliament building, and a massive radio complex, were, though on one hand unequivocally modern in their relative simplicity and clean, geometric lines, on the other marked by a discernibly "massive and heavy" quality and based upon simplified "classical forms"—the same traits Jerzy Münzer had used to describe Italy's fascist-built government edifices, which clearly proclaimed, in his eyes, the "[s]trength and power of fascism."[62] Demonstrating particularly overt classicist influences was the future district's National Library, with an extant photograph of its model (created for the aforementioned *Warsaw Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* exhibition) showing an elongated horizontal façade marked from top to bottom by a rhythmic series of slender, classicizing pilasters, giving the structure an undeniably imposing impression of monumentality and solidity.[63] Even the futuristic main tower of the radio complex, an unequivocal symbol of technological progress, was monumentalized through the addition of a sweeping exterior staircase of theatrically

[61] Stołeczny Komitet Uczczenia Pamięci, "Uchwała Stołecznego Komitetu," 129.
[62] Wagner, "Styk Trzech Dzielnic," 85, 64, 74; Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 290.
[63] Skibniewski, "Nowa Wspaniała Dzielnica," 354.

wide proportions at its base that gave the structure an imposing sense of weight.[64] Finally, the generous use of (often rusticated) stone in the design of the district's buildings overall both enhanced their classicist ethos and rendered them "visually heavier and more stable, ergo more dignified and durable," thus bolstering the district's projected message of authority and long-lastingness.[65] Such was the ostensible "style of the Józef Piłsudski epoch"—sturdy, robust, and inspiring strong feelings of reverence, so as to be "handed down to future generations."[66]

In sum, the design of Warsaw's planned representational district on the eve of the outbreak of the Second World War reflected a complex mediation of meanings and ambitions. In the wake of Piłsudski's death in 1935, numerous prominent Polish architects and urban planners were clearly keen to support Piłsudski's successors' vested interest in reimagining the future district as a propagandistic platform for promoting the ostensible national order that was ushered into Poland by Piłsudski (under the banner of an "urbanistic monument" to the former leader), not least because it presented the former group with an unprecedented opportunity to wield its influence and realize its ambitions to reimagine Warsaw in radical, sweeping fashion. Piłsudski's posthumous figure offered, for one, clear advantages to Polish architects and urban planners for developing the district in that the former provided a clearly defined, dictatorial concept for organizing the district's design around, thus ensuring that the district would form a harmonious, unified architectural whole and bring a much-needed sense of order to Warsaw's chaotic urban sprawl. Further, the Sanacja-backed program to memorialize Piłsudski as a key historical figure and to consolidate the power, authority, and endurance of his epoch through urban means provided Polish architects and urban planners with the necessary justification for designing a representational district that was of an outsized,

[64] Grzegorz Mika, *Od Wielkich Idei do Wielkiej Płyty: Burzliwe Dzieje Warszawskiej* Architektury (Warsaw: Skarpa Warszawska, 2017), 195.
[65] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 315.
[66] Stefan Starzyński, *Rozwój Stolicy*, 85.

excessively monumental, and certainly fiscally impractical, nature, with the clear aim to showcase the scope of the former's technical and artistic prowess and to dramatically elevate Warsaw's capital prestige. It is thus comprehensible why, at this vital intersection of Polish political-ideological and architectural-urban planning ambitions, the urban planning and architectural achievements of fascist Italy, with their demonstrated ability to shape urban space in the service of both modernization and nationalist-political (as well as cult of personality) narratives, would emerge as enticing points of reference for attuned Polish architects and urban planners as they visualized Warsaw's representational district as a "great urban layout" to the "glory" of Piłsudski. Regardless of the actual degree to which Polish architects and urban planners took direct, conscious inspiration from fascist Italy in designing Piłsudski's district, many of their design choices for the district certainly suggest that state-coopted architects and urban planners in authoritarian 1930s Poland had goals highly congruous to those of their peers in Mussolini's Italy in shaping urban space.

Walls for the Urban Masses

It is worth emphasizing, finally, that the design of Warsaw's representational district in the form that it took on the eve of the Second World War signaled a radical departure from the Warsaw that currently was—with its ill-perceived fragmented, speculative, overwhelmingly petty bourgeois character—through its stark anti-individualism. This was manifested, for one, in the sheer "inhuman" scale of the district which, were it ever built, would have had a formidable dwarfing effect on any individual who found themself in it.[67] At its widest point, for instance, Piłsudski's Boulevard was projected to measure a whopping 255 meters (by comparison, the Champs Elysées in Paris is 70 meters wide), while the total height of the Temple of Divine

[67] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 316.

Providence in its final, 1938 version (also designed by Pniewski) was marked at 110 meters, nearly twice the height of the Prudential skyscraper (Warsaw's tallest building at the time) and far exceeding the height of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris (69 meters).[68] In addition, specially designed optical devices integrated into the district's design would further emphasize its already impossibly large dimensions. Particularly worthy of note was a circular, freestanding baptistery that was to stand on the forum in front of the temple, which, as Skibniewski—who praised its design—concluded would help "convey, in its comparative play against the masses [of people standing on the forum], the scale of the entire layout." [69] And there would be masses, indeed; the forum, together with the adjacent Field of Glory, was designed to accommodate 30,000 people.[70]

The architecture of the district's buildings, too, clearly strove to eclipse the individual in favor of the communal. Save for a handful of architecturally distinctive structures, e.g., the Temple of Divine Providence, Piłsudski's monument, the radio complex, and the assortment of ancient facsimiles on the forum, the district's buildings, and particularly those that would face the length of Piłsudski's Boulevard, largely evinced a marked geometric simplicity, uniformity and repetitiveness that clearly suggested their interpretation as a series rather than discrete edifices of any standalone significance.[71] A surviving 1939 architectural rendering from the Urban Planning Department of the City of Warsaw, which shows a cross-section of the buildings that were projected to line the southern flank of Piłsudski's Boulevard, provides a particularly impactful illustration of the planned district's strict sense of austere regularity and strong embrace of repetition.[72] In the rendering, the buildings (of an unspecified function) shown as running along

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[68] Ibid, 270, 304.
[69] Skibniewski, "Nowa Wspaniała Dzielnica," 354.
[70] Piątek, *Niezniszczalny*, 187.
[71] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 261, 297, 294-95.
[72] S. Różański, *Al[eja] Marsz. J. Piłsudskiego-Przekrój Podłużny i Gabaryt Strony Połudn[iowej] i Północ[nej]*, February 24, 1939, Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych, 3430, Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN), Signature: 2/9/0/5.5/I 3430.

the majority of the boulevard, from its intersection with Nowopolna Street in the east until the beginning of the forum in the west, are ten identical, freestanding, massive horizontal blocks, spaced apart in a rigidly symmetrical pattern. Together, they present as a series of looming monoliths, creating, through their repetition, a palpable sense of unyielding, imposing regularity, while a sparse network of trees drawn in the empty spaces between the edifices indicates, by comparison, the latter's imposing dimensions.

The sequential, uniform nature of this last group of buildings, which could also be largely said of the district's architecture on a more general level, arguably gains deeper significance in light of a speech that was delivered by the Polish architect Michał Kostanecki at the Warsaw Chapter of the S.A.R.P. in 1938, on a not-so-commonly publicized topic in Polish discourse: the architecture of the Third Reich. In the speech, Kostanecki, though he expressed some bewilderment over the aesthetic choices of official Nazi architecture, ascribed clear value to what he singled out as Nazi architects' prolific use of repetition in their designs, interpreting it as an innovative philosophical approach towards buildings not as "finite entit[ies]" but as a series of repeated elements forming extendable architectural "wall[s]," which allowed for the creation of effective "frames for the human masses" in urban spaces.[73] Continuing, he averred that under the auspices of this new regime-sanctioned architectural mentality,

> [t]he stadiums and meeting halls, the new squares and streets of German cities are treated as a backdrop and a supplement to the deployed crowds, or rather formations and divisions, moving through them, which form, in combination with the buildings, as well as the celebratory decorations and colored banners so prevalent in Germany today, an architectural whole.[74]

[73] Michał Kostanecki, "Architektura Trzeciej Rzeszy," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 9 (1938): 304, 305.
[74] Ibid, 305.

That this Nazi-cultivated concept of incorporating architecture "into the movements of human crowds and linking it to man itself" held a groundbreaking, universal relevance in Kostanecki's view was plainly evident given that he went on to describe it as "an entirely novel aspect" and an "undeniable advance by the architecture of the Third Reich for the architecture of the world."[75] The fact that such mass-oriented architectural design "based on the same repeating elements" was subject, meanwhile, to apparently "continually" levied allegations of being "dull," and, even worse, capable of "kill[ing] a person's sense of individuality" was evidently of little concern to Kostanecki.[76] In challenging the former claim, he countered that it was "harder to create a greater impression of dullness than that which can be found on a street from the late nineteenth century, where each house strives to be as dissimilar from its neighbors as possible," while dismissing the latter accusation as mere "propagandistic slander that is presently tossed around like a ball between fascism, communism, and capitalism."[77] Kostanecki even deigned to posit, with palpable excitement, a (somewhat cryptic) vision for the future of mass-oriented architecture: "who knows whether the multitudes, which have at present become an element of the architectural composition, will not soon begin assuming the role of its co-creator, as it were."[78]

Kostanecki's surprisingly earnest enthusiasm about architecture's potential as an instrument for framing and organizing masses of people—made all the more remarkable by his open lauding of the Third Reich for its ostensibly cutting-edge advances in this respect—suggests the possible extent to which the design of Warsaw's representational district, with its use of sequential, architectural "walls," may have been consciously striving to attain a parallel aim.[79]

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[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid, 304-05.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid, 305.
[79] Kostanecki later perished in the Gusen concentration camp in 1945.

Certainly, as Trybuś has suggested, the district's function as a means to actively "shape, discipline and motivate" crowds would have proved especially relevant—even urgent—in the agitated political climate of 1930s Europe, as the threat of "open conflict" between nations mounted and the need for a "[d]isciplined nation, ready to endure sacrifices in the name of fighting for an ideal" came increasingly into focus for European governments, Poland's, of course, included.[80] Beyond this important question regarding the degree to which the tense geopolitical reality of 1930s Europe actively informed the district's design, however, it is also worth remarking on a much simpler, and final, point regarding the latter's significance within a broader historical context. In the very fact of its farsighted embrace of architecture as a broadly conceived, holistic "complex" framing collective life, the envisioned district—exaggerated out of proportion as it may have been—undoubtedly held far more in common with the urban projects of the Warsaw of the future that actually materialized under later communist rule than it did with the existing pre-war city on whose peripheries it was meant to lie.[81] On a more concrete level, it is even possible to observe, for one, that the striking horizontal regularity of the previously mentioned 1939 architectural rendering of Piłsudski's Boulevard has arguably carried through to the aptly named Eastern Wall (Ściana Wschodnia) development that arose in central Warsaw after the war. This large-scale postmodernist urban layout—notably consisting of a series of horizontal blocks "identical in character"—was built between 1959 and 1971 on the ruins of a once-highly irregular row of prewar buildings along Marszałkowska Street, thus framing the eastern flank of another important postwar creation: the vast Parade Square (Plac Defilad), which in turn clearly echoes the pre-war Forum that was planned for the Piłsudski District.[82] In light of such arguable continuities, Warsaw's

[80] Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała*, 316, 314.
[81] Edgar Norwerth, "Architektura Przemysłowa," *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 7 (1926): 7.
[82] Michał Murawski, *The Palace Complex: A Stalinist Skyscraper, Capitalist Warsaw, and a City Transfixed* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2019), 90, 88.

planned representational district, as one of the most important pre-war projects for the future city, and, as previously mentioned, a vital "missing link" (as per Trybuś) in the city's historical development, can serve to narrow the seemingly drastic gap between Warsaw as it appeared before the cataclysmic events of 1939-1945 and in its rebuilt form in the decades following.

Conclusion

Warsaw's envisioned representational district, which formed the largest of the city's planned—though never realized—urban development projects in the interwar period, stood, in its final conceptual iteration on the eve of the Second World War, as a particularly lucid embodiment of Polish architects' and urban planners' burning ambition to wrest Warsaw from its chronic urban chaos and bourgeois short-sightedness and transform it into a true capital heralding order, harmony, and authority. Doubtless, it was the Sanacja regime's active, unprecedented interest from 1935 onwards in the district's plans, whose viability as a platform to further the regime's propagandistic aims came to the fore in the wake of Piłsudski's death, that had provided architects and urban planners with the necessary discursive pretext and organizational framework to design an urban layout that went far beyond everyday considerations of function and rationalism and formed a monumental, lavish statement attesting to Warsaw's projected powerhouse capital status. Thus, numerous Polish architects and urban planners, no doubt aware of the enormous opportunities that the district's 1935 discursive reframing as an "urbanistic monument" glorifying Piłsudski (and by extension, his political successors) presented from an architectural, urban planning, and professional prestige standpoint, were eager to embrace and propagate the Sanacja regime's agenda regarding the district's plans in their publicized discourse.

Following this momentous alignment of the outsized ambitions of architects and urban planners, on the one hand, and those of the authoritarian Polish state, on the other, the former group

embarked on a process of conceptualizing the district that echoed in striking ways the groundbreaking urban regulation projects and architectural innovations of fascist Italy, which Polish commentators had been reporting on with noticeable regularity from the mid-1930s. This phenomenon points, for one, to the possibility that the designers of Warsaw's representational district consciously looked to fascist Italian techniques as a suitable model for their own work, thus offering further evidence of the arguably sizeable extent, at least in Poland's case, to which fascist Italy's modernization processes wielded their influence beyond its own borders in the 1930s. Further, it provides tangible proof that the working relationships between architects, urban planners, and the state in fascist Italy and 1930s authoritarian Poland were, in many cases, driven by highly analogous, if not parallel, nationalistically informed ideological goals.

It is important, finally, to underscore the planned district's momentous significance as a comprehensive, radical response to interwar Warsaw's perceived staggering urban problems, which formed, in their ostensibly serious hindering of the city's ability to function as, and adequately embody, a national capital, an issue of high political significance in the context of the recently reborn Polish Republic. In the district's planned location outside the city center—the latter being, according to expert opinion, beyond saving from an urban improvement standpoint—its realization would have not only created an entirely new capital nucleus for Warsaw, but formed the linchpin of a much broader reorganization of the city along far more rational lines—thus marking a new, historic phase in its overall development and a concerted move away from its ill-perceived 19th-century tsarist legacy. Further, in its mass-oriented, unified design and monumental scale, the district, had it been realized, would have formed a sweeping—if not jarring—antithetical departure from Warsaw's typical urban fabric, with its dense, intimate network of singular, largely privately owned, architecturally irregular houses, small-scale residential developments and

haphazardly scattered public and administrative buildings. Although the planned district was ultimately shelved at the outbreak of the Second World War and did not reemerge as a viable concept in Warsaw's radically changed postwar reality 6 years later, it tellingly suggested that Warsaw's future form would be, in any case, a fundamental departure from its current self.

Conclusion

The interwar period was a crucial era for Warsaw in terms of architecture and urban planning, as it lay the foundations for its development out of a nineteenth-century provincial city into a modern, metropolitan capital adapted to the needs of mass urban life. In its newly imposed role at the close of the First World War as the political nucleus and symbolic center of the nascent Second Polish Republic, Warsaw become entrenched in a distinctive new architectural and urban planning discourse that interpreted and constructed the city in accordance with its new status and its corresponding expectations. The latter thus served as the essential driving force behind Warsaw's urban and architectural development as a national capital from 1918 onwards.

This newly emancipated discourse on Warsaw was remarkable, for one, for its dynamic mixture of deeply critical attitudes towards the Polish capital's present state, on one hand, and its striking optimism in its unique developmental potential on the other. Thus, while it ruthlessly censured Warsaw for its anonymous, petty-bourgeois character, insufficiently official appearance, and pervasive urban and architectural chaos—all of which took on a distinctively political and urgent significance as acutely undermining Warsaw's national capital status and authority—it concurrently regarded the city as a viable space for potential, innovative, large-scale urban transformation, and by extension, national redemption. Admittedly, by the 1930s, Polish architects and urban planners had begun to lament that much of what constituted the source of Warsaw's singular potential—its abundance of undeveloped terrain immediately surrounding its overly built-up central core—had been squandered through the unregulated proliferation of small-scale 1920s residential developments on them in response to the city's dire postwar housing crisis. However, the crystallization of an impressive roster of large-scale urban development projects for the city, which clearly aimed to consolidate its capital status, in the latter part of the decade indicated that

Warsaw still had sufficient amounts of viable terrain on the eve of the Second World War for the prospect of a major urban metamorphosis within its bounds to remain feasible. Among these developments, the planned representational district on the Mokotów Fields south of Warsaw's existing central core stood out in the capital's urban planning discourse as singularly promising, not only in functional, but also politically symbolic, terms. This discourse, as evidenced by the writings of the urban planner Marian Spychalski, not only touted the future district as forming a new center of gravity around which Warsaw could organize itself in more rational fashion, but as a salient symbol of the capital's movement away from its politically tainted past—as represented by its chaotic, dysfunctional nineteenth-century core—towards an auspicious, independent future.

Interwar Warsaw's architectural and urban planning discourse was also remarkable for its increasingly—and disproportionately—ambitious, idealistic, and prominently aesthetically concerned nature when compared to the city's everyday physical realities. One major reason for this glaring disparity between the nature of Warsaw's urban discourse and its real conditions was that Warsaw inescapably remained, despite its inarguable discursive and political importance as the capital of a large and populous European nation, by western European standards an economically poor, underdeveloped, and neglected city marked by deep social inequality and fragmentation. Certainly, the newly restored capital's glaringly difficult urban problems were traceable in part to the extreme decisions made by its foreign occupants on its behalf in the past, which left notable consequences. While Warsaw's long legacy of Russian rule, with its imposed fortress belt system that constricted the city's outward growth and thus chronically hindered its development, forms the most obvious example of how foreign intervention compounded Warsaw's urban problems, it is not, as demonstrated in Chapter I, the only one of significance. The actions of Warsaw's later German occupants, who in 1916 went in the opposite direction of the Russians—

and against the advice of the Warsaw magistrate—in ordering a dramatic expansion of the city's formerly claustrophobic municipal boundaries in a massive, singular territorial annexation, also created, somewhat paradoxically, chronic problems for Warsaw of an overarching scale. Thus, as a direct result of German-imposed policy, only a fraction of what legally comprised the capital of Warsaw in 1918 was actually urbanized, with the majority of what was in its jurisdiction remaining in a state of deep underdevelopment and disconnection, often bearing no resemblance to a city—let alone a capital—in any way, and posing a serious liability and overwhelming resource drain for Warsaw's administration all the way through the interwar period. It is important, however, to recognize additionally the role of deep class divisions in interwar Warsaw's society—and of Poland's more generally—in contributing to the city's disarray and generally low standard of development. As shown in Chapter I, the housing colonies that arose in Warsaw in the 1920s, after Poland had regained its independence, clearly further impeded (in predominantly catering to the lifestyle and financial position of the city's socioeconomically higher classes) Warsaw's administration from mitigating one of its most urgent urban problems—that is, its severe housing shortage, on a more systematic level that would have benefited the city on a much wider scale. In light of this fact, interwar Warsaw's relatively low levels of overall development were thus clearly not solely attributable to the consequences of past foreign occupation, but to the actions of independent Polish society as well.

On the other end of the disparity between Warsaw's real conditions and its architectural and urban planning discourse was the latter's overtly ambitious and visionary nature, which was driven not only by national pressures to improve Warsaw as a means of political legitimization, but also by the personal and professional ambitions of the discourse's main interlocuters. These individuals, who comprised an integral part of the fledgling Second Polish Republic's founding

elite as architects, urban planners, and later politicians, clearly used Warsaw's urban development potential as a platform further to consolidate their influence and status in the new polity, in this case as key beholders and shapers of the capital's—and by extension, the nation's—image. The aspirations of Polish architects, urban planners, and politicians to etch their own lasting and influential legacy into Warsaw by reimagining it into a much grander capital—aspirations that, incidentally, were strongly informed by their own privileged, firsthand knowledge of comparably more visually impressive western European capitals like Paris and Rome—were, however, blatantly removed from the city's much more sobering everyday realities, as mentioned above. Thus, it took the forceful, undemocratic intervention of the authoritarian Polish state in Warsaw's affairs in 1934 for a viable discursive space to appear in which architectural and urban planning discussions around the city's capital prestige could be presented as a legitimately nationally urgent matter and begin to develop in a more coordinated and official fashion. The death of Józef Piłsudski in 1935 only further fanned the ambitions of Polish architects, urban planners, and politicians for Warsaw's development, as illustrated in their joint participation in discursively reframing the planned representational district on the Mokotów Fields as an "urbanistic monument" to Piłsudski's memory (analyzed in Chapter III). Through this propagandistic reframing, the district's interested parties clearly provided themselves with the necessary justification to direct its further development not only as an outsized projection of Warsaw's prestige and influence, but of their own.

Finally, interwar Warsaw's architectural and urban planning discourse clearly began reflecting over the course of the 1930s a broader Polish embrace of more nationalist, socially disciplinary, and mass-oriented lines of architectural and urban planning thought unfolding in 1930s Europe, which in turn can be seen as a response to the new demands that Poland's

increasingly authoritarian government placed on architecture and urban space.[1] That the 1930s Polish architectural and urban planning milieu had begun to be attuned to these new demands and attracted by their possibilities has been strongly suggested by its members' receptiveness to the urban planning and architectural developments taking place in fascist Italy, which in the Polish perspective struck an innovative balance between modernization imperatives and loftier, state-fostered nationalist and ideological aims, as shown in Chapter II. Certainly, as the 1930s wore on, Warsaw's planned development projects began to evince a similar aim not only to modernize urban space, but to render it in the service of expressing the state's nationalist agenda and ideology of power, which was particularly apparent in the sweeping design plans for the Polish capital's projected representational district, rechristened in Piłsudski's memory upon his death in 1935. The district's final design also notably evinced, in its superhuman scale and clear mass organizing/framing function, the influence of radical social engineering ideas on Warsaw's urban planning and architectural discourse that had already found clear expression and success—as observed with enthusiasm by the Polish architect Michał Kostanecki in 1938—in the architecture of the Third Reich. The district's evolution thus stands as a particularly lucid suggestion that the quest physically to gather and discipline masses as part of a bid to gain total societal control, more obviously associated with the totalitarian regimes of 1930s Europe, had also found clear applicability in the authoritarian political climate of mid- to late-1930s Poland.

The outbreak of the Second World War dramatically interrupted—but did not fully extinguish—the distinctive architectural and urban planning discourse about Warsaw that had been developing since the restoration of Polish independence in 1918. Certainly, by the end of the war, Warsaw's political, social, and physical conditions had changed so drastically that certain aspects

[1] Jarosław Trybuś, *Warszawa Niezaistniała: Niezrealizowane Projekty Urbanistyczne i Architektoniczne Warszawy Dwudziestolecia Międzywojennego* (Warsaw: Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego (i inni), 2019), 22, 313-14, 348.

of its prewar discourse had become irrelevant after 1945; the planned representational district, for example, disappeared as a concept after the war since both its functional and propagandistic aims had been rendered immaterial by the severe destruction of Warsaw's city center and the establishment of a new political regime in Poland. However, Warsaw's profound mid-century rupture of destruction and political upheaval does not signify that its interwar architectural and urban planning discourse was not profoundly significant for its later development. As this thesis has shown, Warsaw's interwar discourse demonstrated a deep conviction that the city, in emerging from its nineteenth-century anonymity, was not merely in need of isolated improvements, but required a much more fundamental, comprehensive, and even radical transformation if it was to become a spiritually reborn, truly modern capital "worthy of a Nation among nations" that was well-adapted to the needs of twentieth-century life. In this way, this discourse anticipated the actual, far-reaching physical reconstruction of Warsaw that eventually arose—albeit through a most unexpected chain of events—after 1945.

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