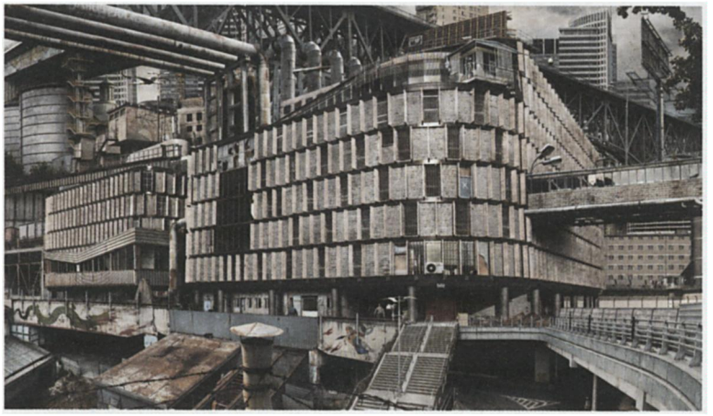


Nicolas Grospierre, *Business Cycle Graph 2008* and Kobas Laksa, *Vertical Columbary 2058*, 2008; Nicolas Grospierre, *Metropolitan Office Building 2008* and Kobas Laksa, *Metropolitan Prison 2061*, 2008 Courtesy Laska and Grospierre

Love Among the Ruins

David Crowley

In autumn 2008 Kobas Laksa and Nicolas Grospierre invited visitors to the Venice Architecture Biennale to stay at the Hotel Polonia. The national pavilion in the Giardini had been turned into a cavernous bedroom decorated with architectural reveries. Brilliant back-lit photographs by the two artists mapped a series of new dream worlds constructed in Poland over the last decade or so, mostly in Warsaw. These landmarks included Rondo 1 (2005), a glass and steel tower designed by AZO/Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, and Foster + Partners' Metropolitan Building (2003). Both are preeminent symbols of the triumph of international capitalism in Poland today, but in the Giardini this brave new world was filled with foreboding: accompanying these self-styled icons were images of the same buildings 40, 50 or 60 years hence.

The future of Warsaw – as visualised by Laksa and Grospierre – is of a world ravaged by crass commercialism and ecological crisis. Warsaw University library, once a proud pantheon to Poland's literary tradition, becomes a shopping mall filled with commercial kitsch. In a world without oil, Warsaw airport no longer facilitates air travel but functions as a shabby battery farm. Like all exercises in futurology, however, it is apparent that these images are more about the immediate past than the future. For much of the last decade Poland has been in the sweaty grip of neo-conservatism. The owners of these palms have been President Lech Kaczyński and Jarosław Kaczyński, the prime minister until 2007 – twin brothers who run the Law and Justice Party. Their politics has been built on what one journalist has called an 'anti-secular, anti-contraception, anti-homosexual, anti-prostitution, anti-Germany, anti-Russia and above all anti-former communists' platform.[1] In their conjoined minds, liberal views – particularly those espoused by former allies in the anti-communist opposition – are indistinguishable from the 'reds' they once fought. In the words of the editor of the liberal daily in Poland, they want 'Catholic Polish nationalism to shine out across a continent sunk in materialism, pornography, homosexuality and godlessness'.[2]

In their march on power, the Kaczyńskis presented themselves as defenders of the nation and of historical memory. Lech, when mayor of Warsaw in the early 2000s, was the driving force behind the new Warsaw Uprising Museum. Opened in 2007 to popular acclaim, it offered visitors a supercharged experience of Warsaw in wartime. The amplified sounds of beating hearts, marching boots and gun-fire ring through galleries filled with replicas of ruined buildings and reconstructions of shallow graves from the Second World War. In the same year, his brother invoked the violence of the Second World War to antagonise Poland's partners in the EU, claiming superior voting rights by counting the nation's war-dead: 'If Poland had not had to live through the years 1939–1945, it would today be looking at the demographics of a country of 66 million.'[3]

Seen in this context, Laksa and Grospierre's futuristic images point to a deep-seated Polish conservatism behind the facade of capitalist modernisation. Accordingly, Foster's Metropolitan building, which upon its completion was claimed as an incontestable symbol of Poland's arrival in the league of cosmopolitan cities, becomes a prison populated by jack-booted security guards. The trademark Foster glass curtain wall which wraps around the structure has been filled with breeze-blocks, obscuring the murky actions which take place within. Similarly, Rondo 1, a 200m skyscraper, now appears under the shadow of a menacing flyover and has been transformed into a vertical columbary containing the ashes of the city's dead. A bust of a cardinal graces a flanking mausoleum whilst a stonemason's yard in the foreground provides more ordinary memorials to dead Poles.

If the Hotel Polonia images draw their vitriol from a sense of outrage at the narrow-minds shaping public life in Poland today, they also tap much deeper currents running through Polish culture since the Second World War. In particular, they draw upon the much-contested currency of the architectural ruin as a symbolic object, particularly in Warsaw, a city which was rebuilt from ruins after 1945. Never just relics, Warsaw's ruins have been markers of real and perceived injustices ever since.

Chronometers

Despite their irony, Laksa and Grospierre's images conform to the conventional symbolism of the ruin as a measure of the irresistible passage of time. Broken buildings have drawn the romantic imagination as signs of the triumph of nature over culture: cracks and weeds mark the limits of civilisation and point to man's hubris.[4] Robert Browning's 1855 poem, 'Love Amongst the Ruins', describes an Italian landscape centuries after the fall of the Roman Empire. In a little tower overrun with humble plants, the poet meets his lover:

That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
Waits me there
In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless, dumb
Till I come.[5]

Love and nature, according to the poet, will outlive war and martial power. It is, perhaps, rather more difficult to aestheticise the ruins generated by modern warfare than those produced by the passing of time (although some have tried[6]). The ruins which result from mechanised violence seem far less innocent or optimistic or, as Georg Simmel described it, 'natural'.[7] As chronometers, they do not measure the slow passing of time but short and explosive events.

Warsaw's ruins were produced in three agonised 'moments': the German invasion in 1939 following the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact; in retaliation for the Ghetto Uprising in 1943 and in revenge for the Warsaw Uprising the following year. Cleared of people (by violence and deportation), Warsaw's streets and buildings were destroyed in 1944 by *Vernichtungs-Kommandos* (Annihilation Detachments) with tanks, flamethrowers and explosives. Systematic annihilation followed a Nazi script which demanded the complete disappearance 'of the city from the face of the Earth'. Particular attention was given to the historic fabric, ie those buildings which most clearly identified Warsaw as Warsaw. Destruction of buildings, in this way, was the production of meaning. As Andrew Hersher has argued of the destruction of New York's Twin Towers:

Damage is a form of design, and the traces of damage inflicted by political violence – a facade stippled by the spray of bullets, a penumbra of smoke around a hole where a door or a window once was, or a pile of rubble no longer identifiable as architecture at all – are at least as significant as any of the elements from which buildings are constructed for living, for the living.[8]

If the violent removal of symbolic objects is an act of design, can it be judged in aesthetic terms? Or, put in a more practical way, what might be the 'correct' aesthetic form in which these ruins might be recorded and preserved?

Achronicity

Whilst this question would seem perverse within the flames of 1944, it has occupied the minds of many in Warsaw ever since. The communist leadership who grabbed power in the late 1940s confronted this issue when they announced the reconstruction of the capital. In August 1949 party leader Bolesław Bierut introduced the Six-year Plan for the Reconstruction of Warsaw at Warsaw Polytechnic, one of the few surviving buildings in the city.[9] The following year his long sermon was published as a massive illustrated tome. This lavish book – available in four languages – provided clear evidence, were any needed, of the process of sovietisation of Poland underway at the time. The benign figure of Stalin, drawing on his pipe, featured on its first page to attest to Poland's new faith in the Georgian god; pre-war images of unrelieved poverty and excessive luxury 'demonstrated' the social inequalities of capitalism; the reconstruction programme was represented by Stakhanovite workers sweating on the city's new building sites; and the new socialist realist vision for Warsaw was projected in sketches for new landmarks. Over the years which followed, when each of these new additions to the cityscape were realised, they too were celebrated in grand honorific ceremonies and published in luxurious tomes.

In these volumes the future was somewhat easier to manage than the past. Bierut's 1949 speech and the book in which it appeared was a lesson in the principles of *diamat*, shorthand for dialectical materialism.[10] The future was already known – the challenge for man was to speed its arrival. Inconvenient details of history were overlooked or distorted. The fact that the Red Army had watched the final stage in the Nazi destruction of the city in 1944, an event which most Poles viewed as a second act of Nazi-Soviet collusion (after the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of 1939), was occluded in the official record. Instead, the book and speech outlined numerous instances of 'fraternal' Soviet aid after 1945: bridges across the Vistula; trains and trolleybuses; prefabricated homes; and a radio station.

A 1955 title, *MDM Marszałkowska 1730–1954*, was probably the boldest book in the genre. Commemorating the construction of a new model district in the centre of Warsaw, MDM, it was a *tour de force* of different montage techniques. Facsimile articles from the international press, official documents, handwritten instructions from the chief architect and plans were all reprinted alongside documentary photographs. Popular cultural forms like street songs, children's drawings and cartoons were also combined. Ostensibly, and in structural terms, this book about the new city centre of Warsaw echoed Alfred Döblin's famous 1929 novel, *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, which mapped the city from fragments including advertisements and chorus-line songs. But the effect of the 1955 title was very different. Here, montage did not produce what Franz Roh in the 1920s had called the 'demolishment of form, a chaotic whirl of blown up total appearance'.[11] Rather, montage in the east eschewed the aesthetics of dislocation and shock: it was given a constructive function to stabilise and fix meaning. It often took a kind of rhetorical form that Roland Barthes called 'concatenation'[12] – carefully organised images, usually supplied with anchoring captions, were combined to deliver unmistakable messages.

In these official publications, montage was often reduced to its most simple and least controvertible form – that of a structured contrast (not unlike the technique employed by Laksa and Grospierre 60 years later). Both the Six-year Plan and the MDM volume made frequent use of the formal contrast between images of the ruined streets, shattered structures and lonely people dwarfed by the yawning desolation and the new vistas and facades being built or reconstructed on the same spot. The distance between then and now was carefully maintained by these visual contrasts. The ravaged state of the city in 1944 and the achievements of the reconstruction programme were, as these images pressed, incontestable. The ruin was not allowed to stand alone, to stand for 'itself' or, perhaps paradoxically, even to stand for the past.

This device of coupling stripped each site of its pasts and, invariably, projected its future. The tendentious function of the ruin represented in this way was to suggest socialist Warsaw's destiny. This is not to say that the image of ruin was stripped of its pathos. It functioned – unmistakably – as an ideological vent to draw patriotic sentiment and an indictment of those who had destroyed the city. But the powerfully affective image of the ruin and the memories that it might arouse had to be contained and its force channelled (quite literally, in the form of voluntary labour to reconstruct parts of the city like the Old Town). In effect, ruins – in the representational cosmos of socialism during the 1950s – were time-locked in 1944, the moment of destruction. The communist image of the ruin was a strangely achronic.

Forgetting

The question of what a ruin might memorialise was deeply problematic for communist authority, not least because the value of all buildings – whether in ruins or not – was measured by ideological criteria above all others. This is perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the example of the Royal Castle in the historic centre of the city.[13] In the first years after the war, before the Party had secured its monopoly, this historic building was frequently represented in the press, sometimes in the form of paired images

depicting the building in ruins alongside a photograph from the 1930s of it still intact. This early coupling broke the rules of *diamat*. Essentially nostalgic and mournful, this retrospective mode was inappropriate for the joyful task of building socialism in Poland.

The castle in ruins formed an open wound at the heart of the city. Unacceptable as a monarchical symbol, this complex of historic buildings, even as rubble, barely existed in the representational order of Polish socialism in the 1950s and the 1960s. Bierut's successor, Party-leader Gomułka, an uncompromising character, is believed to have personally obstructed plans for its reconstruction ('A cactus will grow on my hand before the Royal Castle is rebuilt'). The nature of his objection is unclear and probably manifold: the Castle embodied the quasi-democratic traditions of the Polish aristocracy, which voted for its kings during the commonwealth of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Like an architectural oxymoron, it was an aristocratic symbol of democracy. Moreover, it had first been turned into a ruin during the *blitzkrieg* of September 1939 when the Soviet Union and the Germans had formed their alliance. It testified to the moment when Stalin embraced Hitler. From the Party's perspective both facts meant that a rebuilt castle would be a malignant monument.

Nevertheless, the Castle occupied a prominent place in the imagined or remembered city, not least for those who made the pilgrimage to the Old Town, the centrepiece of the reconstruction of the city and a major site of ideological activity. In ruins, the Royal Castle could function indexically as evidence of both the glorious Polish past and the ignominious Soviet present. Not encumbered with a purpose or function, it was open to a kind of emotional investment that the Party found threatening. Perhaps cynically, a new party leadership in the 1970s licensed the castle's reconstruction, renaming the monument 'Warsaw Castle'. In so doing, they checked any fantastic democratic or aristocratic hopes which the site in ruins might nourish. Restored, this building belongs to an odd category of things – described by Adrian Forty as 'counter-iconoclasm' – that are remade in order to forget what their absence once signified.[14]

Remembering

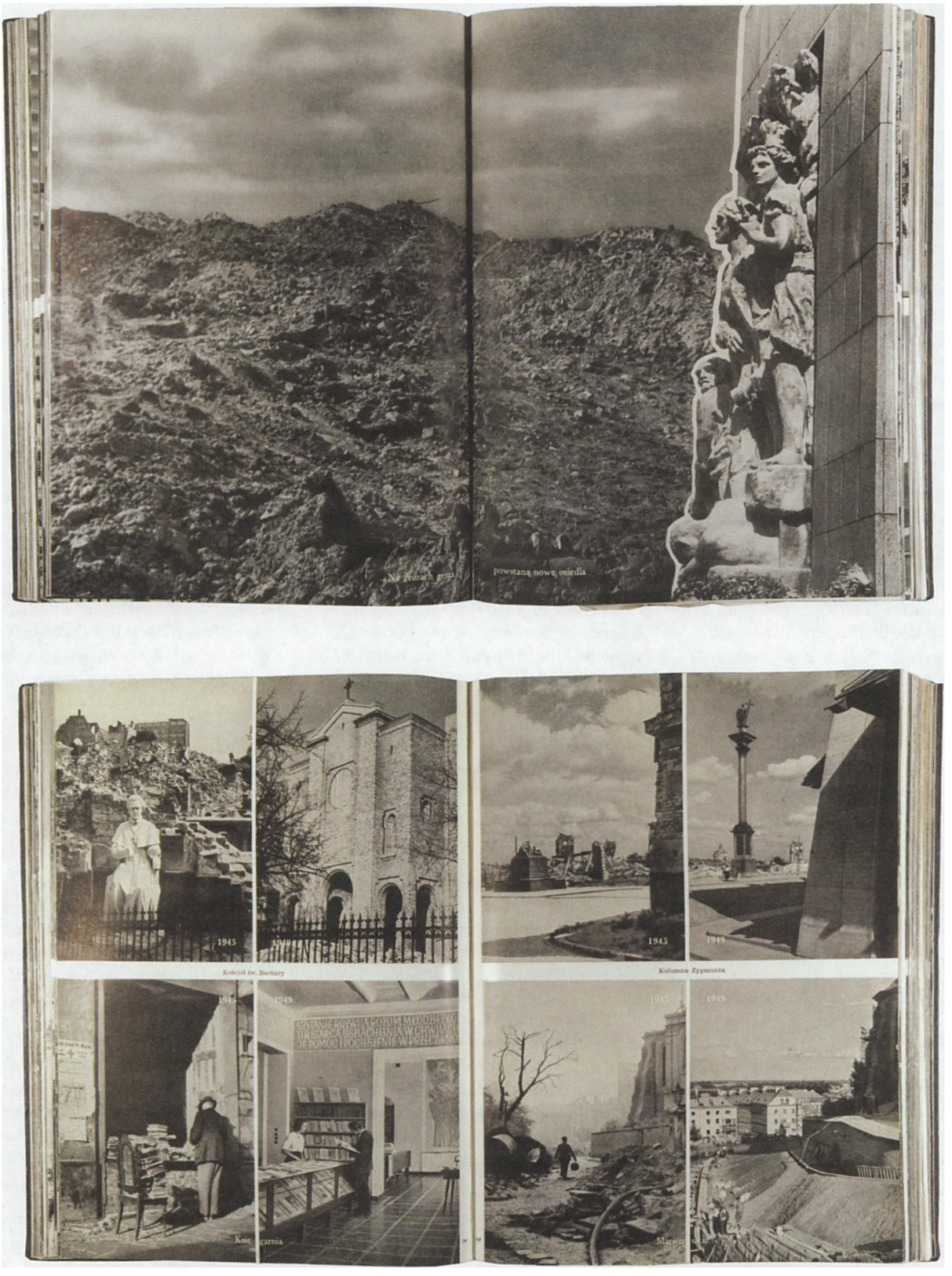
In the new people's republic, history (ordered by ideology) had to triumph over memory (a subjective, emotive and perhaps less compliant capacity).[15] This distinction might even be allegorised in the forms favoured by the Party in its representation of the city: history was monumental, sequential and linear (like the endlessly monotonous socialist realist vistas being built in the early 1950s), whereas the many ruins were discontinuous, fragmentary and exploded (not unlike the incendiary discharges of memory). Incomplete, the ruin required conscious acts of recall to be restored.

Such acts of recall are difficult to find, particularly during the early years of the People's Republic when the policing of culture was most vigilant. One rare example of the public exercise of memory in the early communist period is a series of combination photograph/drawings made by artist Bronisław Wojciech Linke between 1946 and 1956. Linke was an unusual artist in the postwar Polish context. His art had Weimar roots and, like Otto Dix, he used grotesque imagery to comment on the brutality and injustice of life.[16] He was also a committed socialist who refused to subscribe to the official dogma of socialist realism. His pre-war record as an activist was valuable to the regime which required public intellectuals to endorse their programme, yet his idiosyncratic and largely pessimistic vision of humanity was at odds with official dogma. During the course of the sovietisation of Poland and the Stalin years, he worked on a series of drawings entitled 'Stones That Cry'. These were only published during the liberalising 'Thaw' of the mid-1950s,[17] as their anguish, explicit Christian symbolism and underlying surrealism were incompatible with the banal and bathetic tenets of socialist realism. Instead of showing a world populated with grinning peasants and proletarians happily building the future, these montages acknowledge the fragmented character of the city devastated by war. They combine drawings and photographs – recorded with Linke's own camera – with other documents and ephemera. These ruins were less a meditation on history (whether in a Marxist/Leninist mode or not) than an exercise in mnemonics. 'Stones that Cry' was in the first instance an expression of Linke's own grief in the aftermath of war. This perhaps explains the heavy-handed sentimentality of some of the images in the series. In one drawing, entitled *Misterium* (1947), a woman cast in brick gives birth to a child with a crane acting as mechanical forceps, while three architectural figures crowned with barbed-wire accompany this event on violins. The drawing appears to be stamped with the words 'Unchecked for mines', the message chalked on Warsaw's buildings when the Poles started to reoccupy the city. In the foreground, a newspaper with the headline *Ruiny W(arszawy)* (Ruins of W(arsaw)) accompanied with a pre-war image of the Royal Castle and advertisements for prosthetic limbs forms another anthropomorphic figure. Bodies and buildings fuse in this image. In this way, Linke revived and modified the traditional conception of the ruin as *momento mori*. And in giving the ruin an anthropomorphised form, animating the inanimate and representing the death of the living, he presented an uncanny vision of Warsaw. The city of 'new enlightenment' was populated with ghosts and repressed anxieties.

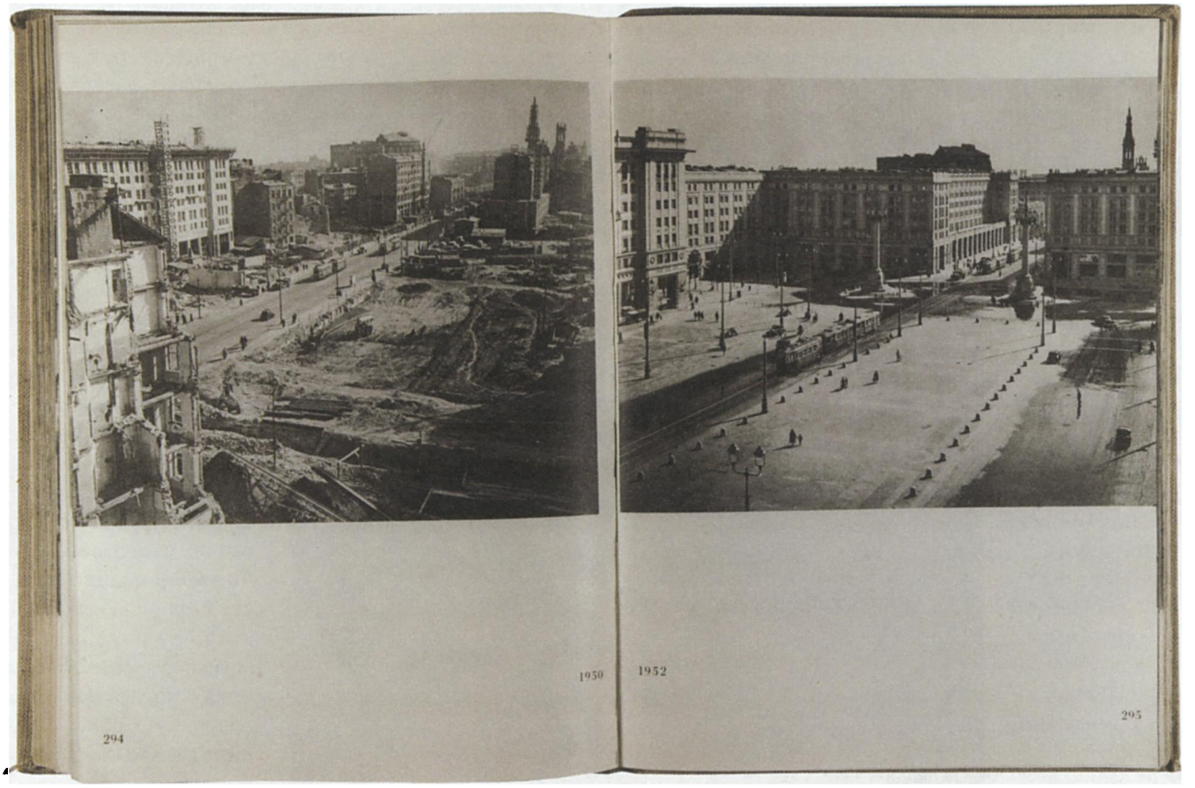
In the birth of a child *Misterium* offers a symbol of present hopes for the future whereas other images in the series raised questions about the meanings attached to the past. A 1956 drawing, for example, entitled *El Mole Rachmim* (*Prayer for the Dead*), depicts a ruined building as a praying Jew. It offered reflection on the absences in Polish society which were not only overlooked but were being erased in the rush to remake the city. At the same moment that this image was being produced, the chief city architect in Warsaw, making the case for new roads, reported that the 5,400 tombstones in the oldest part of the Jewish Cemetery had 'no memorial value'.[18] Viewed in this context, Linke's ruins point to the erasure of memory by 'Progress'.

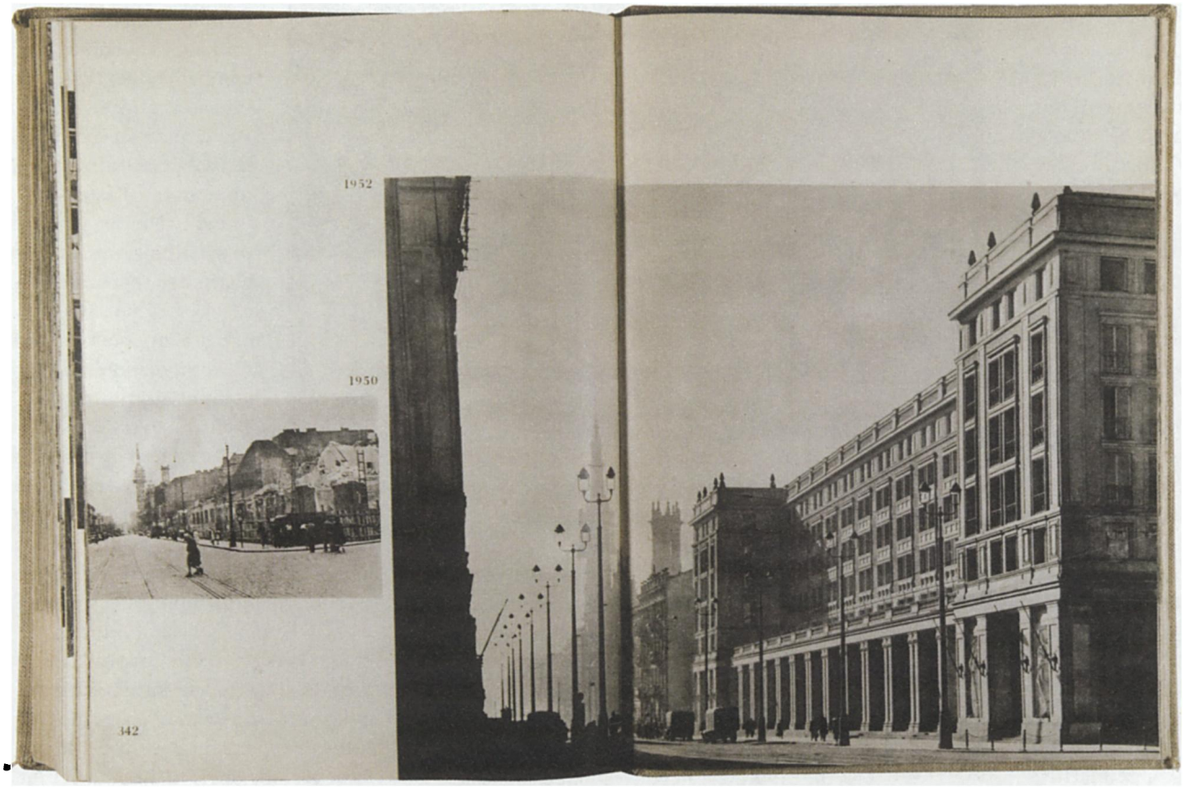
Shadows

If ruins sheltered ghosts from the past, then they also stood for an uncontrolled (and perhaps even uncontrollable) present. In Warsaw, ruins were the setting for social practices which the state refused to acknowledge during the Stalinist years of the early 1950s. Prostitution, squatting, alcoholism and black-market trade were all to be found in the wastelands of the city – in 1950s slang, prostitutes in Warsaw were known as *gruzinki* (Georgian girls) because they conducted their trade in the ruins (*gruzy*). In official ideology such social problems were characterised as symptoms of capitalism. The fact that they thrived in socialist Poland could hardly be countenanced. But during the Thaw of the mid-1950s, immediately after Stalin's death, it became briefly possible to vent criticism of the failures of the regime. With considerable anti-communist feeling in Poland and elsewhere in the Eastern Bloc spreading into street protests and the tragedy of the Hungarian Uprising, the authorities tried to manage disaffection by relaxing censorship. It is not surprising, then, that the ruin was widely adopted as the defining Warsaw setting for artists, novelists and above all filmmakers during these years. For example, Aleksander Ford, a party member and prominent filmmaker, adapted Marek Hłasko's bitter novel, *Eighth Day of the Week,* for the screen in 1957. The film tells the story of a couple's despondent search for a private space in which to make love. They are, in an existential sense, homeless. Piotr, an architect who designs showy modernist towers in the state architectural office, lives in a ruined tenement which constantly threatens to give up its walls and floors, whilst philosophy student Agnieszka shares a tiny apartment with her family and a lodger. In the overcrowded city, only the filthy and rubble-strewn ruins seem to offer the space for them to satisfy their desire. Yet even the most derelict location turns out to



Page spreads from Bolesław Bierut, *Sześcioletni plan odbudowy Warszawy* (Warsaw, 1950)
Photos Sue Barr





Page spreads from Stanisław Jankowski,
***MDM Marszałkowska 1730–1954* (Warsaw, 1955)**
Photos Sue Barr

be populated with a gang of drunks who abuse the lovers. Hemmed in by their environment and the narrow choices facing them, their relationship falls apart.

The film itself – a co-production with a German film company – was shot during a moment of relative liberalisation but was completed when the Party was pulling in its reins. At a private screening for Władysław Gomułka, the then president is reported to have stormed out screaming *świństwo, świństwo, świństwo* ('filthy swine, filthy swine, filthy swine'),[19] subsequently banning the film for 25 years, a record in the history of Polish communist censorship. By contrast, another Thaw film which made use of Warsaw's ruins not only as a backdrop but as a metaphor enjoyed a far greater success. Andrzej Wajda's *Kanał* (1956) narrates the fate of a small troop of soldiers during the Warsaw Uprising in the summer of 1944. The film is divided in two, the first of which depicts the soldiers' final hours in the ruins of the city (smoking, singing, making love and occasionally fighting), while the second presents a hellish journey through the sewers to engage the Germans in a final battle. Lacking the heroism favoured by Soviet films, the protagonists in *Kanał* all die in futile circumstances; their bodies crumpled and broken end up like the cityscape itself. Although the film offered no criticism of the Soviet Union, it was evident to Polish viewers that they were victims of both Hitler and Stalin. The Kremlin had halted the progress of the Red Army on the Eastern banks of the Vistula in 1944 whilst the Germans decimated the insurgents fighting in the ranks of *Armia Krajowa* (home army) and then destroyed the city. Stalin preferred to enter an empty city rather than one in the hands of patriotic and belligerent Poles. In fact, the Kremlin and the Polish communists viewed the *Armia Krajowa* as dangerous rivals long after the conclusion of the war. Party ideologues even claimed that the insurgents ('reactionaries') were as much to blame for the destruction of the city as Hitler. At the same time, public discussion of the Warsaw Uprising was prohibited. Made during the Thaw, Wajda's film effectively constituted the first memorial to the actions of the *Armia Krajowa* in Poland. And unlike the later monuments erected in the city – notably Marian Konieczny's sword-wielding *Memorial to the Heroes of Warsaw* (1961) – it captured the flaws and frailties of Warsaw's defenders.

The Last Ruin?

Shot on and below the streets of Warsaw, *Kanał* did not demand elaborate sets. More than ten years after the end of the war, the city could still provide an ample supply of ruined sites. Over the years that followed, however, the ruins of the Second World War were slowly erased from the city. In 2003, perhaps the last wartime ruin in central Warsaw – the modest Divine Mercy and Saint Faustyna Church on Żytnia Street dating from 1872 – was finally restored to good architectural health. Curiously, restoration caused a minor outcry. Architects and conservators – figures who might otherwise have had an interest in restoration (or even demolition) – argued for the preservation of the church in its derelict state. The building, they argued, should be put under a bell jar (not unlike Foster's treatment of the Reichstag), echoing calls for what Charles Meredith has dubbed a 'negative monument', which 'makes a place for the ruins that remain; it allows them to be an anguished site of cultural patrimony'.[20]

German publicity material for Aleksander Ford's *Ośmy Dzien Tygodnia* (*Eighth Day of the Week*), 1957

The case for this kind of preservation lay in the building's history. It had been badly damaged during the Warsaw Uprising when young fighters from the *Parasol* battalion of the *Armia Krajowa* fought the *Wehrmacht*. Tomasz Urzykowski, a prominent architectural historian, describing his experience of the decayed space 60 years later, noted that 'Entering the church one felt the atmosphere of a blighted Warsaw as well as the tragedy of the city. One also feels its power (after all, the church, though blasted, burned out, still stands).'[21] This was not the only moment in which the building had played a 'historic' role. During the period of Martial Law in the early 1980s when the state suppressed the Solidarity Trade Union with troops, curfews and draconian censorship, the catholic church became a channel for a wide range of protests by believers and non-believers alike. At a time when artists and audiences boycotted official institutions, church buildings became temporary exhibition spaces and meeting centres.

Similarly, the church on Żytnia Street provided a suitably melancholic setting for a number of exhibitions and theatrical performances by banned avant-garde companies like *Teatr Ósmego Dnia* (Theatre of the Eighth Day) from Pozna and anti-communist intellectuals like Andrzej Wajda (who mounted an 'Easter Vigil' there in 1985). The dilapidated state of this building, with exposed and charred timber beams supporting a leaky roof, unrendered walls and broken columns, often lit with flickering candles, added to conspiratorial atmosphere of these events, suggestively linking them to the cycle of insurrection and punishment which runs through Polish history.

Twenty years later, conservative opinion on the state of church on Żytnia Street was that 'the idea of leaving [it] as a permanent ruin reflected a desire to commemorate not so much the Warsaw Uprising as the activities of the social groups which gathered around the church in the 1980s.'[22] Preservation would, it was argued, be a kind of self-aggrandisement, a monument to the 'independent culture' of the 1980s. The more zealous voices in the church (not least those clerics speaking through the megaphone of the reactionary Roman Catholic Radio Maryja) insisted that no such garland should be bestowed on the liberal intelligentsia because it had forsaken its role as a moral force. The last

ruin was, in effect, disputed property in a slow and angry divorce between the liberal intelligentsia and the church.

End Games

It would seem as if the battles over Warsaw's war-time ruins have now come to an end. After all, few remain (although in the decaying structures of state socialism a new order of ruins is clearly visible[23]). But they have been revived as simulacra. The Museum of the Warsaw Rising uses ruins as evocative props to tap popular sentiment. Visitors pass through a 25m-long sewer, like an insurgent during the Uprising, to confront images of the city from the 1930s. These photo panels are accompanied by 'authentic' ruins, disjointed relics from the Royal Castle. The route through the museum is presented as a vertiginous freefall through history to enter the cosmos of martyrs and saints, the men and women who fought in 1944 to save the city. Massive portraits of fighters, medics and couriers in Warsaw's ruins have been fixed to the interior and exterior walls of this building, a former tram power plant at Przyokopowa Street.

There is, however, a provocative postscript to this 60-year cycle which has seen the replacement of ruins by their images. In 2006, artist Zbigniew Libera and writer Dariusz Foks published a small booklet entitled *Co robi łączniczka* (*What a Courier Does*). Prompted by an overlooked, even repressed theme in Wajda's *Kanał* – that of sex in the ruins – they embraced the figure of the *łączniczka* – the *Armia Krajowa* courier who travelled between barricades and through the sewers to carry messages to the ragged battalions fighting in Warsaw in the summer of 1944. In Wajda's 1956 film, the courier 'connects' emotionally and sexually with the fighting men (as well as with the 'normal' world of black market goods). She embodies the flight from conventional morality which occurs in war and perhaps, as Hłasko suggested, in the heterotopic space of the ruin. This historical experience has been forgotten or even suppressed in the sanctification of the *Armia Krajowa* underway in conservative Poland today.

In Foks' and Libera's project – a series of texts which read like strange instructions for conduct in war and manipulated photographs – the appeal of the *łączniczka* is restored. The ruins of Warsaw form the backdrop for portraits of film actresses from the 1960s and 1970s in the enticing poses of movie publicity shots. All but one are international stars: Catherine Deneuve features, for instance, in her role as a prostitute in Luis Buñuel's *Belle de Jour* (1967). Libera's technique is familiar: the mass media has a way of blending fact and fiction in ways that make the two hard to distinguish. After all, the Museum of the Warsaw Rising has been shaped as much by Wajda's *Kanał* as it has by the hundreds of oral testimonies which its curators have gathered over the years. But perhaps, in the Polish context at least, there is something else at work here. Like Thom Andersen's recent montage film, *LA Plays Itself*, in *Co robi łączniczka* the background zooms forward. It reminds the viewer of the melancholic glamour which have been attached to ruins and their images in Poland for more than 60 years.

Zbigniew Libera, Dariusz Foks, *Co robi łączniczka*, 2006
Image features a still of Catherine Deneuve in Luis Buñuel's *Belle de Jour*, 1967
Courtesy Raster Gallery

1. John Cornwell, 'The Warsaw pact', *The Times*, 19 August 2007.
2. Adam Michnik, editorial in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 7 October 2007.
3. Kamil Tchorek, 'Polish voters support leaders' all', *The Times*, 23 June 2007.
4. Charles Merewether 'Irresistible Decay: Ruins Reclaimed', in Michael S Roth, Claire Lyons and Charles Merewether (eds), *Irresistible Decay* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty, 1997), pp 1–13. See also Christopher Woodward, *In Ruins* (London: Vintage, 2002).
5. Robert Browning, 'Love Among the Ruins', in *Men and Women* (Boston, 1856), pp 3–4.
6. Germany in the twentieth century provides various examples of this impulse. See Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces: Artefacts of German Memory, 1870–1990* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000).
7. Georg Simmel, 'The Ruin', in Kurt H Wolff (ed), *Essays on Sociology, Philosophy and Aesthetics* (New York: Harper, 1965), pp 259–66.
8. Andrew Hersher, 'The Language of Damage', *Grey Room* 7 (Spring 2002), p 69.
9. Bolesław Bierut, *Sześcioletni plan odbudowy Warszawy* (Warsaw, 1950).
10. Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind* (London: Harmondsworth, 1985).
11. Franz Roh and Jan Tschichold, *Foto-auge: 76 Fotos der Zeit* (Stuttgart, 1929), reprinted as *Photo-Eye: 76 Photos of the Period* (New York: Arno, 1973).
12. Roland Barthes, 'The Photographic Message', in Image, Music, Text (London: Harper Collins, 1977), p 24.
13. A more detailed discussion of this episode appears in my book, *Warsaw* (London: Reaktion, 2003).
14. Adrian Forty, 'Introduction', in Adrian Forty and Susanne Kuchler (eds), *The Art of Forgetting* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1999), p 10.
15. On the force of memory channelled by opposition see Rubie S Watson's introduction to Rubie S Watson (ed), *Memory, History and Opposition Under State Socialism* (Santa Fe, NM: SAR Press, 1994), pp 1–19.
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