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The Great War and Polish Memory. Architectural Forms of Commemoration and the Myth of a New State*

1. *Impossible Objects*

On the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of World War I, the 14th International Architecture Exhibition was organised in Venice[1]. And even though opening date of the exhibition only accidentally coincided with the anniversary of the Great War, its main slogan proposed by the world-famous architect and architecture theorist Rem Koolhaas seems very apt in view of the reinterpretations of that conflict, reiterated worldwide. Especially if we bear in mind the consequences of the war for Central and Eastern Europe – most notably for the Slavic nations, for whom the map changed in a way that would have been unimaginable before the war. The title *Fundamentals*[2], proposed by Koolhaas and accompanied by the subheading: *Absorbing Modernity 1914-2014*, inspired exhibitions in national pavilions, prepared by each country's curating teams. In this way – incidentally, perhaps, but tellingly nonetheless – an analogy was established between the birth of modernity and the outbreak of that particular conflict, which seems very interesting in the perspective of World War I cultural history. This birth of history from the spirit of war, to paraphrase Friedrich Nietzsche, has been frequently commented upon by scholars (Eksteins 1989, Armstrong 2005, Didi-Huberman 2009). In relation to the countries newly created or reinstated in the aftermath of the 1914-1918 war, such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, Finland and Lithuania, this phenomenon inspires questions about the relationship between independence, war and modernity on the one hand, and tradition on the other. There are also the issues of post-dependence discourses used in those young states, and the challenge of creating new identities.

The abovementioned aspects were brought together in the exhibition titled *Impossible Objects*, prepared by the Institute of Architecture and shown in the Polish pavilion in the Venetian Giardini. In the exhibition manifesto the curators wrote[3]:

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[1] 14th International Architecture Exhibition took place on 7 June-23 November 2014.

[2] The event titled *Fundamentals* included three main exhibitions: *Elements of Architecture* in the Central Pavilion, *Monditalia* in the Arsenale and *Absorbing Modernity 1914-2014* in the national pavilions.

[3] The exhibition was curated by the team of the Institute of Architecture: Dorota Jędruch, Marta Karpińska, Dorota Leśniak-Rychlak and Michał Wiśniewski.

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> The exhibition *Impossible Objects* addresses the complex relationship between modernism and politics in the context of the Polish state, newly revived after 1918. Modernity as a focal point of national pride and international aspirations, coexisting with various attempts to reference the past: elaborate historic myths, symbolic resurrection and victorious defeats. Official funeral rites, the cult of military leaders and poets elevated to the status of national saints and the myth of the existing-though-non-existent state – all these elements provide the foundation for the shaky sense of Polish national identity. The attitude of the Poles towards modernity is as complex as the idea of modernism itself. Are we part of the post-1918 European race towards multifaceted modernisation? And to what extent is the Polish case typical – or unique to its situation of a post-partition (postcolonial) state, previously functioning only as a theoretical concept? Is our ambivalent approach towards modernity the key to understanding our distinctive culture, which is often so difficult to comprehend for others? These are the main issues we chose to address in response to the biennale motto proposed by Rem Koolhaas (IA FN).

Although the exhibition's political aspect was not clearly defined, the show necessarily entered into a dialogue (often combative) with contemporary Polish politics of memory and so-called historical policies. The chief exhibit – the titular Impossible Object – was a work by a young Krakow artist, Jakub Woynarowski. It was a full-scale replica of the architectural creation by one the leading Polish inter-war architects, Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, credited with shaping a new identity for Poland with the language of architecture. In 1937 he created a granite, marble and bronze canopy for the entrance to the tomb of Marshal Józef Piłsudski. Deceased in 1935, Piłsudski was one of the main architects of Polish independence and the crucial Polish military leader in World War I and the subsequent Polish-Ukrainian (1918-1919) and Polish-Bolshevik (1919-1921) wars. Although Szyszko-Bohusz's canopy uses traditional architectural elements (six marble columns with bronze composite capitals, spindles), the composition is put together by using simple, modernist details. But there is much more to that object than just its interesting form. In the context of the recent war and Polish struggles to regain independence, as well as the shaping of the politics of memory and identity of the new state, dependent on the visual propaganda, the canopy's location and material seem of primary importance.

First of all, it was placed in a highly symbolic space, i.e. near the Wawel cathedral. The cathedral has always been pivotal in terms of Polish national memory as the burial place of Polish kings and, ever since the 19th century, also of Polish national heroes and poets considered as national bards[4]. The canopy formally adorns the tomb of Józef Piłsudski, the Chief of State, but it is linked with other sepulchres, i.e. those of kings, heroes and poets.

[4] The cathedral is also the burial place of the 'almost king', Prince Józef Poniatowski, nephew to the last Polish king, who was buried here in 1817, and the 'peasant king' Tadeusz Kościuszko (buried a year later) (Kijowski 1984: 34). In 1890 the body of the poet Adam Mickiewicz was laid to rest in the crypt (he died in Istanbul in 1855), and in 1927 the body of another poet, Juliusz Słowacki (died in Paris in 1849), was also transferred here.

As a result, Piłsudski's figure is linked to history, while history, on the other hand, is made contemporary and subordinated to the current historic policy of the state[5]. The materials used for creating the canopy are also meaningful. As mentioned before, granite, bronze and marble were used as spolia – they were retracted, as follows: from Otto von Bismarck's monument in Poznań, demolished in 1919 as part of re-Polonisation of the region (before 1918, it belonged to the German Empire); from recast Austrian canons from the Austro-Hungarian Krakow Fortress; and from Alexander Nevskij Orthodox Cathedral in Warsaw (which remained in Russian hands until 1915), demolished in 1926, as it was regarded as a symbol of Russification (Wiśniewski 2013: 52-53).

Owing to its traditional-and-yet-modern form, uniting history and modernity with shaping cultural memory through architecture as well as materials from the three partitions (literally and symbolically) that subsequently formed the new Polish state, the canopy – through its reference to the body of Marshal Piłsudski – epitomised the collective body of the nation and the regained independent state. It can be said that, like in Ernst Kantorowicz's theory about the king's body, Piłsudski had two bodies rather than one. As Ulrich Schmid wrote, analysing textual and visual images of Piłsudski's body, "the Marshal also has two bodies: the mortal one in which his individuality resides and the immortal body which guarantees political unity" (Schmid 2014: 47). This discourse of the double body of the Marshal / king was present even while Piłsudski was still alive; however, it materialised in full after his death. The memorial photo album titled *Gdy Wódz odchodził w wieczność...* ('*When Our Leader Departed*', GWO), released to commemorate the funeral ceremony in Warsaw and Krakow, contains the following passage: "a great heart in the nation has ceased to beat" (GWO: 2) – just as if the collective body of the nation only had one heart, the one belonging to Piłsudski.

Woynarowski's replica is a subtle modification of Szyszko-Bohusz's original design. Exploring the topic of visual propaganda and the imagined (rather than real) character of Piłsudski's sepulchre in terms of national memory, the artist shows how interwar Polish architecture was used for creating idiosyncrasies of memory of the newly reinstated country. Woynarowski's concept involved physical separation of the upper layer of the canopy from the six supporting columns, achieving a striking visual effect (impossible in reality), seemingly making the canopy float in the air. According to the curators:

> The act of physical separation of the lower and upper parts of the structure gives it a hallucinatory, impossible quality. [...] The place where the capitals should be joined with the surface of the cuboid becomes a 'gap' between two separate artistic orders. The Polish architect links them, despite the divide between the modern form and reactionary

[5] The close link between the canopy and the remaining tombs is stressed in the Latin inscription placed on its sides: "*Corpora dormiunt, vigilant animae*" (Through bodies rest, spirits keep vigil). The use of plural *corpora* makes it a clear reference to all the bodies in the crypt (rather than just Piłsudski's).

> content, applying academism and modernism. The form of the project visibly references the lines of tension resulting from Piłsudski's utopian vision: the cult of the past is juxtaposed with modernist zeal, unresolved local grudges with international aspirations and postcolonial patchwork with a unified vision of the new state (IA FN).

Szyszko-Bohusz's canopy, remembered and reinterpreted on the centenary of World War I, is by no means the only example of Polish interwar architecture seeking to create the myth of the new state through references to the memory of the Great War. This, I believe, should come as no surprise in any country reinstated after over one hundred years of political submission. Like other countries in Central and Eastern Europe called into existence in the aftermath of that conflict, Poland was in great need of both consistent historic policy and mechanisms to create cultural memory. At that time, the Polish nation was still a concept rather than a fact; moreover, in the newly created state Poles accounted for no more than 69% of the population. One way of producing such mechanisms was architecture, which often not only gained the status of a place of memory but also provided a frame for performative acts in the national discourse of biopower, including an element of creating cultural memory and its social embodiment. In the following part of the present article I discuss selected structures created by Polish architects, which I label as 'architecture of memory'. Like Szyszko-Bohusz's canopy, these are works referencing the Great War and necroperformative objects (functionally linked with the dead body of the soldier)[6]. At the same time, they are representative of idiosyncrasies, omissions and deliberate silences characteristic for Polish complex cultural memory of World War I.

2. *Opportunities: Polish Architecture of Memory*

The issue of the modern memory of the war linked with a mass boom in memory that commenced while the fight still continued and reached its peak in the years immediately after the war is highly complex, albeit relatively well analysed (Fussell 1975). Scholars have also investigated the interesting aspect of newly emerged and popularised forms of recording memory, including architectural ones (Winter 1995). Out of that vast cultural spectrum I am selecting those which seem the most typical and pivotal for commemorative architecture of memory and necroperformance of the Great War: (1) World War I cemetery, often connected with the war memorial[7], (2) cenotaph as an empty, symbolic grave and its dialectic

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[6] The issue of the memory of the Great War in the context of the body as an archive, in relation to the proposed category of necroperformance, is discussed by Dorota Sajewska (2016). However, Sajewska does not touch upon architecture, which is the main aspect covered by the present article.

[7] Of course, the category of war memorial is a far more complex issue. I have analysed this topic in relation to Austrian World War I cemeteries. On that occasion, I investigated the usage of several alternative categories (e.g. *Friedhofsdenkmal*, *Siegesdenkmal*, *Gedächtnismal*) introduced in German scholarly text on the topic, where every one of these terms has its distinctive meaning and dynamics (Szymański 2015).

antithesis, as it is founded on the absence of the body and (3) the tomb of an unknown soldier. First, I briefly present the classical forms of these three necroperformative architectural structures and then I compare them with selected Polish examples. In my view, such a comparison can effectively reveal the specificity of Polish cultural memory of the Great War, as distinct from that cultivated in other Central and Western European countries.

Even though World War I was not the first conflict which required establishing war cemeteries close to the front line, or even on battlefields[8], it pushed this form of commemorative structure to previously unknown heights. Never before – and never again – would such effort and funds be devoted to creating monumental and often majestic war cemeteries. Significantly, these were not limited to tombs and their immediate surroundings, but also included chapels, monuments and various kinds of war memorials[9].

Extensive, centrally planned building of war cemeteries and memorials commenced during the conflict in almost all the countries involved in it, or shortly after the armistice. Concern for the war tombs – temporary at first, and permanent after exhumations – and their visual aspect was displayed by all sides of the conflict. In 1917, the British National Committee for the Care of Soldiers' Graves was transformed into the Imperial War Graves Commission, whose aim was to care for architectural commemoration of British Empire soldiers fallen in the Great War (Crane 2013: 96). In 1923, the American Congress and the US president Warren Harding founded the American Battle Monuments Commission, responsible for designing cemeteries for fallen American Expeditionary Forces soldiers and supervising their care. In Vienna the War Grave Department (*Kriegsgräber Abteilung*) (subordinated to the Ministry of War) was created as early as in 1915 (Szymański 2014: 428), while in imperial Russia the Alexander Committee in Sankt Petersburg was created in 1914 to serve a similar purpose (Dąbrowski 2004: 29).

This is not the right place or moment for a detailed discussion of the organisation of war burials of the period, whose scale was enormous. The war soon became a very special *lieu de mémoire*, to use Pierre Nora's apt term (Nora 1989: 7-25). Being a universal place of memory, it became at the same time a unique place of memory for every country or nation that experienced it. Having in mind Aleida Assmann's discernment, one could argue that while in some countries (e.g. Germany and the United Kingdom) the war was a traumatic place of memory, in other, such as Poland, a place of memory whose connotations were largely positive and affirmative (Assmann 2002: 197-212). The production of war memory was carried out by a number of different means. Suffice it to say that almost entire Europe (and not only Europe) was covered by thousands of German, Austro-Hungarian, British,

[8] Earlier conflicts that involved the creation of war cemeteries, and which can provide an important point of reference for the programme of creating World War I cemeteries are the American Civil War (1861-1865) and the Crimean War (1853-1856) (Crane 2013: 8) as well as the Prussian-French war (1870-1871) (Pépin 2007: 236-237).

[9] The number of World War I cemeteries can only be rivalled by the number of those created during and after World War II.

Canadian, Italian etc., larger or smaller war necropolises. The area crucial for the present discussion is of course the Eastern Front, which ran across the lands incorporated into the new Polish state in 1918. Significantly, the Eastern Front was operated by three imperial armies ruled by three ministries of war which were no longer in existence after the war, and fighting for three emperors who lost their power due to revolutions and post-war instability[10]. This was the situation in which Polish independence was born and the new country was put together on the lands which until then were divided between three now deposed rulers. Significantly, also Polish people were subjects of three emperors and fought in three imperial armies, frequently facing one another in battles. This dramatic aspect of the Great War has never been sufficiently addressed in Poland. Though there are many sources documenting individual experiences of Poles, e.g. those in the German army fighting their countrymen in the Russian army (Kaczmarek 2014: 116), until this date no one has counted how many Poles were in that kind of situation, how many of them were wounded and how many – which is, after all, crucial for the research on the architecture of memory[11] – were killed and buried in Austro-Hungarian, German and Russian war cemeteries on the Eastern Front territories that became part of Poland after 1918.

Affectively tense and made into a taboo, this gap in the Polish cultural memory was further obscured after the war by the creation of the myth of the one and only just Polish military unit fighting in World War I, namely the Polish Legions commanded by Józef Piłsudski, created with the permission of German and Austro-Hungarian rulers to support the Austro-Hungarian army. The myth of the Legions was already established during the war. Books were written to celebrate Polish war effort and reinforce the narratives of Polish independence, propagated by the Legions from 1914; postcards were released with copies of military paintings by artists who indeed composed a large group of the Legions' soldiers; in addition, exhibitions of Legions' art and fundraising actions were organised to support them[12]. This, as well as the fact that – after World War I and two wars fought by the new Polish state under Piłsudski's command against the Soviets and Ukrainians – most Polish military leaders had Legions background, shaped Polish cultural memory of the great war. Millions of Polish recruits in the three imperial armies were forgotten, while all commemorative efforts focused on the Legions. As a result, the memory of millions was replaced by memory of about twenty thousand people who served in the Legions between their formation in 1914 and liquidation in 1916.

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[10] I.e. German, Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires. The three emperors are: tsar Nikolaj II deposed by the February Revolution in 1917, Wilhelm II who lost his throne after the November Revolution in 1918 and Charles I of Austria who renounced his rule in Vienna on 11 November 1918.

[11] Various numbers are quoted by different scholars, ranging from 2 million to 3.4 million. The problems connected with counting Polish soldiers serving in imperial armies are discussed by Marcin Jarząbek (Jarząbek 2017: 32-35).

[12] Indeed, the Legions expressed independence narratives from the very beginning of the war. Conversely, the documents left by Poles forced to join German, Russian and Austro-Hungarian armies show loyalist approach, especially early in the conflict.

In this perspective, hundreds of Eastern Front cemeteries created by Germans, Austrians and Russians, now located in Poland, were perceived as useless – if not dangerous – in terms of the foundation myth of the new country. Paradoxically, the fact that there were Polish soldiers buried in those cemeteries did not help at all. On the contrary, as a proof that there were other victims besides Legions' soldiers and a counter-narrative rivalling the dominant one about Poles fighting for independence under Piłsudski's leadership, they became dissonant, unwanted heritage. The new state needed a clear-cut, single narrative of the past rather than complex, plural, multifaceted memory.

As a result, many war cemeteries in Poland have been substantially transformed. Some necropolises – especially the temporary ones, created with less durable materials – were destroyed; a certain number of soldiers' bodies were exhumed and transported into their native countries. In early 1930s a decision was made to merge World War I tombs on a mass scale, which led to the elimination of hundreds of individual graves and small cemeteries. The action was carried out simultaneously to implementing the decision concerning the creation of separate cemeteries for Polish Legions soldiers – these were often established on the premises vacated by those liquidated or merged war cemeteries (Pałosz 2012: 214-215). As can be seen, Polish post-war necroperformance and architecture of memory required not only erecting new structures but also destroying some already in existence.

Discussing the complex – also in terms of discourse – issue of World War I cemeteries in Poland and their significance for establishing cultural memory, it is impossible not to mention one specific place which proved crucial for the foundation of the new myth. Linked with both remembering and forgetting the Great War, it remains one of the key sites for Polish cultural memory. I mean the Cemetery of the Defenders of Lwów designed by Rudolf Indruch. In 1921, the architect won the contest for designing a necropolis for several thousand victims of the Polish-Ukrainian war. Apart from tombs, the cemetery included other structures erected in the neoclassical style: a chapel (opened in 1925), catacombs (completed in 1932) and the massive Glory Monument in the form of an arch of triumph flanked by a colonnade (opened in 1924) (Nicieja 1990: 74-116).

I am mentioning this important place of Polish memory – destroyed after World War II on the command of the Soviet Ukrainian authorities and partially rebuilt in the independent Ukraine after 1991 – because of three main reasons. First, it was the most majestic of all war cemeteries erected in the interwar period as well as the most important cemetery commemorating World War I together with the subsequent Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Soviet wars. Second, in a way it ousted the Great War from Polish cultural memory, replacing it with the memory of wars on the Eastern borders, fought by the army of the independent Poland. Third, the cemetery was formally (in terms of ideas and materials) linked with two other forms of architecture of memory dominant in the aftermath of World War I: the cenotaph and the tomb of the unknown soldier.

The cenotaph, i.e. an empty, symbolic tomb in contrast to a 'real' one which contains human remains, is by no means a post-World War I invention. Cenotaphs were used back in the antiquity, but they were definitely rediscovered for the architecture of memory after the

Great War, when they became immensely popular. This can be attributed to the influence of the Cenotaph in Whitehall, designed by sir Edwin Lutyens and unveiled on 11 November 1920, which proved paradigmatic for the renaissance of this architectural form (Winter 1995: 102-105). Built from Portland stone, the slender, classic monument adorned by Derwent Wood's stone sculpted wreath awed the public and impressed the critics. According to Szymon Piotr Kubiak, the form and concept of the London cenotaph were so influential that

> they encouraged the designer to replicate this form in several variants in Southampton (1920), Derby (1921), Rochdale (1922) and Manchester (1924). Many other cities in the world (e.g. in Sønderborg, Denmark) commissioned monuments inspired by the London cenotaph, if not straightforward copies of it. Cenotaphs were placed in Hongkong (1923) and Bermuda (1925). Confronted with financial difficulties preventing him from acquiring original specifications to create a cenotaph in Auckland, New Zealand, Malcolm Keith Draffin [...] allegedly copied the design in pencil while watching newsreels (Kubiak 2011: 60-61).

Despite the fact that in Poland no copies of Lutyens's cenotaph were created, the classical language of architecture used by the architect dominated Polish architecture of memory. According to Kubiak, the inventory of formal elements used by Lutyens, based on connotations glorifying death, victory and sacrifice, as well as soothing qualities of order and harmony, were widely used for propaganda in the Entente and New Europe countries, including Poland (especially in the cemetery in Lviv) (Kubiak 2011: 61). The classical language of architecture, rooted in Ancient Rome and Greece, proved especially useful for the architecture of memory in the new Polish state. Its main advantage was its lack of German and Russian associations, which allowed the new structures to cut the links with the former occupants. Nevertheless, the architecture of memory in the new Polish state was based not only on the classical tradition but also on the medievalist one – the third dominant style of postwar architecture of memory, next to classical and modernist styles. The medievalist elements have been discussed, in relation to the war architecture in Britain and Germany, by Stefan Goebel (2007).

Medievalism was the main cultural code used for the creation of the largest interwar cenotaph in Poland – Piłsudski's Mound in Krakow, referred to as "the Grave of the Graves". A 30-metre soil mound was built between 1934-1937. Its creation was first proposed while Piłsudski was still alive and originally it was meant not so much to venerate Piłsudski himself as to commemorate the Polish struggle for independence. However, in 1935, after Piłsudski's death, the mound was given his name and the narrative of independence was joined with his symbolic resting place. It is worth noticing that here again, like in the case of Piłsudski's tomb in Krakow, Kantorowicz's concept of the double body of the king was in operation. The mound includes soil from battlefields where Polish soldiers fought during World War I and subsequent wars on the eastern border (1918-1920), also those in which Piłsudski himself participated. Giving Piłsudski's name to this symbolic grave built

using soil from distant places and dates fashioned the Marshal as the figure personifying the entire history of the nation and made him a guarantor of national and political unity[13].

Like the canopy and the cemetery in Lviv, the mound – owing to its association with Piłsudski's person – repressed any counternarratives of the Great War. The myth of the new country was based on the concept of independence as a place of memory and created at the expense of the plural, multifaceted memory of World War I. The very form of Piłsudski's cenotaph, commemorating the Marshal and soldiers who died on the battlefields from which the soil was transported, alluded to the traditional Krakow form. In the vicinity, there are three other soil mounds: two prehistoric ones (albeit tradition links them with early Medieval period)[14] associated with legendary Krakow rulers Krakus and Wanda and one cenotaph-mound from 1820-1823. Formally and ideologically alluding to Krakus' and Wanda's mounds, the structure commemorates Tadeusz Kościuszko, who, like Piłsudski, is actually buried in the Wawel crypt (Frančić 1994: 195-211).

The third classical example of World War I architecture of memory is, as previously mentioned, the tomb of the unknown soldier. As a real grave of one soldier which symbolically represents all victims, this commemorative form is both strongly linked with the cenotaph and highly distinct from it. What links it with the cenotaph is the symbol, i.e. the synecdoche of 'all the unknown dead' but what sets these two forms apart are the actual remains of one unidentified soldier present in the former[15]. The tombs of the unknown soldier appeared as a new type of place of memory in the aftermath of the Great War, a testimony of the need for a precise cultural code, both ceremonial and problematic.

Problematic, because the remains of the unknown soldier had to be ceremonially exhumed, transported and buried permanently with appropriate pomp. This form of commemoration proved very tricky, as the soldier's personal identity had to be unknown while his nationality – beyond all doubt. Wouldn't it be a scandal if it turned out that the body buried in the Place de l'Étoile in Paris, under the Arc de Triomphe, is Belgian, or worse still, German? Published in 1966, René Masson mocumentary novel *Le soldat inconnu* is based on such a fantasy. The book offers multiple narratives and speculations regarding the identity of the person buried as the French unknown soldier. Through his warm humour, Masson shows the importance of the tomb of the unknown soldier. Emotional accounts of

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[13] Interestingly, recently new soil was added to the mound: soil from World War II battlefields as well as soil from Smolensk where presidential airplane crashed in 2010, killing Polish officials and the president himself.

[14] That's why I'm describing Piłsudski's Mound as an example of medievalist architecture of memory.

[15] It should be noted that apart from the 'central' tombs of the unknown soldier, erected in European capitals (e.g. Paris, London, Rome or Prague) and paradigmatic for the architecture of memory of the Great War, which do contain the remains of exhumed soldiers, there are also 'local' tombs of the unknown soldiers (in Poland e.g. in Krakow, Lodz and Tarnów) which are symbolic tombs only. In this respect, they can be treated as classic cenotaphs.

people whose loved ones never have been found – and there were thousands of such stories during the war – show the affective relationship with the post-war architecture of memory and prove that a close emotional link is necessary (Masson 1966). In short, if the tomb of the unknown soldier is to remain a place of individual and collective (national) memory, the unknown soldier can never be identified.

The procedure of selecting the remains was highly formalised. It was first tried in 1920 when the first two tombs of the unknown soldier were erected in Britain and in France[16]. The remains of the soldiers killed in the Great War underwent careful selection. In France, nine initial choices were made on different sections of the Western Front, e.g. Flanders, Artois, Champagne and the Somme region as well as Verdun. Due to problems with proving French origins of one of them, finally eight bodies symbolising the main regions of the Western Front were transported to Verdun. On 8 November 1920, the young veteran, twenty-one-year-old Auguste Thin, had the honour of selecting the one body which was subsequently ceremonially transported to Paris. There it was deposed in the Pantheon where it was saluted until January 1921, when it was finally placed under the Arc de Triomphe in the Place de l'Étoile. The seven rejected, anonymous bodies were buried in Verdun.

The British procedure was similarly elaborate and formalised, as the unknown soldier was selected with eyes closed out of six coffins containing the remains of soldiers killed on the Western Front. In Italy, the selection out of eleven bodies was made in 1921 by Maria Bergamas, the mother of the killed soldier Antonio Bergamas, whose body never has been found.

When the tombs of the unknown soldier were erected in London and in Paris, Poland was still involved in the armed conflict with Soviet Russia, which ended in the year when the tomb of the unknown soldier was unveiled in Rome. The Polish tomb was created four years later, in 1925. As the diplomatic necroprotocol has already been established in the West, Poles also began with deciding on the place from which the remains of the unknown soldier were to be exhumed (despite the fact that at the time there was still no consensus regarding the location of the monument). Fifteen battlefields were designated on the basis of the following features: there needed to have been a great many victims, the fight needed to be considered glorious and the places could not belong to the territories of the enemies (whatever that might mean given the uncertain circumstances of the new Polish state, whose borders were determined arbitrarily rather than consensually). What made the Polish case distinct from the British, French and Italian predecessors, however, was the chronological aspect. All battlefields considered for the purpose were those of battles fought after World War I had formally terminated, i.e. after 11 November 1918, which was also the date symbolically associated with Polish regained independence.

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[16] The French tomb of the unknown soldier is located on the Place de l'Étoile in Paris under the Arc de Triomphe; it was unveiled on 11 November 1920. The British one, known as the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior is located in Westminster Abbey. It was inaugurated on the same day that the tomb of the unknown soldier in Paris and the Cenotaph in Whitehall, on 11 November 1920.

The battlefields were thus those of the Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Bolshevik wars in 1919-1920. As a result, the commemorative mode which in Europe was associated with the Great War in Poland became part of the architecture of memory of the first war fought in defence of the new Polish borders (the Polish-Ukrainian war, the early and final phases of the Polish-Bolshevik war) and independence (the middle phase of the Polish-Bolshevik war)[17].

Then Lviv was selected through drawing lots as the place from which the remains of the unknown soldier were to be taken. In this way, through sheer chance, if one chooses to believe it, the authorities selected a place with a huge significance (as I have proven before) for the political discourse and the creation of the myth of the new state. It was here that the Cemetery of the Defenders of Lwów was created. Like in Italy, the person who made the final selection of the coffin to be transported to Warsaw was a soldier's mother: Jadwiga Zarugiewiczowa, Polish Armenian, the mother Konstanty Zarugiewicz, a nineteen-year-old soldier killed in Lviv, whose body never was discovered (Nicieja 1990: 253-258). On 2 November 1925 the body of the unknown soldier was buried under the colonnade of the Saxon Palace. The monument soon became one of the pivotal places of Polish memory and allowed the creation of the official memory on the ruins of the plural memory of the Great War. It could now be described as an axis running from Lviv to Warsaw.

3. *Impossible Memory*

Despite drawing inspiration from the ways of commemoration linked with World War I, Polish memory of the Great War that emanates from postwar architecture of memory, ambivalent and largely repressed, was mainly focused on the regained independence as the constructive place of memory. Secondly, the impact was placed on the two wars fought in 1918-1921, i.e. after the termination of World War I. As a result, multifaceted memory of that conflict was largely replaced by the official cult of the Polish Legions and Józef Piłsudski. Nevertheless, Piłsudski's body, discussed here in the light of Kantorowicz's concept, merits one more important comment.

As I have tried to prove, Polish architecture of memory – including the canopy over Piłsudski's tomb, Piłsudski's Mound, the tomb of the unknown soldier, many Legions cemeteries and the Cemetery of the Defenders of Lwów – is strongly linked with the figure of the dead body – the subject of ritualization, national celebration and other performative actions. The most important body which underwent all these processes was, of course,

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[17] Repressing the Great War in the Polish memory through focusing on the subsequent conflicts was not done merely because of selecting this particular battlefield. The other significant element are 35 commemorative plaques with names of battles. More than half of them (17) refer to battles fought in the Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Bolshevik conflicts. The other half refer to World War I battles but only those with the participation of the Polish Legions or other Polish military units formed in France (Légion des Bayonnais) and Russia (Puławy Legion). There is no mention of the great battles fought on the Western Front (Verdun, Somme), Italian Front (Isonzo) and Eastern Front (Tannenberg), despite the fact that many Poles fought in those battles – only dressed in imperial, not Polish uniforms.

that of Piłsudski's himself – understood, according to Kantorowicz's concept, as the double body (personal, belonging to the Marshal, and public, being a guarantor of national unity). But even Piłsudski's private body was not just his own. Buried in Krakow, it represents the link with history, constantly updated. But we should not forget that not all Piłsudski's remains lie in the Wawel crypt. His heart was transported to Vilnius where it was buried in his mother's tomb, while his brain was removed from the skull in order to be examined by scientists (JP: 157). As a result, Piłsudski's body, portioned like holy relics and placed in different cities, symbolised the unification of the nation and state in 1918.

But all these actions, which can be interpreted in the Freudian categories of totem and taboo, did not guarantee the survival of the state. It turned out that in the post-World War I world it was simply an impossible object – like Woynarowski's work in the Polish Pavilion in Venice. It seems then that the impossibility of Polish cultural memory in the interwar period requires further study.

The Great War is often discussed in the context of the transformation of the British Empire soldiers into modern political nations – New Zealanders, Australians and Canadians (Szymański 2016: 107-112), yet its significance for the nations of the 'Old Europe' is often disregarded. In the multilingual German army and even in the homogenous French one[18], soldiers acquired not only new linguistic standards but also new ways of conceptualising war, specific to each community defined by language and culture. Consequently, it may be suggested that while in some armies nations were forged, such process was impossible in Poland, which did not possess its own army at the time[19]. While in other countries the Great War contributed to the consolidation of nations, in the case of Poland the only important outcome was the regained independent state. The nation was formed later, and the process was triggered by the Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Bolshevik conflicts. However, its complete formation proved impossible, as is shown by the Polish architecture of memory discussed here. One of the reasons was the abrupt interruption of that process in September 1939, when two imperial armies – German and Soviet – broke the armistice after 20 years of peace, opening a new phase of the Great War in the new country. The conflict was later given the name of World War II. The architecture of its memory is still all too visible in Polish landscape.

[18] Referring to the homogeneity of the French army, I am of course excluding all foreign legions and colonial military armies.

[19] I am not referring to Polish military units formed in independent countries participating in the conflict (mentioned earlier in the text).

Abbreviations

GWO: *Gdy Wódz odchodził w wieczność...*, s.l. 1935.

IA FN: *Figury niemożliwe*, <http://instytutarchitektury.org/biennale/> (latest access: 11.02.2018).

JP: *Józef Piłsudski 1867-1935*, Kraków 1935.

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Abstract

Wojciech Szymański
The Great War and Polish Memory. Architectural Forms of Commemoration and the Myth of a New State

1918 was a seminal year in the history of 20th-century Poland – the country which, together with other Central and Eastern European states, gained independence as the Great War drew to an end. At the same time, the Great War does not appear to occupy a special and privileged place in Polish cultural memory. As a matter of fact, overshadowed by the trauma of World War II it is anything but an important site of memory. In the field of visual arts and literature the period 1914-1918 did not bring works which would be either formally 'modern' or would account for the tragedy of the war. It might well be stated that the eruption of modern means of expressions which were used by artists and writers to narrate the experience of the Great War – the phenomenon that can be observed in art and literature of many post-World War I European states – did not leave any substantial traces in Polish culture. On the contrary, if the Great War was represented in Polish art, it was done so in a highly traditional and academic fashion. What one may find surprising is not only a special conservatism of formal means applied to textual and visual narratives about World War I. What also calls one's attention to is the semantic operation conducted in Polish post-World War I culture: the substitution of the Great War memory with the memory of 1914-1920. This extension of the conflict by two more years made it possible for the new Polish state to divert the social attention and concern from World War I to the on-going fights for Poland's eastern border. It was the latter that became a climax – not only in Polish public discourse but also in war art and literature. While the rest of Europe was, at that time, erecting the tombs of the unknown soldiers that died in the Great War, Poland was erecting the tomb of the unknown soldier that died in the Polish-Ukrainian war. The present article wishes to investigate some selected works of literature, art and architecture from the period 1916-1926 so as to illustrate the above-mentioned processes of the use and abuse of the meaning and memory of the Great War – all in order to create a new culture of memory for a new state.

Keywords

Polish Architecture of Memory; Józef Piłsudski; World War I in Polish Culture of Memory.