The PALACE COMPLEX

A Stalinist Skyscraper,
Capitalist Warsaw,
and a City Transfixed

Michał Murawski

THE PALACE COMPLEX

NEW ANTHROPOLOGIES OF EUROPE

Michael Herzfeld, Melissa L. Caldwell, and
Deborah Reed-Danahay, *editors*

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*This book is dedicated to the memory of
my grandparents: Kazimiera Zabrocka (31.1.1928–01.1.2008)
and Józef Zabrocki (22.2.1927–4.1.2014).
I see Warsaw through their eyes.*

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PREFACE:

POLITICIZED PERAMBULATIONS

J ÓZEF ZABROCKI, MY GRANDFATHER, WAS AN UNAPOLOGETIC, HOT-BLOODED communist. He wasn't dogmatic about his ideology, but he was determined to make his opinion known and to defend it when it was challenged. He saw himself, I think, as one of the last living carriers of the message of communism, certainly in Poland. He was determined to resist what he saw as the endless distortion and whitewashing of the communist contribution to the creation of modernity, whether in its Varsovian, Polish, or global incarnation. Furthermore, he was possessed of a clear sense of how communism had formed the urban morphology, aesthetic, and social fabric of postwar Warsaw and of how the progressive aspects of this legacy were being erased in the post-1989 reality.

Józef Zabrocki was twenty-two years old when he moved to Warsaw in 1949, to study at the Warsaw Polytechnic. I was six years old in 1990, when I left Warsaw for England with my mother. Since then, however, I regularly travelled back, and it was during these trips that I got to know my home city through the eyes of my grandfather. For more than two decades he would take me—and any visitors, friends from school or university I happened to be with, for whom I would have the job of speed translating—on long, meandering excursions around the city he was proud to call his home.

Our perambulations around Warsaw were relentlessly politicized, sometimes exasperatingly so. If, as sometimes happened, we tried to stop for lunch at a café he had once frequented and found it turned into an overpriced sushi bar or hair salon, the rest of the day would be spent scornfully pointing out former libraries or cultural centers turfed out to make way for car dealerships and banks. When I, in a fit of adolescent emigrant municipal patriotism, would express admiration for the shiny glamour of some newly planted glass, steel, and granite edifice, he would instantly bring me back down to earth: "Look at that person's balcony cast into shadow—socialist architects and planners designed it to be bathed in sunlight. Where are the planners now? And that private atrium decorated with fake exotic plants—that was once a housing project garden planted with lime trees or weeping willows."

In the Old Town, my bemused foreign guests would have hammered into them the awareness that this cute warren of ancient streets was in fact only several decades old. They would be told how the people of Warsaw—my grandfather among them, a member of the Student Brigades for the Reconstruction of Warsaw (Studenckie Brygady Odbudowy Warszawy)—toiled at Stakhanovite pace (the famous *warszawskie tempo*), fishing through endless seas of rubble, picking out and scrubbing clean whole bricks suitable for reuse.

Sometimes our trajectories would take us to Old Ochota (a smart residential district to the southwest of central Warsaw; most buildings there date from the interwar years), where my grandfather, then an engineering student at the Warsaw Polytechnic, had lived during the first years following his move to the capital. From this base, he told me, he had made his proudest contribution to the rebirth of the capital city. In May 1950, the so-called peasant-proletarians (*chłoporobotnicy*) engaged in construction were streaming out the city for the harvest period, and there was no one left to complete the new halls of residence, which were to provide accommodation for the deluge of students due to arrive in Warsaw from all parts of the country that September. In response to this crisis, my grandfather undertook the herculean task of coordinating six hundred student laborer volunteers, who, working through the hot summer in four three-week shifts, completed the construction of five halls of residence for students of the University of Warsaw, the Warsaw Medical Academy, and the Warsaw University of Life Sciences. As my grandfather put it in a short, unpublished memoir written with his comrade and lifelong friend Zbigniew Karandyszowski, "Without exaggeration, we can say with some pride that thanks to this initiative of the Warsaw branch of the Warsaw Academic Polish Youth Union (the student section of the Polish equivalent of the Soviet Komsomol) over 1,300 students were able to find a home during the academic year 1950–51. . . . The mass development of education in Warsaw would not have been possible without this initiative" (Karandyszowski and Zabrocki 2005, 8–9).

While these trips were taking place, I would alternate between finding them captivating, boring, and infuriating. Accompanied as they were by generous doses of humor, irony, and self-deprecation, however, they were never unbearable. And there is no doubt that they planted within me the seeds of a lifelong fascination with Warsaw. Back in the UK, I would spend endless hours gathering up all the Varsaviana (Warsaw-related literature) I

could find in my parents' house—guides, architectural atlases, coffee table picture books, collections of poems, pamphlets—pore over them, and discuss their content with my mother and stepfather, who encouraged and to a large extent shared my obsession.

And, of course, during these formative years I also encountered other people's perspectives on Warsaw. My (unfortunately much less frequent and protracted) visits to other family members left me very aware of radically disparate perspectives on and ways of experiencing and imagining the city. My grandmother Kazimiera Zabrocka, who knew Warsaw longer and better than her husband, and who had spent the entire war there, would occasionally accompany us on the urban journeys described above, but—partly as a result of my grandfather's tireless extroversion and her humility—I never experienced her take on the city as intensely as I did his. My impression of Warsaw, then, and my fascination with the city, was most directly formed by the content, rhythm, and attitude of these tours and discussions with my grandfather. He died on January 4, 2014, after I had defended my PhD but before this book was published.

Ignoring the Palace

These journeys through Warsaw would take us to (or at least through) Parade Square, to the Palace of Culture, a building whose praises my grandfather never tired of singing. We would end up there either on purpose; on our way to visit one of the theatres, cinemas, or museums located within the building; or by chance, because we happened to be changing trams, trains, or buses at one of the public transport interchanges located in its vicinity. During the early 1990s, we would also visit Cricoland, a hair-raising amusement park that occupied a large patch of land in the southeastern corner of the square for several years (featuring shark tank divers, daredevil motorbike stunt riders, and unnervingly creaking mini rollercoasters); or we would go looking for knockoff-brand trainers or pirate CDs in the vast open-air bazaar, which spread semilegally throughout the eastern and southern sides of the square for much of the post-1989 period. Occasionally we would take the lift up to the thirtieth floor of the Palace. From there we would benefit from the total perspective—the heaven-storming God's eye view—provided by the Palace's viewing terrace. From there, the summit of the tallest building in Poland, the disparate locations and narratives of our urban excursions would be brought together and explained.

But when I arrived in Warsaw in December 2008 to carry out fieldwork, I spent six months trying to ignore the Palace. My research was supposed to be about the relationship between architecture, urban space, and ideology in the twenty-first century city. I wasn't sure yet what I was going to write about, but I wanted it to encompass several key concepts and sites in the city—the monstrous Temple of Divine Providence, a huge, controversial basilica under construction since 2002 at the central point of a new planned suburb in southern Warsaw; the battle over the city's prewar and postwar modernist heritage, which is loved, fetishized, lovingly restored, and mercilessly demolished all at the same time; the controversies over the restitution of urban land and buildings confiscated from their prewar owners in 1945 (more about this below); and the city's permeation by competing narratives of memory, martyrology, monuments, and museums. All of the above seemed fascinating to me, but I was paralyzed by the tyranny of choice—the fear that I would return to Cambridge with eighteen months' worth of jumbled notes and recordings too random and confused to allow me to produce a coherent dissertation.

I was very wary, however, of devoting too much attention to the Palace of Culture. It seemed too big, too obvious in its prominence and importance. It was talked about by too many people on park benches and in taxis; too many people saw it from their windows at home or at work; it featured on too many company billboards, company logos, TV adverts, novels, music videos, and magazine covers. It was used by too many thousands of people every day. It towered over Warsaw's skyline too much; too many plans to overcome its dominance by building higher towers all around it remained unrealized and haunted the imaginations of ordinary Varsovians and decision-makers alike. Put differently, I was wary of being sucked into the so-called Palace Complex, which gives this book its title.

Yet everywhere I went, the Palace kept mercilessly pushing itself back into my field of vision, forcing me to compare everything back to the overdetermining context of itself, as if it were more important on its own than the rest of the city put together. Eventually, around the middle of 2009, I gave up my futile resistance act and cast my lot with the Palace itself. After many phone calls, reference letters sent to and fro, and some polite strong-arming of reluctant and suspicious administrators, I took up employment as a doctoral intern in the Administration of the Palace of Culture, the municipal limited liability company responsible for managing the Palace on the city's behalf. I signed a contract and received an ID badge that opened

up spooky-looking doors all over the Palace, was assigned a desk on the fifteenth floor, was hooked up to the Palace's computer servers, and was given a free-ish hand to do as much wandering around and poking my head about as I wanted.

Having negotiated access, I plunged into what I imagined participant observation—the immersive research methodology whose key characteristics were laid out by Bronisław Malinowski in his book about the Trobriand Islands nearly one hundred years ago—to look like in the context of a Stalinist skyscraper in twenty-first-century Warsaw. I talked to employees and observed their routines, occupations, interests, and passions. I made appointments with directors of theaters, curators of exhibitions, martial arts instructors, and nightclub proprietors. I attended plays, exhibition openings, academic conferences, corporate events, and trade fairs and signed up to use the marble-clad swimming pool in the Palace of Youth. I talked to randomly encountered tourists, school groups, shopkeepers, and car park attendants. I attended meetings of the Warsaw city council and got to know the politicians and bureaucrats who frequented the Palace and had their offices there—then including staff of the municipal architecture bureau, who were at the time working on a new version of an ambitious development plan for Parade Square.

At times I felt an overwhelming temptation to use my access-some-areas ID pass to explore quirky nooks and crannies, take photos of ancient Stalin-era ventilation equipment, and talk for hours to the mustachioed electricians and bouffanted elevator operators who had been employed by the Palace for unthinkably long periods of time. It would have been relatively simple, in other words, to seal myself within the charismatic cocoon bounded by the building's thick walls and ignore the city outside.

The Palace's irredentist tendency to extract itself from within its own walls, however, quickly began to strike me as too significant to ignore. Soon I began to suspect that much (if not all) of Warsaw could be encompassed through the prism of its relations with the Palace. Since the Palace could not contain itself within its own ample bulk, I decided to follow the Palace into the city. I got to know, socialized with, and interviewed people who took a particular interest in the building, with collectors of trivia and postcards and other sorts of Palace fanatics. I attended public meetings and film screenings devoted to the Palace and those that weren't—and noticed that the specter of the Palace quite mercilessly gate-crashes into the conversations and events devoted other aspects of Warsaw's urban existence.

I talked to residents of various parts of Warsaw about how they viewed the Palace as part of their lives. It was the productiveness of this engagement with the external aspect of the building's existence that made me conscious of the extent to which the Palace really was a public building like no other with which I was familiar.
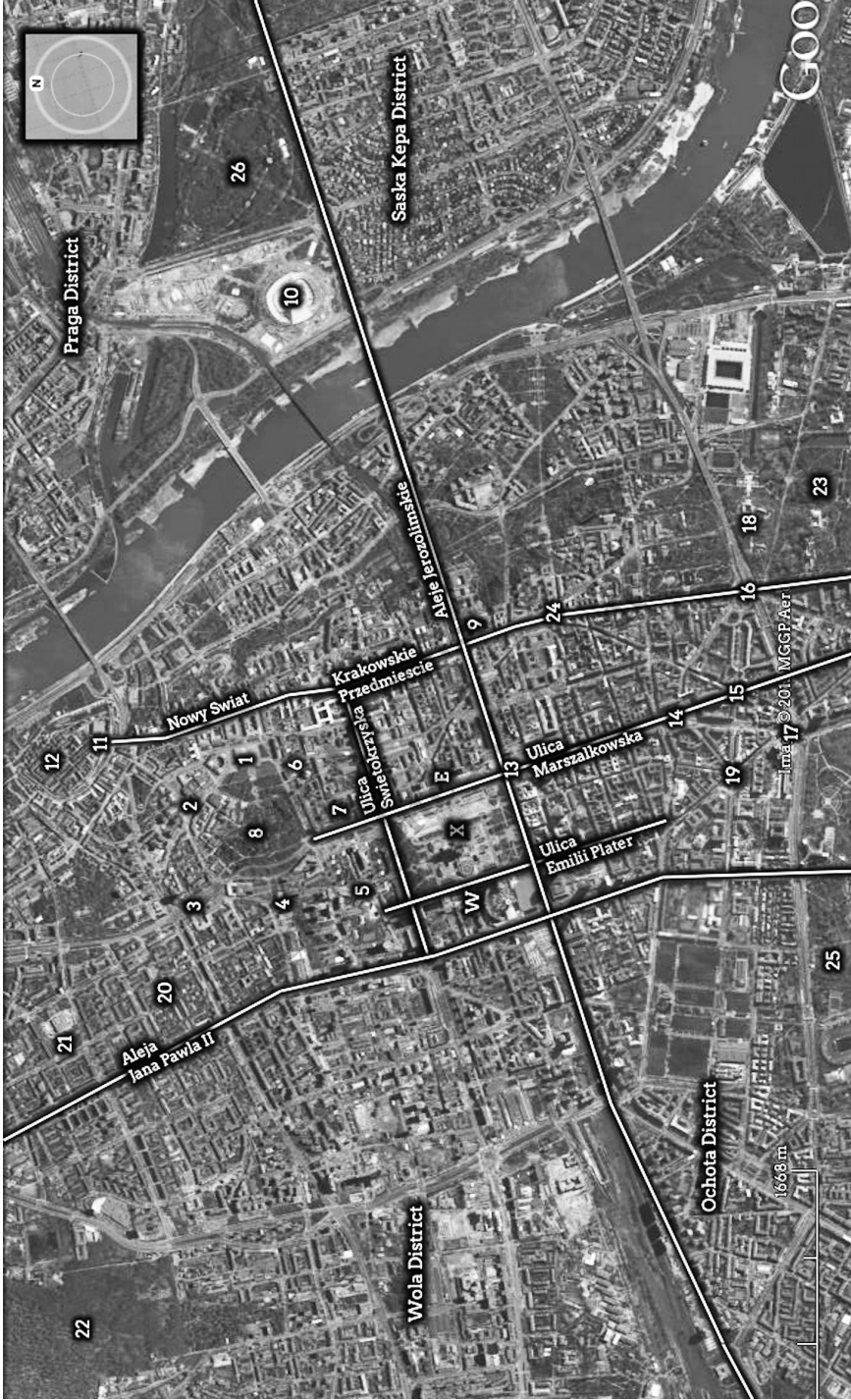
While tracing the Palace's presence beyond its walls, I experimented with methodological devices (or Palaceological ones) that mirrored the enormous scale, bombastic aesthetic, and broad social reach of the Palace itself in their attitude and content. These experiments encompassed several public events, conducted with the partnership and support of Warsaw arts institutions and the local media. They encompassed three public discussions (*Archigadaniny*, or "Archiblahblahs," described in chap. 5) and two performative projects: "Palaceization," described in chapter 6, and "The Department for Issuing Anecdotes of the Palaceological Department of the Dramatic Theatre," located for one day (the Palace's fifty-fifth birthday) in the Dramatic Theatre's so-called Stalin Lodge. On completion of several tedious forms, supplicants received anecdotes from the Issuing Department (I played the role of issuing clerk) in exchange for ethnographic data. These events were conducted with the partnership and support of Warsaw arts institutions (in particular the Museum of Modern Art and the Dramatic Theater) and—latching on to the Palace's public persona—generated fairly widespread coverage in the Warsaw print, broadcast, and online media. The coverage generated by these ethnographic conceptualist interventions ultimately generated the conjuncture, which allowed me to carry out a large-scale quantitative survey of over five thousand respondents toward the end of my time in Warsaw. The scope and scale of this public anthropological work allowed me to hijack Varsovians' fascination with the Palace of Culture—to instrumentalize the Palace Complex, in other words—and to gather firsthand ethnographic data from a much broader and wide-ranging group of informants than traditional, face-to-face ethnographic methods would have allowed me to.[1]

These methods attempted to mimic, then, the extensive and dominant character of the Palace's own publicness in the context of the city. Since the Palace was first and foremost a public building, I decided to embark on the experiment of becoming a public anthropologist as well. One of the immediate effects of this "going public" was the sweeping away of my place of respite from the duties of fieldwork—the private veranda inhabited by my Warsaw friends and family—to which I would flee when I had had enough

of engaging people in conversations about the Palace of Culture, Stalinism, or anything else related to my research. Once my fieldwork entered into the public sphere, however, this Warsaw veranda was cast asunder, as everybody around me—grandparents, aunts, childhood friends—started either producing "data" (which I felt the unending obligation to record) or challenging my grasp of the facts and the accuracy of my interpretations.

Going public also had a strange effect on my positioning within the local knowledge economy. With time, I became a sort of marginal member of Warsaw's native community of architectural experts, the so-called Varsavianistas. On the other hand, I became all the more closely identified as an outsider, a half-foreign expert endowed with some sort of aptitude for detached observation but at the same time suspicious and with divided loyalties and intentions—a cagey counterpart, perhaps, to the discipline's celebrated "halfies" (Abu-Lughod 1991) and "hyphenateds" (Visweswaran 1994). One moment in particular laid bare my awkward status as at once indigenous alien and expert ignoramus. One chance pavement interlocutor told me, with a slight hint of sarcasm, that I should not be asking him, an ordinary old Varsovian, about the Palace. I should meet an anthropologist from England called Murawski, who is on the radio all the time and who can tell me everything I want to know, and who, to my surprise, had apparently even published a book about the Palace. Once I assured him that no such book exists and that my limited knowledge was the product of a little over a year's worth of fieldwork in Warsaw, it turned out that my interlocutor's humility was a front—he was, in fact, a former president of a Warsaw urban planning institute who had himself regularly appeared in the media to discuss various issues, among them the Parade Square development plan.

There were times, as well, at which my chameleonic positionality created ethical quandaries and access problems, especially within the Palace administration. The marketing director, for example, was distrustful of my intentions and uneasy about the fuss I was making around the Palace. In effect, some of my initiatives and requests were denied permission at the directorate level. At other times, however, going public had an access-broadening effect, even within the Palace itself. I found out that some of the Palace's technical employees had initially been weary of the notebook-wielding so-called anthropologist wandering around the Palace corridors. They suspected that I may have been sent by the Palace bosses to check up on their performance. However, once I acquired a public persona, many of the same people came to accept my motivations as genuine, and our

N

Praga District

Saska Kepa District

26

10

Aleje Jerozolimskie

9

24

18

23

16

15

14

Krakowskie
Przedmiescie

Nowy Swiat

Ulica
Swietokrzyska

Ulica
Marszalkowska

Ulica
Emilii Plater

11

12

1

6

7

13

E

2

8

5

W

X

3

4

19

20

21

Aleja
Jana Pawla II

22

Wola District

Ochota District

25

1668 m

ima 17 © 201. MGGP Aer

Goo

Map P.1. Warsaw Śródmieście (Central) District and Surroundings.
Key to map:

X: Palace of Culture (PKiN) and Parade Square (Plac Defilad).

E: "Eastern Wall" (Ściana Wschodnia).

W: Zachodni Rejon Centrum, "Ściana Zachodnia" (Western Central Region, "Western Wall"). See Warsaw Central Region map overleaf.

1: Piłsudski Square (Plac Piłsudskiego).

2: Theatre Square (Plac Teatralny).

3: Bank Square (Plac Bankowy).

4: Iron Gate Square (Plac Za Żelazną Bramą).

5: Grzybowski Square (Plac Grzybowski).

6: Małachowski Square (Plac Małachowskiego).

7: Dąbrowski Square (Plac Dąbrowskiego).

8: Saxon Garden (Ogród Saski).

9: Former Central Committee Headquarters (Warsaw Stock Exchange after 1990, now a financial center) and De Gaulle Roundabout (Rondo De Gaulle'a).

10: National Stadium (Stadion Narodowy). Formerly Tenth Anniversary Stadium (Stadion Dziesięciolecia).

11: Castle Square (Plac Zamkowy).

12: Old Town Market Square (Rynek Starego Miasta).

13: Dmowski Roundabout (Rondo Dmowskiego). Intersection of Aleje Jerozolimskie and Ulica Marszałkowska.

14: Constitution Square (Plac Konstytucji). MDM Estate.

15: Saviour Square (Plac Zbawiciela).

16: Junction Square (Plac Na Rozdrożu).

17: Lublin Union Square (Plac Unii Lubelskiej).

18: Ujazdowski Castle, Centre of Contemporary Art (Zamek Ujazdowski, Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej).

19: Polytechnic Square (Plac Politechniki).

20: Muranów (the central area of the former Jewish Ghetto) and a late 1940s / early 1950s housing estate designed by Bohdan Lachert.

21: Ghetto Heroes Square, Museum of the History of Polish Jews (Plac Bohaterów Getta, Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich).

22: Powązki Cemetery (Cmentarz Powązkowski).

23: Łazienki Park (Park Łazienkowski).

24: Three Crosses Square (Plac Trzech Krzyży).

25: Mokotów Fields (Pola Mokotowskie).

26: Skaryszewski Park (Park Skaryszewski).

Map by Michał Murawski. Image from Google and MGGP Aero (2011).
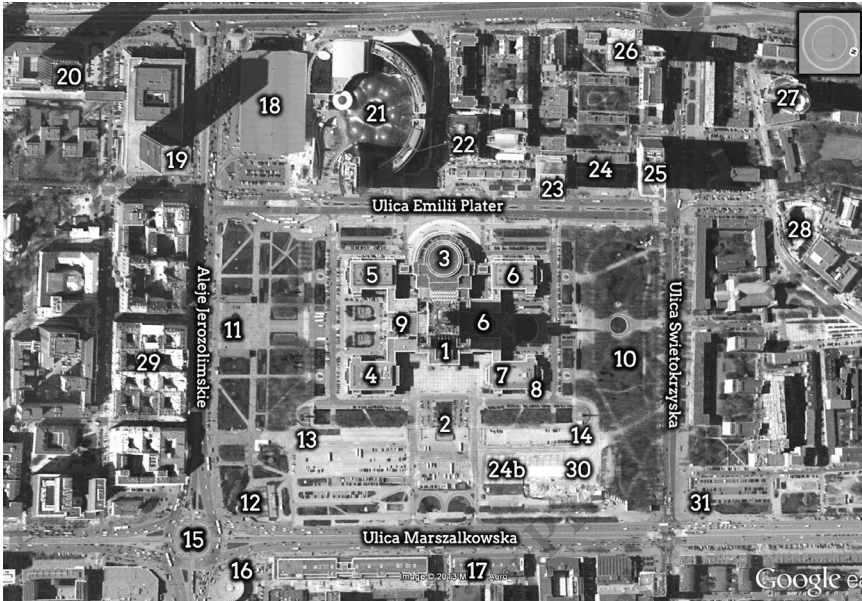
Map P.2. The Palace of Culture, Parade Square, and immediate surroundings (Warsaw Central Region)

 1: Main entrance to the Palace.
 2: Honour Tribune (Trybuna Honorowa).
 3: Congress Hall (Sala Kongresowa).
 4: Dramatic Theatre (Teatr Dramatyczny).
 5: Museum of Technology (Muzeum Techniki).
 6: Palace of Youth (Pałac Młodzieży).
 7: Studio Theatre and Gallery (Teatr Studio, Galeria Studio).
 8: Puppet Theatre (Teatr Lalka).
 9: Kinoteka Cinema Multiplex.
10: Świętokrzyski Park (Park Świętokrzyski).
11: Suburban Railway Station (Dworzec Śródmieście).
12: Metro Line I Centrum Station and "Frying Pan" (*Patelnia*).
13: Southern Obelisk.
14: Northern Obelisk.
15: Dmowski Roundabout (Rondo Dmowskiego).
16: Pekao Bank (Rotunda).
17: Centrum Department Stores (Domy Towarowe Centrum).
18: Central Railway Station (Dworzec Centralny).
19: Hotel Marriott (LIM Center).
20: Oxford Tower (Elektrim).
21: Golden Terraces Shopping Mall (Złote Tarasy).
22: Złota 44
23: Hotel Intercontinental.
24: Temporary building of the Museum of Modern Art, in the former Emilia furniture pavilion (demolished).
24b: Planned site of the new Museum of Modern Art building.
25: Warsaw Financial Center.
26: Rondo 1 Tower.
27: Telekomunikacja Polska Tower.
28: Cosmopolitan Tower.
29: Surviving nineteenth-century tenements along Ulica Marszałkowska.
30: Construction site of Metro Line II Świętokrzyska Station. Former location of KDT.
31: Metro Line I Świętokrzyska Station.

Map by Michał Murawski. Image from Google and MGGP Aero (2011).

interactions became more easygoing and fruitful. The effect of going public, in other words, was noticeable not merely beyond the Palace but on the level of face-to-face interactions within the building as well.

Within and without the Palace, my hope was that, in becoming a public anthropologist, I would be able to avoid giving an either-or answer to the classic question that plagues anthropologists carrying out research in large-scale urban settings (Hannerz 1980; Low 1996): was mine a study of the city itself or merely of a particular social phenomenon occurring in the city? Anthropologists, ever careful not to make claims about the generalizability of the material they collect, have tended to plump for the latter of these two answers. In my analysis, however, I attempt to go beyond the micro level of description and analysis, to which anthropology—whether rural, urban, or otherwise—usually tends to limit itself. I aspire to produce, in other words, an ethnography of Warsaw as seen through the Palace—in other words, a Palaceology of Warsaw.

Note

1. I discuss the repercussions of these methodological experiments at length in Murawski (2013), with reference to Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov's notion of "ethnographic conceptualism" (2013). See also Sansi (2015, 148–153).

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The list of friends and colleagues outside Warsaw—within academia and outside of it—is just as long. I begin by thanking my supervisor at Cambridge, Caroline Humphrey, for her wisdom, patience, and guidance since I began to work on my Warsaw-themed research MPhil in October 2007. Victor Buchli (who also examined my PhD) has been a mentor since I took his Anthropology of Architecture course in 2005 as a SOAS intercollegiate student at UCL—it was his spur and inspiration that led me to devote my anthropological attentions to architecture and urbanism. Matei Candea, my internal examiner, gave invaluable advice that guided this manuscript into publishable condition.

I can't omit to mention the friendship and intellectual companionship of Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll, Alexander Kentikelenis, Fionn Dempsey, Aris Komporozos-Athanasiou, and Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov. Florence Keith-Roach—whom I met thanks to a serendipitous encounter facilitated by Elisabeth Schimpfössl—turned my entire life and world upside down during the final three years of work on this manuscript. Florence's imaginative power and super-ethnographic sensitivity to the minutiae of everyday life has—I hope—rubbed off on some of these pages. Florence's love came with the friendship and hospitality of Clementine Keith-Roach, Christopher Page, and Baby Rainer attached to it. Their home in Athens provided me with the calming, light-drenched setting in which I completed the final section of this manuscript.

NARODOWE
ARCHIWUM
CYFROWE

I'd like to end by thanking my mother, Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, and my stepfather, Stefan Muthesius, for their selflessness, their willingness to offer me advice and support at every stage of this research, and their love.

This book is dedicated to the memory of three of my grandparents—Kazimiera Zabrocka (31.1.1928–1.1.2008), Józef Zabrocki (22.2.1927–4.1.2014),

and Janusz Murawski (17.10.2016)—and to the long life, health, and happiness of my grandmother Mira Murawska. Their generation, which built Warsaw (and Poland) anew, is a heroic one. I hope that one day the toil and sacrifice they underwent in order to bring about the creation of a more equal, just, and equitable Poland than had ever existed before will be recognized by all.

THE PALACE COMPLEX

INTRODUCTION

Palace Complex / Complex Palace

Stalinist Jubilee

The deputy mayor of Warsaw, a portly young man wearing fashionable thick-rimmed glasses, is standing and gesticulating on a long wooden table laid outside the column-lined main entrance to the Palace of Culture and Science, a Stalinist skyscraper. It's a balmy night, July 22, 2015, and the Palace is celebrating its sixtieth birthday. The deputy mayor invites a sixty-five-year-old woman he has just met onto the table to drink shots of vodka with him and his coterie. She attracted the interest of journalists and photographers because they noticed a giant tattoo of the Palace covering the larger part of her left lower leg. She had had the tattoo done five years earlier, on the fifty-fifth anniversary of the Palace's opening. She loves the Palace, she says. She tells a journalist, "I'm a sixth generation Varsovian [resident of Warsaw], but I can say with a straight face that my entire life has revolved around the Palace of Culture." When the Rolling Stones played the Palace's Congress Hall in 1967, their first gig beyond the Iron Curtain, she was there, and she even tracked Mick Jagger and Keith Richards down in the hotel where they were staying the following afternoon and had lunch with them. She used to swim in the Palace's pool, too, and she was a member of a famous choral folk outfit that has been based in the youth section of the building for many decades.

The deputy mayor and the woman with the tattoo are standing on the long table, surrounded by music and a sea of revelers, drinking, singing, dancing, and embracing in the Palace's honor. A little earlier this evening, a small group of about fifteen protesters stood beneath the columns lining the main entrance to the Palace, holding up a banner that read "The Poles, a NATION conquered." The leader of the protest, a minor far-right politician and filmmaker called Grzegorz Braun, was yelling into a megaphone, asking people if they knew what actually happened on July 22. I answered him. It was the main national holiday throughout the era of Poland's communist regime. It celebrated the foundation of the Soviet-backed Committee for

Figure I.1. Palace Protest: "The Poles: A Nation Conquered": a banner held by a group of protesters outside the Palace of Culture's main entrance, July 22, 2015. Photograph by the author.
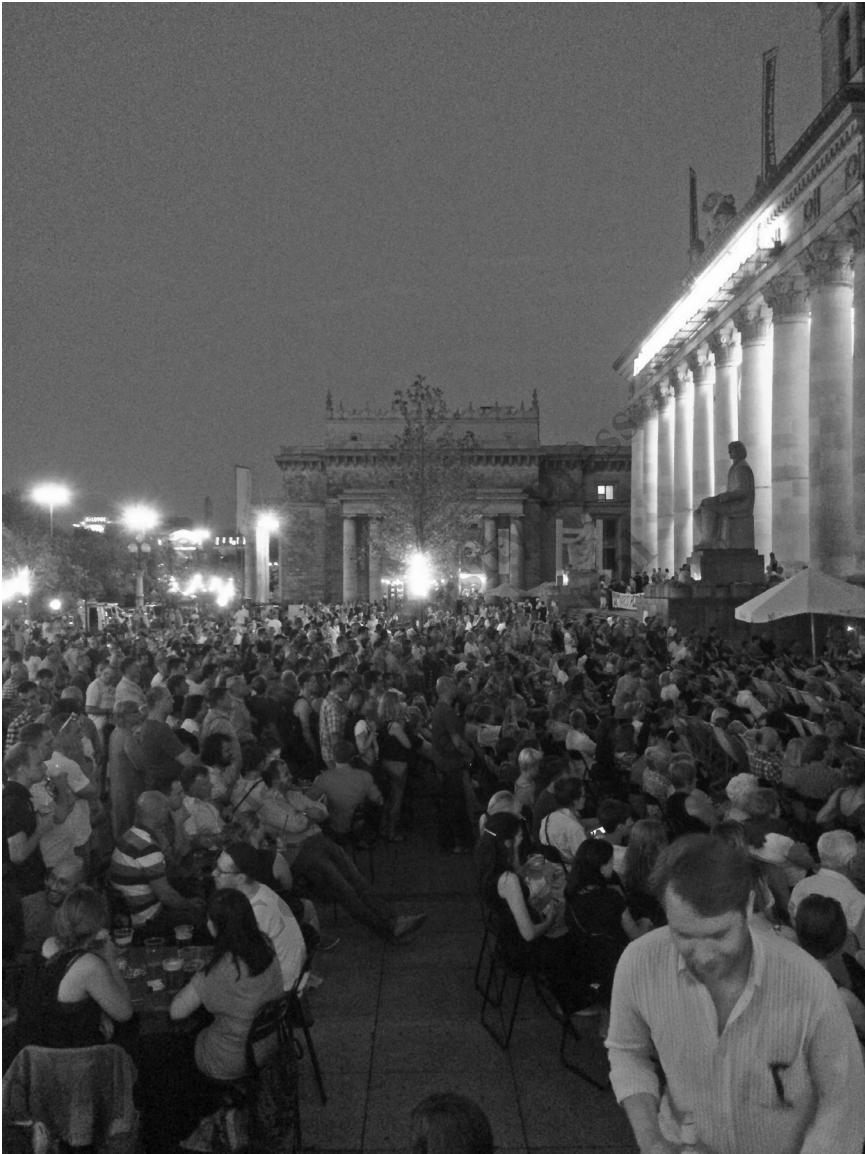
Figure I.2. Palace Party: An event held as a party of a weeklong sixtieth birthday party for the Palace of Culture, cosponsored by the Warsaw municipality, July 22–29, 2015. Photograph by the author.

National Liberation on July 22, 1944, which came to form the nucleus of Poland's postwar government. Throughout the communist era, many important state events—such as the Palace's opening ceremony—tended to take place July 22, a national holiday.

"So it commemorates the anniversary of Polish enslavement to the Soviet yoke!" yelled Braun. I implied I disagreed with that assessment, and one of the people behind the banner shouted some swear words at me. I went inside the Palace and headed to the Marble Room on the second floor, where a book of art photographs of the Palace was being launched.[1] By the time I emerged back onto the square, about forty-five minutes later, the protesters were gone. Revelers were drinking and dancing and watching a well-known TV personality tell jokes about the Palace. The party featured jazz big bands, food tastings, movie screenings, playable games of Tetris utilizing the windows on the Palace's façade, and free vodka. It carried on for over a week.

So why was the municipality putting on (and paying for) this party for a Stalinist skyscraper, and why were so many Varsovians partaking in the revelry? Communism had collapsed twenty-six years before, but some people clearly still remembered it, and not in the happiest way. Indeed, you do not have to be loony nationalist like Grzegorz Braun and his friends to find a few things not to like about the Palace of Culture. The building was designed by a team of Soviet architects and engineers and erected by an imported, three-thousand-strong brigade of Soviet laborers. Built in the extravagant socialist realist architectural style, the Palace is the largest and most spectacular Stalin-era building outside of Moscow itself. In appearance, scale, and origin, it is the lost sibling of the seven "tall buildings," or *vysotki*, erected on Stalin's initiative around the ancient city core of Moscow between 1947 and 1953. Together with Parade Square, the windswept and foreboding sixty-acre open space that surrounds it (twenty times larger than London's Trafalgar Square, slightly bigger than Moscow's Red Square), the Palace rides roughshod over the spatial structure, aesthetic predilections, and socioeconomic arrangements of old Warsaw. The Palace-Square ensemble took shape on the site of what once had been a densely packed, bustling downtown quarter of landlord-owned five- and six-story tenement blocks. The greater share of this area's buildings had been destroyed during the Second World War, but the few that remained standing were expropriated from their former owners and demolished to make way for Stalin's gift to Poland, the triumphant centerpiece of the new socialist metropolis.
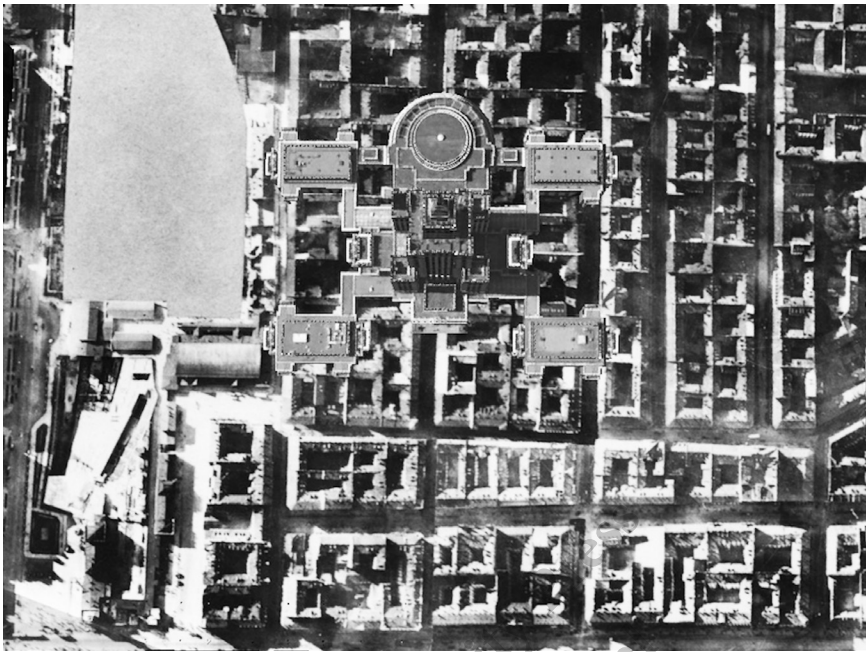
Figure I.3. The Palace of Culture superimposed onto an aerial photograph of central Warsaw from 1935. Copyright Google Maps.
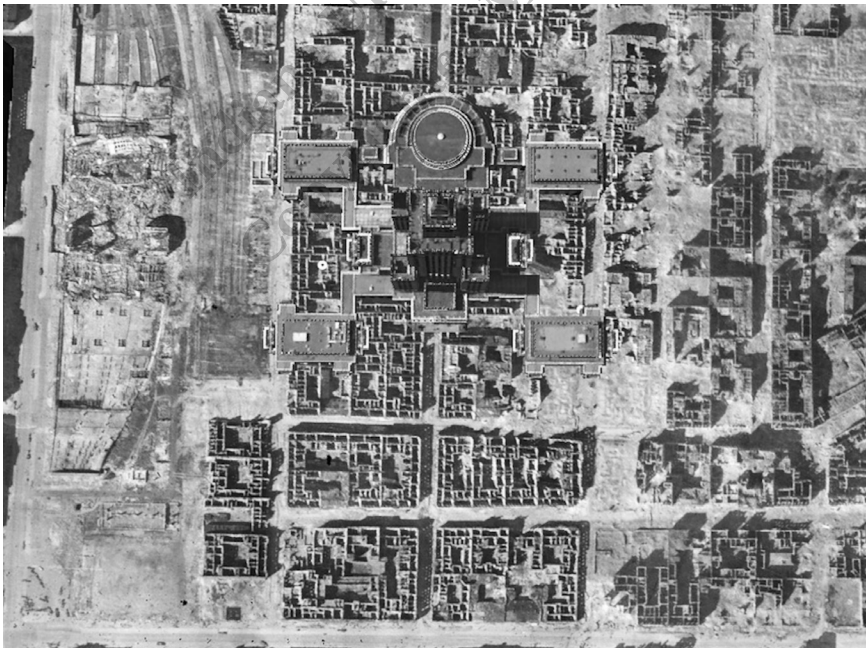
Figure I.4. The Palace of Culture superimposed onto an aerial photograph of central Warsaw from 1945. Copyright Google Maps.

Figure I.5. The Palace of Culture superimposed onto a satellite image of central Warsaw from 2015. Copyright Google Maps.

The Palace's opening ceremony on July 22, 1955, marked the end of a decade during which the Soviet Union had swiftly consolidated its political control over the postwar Polish state. How can it be, then, that the Soviet communist Palace is thriving in the capitalist Polish city?

Palace Disease

In the late 1970s and 1980s, Poland's communist regime trundled into its dying decades. During this time, artists, writers, musicians, filmmakers, and satirists produced visions depicting the Palace as codependent on the system that erected it. One of the opening lines in Tadeusz Konwicki's novel *A Minor Apocalypse*, for example, describes the Palace, once a "monument to arrogance, a statue to slavery, a stone layer cake of abomination," transformed into merely "a large, upended barracks, corroded by fungus and mildew, and old toilet forgotten at some central European crossroad" (1983, 4). Meanwhile, the closing scene from Sylwester Chęciński's 1991 film *Calls Controlled*, set during the martial law winter of 1981, features

the main protagonist, an accidental antiregime conspirator, fleeing from pursuit by the Citizens' Militia into the Palace of Culture, at the same moment holding a New Year's Eve banquet for the communist top brass. Hiding in a toilet cubicle, the escapee pulls the flush to escape the suspicions of prying toilet users. Immediately the entire Palace crumbles and topples over, an unambiguous allegory for the fragility of the repressive, conflicted, and unsustainable system the building represented. The culprit crumbles out of the rubble, hopelessly muttering, "We'll rebuild it . . ." These late socialist visions ridiculed the Palace's pretensions to monumentality and eternity, portraying its supposed "transcendence as just as frayed and tacky as the entire reality of the Polish People's Republic" (Benedyktowicz 1991, 32).

The Polish People's Republic finally collapsed in 1989. Flying in the face of these visions of decay, however, the Palace has quite triumphantly transcended the implosion of its guarantor regime. Today, more than a quarter century later, it continues to exert an electrifying, at once energizing and debilitating impact on the reality of twenty-first-century Warsaw.[2] The core puzzle, which I unpack in this book, is the question of how and why the Stalinist Palace continues to pervade and dominate the capitalist city, functioning in just the way the designers and ideologues of the 1950s intended it to function. The Palace today remains broadly true to its original designation, as a Soviet-style House of Culture writ enormous. As of summer 2015, it plays host to four theaters, two universities, a multiplex cinema, the headquarters of the Polish Academy of Sciences, a three thousand-seat Congress Hall, the meeting room of the Warsaw City Assembly, numerous departments of the municipal administration, a Palace of Youth (featuring a spectacular, marble-clad swimming pool), and the offices of many private companies, as well as a dance academy and myriad restaurants, pubs, cafes, and nightclubs.

Despite more than twenty years of discussion devoted to the idea of demolishing the Palace or filling the void around it with a forest of even taller skyscrapers, the Palace is still the tallest building in Warsaw (indeed, in Poland), while Parade Square is still the biggest urban square in Europe. In 2000, the Palace added a new distinction to its roster of superlatives when, at the behest of then mayor Paweł Piskorski, it became the world's tallest clock tower.[3]

Following the Polish press's pre- and post-1989 tendency to ram home that which is remarkable about the Palace by reciting strings of impressive

numbers, I borrow the opening lines of the first post-1989 piece of reportage devoted to the building, Mariusz Szczygieł's "Stone Flower" (1991, 14):

> The Palace of Culture occupies 3.3 hectares of space, its height is 230.68 meters. Its 42 floors are served by 33 elevators, travelling at speeds between 1 and 6 meters per second. The Palace contains 3,288 rooms, among them fifteen large halls devoted to hosting exhibitions and conferences. The biggest of these, the Congress Hall, has 2,915 spaces for spectators, simultaneous translation facilities in eight languages, 52 seats on the praesidium, a 36-metre wide stage, fourteen cloakrooms able to accommodate a total of 56 people. Between 1955 and the end of 1990, 147 million people have taken part in 221,000 events within the Palace. 33 million tourists have viewed the panorama of Warsaw from the thirtieth-floor viewing terrace. Every day, around thirty thousand people pass through the Palace.

As I found out during my time in Warsaw, this fascination with vast dimensions and thronging multitudes remains a feature of Varsovians' comprehension of and interaction with the Palace to this day. A few more up-to-date numbers taken from a large-scale survey of five thousand respondents, which I carried out toward the end of my fieldwork period in Warsaw, can help further illustrate the scale of contemporary Warsaw's Palace Complex: 77 percent of respondents agreed that the Palace "exerts an impact" on the city (52% on architecture, 49% on urban planning, 43% on "urban culture," and 36% on "urban psychology"). Of those born in Warsaw, 77 percent have childhood memories associated with the Palace. Forty-five percent of current Warsaw dwellers have a direct view of the Palace from their home or workplace, 61 percent visit the Palace at least several times a year, and 22 percent cross its threshold more than once every month—quite remarkable figures, given Warsaw's population of two million people. While the Palace's identifiability among Varsovians as the city's primary symbol rose from 21 percent in 1990 to 32 percent in 2000 (Jałowiecki 2000), 63 percent of over five thousand respondents in my survey picked the Palace as Warsaw's "most important and easily identifiable symbol," against only 12 percent for its nearest competitor, the Warsaw mermaid (the Polish capital's traditional emblem, enshrined in the city's coat of arms).

With time, this once-despised edifice has become a focal point not only for Varsovians' fascinations, fantasies, and everyday lives but also for their affections. Sixty-one percent of my survey respondents declared their "positive disposition" toward the Palace of Culture while over 80 percent expressed their opposition to the idea—much vaunted during the twilight years of the state socialist period—of demolishing the building. Many of my

Warsaw interlocutors described to me how their feelings toward the Palace evolved over the years. In the words of one of them, a hardline anticommunist broadcast journalist, "In the '90s, I dreamed of eradicating that communist wart, by fire and sword. But now, I endow the building with a great deal of warm sentiment. . . . It looks like I've been ill with Palace disease! I've really become conscious recently of the enormous role, the incredibly positive role that the Palace of Culture has ended up playing in my life!"

In the chapters that follow, I deploy materials collected during sixteen months of fieldwork in Warsaw to flesh out the story of how an entire city became and has remained obsessed with a single building. I trace the profound impact of the Palace Complex on multiple domains of Warsaw's everyday existence: on its architectural and urban landscape, on its political, ideological, commercial, and cultural lives, and on the bodies, minds, and affects of its inhabitants. Crucially, I also trace continuities between the way in which the Palace exerts a hold over the social life of twenty-first-century Warsaw and the objectives articulated by its Stalin-era designers, ideologues, and patrons. The communist architectural thinkers of the 1950s had intended for the Palace to function as Warsaw's "unchallenged social and architectural *dominanta*" (Goldzamt 1956, 457), the city's "territorial and vital center of gravity" (22), the building's "architectural power distributed throughout the city as a whole" (425). The Palace, it would seem, retains an extensive level of prominence in the life of the capitalist city in a manner that is strikingly consistent with these radical ambitions. Although Poland's socialist regime may have collapsed, the Palace—and its complex—continues to prosper. The extent to which capitalist Warsaw remains obsessed with the Palace of Culture testifies, in other words, to the remarkable endurance and success of the economic, aesthetic, ideological, and social engineering vision designed into the Palace during the Stalinist 1950s. Although Poland may be post-socialist, the Palace itself remains, in many ways, still-socialist.

The Palace's success—and my emphasis on it in this book—runs against the grain of a widespread fascination with failure among scholars of material culture and especially of planning and architecture. A great deal of literature produced during recent decades has sought to highlight the generative capacity, open-endedness, or social potentiality contained within failure (Latour 1996; Hommels 2005; Miyazaki and Riles 2005; Abram and Weszkalnys 2013; Appadurai 2014; Buchli 2017; Jeevandrampillai et al. 2017). According to the editors of a recent volume on material failure, students of

the social ought to seek a deep, multifaceted understanding of what happens "when things fail to cohere with expectation, when they do not do what they are supposed to do" (Jeevandrampillai et al. 2017). The long career of the Palace Complex, however, suggests that it may be just as fruitful to seek an understanding of what happens when things—perhaps against all odds—succeed in cohering with expectation, when they do end up doing exactly what they were supposed to.

It is clear, of course, that the Palace's own success has to be seen against the background of many other failures: most notably the ultimate failure of state socialism itself but also, to a large extent, of the nascent capitalist system, which has been under construction in Poland for the past quarter century. In particular, I focus in this book on the failures of the many architectural schemes for overcoming the Palace Complex, initiated in Warsaw since 1989. One of the core things I set out to demonstrate is that the failure of these attempts to overcome the Palace's stranglehold over Warsaw ought to be understood to a large extent as a function of the success of the Palace, whose design—which penetrates so many different domains of Warsaw's existence—does not permit its dominance to be undermined.

Our Complex

Warsaw's municipal authorities themselves have a multipronged, arguably incoherent policy and attitude to the Palace and Square and to the enormous chunk of central Warsaw they occupy. On the one hand, Warsaw's municipality sends its deputy mayor to dance on the table during lavish birthday parties for the Palace and so far retains the Palace's public ownership status. On the other, it is slowly chopping up Parade Square, parceling out its land to the descendants of prewar owners or—more likely—to rapacious property developers through mechanisms that are often anything but legal or transparent. The municipality's core imperative—and that of the developers who do business with it—is to overcome the Palace Complex, or to overcome the domination of the Palace over Warsaw's cityscape. While this task of overcoming the complex is, in part, a symbolic and political one, it is also one with a very strong financial dimension. The guiding idea is that Parade Square—this gigantic, unprofitable, anachronistic void in the middle of Warsaw—needs to be filled. A swish moneymaking city district is to be built here, complete with new skyscrapers (at least one of them even taller than the Palace itself, according to the binding zoning plan), cultural tourism destinations, and upmarket department stores.

Figure I.6. Mayor Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz and Zaha Hadid reveal the design of Lilium Tower, 2008. Photograph by Rafał Trzasko, courtesy of the Press Office of the City of Warsaw.

These grand ambitions are frequently talked about by Varsovians with recourse to the language of the complex, suggestive of psychological ill-ness. A particularly interesting example of this kind of usage came in 2008, when a British-Iraqi starchitect (the late Zaha Hadid) and the mayor of Warsaw Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz held a joint press conference to present the design of Lilium Tower: a seventy-six-story, 260 metre, bulge-shaped apartment and hotel building to be built in the Palace's immediate vicinity, just adjacent to Parade Square. Hadid's tower was to be the first building in Warsaw that would exceed Stalin's gift in height. "Finally, Warsaw will have its Manhattan," the mayor exclaimed. "We will overcome our Palace of Culture complex!" Or, as Deputy Mayor Jacek Wojciechowicz put it on another occasion, "We finally have to work through this Palace Complex, to remove the Palace from its pedestal. It should be one tall building among many, not the only one."

Some Varsovians, then, think that the best way to overcome the city's architectural Palace Complex is to bury the Palace within an asymmetrical forest of skyscrapers. This idea is vaunted by the current administration and forms the basis for the binding local plan for Parade Square and its

environs, approved in 2010. Others—such as the winners of an architectural competition for the Palace's surroundings held in 1992, whose plan for the Palace was finally dropped by the city in 2008—are of the opinion that the best thing to do would be to surround the Palace with a ring of even taller skyscrapers. Others still think that the Palace ought to be surrounded by low buildings, replicating the dense network of streets that characterized the area's prewar layout. Very few people think that demolishing the Palace is a good or workable idea, although this notion had its backers in the 1990s and continues to attract some quite high-profile supporters. One thing that everyone agrees on, however, is that everybody else suffers from the Palace Complex. The Palace Complex is what the other Varsovian has. In the words of some of my survey respondents:

"If we surround the Palace with skyscrapers, this will only magnify our Palace Complex!"

"There is no sense at all in destroying the Palace. This would only testify to our complexes."

"Let's avoid this hysterical complex of surrounding the Palace with skyscrapers . . . the Palace should be a living organism, not ridden with complexes!"

"All this stuff about hiding the Palace . . . these are all the complex-laden (*zakompleksione*) ideas of so-called 'patriots.'"

"All of them (plans for the Palace's surroundings) are the result of complexes, none of them accept the Palace, thus none of them are innovative."

"One symbol is enough (the Palace), adding other elements, which will compete with it, deafen its architecture, this mirrors the complexes of the city councilors (we don't know how to deal with history, nor how to make history!)"

"[All of the new plans will fail], because we have no good ideas, and because of the Palace Complex."

"The exuberant fantasies of city politicians and architects have nothing in common with the city. Let them go and heal their complexes back on the farm."

Complexes, Complexity, *Kompleksowość*

The notion of the Palace complex (or illness), as used in the sardonic, casual parlance of Warsaw's decision-makers and city dwellers, connotes some sort of vaguely Freudian fixation, debilitating to the normal operation of the individual and collective psyche.[4] A somewhat different understanding of *complex*, emerging from early twentieth-century material culture studies, has also been deployed by anthropologists seeking to shed light on the relationship between economy, politics, and social life. Particularly notable is the case of the "cattle complex," described for East African populations whose lives appeared, at least to their ethnographers (Herskovits 1926), to revolve to an unusual extent around livestock. The "cattle complexes" had a psychological, affective, and emotional dimension too but encompassed a much broader focus on materiality and political and economic organization as well as ceremonial and symbolic life. Here, the complexity of social life was also *reduced*—not to an abstract psychosexual drive but to the tangle of connections leading back to a singular tangible element, which appeared to predominate over all other spheres of existence. As Edward Evans-Pritchard puts it in his description of the Nuer "interest in cattle" (1940, 118), "So many physical, psychological and social requirements can be satisfied from this one source [cattle] that Nuer attention, instead of being diffused in a variety of directions, tends . . . to be focused on this single object."

The ethnographers of the cattle complex did not claim to be diagnosing any sort of pathology and drew no explicit connections between their theories and those of Freud or Jung. Nevertheless, with time, the psychoanalytical and sociocultural meanings came to mingle with each other, and it is precisely this ambiguous understanding of *complex* that is of interest to me here. This hybrid concept is voluminous enough to retain a sensitivity to the volatile interplay between history and architecture, politics and materiality, reality and myth, economics and obsession. Yet, unlike other currently fashionable notions, which seek to account for social complexity—like *assemblage* or *actor-network*—it does not lose sight of the imperative to reduce or condense this complexity, to turn it into something intelligible and explanatory. *Complex* is a highly instructive heuristic, then, through which to think about the social and cultural role of the built environment—particularly in situations where landmark buildings or planning ensembles (otherwise known as "architectural complexes") exert a profound impact on the social lives of their surroundings.[5]

In an attempt to compare the Africanists' cattle complex to a corresponding "pig complex" suggested by Melanesianists, Andrew Strathern (1971, 129) points out that this usage of the term *complex* has a "nice ambiguity." It suggests "both some kind of psychological fixation and the *complex ramifications of the uses to which these animals are put*" (emphasis added). It is here that it is illustrative to juxtapose Strathern's wording with a passage from architectural historian Selim Khan-Magomedov's "typology of new types of buildings for social and administrative purposes in the Soviet Union" (1987, 399–433). Referring to the competition for the 1922 Moscow Palace of Labor to stand on the banks of the Moskva River, Khan-Magomedov points out that Palaces of Labor were designed as public buildings serving an extraordinarily broad range of purposes.[6] Closely echoing Strathern's wording, Khan-Magomedov emphasises that one of the things characterizing these buildings' novelty was precisely "the *complex uses to which these institutions were then put*" (399, emphasis added).

Soviet designers and planners in the 1920s themselves referred to the *kompleksnyy* medley of functions, which Khan-Magomedov's "new types" of Soviet institutions (like Palaces of Labor, Houses, and Palaces of Culture) were to amalgamate within the buildings purpose-designed to house them. This sort of architectural *kompleksnost'* (*kompleksowość* in Polish, most directly translatable into English as "comprehensiveness") was not driven by the desire to construct complex edifices for the sake of complexity itself, however. The buildings housing these new types of Soviet institutions were intended to be extraordinary and spectacular edifices in which vast quantities of people would gather and transform themselves through work and leisure. The act of gathering in a House or Palace of Culture would reconfigure the self-seeking bourgeois city dweller or retrograde, superstitious peasant into a constitutive, multitalented, rounded member of a new progressive, socialist collectivity. In Khan-Magomedov's words, "the new type of club, Palace of Labor," together with communal dwellings and other types of collectivizing facilities, ought to function as "social condensers" or "*conductors and condensers of socialist culture*" (1987, 596, original emphasis).[7]

This mission of transformative acculturation through architecture lay at the core of the task envisioned for Warsaw's Palace. As Warsaw architect Szymon Syrkus put it in April 1952, expressing delight at the content of the first proposals for the Palace's design and program, "This edifice will be . . . an immovable guiding star on our journey to transform old Warsaw, princely Warsaw, royal, magnates', burghers', capitalist Warsaw into

socialist Warsaw" (Khan-Magomedov 1987, 460). Warsaw's Palace was built in the Stalinist 1950s and not in the avant-garde 1920s, and in People's Poland rather than in the Soviet Union proper. Nevertheless, it constitutes one of the most—if not the very most—far-ranging and ambitious implementations of this type of Soviet thinking about architectural kompleksnost' and social condensation—a type of thinking at the core of which lay the imperative to transform the very fabric of human life through architecture: to deploy buildings and the built environment, in other words, to bring radical new modes of human consciousness and collectivity into being. It is hard to put this more vividly than did Edmund Goldzamt, arguably the most prominent and erudite spokesperson of architectural Stalinism in 1950s Warsaw. Paraphrasing an infamous declaration of Stalin's, Goldzamt called on Warsaw's architects to function not merely as "engineers of buildings" but also "engineers of human souls" (Baraniewski 1996, 237).[8]

An understanding of this sort of comprehensive kompleksnost'—as kompleksowość—was also relayed to me by many of my informants in their expressions of the sort of plan for the Palace's surroundings, which might be able to break the post-1989 deadlock.

"What is needed is a *kompleksowy* working-out of the plan in its entirety . . . not the fragmented plan we have now."

"The site is spectacular, and the project needs be kompleksowy, so there are always protests and discussions every time a project is announced. Nobody wants to take on the responsibility for such a huge decision."

In the particularly illustrative words of one respondent, which juxtaposes the idea of the psychological complex and the sort of condensatory kompleksowość discussed above:

"[In order to realize a good plan for the Palace's surroundings], we need to first reject ideology, accept history, jettison martyrology, get rid of our complexes . . . what's more, we need to think in unified terms, we need a kompleksowy plan for the Palace's surroundings."

In other words, the only way to overcome the Palace complex is by achieving kompleksowość—precisely the sort of kompleksowość the Palace has but which none of the post-1989 plans for its surroundings have been able to muster.

Reducing Complexity

The Palace today throbs with as much social condensatory dynamism as it did back in 1955, 1970, and 1991. Its enduring kompleksowość within as well as the unrelenting fixation twenty-first-century Varsovians bring to bear on the building from without (which I also analyse in this book via the concept of centrality) both testify to the remarkable extent to which Goldzamt's radical, far-reaching vision of architecture as social engineering and as condensation and reduction of complexity was implemented in Warsaw. The extent to which Warsaw's Palace Complex is an index of planning success—as an example of a grand and radical social engineering project achieving exactly what it was supposed to—is a function of the Palace's capacity to condense the complexity of the surrounding city.

This complexity-reducing function speaks to another way in which the Palace presents a challenge to contemporary anthropology and ethnographic theory. The anthropological preoccupation with material failure— or the discontinuity between design intention, built form, and social effect—maps onto a longstanding tendency (among anthropologists as well as other scholars in the social sciences and humanities) to emphasize social complexity and causal contingency in their work. There is a widespread opinion—among urban scholars in particular—that cities are ineffably and endlessly complex—that they can be understood only in terms of complexity and that any attempt to reduce complexity is not only bound to implode but may also be politically suspect.

The impulse for this burgeoning complexity- and failure-celebrating consensus was consolidated during the postmodern and Foucauldian 1980s and 1990s, gaining further steam in the later part of the 2000s, as schools of thought like Science and Technology Studies and Actor-Network Theory came to exert a strong influence in disciplines across the social sciences and humanities. "No measure will ever wrench from cities their fundamental irreducibility," wrote Bruno Latour some years ago (2006, 85). Anthropologists and other urban scholars ought to switch from "an analytic of structure to an analytics of assemblage," argued Aihwa Ong more recently (2011, 14). Only then will they be able to "account for the *complexity* of urban global-engagements, rather than to subject them to economistic or political reductionism" (2011, 3).[9]

While I acknowledge the validity of the imperative to represent the heterogeneity and complexity of the city in ethnographic descriptions, it

is important to emphasize that the description of complexity for its own sake has limited value as an analytical exercise. In the words of Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov, "complexity is a good question but a bad answer" (2013, 16). The following pages outline two ways, then, in which the "concrete diversity" (Godelier 1978, 765) of relations between Warsaw and the Palace can in fact be meaningfully reduced (that is to say, rendered graspable). First there is the domination of the city by a single, enormous physical entity (the Palace)—an entity that is able to exercise its domination because of the (to paraphrase Strathern and Khan-Magomedov) "complex uses to which it is put." That is to say, the Palace Complex works only because the Palace itself is complex enough to be able to concentrate so much of the city's complexity on itself. Second (and ultimately), Warsaw-Palace relations can be reduced to the "last instance" determination (Althusser 1969, 87–129) of their interaction by the prevailing political-economic conditions of existence.

Architecture, Socialism, Economics

The relationship between architecture and economics is always intense and, in cultural theorist Frederic Jameson's terms, "virtually unmediated" (1991, 5). Its scale, its expense, the complex logistical operations architecture entails, and (in a market system) its connection to land values mean that, as Jameson puts it, "of all the arts, architecture is the closest constitutively to the economic" (5). This observation relates to the old Marxist controversy over the nature of the dependency between the economic base or infrastructure of society and the political, cultural, and ideological superstructure. This duality appears in structural Marxist Louis Althusser's work as the reciprocal relationship between, on one side, "determination in the last instance by the (economic) mode of production" and on the other "the relative autonomy of the superstructures and their specific effectivity" (1969, 111). Althusser is at pains to point out that determination in the last instance by the economy cannot be taken for granted. The economic dialectic is always overdetermined, "never active *in the pure state.*"[10] The myriad components of the superstructure are "never seen to step respectfully aside when their work is done or, when the Time comes, as his pure phenomena, to scatter before His Majesty the Economy as he strides along the royal road of the Dialectic. From the first moment to the last, the lonely hour of the 'last instance' never comes" (113).

The built environment, in Anique Hommels's phrase (2005), is notoriously "obdurate." Architecture displays a chronic tendency to pick up the

gauntlet thrown down by the last instance. The task, then, of a Marxist-inclined ethnographic study of the built environment is to account for the relationship of determination between the political-economic last instance and the various more-or-less autonomous factors and forces—aesthetic, symbolic, affective, and so on—piling up on top. In the case of Warsaw's Palace, this last instance determinant finds its clearest expression in property relations: in the relationship between the expropriatory, communist property regime, which created the condition of possibility for the Palace's construction, and in the ascendant restitutive property regime, which has been attempting to bring about the reprivatization (*reprywatyzacja*) of Warsaw's urban fabric since the collapse of communism. The Palace's intransigent refusal to submit to the various revenue-generating schemes envisioned for its surroundings since 1989 has much to do not only with the aesthetic or physical obduracy of the building itself but also with the fact that nonsocialist property relations have not been fully able to consolidate themselves in Warsaw following the end of the People's Republic.

"Socialism Failed" and "Socialism Had No Economy"

What is the nature of the relationship, then, between economics, politics, aesthetics, and ideology in the socialist and post-socialist city? What does the collapse of the Soviet Union and the People's Republics in Eastern Europe say about the extent to which socialist architecture and urbanism succeeded or failed to bring about their intended aesthetic and social goals? Anthropologists and cultural historians of socialism and post-socialism have tended to answer these questions from one of two distinct but overlapping perspectives, both related to the complexity-centric view of architecture and urbanism enumerated above. I call these the "socialism failed" and "socialism had no economy" schools of thought. The first cluster of studies have emphasized the extent to which the totalizing, transformative social reform projects (especially in city planning and architecture) that state socialist countries wanted to bring into being wound up as failures, sabotaged by the swarming multiplicities and complexities of everyday life (Kotkin 1997; Buchli 1998, 2000; deHaan 2013; Fehérváry 2013). Scholarship representing the second group, meanwhile, has put forward versions of the opinion that the actually existing state socialist project inverted the Marxian causality between determined cultural superstructure and determining economic infrastructure. This point of view effectively substitutes

economism for a different kind of idealistic determinism, arguing that socialist projects (despite themselves) were primarily aesthetic, epistemic, discursive, ideological, or performative in nature (Groys 1992; Todorov 1995; Yurchak 2005; Dobrenko 2007; Glaeser 2011; Clark 2011; deHaan 2013; Schwenkel 2015).

Caroline Humphrey has pointed to the prevalence of a failure-centric perspective in scholarly understandings of Soviet planning projects in 1920s and 1930s: "it has become a familiar idea that the early Soviet goal fell to pieces . . . overwhelmed not so much by overt opposition as by the teeming practices of life that had their own and different logics" (2005, 40).[11] In Krisztina Fehérváry's recent assessment, meanwhile, "anthropological research has continuously demonstrated that human beings are rarely transformed by material forms according to the intentions of architects or designers. People confound attempts to change their behaviour and forms of sociality unless they are willing participants" (2013, 13). The canon of this "built socialism as failure" school continues, for the most part, to be constituted by established Foucauldian and poststructuralist-inflected studies, such as Stephen Kotkin's book on Magnitogorsk (1997) or Victor Buchli's on the Narkomfin Communal House in Moscow (2000). A sophisticated attempt to check this tendency to depict Soviet urbanism only in terms of its botched grandeur is provided, however, in Stephen Collier's study of biopolitics in transition in the south Russian industrial city of Belaya Kalitva (2011).

Collier's book acknowledges that by "really the *very* end of the Soviet period," Belaya Kalitva (and other comparable small- and medium-size cities throughout the Soviet Union, many of them founded almost from scratch during the 1930s, '40s or '50s) had developed as a near bona fide urban *khoziaistvo* (or economy), relatively consistent with the postulates of the city's 1964 plan.[12] In Collier's (semi-ironic) bucolic description, Belaya Kalitva had become "a small industrial settlement tucked neatly into a confluence of rivers ranged with pretty white bluffs . . . from some perspectives, a livable balance between industrial production and residential development had been achieved . . . a moral economy was organized around the *khozians* of the city, and around the mundane elements of urban infrastructure and social welfare provisioning" (2011, 107).

However, for Collier, plans cannot be evaluated purely on their own terms. Though the consolidation of city building may comprise one of the fundamental Soviet legacies, the success of Soviet urban and infrastructural

consolidation was pyrrhic, coinciding as it did almost exactly with the Brezhnev-era *zastoi* (stagnation), which marked the high road toward the final disintegration of the Soviet project. Citing political sociologist Daniel Chirot's (1991) proclamation that "the tragedy of communism was not its failure but its success" (1991, 112), Collier describes how Soviet cities became all too consolidated, their infrastructures so rigid, unflinchingly dependent on centrally issued commands and deprived of incentives to modernize that they were totally unable (and unwilling) to adapt to the dramatic new flexibilities that came to characterize the global capitalist economies following the 1970s financial crisis.

Collier explicitly makes the argument that it was this mundane sphere of late socialist, bureaucratized planning as provision—rather than the demiurgic follies of the avant-garde or Stalin era—that constituted the most lasting legacy (if not the success) of Soviet built socialism. My observations of the Palace's interaction with the everyday life of Warsaw, however, allow me to question the failure-centric narrative in terms that are further reaching than Collier's. A little like Melissa Caldwell's Russian dachas, the Palace is at once "the setting for the extraordinarily ordinary and ordinarily extraordinary" (2011, 174). Its existence encompasses the otherworldly as much as the humdrum domains of the city's social life. In Warsaw, then, it was precisely a spectacular monument to Stalin-era gigantism, which made for the most consequential afterlife of the communist project—not just in terms of the symbolic or the mnemonic realms but also in terms of the most grounded parameters of everyday urban sociality.

Bulgarian cultural historian and philosopher Vladislav Todorov (1991, 363) has put forward an interpretation that merges aspects of both the "socialism failed" and "socialism had no economy" schools. According to Todorov, communism produced "ultimately defective" economic structures but "ultimately effective" aesthetic ones. There is clearly some truth in this idea, given the fact that state communism as a political and economic system crumbled in Eastern Europe while many of its aesthetic creations—the Palace among them—continue to live on and to exert a remarkably strong impact on their surroundings and on the social lives of those who use them. But arguments that suggest that socialism replaces economics with aesthetics (Todorov 1991; Groys 1992; Dobrenko 2007; Clark 2011) or with discursive, rhetorical, or epistemic constructions (Yurchak 2005; Glaeser 2011) are not satisfactory in the explanations they provide for this phenomenon. It is not enough to say that "the fundamental academic field of communism

lies in its political aesthetics" because communism is "based on political aesthetic and political rhetorical principles and not on economic ones" (Todorov 1991, 363–364) nor to claim that "the mystical political economy of socialism, which lacks any foundation in human nature, can be understood only in terms of aesthetics" (Dobrenko 2007, 6). In my reading, the characteristics of Stalinist architectural aesthetics emerged, in the last instance, from a Marxian political-economic intentionality. The aesthetics of socialism, in other words, were not just political but also economic. Socialism as well as its unraveling and aftermath, then, ought to be considered in terms of its *economic aesthetics*.

In a text on the relationship between the Marxian base, built infrastructure, and the ideological intentionality designed into architecture, Caroline Humphrey deploys the metaphor of the prism to underline the possibility of a positive relationship between what architects and planners want buildings to do and what they actually do. Even if architecture's impact on social life "is not at all a simple reiteration of what been envisioned in the ideology," "the built construction seems capable . . . of acting as if like a prism: gathering meanings and scattering them again, yet not randomly. As a prism has a given number of faces, the light it scatters has direction" (2005, 55). Enlisting this insight of Humphrey's, this book works toward a framework for the analysis of socialist architecture and planning that acknowledges the importance of the ideological and epistemic intentionality and aesthetic effectivity—without, however, setting out to deny their undergirding economic foundation.

The Palace's enduring triumph, then, is integrally connected to the act of economic violence (and beneficence) that made possible its foundation. The Palace's gifting to the city was accompanied and made possible by the mass expropriation of private property. So the spirit of the Palace-as-gift is an inherently expropriatory one. The Palace's extraordinary intransigent publicness, I argue, is made possible precisely by the continuing existence of this spirit of expropriation—its public spirit—that has not been extinguished because the Palace has not yet been privatized. In order for the Palace to have been appropriated so extensively, so substantively by Warsaw's inhabitants, the land beneath it first had to be expropriated from its prewar owners. Appropriation, in other words, is impossible without a corresponding act of expropriation. The survival of this public spirit— severed by the dissolution of the Soviet Union from its connection to foreign domination—is the afterlife of socialist modernity in Warsaw.

Still-Socialism: The Palace as Noncapitalist Enclave

In the later decades of the twentieth century, western Marxist spatial thinkers pored over the idea of the enclave. So long as the reigning global order exists, is it possible—debated Henri Lefebvre, Manfredo Tafuri, and Frederic Jameson—to create noncapitalist, seditious terrains within its dominion? Broadly speaking, this debate was inconclusive. Most of them answered in the negative or failed to come up with very convincing renditions of what these enclaves might consist of.

Venetian Marxist architecture critic Manfredo Tafuri was the most pessimistic among this group of theorists. For Tafuri, every radical or progressive architectural or spatial project formulated and/or implemented since the Enlightenment has, almost without exception, been turned soon enough into a handmaiden for the system of capital accumulation it was designed to resist. From Thomas Jefferson to William Morris to the workers *Siedlungen* of 1920s Frankfurt or Berlin and the daring projects of Red Vienna, every attempt to change society through architecture has degenerated into nothing other than—in Tafuri's words—"a pathetic homage to inoperative values" (1976, 7). Every single island of utopian spatiality, in other words, soon enough becomes hopelessly submerged within the storm of contradictions it was supposed to weather, swarming in on it from the unforgiving capitalist ocean all around.

Marginally less pessimistic was Henri Lefebvre, a thinker whose oeuvre is divided fairly equally, in Łukasz Stanek's characterization (2011, vii), into three "voices": a commitment to empirical *research*; a *critique* (of capitalist architecture); and a *project* of identifying examples of and formulating the parameters of noncapitalist space. These parameters are variously defined by recourse to a medley of adjectives, among them "differential" space, "concrete," "possible," "unitary," "heterotopic" (Lefebvre used this term independently of Foucault), and "transductive" space (Lefebvre 1991).

Lefebvre gave empirical consideration to a whole host of candidates for the mantle of differential space, some of them designed, others spontaneous: the pioneering housing estates of '50s and '60s France, the monumental new centre of postwar Belgrade, the Paris of the Commune, the Nanterre of 1968, even the Club Med tourist resorts of the Costa del Sol. Of particular interest in the context of the Palace of Culture is Lefebvre's understanding of the dialectic of centrality: the question of what kinds of space, under what kinds of conditions, are able to condense human beings as well as

social processes and phenomena. Both to condense them in the negative sense of exacerbating contradictions as well as in the positive sense of enabling or forging meaningful, radical kinds of human collectivity.

It is Frederic Jameson, however, who has attempted to synthesize these ruminations of thinkers like Lefebvre and Tafuri, via a consideration of the idea of the enclave, or the enclave theory of social transition. In Jameson's words (1988, 50), "the emergent future, the new and still nascent social relations that announce a mode of production that will ultimately displace the as yet still dominant one, is theorized in terms of small and yet strategic pockets or beachheads within the older system."

These western Marxists, brooding over the impossibility of creating noncapitalist spaces, paid relatively little attention to socialist Eastern Europe and to other sites where the dominance of the capitalist mode of production was either incomplete or nonexistent.[13] In one uncharacteristic moment of optimism, however, Tafuri (writing with Francesco Dal Co) has some positive things to say about East Berlin's Socialist Realist Stalinallee. As he describes it, "the monumental bombast of the Stalinallee . . . was conceived to put into a heroic light an urbanistic project that set out to be different. In fact, it succeeds perfectly in expressing the presuppositions for the construction of the new socialist city, which rejects divisions between architecture and urbanism and aspires to impose itself as a unitary structure" (1987, 326).

Frederic Jameson picks up on this unusual flickering of enthusiasm on Tafuri's part. According to Jameson, it suggests that, for Tafuri, the very existence of this kind of "heroically different urbanism" *can* create something like a "force field" (1988, 53) of revolutionary influence. In response, Jameson recognizes—though somewhat in passing—that this means that the conditions of possibility for radically "differential" space might be found "in the Second and Third Worlds," places that "make possible projects and constructions that are not possible in the First" (52).

Lefebvre, however—the disgruntled French Communist Party intellectual—had a far less hopeful attitude toward the question of whether or not state socialism can create the conditions of possibility for differential space. In response to the self-posed question "has socialism produced a space of its own?" Lefebvre answers in the negative: "A revolution that does not produce a new space has not realized its full potential; indeed it has failed in that it has not changed life itself, but has merely changed ideological superstructures, institutions or political apparatuses. A social

transformation, to be truly revolutionary in character, must manifest a creative capacity in its effects on daily life, on language and on space. . . . One cannot help but wonder whether it is legitimate to speak of socialism where not architectural innovation has occurred, where no specific space has been created."

Against such a sweeping dismissal, one of the purposes of this book is to account in detail for one extraordinary state socialist building, which—on Lefebvre's own terms—did produce a new space and did exert an enormous creative effect on daily life language and space, not merely—contra Lefebvre—on the level of "superstructure" but on a more foundational level too. Furthermore this book aims to show that this differential space continues not only to endure today but to remain still-socialist—functioning as a noncapitalist enclave and a potential Jamesonian force field of revolutionary influence—despite the collapse of the political-economic system that made it possible in the first place.

This book does not interpret the Palace, then, as an ex-communist building that has been tamed by capitalism. It is not a formerly tyrannical and oppressive thing that has now been turned into nothing other than a cute and pliable mechanism for the accumulation of profit. It cannot be reduced to a commercialized object of what the Germans—with their *Trabis* and their *Goodbye Lenins*—call *ostalgie*. The Palace of Culture is uniquely effective piece of communist architecture, spatial planning, and, yes, social engineering. It is a building that functions as well as it does because the land on which it stands was expropriated from its prewar owners and has not yet been reprivatized. It is a building that resists the "wild capitalist" chaos—of property restitution, twenty-story billboards, inner-city poverty, and rampant gentrification—that surrounds it. The Palace, in other words, is not so much a post-socialist building as a still-socialist one. A building that, thanks to the economic aesthetic and public spirit built into it by its designers—is able to endure as an enclave of a noncapitalist aesthetic, spatial, and social world at the heart of a late capitalist city.

The Palace-as-noncapitalist-enclave may not last for long, however. Parade Square is slowly being chopped up and parceled out to the descendants of prewar owners or, more often, to rapacious property developers who have spent most of the last twenty years buying up land claims, more often than not for extremely low (nonmarket, in the capitalist parlance) prices. So what can the Palace do here? In my opinion, the Palace is more than just a cozy building, intimately known and well loved by Varsovians, increasingly

detached from its nasty Soviet and Stalinist genesis. It is a dangerous building, a skyscraper intended by its designers and ideologues to "revolutionarily transform the city" (Goldzamt cited in Sigalin 1986c, 11), to "radiate" its "social and cultural content" (Polish Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz cited in Sadowski 2009, 203) and "architectural power" (Goldzamt 1956, 21) all over the ruined wasteland of postwar Warsaw.

I want to put the Palace forward, then, as a powerful architectural embodiment of what anthropologist Kristen Ghodsee has referred to as the "the left side of history" (2015) but also—since its magnificent solidity makes it likely to be around well into whatever future comes around—of what Jodi Dean (2012) calls the "communist horizon." My intention in this book has been to showcase the story of the Palace as a building that exists at once as an anachronism, a fossil of a dead (or dormant) property regime, ideology, and aesthetic; and an edifice alive with subversive public spirit, whose architectural power embodies a powerful challenge to the privatizing political economy and exclusionary spatiality of the post-socialist city.

The Palace is a building that, in accordance with the wishes of its designers, transformed the capitalist city into a socialist one. Today, now that the city is no longer socialist, the Palace continues—somehow—to be socialist. And today, the capitalist city remains transfixed on the still-socialist skyscraper.

Structure of the Book

Following this introduction, chapters 1, 2, and 3 situate the Palace's gifting to Warsaw in the historical context of the rebuilding of Warsaw after 1945 and the onset of Stalinism after 1949, and delineate the political-economic and architectural intentionality that lay behind its inception and construction. Organized around a close examination of the work and writing of two powerful movers in Warsaw's postwar architectural life, these chapters comprise an ethnohistorical narrative, detailing how the Palace came to be in Warsaw. This ethnohistorical section of the book is followed by an ethnomethodological chapter 4, which details some of the ways in which the inhabitants of Warsaw—artists, scholars, and laypeople—have thought about the Palace so far. These conscious interpretations and understandings of the building constitute an integral part of the city's Palace Complex, but they have also served as points of departure for my own take on what the building means and how it works.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 constitute the ethnographic core of the book. Together, they detail how the Palace exerts a profound impact on myriad aspects of contemporary Warsaw's social life and assess whether and how far the twenty-first century Palace continues to function in a manner consistent with the Stalinist economic aesthetic vision designed into it. Chapter 5 deals with the immediate impact that the regime transformation had on the Palace and Square. It looks at the manner in which the Palace came to be increasingly Varsovianized and "town halled"—that is, connected with the civic life of the Polish capital following its transferal from state to municipal ownership in 1990. And it charts the tortured adventures of Parade Square development plans—attempts to overcome the city's architectural Palace Complex—vaunted by successive Warsaw mayors since the beginning of this century.

Chapter 6, meanwhile, summarizes some of the private visions for the Palace put forward by Warsaw's citizens as well as examining in detail the significance of the Palace's powerful centrality within Warsaw. Chapter 7 concentrates on the extraordinary dimension of the Palace's social existence, focusing on the manner in which some Varsovians' encounters with the Palace cross and confound the boundary separating detached interest from obsession or intimacy. It draws a connection between Stalinist aesthetic theories concerning the political sublime and the nature of the Palace's contemporary encounters with Warsaw's worlds of myth, love, and madness.

Finally, the closing chapter draws into explicit focus the parameters of the Palace Complex's last-instance economic determinant. It describes the fumbling but dramatic manner in which a private ownership-based property regime has been attempting to reassert itself in post-1989 Warsaw. I conclude by drawing a stark distinction between two competing Palace Complexes vying for dominance in contemporary Warsaw: a complexity-reducing, public-spirited *city-building* one and a complexity-embracing, privative *city-debilitating* one. The book ends by arguing that the Palace of Culture will be unable to maintain its role as a consequentially public social condenser for the city unless it remains publicly owned and managed.

Notes

1.   Seven major books about the Palace, in fact—including one by this author—were launched within one four-month period in 2015, and there were four launches happening that

very week (Baraniewski 2015; Chomątowska 2015; Fota 2015; Majewski 2015; Murawski 2015; Stopa 2015; Budzińska and Sznajderman 2015).

2. The Palace's post-socialist longevity exists in marked contrast to comparable buildings like the Palast der Republik in East Berlin, whose existence was "brought to a screeching halt" (Bach 2017) two weeks before German reunification in 1990, after the uncannily timed discovery of an asbestos infection. The body of the Palast lingered on obdurately until 2007, however.

3. Capitalism also provides ground for the proliferation of architectural superlatives. The notion of the "statistical sublime" has been applied to contemporary skyscraper architecture by theorists Reinhold Martin (2001, 2003, 2011) and Gwendolyn Wright (2008). However, whereas Martin (2011) describes how this numerical narrative is "largely unconscious" in the capitalist instance, the case of the Palace ties it to the "planned cultivation" of the sublime characteristic of Stalinist socialist realism.

4. Dejan Sudjic's book *The Edifice Complex* (2011) also rests on a psychologized premise, insinuating that the desire to build big testifies simply to the inadequacies of architects and megalomania of architects and their patrons. Bruce Grant (2014) develops Sudjic's psychological metaphor, examining the relationship between post-Soviet architectural monumentality in Baku and different kinds of "surplus" or excess: political tyranny and neoliberal ruthlessness as well as the affects and fascinations Baku's citizens invest in the city's real or imagined skyline.

5. However, the spirit of the cattle complex may have made an unwitting comeback in the recent burgeoning of "object-oriented" (Latour and Weibel 2005; Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell 2007) and interspecies (Haraway 2003; Candea 2010) work in anthropology and elsewhere, among these Nancy Ries's (2009) reduction of post-Soviet Russian "ontology" to "potato."

6. On the Soviet use of the word *Palace*, a 1922 statement of Sergei Kirov's is instructive: "It is often said . . . that we wiped the palaces of bankers, landowners and tsars off the face of the earth. . . . Let us now erect in their place the new palaces of workers and laboring peasants" (cited in Khan-Magomedov 1987, 402).

7. The contributions to Murawski and Rendell (2017) provide a systematic reexamination of the idea of the social condenser.

8. Attributed by Fitzpatrick (1978) to Yury Olesha. See also Tomasik (1999).

9. See Murawski (2016, 2018b) for more extensive critiques of the way in which ideas of assemblage and complexity have been deployed in anthropology and urban studies.

10. Althusser (1969, 95–101) adapts the Freudian concept of overdetermination to refer to a structural model, which describes the determination of a single phenomena by many causes, without forsaking the principle of last-instance determination by the economy. Considering my interest in this book in the notion of the "social condenser," note also that Freud's theory of dreams (1958) describes overdetermination as occurring alongside condensation, where latent dream content secretes into one manifest image.

11. See also Crowley's work on Warsaw (1997; 2002; 2003, 143–83) and Crowley and Reid (2002).

12. Understood by Collier in substantive holistic terms as a unit of welfare provisioning.

13. One notable exception is Henri Lefebvre's interest in Belgrade. See Stanek (2011, 233–234).

1

THE PLANNERS

Conceiving the Palace Complex

Józef Sigalin (1909–1983) was the key bureaucrat and expediter of all things related to architecture and planning in 1950s Warsaw. His contemporary and rival Edmund Goldzamt (1921–1990) was the most prominent and erudite spokesperson of architectural Stalinism in Poland during this period. As the key Polish interlocutor for the Palace's Moscow-based design team, Sigalin played a decisive role in determining the scale, program, appearance, and location of the Palace in Warsaw. As the foremost Polish interpreter and adapter of Stalinist socialist realist architectural doctrine, meanwhile, Goldzamt was instrumental in lending ideological expression to what it was that made the Palace at once "socialist," "Varsovian," and "Polish." Sigalin and Goldzamt, then, were among the most influential participants in the architectural world of 1950s Warsaw. But they were also two of its most incisive and prolific chroniclers, producing extensive written documentation of their thoughts and experiences, primarily in the form of theoretical treatises (in Goldzamt's case) and diaries and memoirs (in Sigalin's). Although I do not limit my horizon to Sigalin's and Goldzamt's perspectives, my distillation of the ideology and practice of architectural Stalinism in 1950s Warsaw takes the works, lives, and words of Sigalin and Goldzamt as its guiding points of departure.

Obedient Executors?

In the 1950s and today, critics have showered condemnation on both Sigalin and Goldzamt. Writer and diarist Leopold Tyrmand—whose *1954 Diary* is an exceptionally detailed and candid account of Warsaw's everyday life during the Stalin period, written from a determinedly antiregime

Figure 1.1a (*top*). Edmund Goldzamt. Photograph from the family archive, courtesy of Anna Guryanova.

Figure 1.1b (*left*). Galina Guryanova and Edmund Goldzamt outside the Palace of Culture, late 1950s. Photograph from the family archive, courtesy of Anna Guryanova.

Figure 1.2. Józef Sigalin. Photograph
Polish Press Agency (PAP).

perspective—describes them as "architectural *politruki*" (political commissars), "tame, limited, obedient executors" (Tyrmand 1999, 195). In Tyrmand's prediction, Sigalin and Goldzamt would one day be forgotten, but their "criminal stupidity" (195) and "servility in face of non-architectural ideologies will terrify our grandchildren" (203).

It is impossible to reflect on the activities of Sigalin, Goldzamt, and other prominent figures of the time without reference to the political context and without awareness of one's own political and aesthetic worldview. My own account of their activities and motivations aspires to be frank, but it is not devoid of sympathy. There is no doubt that both figures participated in the political machinations of the day and that their own success necessitated the marginalization of many of their colleagues. But a purely negative characterization obscures the fact that both Sigalin and Goldzamt evaluated their actions not only in terms of the purity of principles or implementation but also in terms of the effectivity of their contribution to the enormous task at hand—the creation of a new, socialist capital city on the rubble of the old one. Both had been committed communists already before the war, and the tumult of war and genocide made a painful and direct mark on each of their lives. Goldzamt, who came from a family of Jewish intellectuals in Lublin, had seen most of his relatives killed in the German-occupied region of Poland. Goldzamt himself escaped to Lviv, Tashkent, and finally Moscow, where he completed his architectural training during the war years. Sigalin was a decade older, and his link to the capital city was stronger. He came from a well-established family of Warsaw industrialists, also of Jewish heritage. His older brothers, Grzegorz and Roman, had been successful modernist architects in Warsaw before 1939. The toll on Sigalin's family was perpetrated by Soviets as well as by Nazis, however, and predated the outbreak of war. Grzegorz, who traveled to Moscow throughout the 1930s as an architect and member of the Polish Communist Party, was caught up in Stalin's 1937 purges and died at an unspecified time in the Lubyanka, Moscow's NKVD headquarters (Kołodziejczyk 2012). Roman, a Polish artillery captain, was taken prisoner after the Soviet invasion of eastern Poland in September 1939. He was, in all likelihood, executed in 1940 at Kharkov as part of the broader Stalin-decreed massacre of Polish officers, referred to under the umbrella term *Katyń*, a reference to the forest where most of the killings took place.[1] And in July 1943, Sigalin's mother and sister swallowed poison capsules in a freight car heading for the Nazi death camp at Treblinka (Kołodziejczyk 2012). The writings of Goldzamt and Sigalin

are replete with generalized invocations of the horrific impact of war on the human population and physical matter of the city, but they are silent about their own experiences. In his memoirs, Sigalin acknowledges that his brother was "murdered at Katyń in 1940" (Sigalin 1986a, 10), but he does not attribute blame—until 1989, the official line of the PRL [Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa—Polish People's Republic] and Soviet governments was that the Germans had perpetrated Katyń.[2]

Goldzamt and Sigalin met in Moscow in 1948. Sigalin was already a powerful figure in the Warsaw architectural community while Goldzamt was a precocious twenty-seven-year-old diploma student at the Moscow Institute of Architecture, the recipient of a stipend from the Polish Ministry of Education. During their Moscow conversations, Goldzamt presented his interpretation of the principles of socialist realist architecture—as he had learned them during his studies in Moscow—and summarized to Sigalin how they ought to be applied in the reconstruction of Warsaw. In Goldzamt's own recollection, Sigalin's response was to say, "Comrade Mundek,[3] I have to have this!"[4] The document Goldzamt prepared in response to Sigalin's request came to form the basis of his 1949 presentation of the doctrine of socialist realism to a Warsaw congress of party-affiliated architects. However, their initial friendship and pursuit of common interests soon turned into mistrust and acrimony; by 1952 their disagreements became public, and this bitterness is reflected in Sigalin's account of the Parade Square design process.

De-Stalinization also had a different effect on each architect. Goldzamt (who had a reputation as a zealous ideological enforcer) had his position of influence compromised completely, and he turned to academic research on socialist urbanism, Italian towns, and William Morris (Goldzamt 1967, 1968, 1987). He designed the occasional building, including a modernist seaside hotel in the resort town of Kołobrzeg. Though he divided his time between Poland and the Soviet Union, he was said to have felt less comfortable in Warsaw than in Moscow, where he died in 1990.

Sigalin (a more consummate organizer and power broker than Stalinist Jacobin) was soundly attacked in 1955 and submitted to self-criticism at the March 1955 meeting of the Association of Polish Architects with the admission, "I knew how to bang the command drums all too well" (Majewski 2009, 15). Some of Warsaw's most prominent architects, many of them not known for their coziness with the party, signed an open letter in his defense, in which they declared their respect for his person and achievements.

Although Sigalin's closeness to power never again came to match the phenomenal level of the 1950s (head of the Bureau for Reconstruction between 1945 and 1951, chief architect of Warsaw 1951–1956, and plenipotentiary for the construction of the Palace of Culture and Parade Square 1952–1955), he continued to play a significant role in many architectural and planning projects throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

The three-volume memoirs of Sigalin (*Warsaw 1944–1980*) span over thirty years, but they focus on the first ten years of postwar reconstruction. They include a number of retrospective reflections but also the transcripts of meetings and discussions at which architects, politicians, and members of the public pored over the rebuilding and later postwar development of Warsaw. I will devote significant space to materials taken from these memoirs—they serve as an excellent ethnographic record of the time, reproduced by Sigalin from notes he took while participating in (like no one else) and observing (with a clear sense of detachment) the events of the day. One of the aims driving this book—written on the basis of my own notes taken during a later but in many senses equivalent and comparable (if less dramatic) period of political, economic, and architectural upheaval in Warsaw—will be to demonstrate how much of the work done by Sigalin and his contemporaries fulfilled and even surpassed its aims. The essential features of the built environment of Warsaw in the twenty-first century were designed and realized during the 1940s and 1950s by Sigalin, Goldzamt, and the other members of his remarkable, tragic, and heroic generation. Bearing in mind Sigalin's initial fascination with Goldzamt's interpretation of Stalinist architectural doctrine, it makes sense to recount a few of Goldzamt's most expressive formulations about the foundational significance of city centers in socialist urbanism.

No City without a Center

Goldzamt's 1956 book is an expansive, erudite, and heavily ideologized exploration of how urban planning has responded to the problem of the relationship between centers and peripheries. Although it draws on examples from across the world and from throughout the history of Western civilization, its recurring focus is on Leningrad, Moscow, and especially Warsaw, culminating in a long analysis of the significance of the Palace and Parade Square to the task of creating a socialist urban environment.[5] For Goldzamt, "There can be no such thing as a city without a center. The very idea

of the city incorporates within itself the fact of the existence of the primary catalyst of the urban organism: the central ensemble or arrangement" (1956, 11). The whole is not able to exist as a unity, in other words, without containing a dominant entity (*dominanta*)[6] that holds it together. For Goldzamt—whose extrapolation of centrality anticipates some of Henri Lefebvre's later formulations to quite an uncanny degree—urban centers have always functioned as the "urbanistic and architectural expressions of the ruling system and its ideology . . . central ensembles are the most powerful monuments of their epoch, monuments of the national culture . . . material carriers of the dominant worldview" (Goldzamt 1956, 16).[7]

But Goldzamt's account is not focused on how city centers embody or reflect hegemonic social norms: he is more interested in the manner of their functioning as "actual tools of ideological impact" (1956, 16) and in the means by which socialist city planning is able to eradicate the "perennial contradiction between center and periphery, exacerbated during the epoch of industrial capitalism" (18). Goldzamt, in other words, is interested in the city center not merely as an expression of social transformation but as an active agent in its implementation. So how does he square the egalitarian imperative behind socialist urbanism with the Stalinist elevation of the agentic center? Goldzamt distinguishes between the leveling effect of socialist town planning on the distribution of wealth and access to dignified living conditions among inhabitants on one hand and, on the other, the *architectural* differentiation between center and periphery, which the realization of an egalitarian urban environment necessarily entails:

> Socialist urbanism eradicates class differences within the city, creating across all districts identical conditions for living, in terms of dwelling, work, communal services and aesthetic experiences. . . . But the eradication of the social contradiction between the city center and the suburbs does not entail the elimination of all differences in architectural solutions, nor does it entail the eradication of central ensembles, with their particular form and spatial role. To the contrary—the democratism of socialist society . . . necessitates the enormous significance of the centers of socialist cities. What is more, their prominence in the life of socialist cities must become incomparably higher than that of the ceremonial or financial-commercial centers of feudal and capitalist cities. The foundation of the strengthening of the role of the center in the practice of Soviet, Polish and the other people's democracies is the transformation of the infrastructure of social ties carried out by central ensembles (18).

The writings of Warsaw's Stalinist ideologues, then, offer a counterpoint to the view that Stalinist decisionmakers or ideologues saw architecture "as

merely part of a representational superstructure" and that, in their ideological universe, "the material world as such"—as opposed to the "collective labor of building it"—had "no agency" (Fehérváry 2013, 62). Goldzamt's pronouncements could not be any clearer in their understanding of how the Stalinist urban organism—when possessed of the right characteristics, chief among these being a powerfully articulated centrality—is able to and should become a powerful agent in the transformation of society, simultaneously actualizing and illustrating the "coming unity of interests in socialist society, the unity of the interests and ideals of the entire population of the socialist city" (Goldzamt 1956, 20). Echoing German expressionist architect and theorist Bruno Taut's influential notion of the *Stadtkröne* (1919), Goldzamt writes that the "particular destiny and ideological role" of the central ensemble "determine the deployment in its construction of only the most monumental types of public construction and architectural form, *which crown the plastic/aesthetic unity of the city*" (Goldzamt 1956, 20, emphasis added). Further, adds Goldzamt, "the dominating role of the central ensemble is the effect of concentration therein of *architectural power*" (21).[8]

Beyond these abstract prescriptions, Goldzamt provides several clues as to the ideal form that such a crowning urban dominanta should embody. In fact, he even points toward the necessarily diverse nature of the central ensemble, "a large and complicated organism, embodying the richness and multi-faceted character of life" (Goldzamt 1956, 20–21). Goldzamt draws on Soviet as well as postwar Polish examples to argue that "this kind of ensemble is rarely reducible to only one square: most frequently it is composed of a series of plaza and street elements" (21–22). Underlying all this "enormous complexity and diversity," however, is the one "constantly recurring motif of the splendid avenue connected to a square, on which rises *the main social building of the city*" (21–22, emphasis added). It is also quite clear from Goldzamt's description of plans for the new Moscow that the prototype for this sort of "main social building" would be the Palace of the Soviets, the "unchallenged dominanta" (323) of "Moscow—the capital of socialism" (287).

"Can Warsaw Live?"

The genesis of the Palace of Culture, Parade Square, and their relationship to Warsaw are, of course, integrally connected to the consolidation of the Soviet Union's control over Poland in the years following the Second World

Figure 1.3. Henryk Dąbrowski's rendition of the Palace of the Soviets as the pivot of the new Moscow (from Goldzamt 1956). Permission courtesy of Józef Filochowski and the online gallery www.henrykdabrowski.com.

War—although I will elaborate a little on how prewar visions may have had an impact on the postwar plans for Warsaw as well. Ultimately, however, the Palace should also be considered as a core element of the post-1945 reconstruction of the Polish capital. In fact, it came to constitute the key functional, architectural, and urbanistic element around which the postwar city was organized.

The devastation Warsaw faced during the Second World War was overwhelming. Although the figures are disputed, the most frequently cited sources refer to the total destruction (beyond repair) of 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 (Sigalin 1986a). Approximately 10 percent of the city was destroyed in German aerial and artillery bombardment during the siege of September 1939. A further 12 percent of buildings were lost during the "pacification" of the Uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto in April 1943 and the systematic flattening of its remains after Warsaw's last Jewish inhabitants had been deported by the Germans to the Treblinka death camp. Despite these spectacular losses, it is said that as late as the spring of 1943, Warsaw was more intact than London after the Blitz (Markiewicz 2003, 220). The final months of the war dramatically transformed this situation. Twenty-five percent of the city's buildings were lost during the sixty-three-day long, abortive Warsaw

Figure 1.4. Henryk Dąbrowski's drawing of Warsaw organized around the Palace of Culture (from Goldzamt 1956). Although the Palace dominates the cityscape and town plan here, the rebuilt Old Town (with the Royal Castle at its heart, whose reconstruction did not take place until the 1970s) is carefully placed in the foreground of the image. Permission courtesy of Józef Filochowski and the online gallery www.henrykdabrowski.com.

Uprising of August to October 1944. Once this had been put down by the Germans and the surviving inhabitants of the city evacuated, German *Vernichtungs-* and *Verbrenungskommando* engaged in a systematic, three-month-long orgy of destruction, torching, dynamiting, and bombarding out of existence another 35 percent of the left-bank city (the right bank had been taken by the Soviets during September 1944), following Hitler's order that "Warsaw has to be pacified, that is, razed to the ground" (Jankowski 1990, 79). The Red Army, together with the Polish troops fighting alongside it, entered an obliterated and depopulated city on January 17, 1945.

Sigalin's memoirs contain a moving description of his longing for Warsaw while in Soviet exile, first in the Tajik city of Leninabad (now Khujand) and later as a captain of the Soviet-backed Polish Berling Army, which fought alongside the Red Army in the battles of Warsaw and Berlin. It also discussed his reentry into the city with the small team of architects, planners, and engineers tasked with putting together Warsaw's reconstruction effort. Bearing in mind Sigalin's later role as "Warsaw's Haussmann" (Kurowski, cited in Cierpiński and Wyporek 2005, ix), the organizing force behind Warsaw's reconstruction (first in a modernist, later in a Stalinist,

and then again in a modernist guise), broker for the Soviet Union's "donation" of the Palace of Culture to Warsaw, and primary designer of Parade Square, it makes sense to reproduce here some quite lengthy sections from his affected but powerful account.

> There were tens of thousands of us Varsovians in the East . . . dispersed by the strange losses of wartime fate across immeasurable distances. . . . By day, we were absorbed by our work, which freed us from our memories. . . . The evenings were harder: enumerating every single shop on Marszałkowska, from Królewska to Zbawiciela Square, then all the moorings along the Vistula, every estate, fence, factory and tree on Wolska, all the paths in the Saxon and Łazienki Gardens. "And do you remember the little square at the back of the Kazimierowski Palace in the university? Do you remember it?" We remembered everything.
>
> Finally, during the fourth spring in exile, in May 1943 we volunteered for the newly formed Polish Army. . . . Twelve thousand people changed their wanderers' bundles for army backpacks. The Warsaw tram driver quickly transformed himself from a Siberian lumberjack into a well-trained tank operator. . . . At 4.30 in the morning on 1 September 1943 . . . the first train left for the front. Exactly on the fourth anniversary of the first German air raids on Warsaw, the first dead inhabitants of Warsaw. (1986a, 1–2)

When the Berling Army reached Lublin in eastern Poland, where the Soviet-backed provisional government (declared on July 22, 1944) was being formed, Sigalin stayed behind. By September 15, the combined Soviet-Polish army occupied Praga (suffering heavy losses), the Warsaw district situated on the eastern bank of the Vistula river. The Warsaw Uprising had been raging on the west bank since August 1, 1944, awaiting expected Soviet assistance. The Red Army stayed put, but the Berling soldiers crossed the river several times, losing six thousand soldiers, without being able to provide any meaningful assistance to the insurgents. The Uprising capitulated in October; the reprisals and urbicide that followed lasted until January 1945.

> German cannons, rockets and machine guns, pointed towards the Praga bank . . . gave cover for three and a half months thereafter to the Hitlerite crime, carried out first of all against its people, then against the now defenseless city. These one hundred days have their assigned place in the history of the Second World War, the history of Poland, the history of Warsaw.
>
> During this same time . . . we worked in Lublin, in a team of several people, tasked by the [Polish Provisional Government] to work out "matters relating to the rebuilding of the country." We Warsaw architects . . . started of course with plans for the development and transformation of the capital, and then, unfortunately, for its rebuilding. We all lived and worked with a wound constantly bleeding in our hearts: Warsaw was dying. . . . On that other bank, smoke, flames, explosion, smoke. . . . We were helpless. (1986a, 8)

Figure 1.5. "This intersection is never quiet": The corner of Ulica Marszałkowska and Aleje Jerozolimskie, with the ruins of Warsaw in the background. Photograph by Kazimierz Seko, courtesy of The KARTA Institute.

Sigalin and the rest of the Lublin architects left for Warsaw on January 18, 1945, the day after its liberation by the Red Army was declared.

> Under the awning of a rickety lorry, huddled together . . . holding onto a dangerously unstable barrel of petrol, a typewriter and a bale of paper, we rode, to "rebuild Warsaw," just like that. . . . I have no memories of the journey. Just a tense silence. I don't remember Praga either. We could see nothing. All the power of our hearts, minds and sight was directed only towards that other bank—to Warsaw.
>
> Among my papers from this time . . . are some—I can see now, very chaotic—notes I scribbled together that same evening, after our tour of the city. . . . Professor Niemojewski takes off his hat. . . . He keeps saying, louder and louder: "There it is! Look! It's standing!" I don't understand this joy—it's awful here, it's a cemetery. . . . From Belwederska we can see a bright, seemingly untouched house, at the corner of Chocimska and Skolimowska. I think about an office for the Bureau of Reconstruction. . . . On Łowicka, another untouched house. It's freezing, but all the windows are open. A strange sight. . . . Marszałkowska. All the buildings, toppled over. Road surfaces, pavements, lanterns, all in pieces. Groups of people. Some tramcars on their sides. The rails are ripped out. Notes hung to what were the gates of buildings. People, families, everyone is looking for everyone. In former courtyards, crosses, crosses. Life, movement on Aleje Jerozolimskie. This intersection [Marszałkowska/Jerozolimskie] would later come to form the "central" corner of Parade Square:

see map 1, no. 13] is never quiet. . . . Awful skeleton of the railway station, all awry and leaning, it could crush people.

Nowy Świat [see map 0.1] is a ravine. A huge hole in the road, like an enormous crater. A malevolent canyon. People trying to make way for our car *climb* onto the sides of the road—the rubble of old Palaces. . . . Silence everywhere. A desert. I take the driver by the hand: "Watch out! Corpse on the road!" The wheels of our car almost run it over. I jump out, start brushing off the snow. King Zygmunt.[9] Lying on his back, eyes facing the sky. I break into tears. Everyone gets out of the car. Silence. . . . On Okopowa [map 0.1, 22] I wrote, "The cemetery walls seem obsolete, they no longer divide the living from the dead."

This whole journey, which turned us from "delegates" and "plenipotentiaries" of the Bureau for Planning and Reconstruction into wanderers, crossing the breadth and width of [Warsaw], struggling between the death and life of the city—this was a hard fight, which every one of us had to conduct inside. Can Warsaw live? (Sigalin 1986a, 10–13)

The New Socialist Capital

Clandestine plans for rebuilding had been put together by Warsaw architects, working in hiding in the city, elsewhere in the country, and in exile, throughout the period of the occupation. In February, Poland's State National Council[10] decreed the creation of the Bureau for the Reconstruction of the Capital City (BOS—Biuro Odbudowy Stolicy). During the early months of 1945, a team of BOS architects led by Maciej Nowicki drew up a series of plans for a monumental (but still modernist) city center (see Barucki 1980), featuring a large cluster of high-rise buildings set in open space and parkland in an area focused around the junction of Marszałkowska Street and Jerozolimskie Avenue.[11] This idea became consolidated in the imagination of Warsaw planners and decision-makers over the course of the next several years, with two separate architectural competitions being organized (a closed one in 1946 and an open one in 1947) for an area corresponding to that of Nowicki's city. The majority of entrants (including prizewinners) envisioned a culminatory scattering of functionalist high-rise office towers near the Marszałkowska/Jerozolimskie intersection. Each of the plans remained firmly on paper, and any hopes that central Warsaw would become a laboratory for experiments in modernist urbanism were definitively scuppered as Poland's political mood underwent a swift Stalinization toward the end of the 1940s. December 1948 saw the abandonment of any pretense of multiparty rule and the legal codification of a vanguard-led dictatorship of the proletariat following the merger of the dominant Polish Workers'
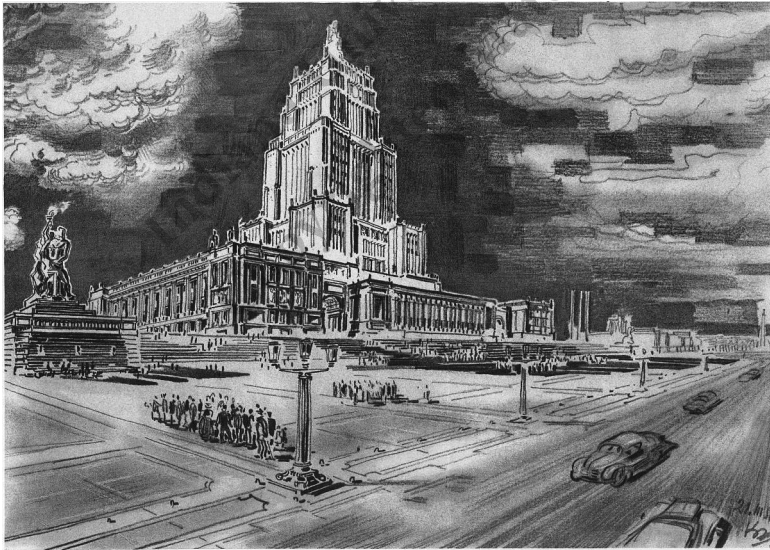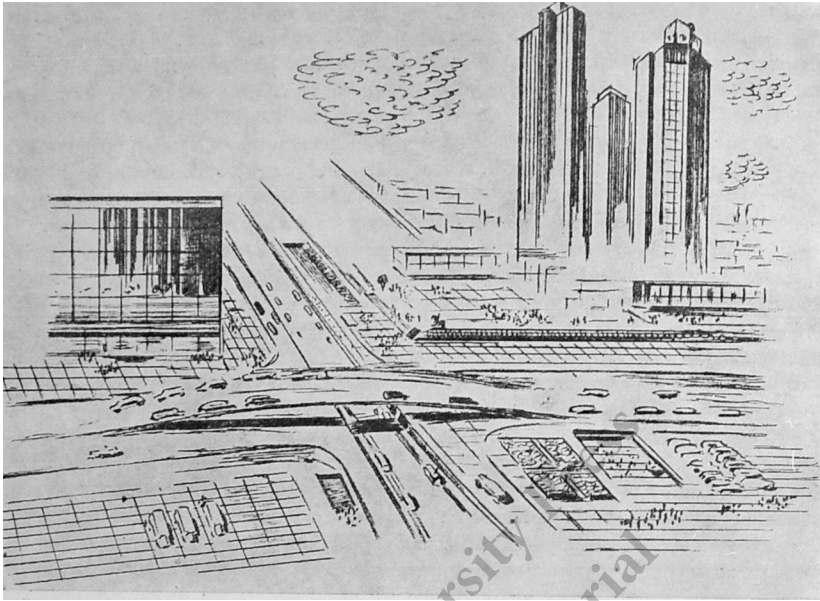
Centralny Dom Kultury przy Marszałkowskiej 1955
Центральный Дом Культуры на Маршалковской улице 1955

Figure 1.6a and b. A double-page spread from Goldzamt (1956) juxtaposes a 1948 sketch of functionalist towers (author unspecified) at the intersection of Ulica Marszałkowska and Aleje Jerozolimskie, the future location of the Palace of Culture (fig. 1.6a) unfavourably with a 1950 sketch of Centralny Dom Kultury (fig. 1.6b) at the Marszałkowska/Jerozolimskie intersection, first published in Bierut (1950).

Party—formed by Polish exiles under Soviet tutelage in the USSR in 1942—and the prewar Polish Socialist Party into a formalized Communist entity, the Polish United Workers Party (PZPR—Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza).

In Poland, as in other countries of the Soviet bloc, political Stalinism found its aesthetic expression in socialist realism, established in the Soviet Union as the "official" method in the arts during the 1930s and exported to Eastern Europe after 1945. In urban architecture, this entailed a move away from the clean lines and stylistic abstraction favored by the modernists, toward bombastic monumentalism, ornamentation, and inspiration drawn from the historical orders and vernacular traditions. As modernism in architecture was associated with self-conscious internationalism and hostility to tradition, architects adhering to modernist principles were routinely condemned for their "rootlessness," "soullessness," and "cosmopolitan deviations" from the Stalinist incarnation of the socialist project (see Murawski 2012). Changes took place swiftly. At a congress of party-affiliated architects in Warsaw in June 1949, Edmund Goldzamt declared socialist realism "national in form, socialist in content," but "drawing from the treasury of Soviet architecture," to be the "mandatory creative method" (Baraniewski 2004, 104). Reciting the mantra repeated programmatically in the Soviet Union after 1946 by Stalin's culture commissar, Andrei Zhdanov, the resolutions adopted by the congress condemned "formalism and cosmopolitanism in architecture" and represented Polish architecture as a front in the struggle between two opposing camps: "On the one hand, the camp of democracy, socialism and peace—with the Soviet Union as its main bastion—and on the other, the camp of imperialism, economic crisis and warmongering" (Åman 1992, 59).

Hot on the heels of Goldzamt's declaration, in July 1949, followed the first congress of the Warsaw branch of the Polish United Workers' Party, at which First Secretary Bolesław Bierut presented the famous Six-Year Plan for the Reconstruction of Warsaw, heralding a radically politicized direction in the planning of the capital city. In 1950, an embellished version of Bierut's speech was published as a lavishly illustrated, four-hundred-page publication documenting the barbarism of Warsaw's destruction, touting the successes of the rebuilding effort so far and illustrating the heroic shape of things to come. The album featured a series of foldout drawings visualizing the flagship sites of the future socialist city, among which was the first representation of a freestanding "Central House of Culture" (CDK—Centralny

Dom Kultury) at the junction of Marszałkowska Street and Jerozolimskie Avenue (the same illustration was later positively contrasted in Goldzamt's book with Nowicki's functionalist tower—see fig. 1.6). In Goldzamt's words, whereas the modernist "city" designs of 1945–1948 were the effect of an "unambiguous mimicry of Corbusier's soulless schemes," Marczewski's 1950 House of Culture sketch "marks a decisive turn towards an architectural image embracing affect and humanism" (Goldzamt 1956, 458). Jan Minorski, another Moscow-trained Polish architect who returned to Warsaw in 1949 as an enforcer of the new doctrine, defined the superiority of the "House of Culture" project over its predecessors in terms of its ability to envisage the city center as a "social dominanta" (*socjalna dominanta społeczna*) of the urban environment.

Communist Modern: Socioeconomic Conditions and "Socialist Content"

Before I lay out how the "House of Culture" vision morphed and concretized itself into the Palace of Culture, I will talk briefly about what—according to the ideologues of socialist realist architecture—linked and distinguished the freestanding Stalinist architectural dominanta from preceding as well as subsequent plans for modernist towers at the same location. To begin with, the attitude of modernist and socialist realist urbanists to the type of urban landscape that had occupied the future site of the dominanta before the war (and the ruins and surviving buildings that remained) was virtually indistinguishable. This was a site of densely packed tenement housing of inconsistent quality and small commercial outlets, the southern part being occupied predominantly by Polish and the northern part largely by Jewish inhabitants (the border of the Warsaw Ghetto ran through what is the square today and through the northern wings of the Palace, and is today memorialized by an iron line in the paving marking parts of the old ghetto wall).[12] Already in 1934, *Functional Warsaw* (Chmielewski and Syrkus 1935), the bible of Warsaw's avant-garde modernist planners and architects, sought to render coherent and integrated a "chaotic and atomized" city (Chmielewski and Syrkus 1935, cited in Malisz 1987, 261). Coauthor Szymon Syrkus was a signatory of the original Athens charter (from whose postulates *Functional Warsaw* directly arose) and archfunctionalist until 1949; thereafter, he was a pious devotee of Stalinist architectural ideology. In line with attitudes that were de rigueur among Western European as much as Eastern European

urban planners at the time, none of the postwar plans shed tears for the destroyed nineteenth-century housing and commercial properties on the site of the new city center. Every one of the designs taken into serious consideration for the core central site (to the north of Jerozolimskie and to the east of Marszałkowska) after 1945 took for granted the necessity to do away with all the remaining buildings, some of which had been privately rebuilt by their inhabitants or owners in the years after the war.

This is Goldzamt's description of the area occupied by Parade Square before its wartime destruction during 1943 and 1944 "by an unprecedented act of fascist bestiality, which removed from the surface of the earth an entire city quarter and hundreds of thousands of human lives" (1956, 487): "The Stalin Square is coming into being on an area previously cut across by over a dozen ravine-streets, characterized by a several dozen dense urban blocks under bourgeois ownership, within which the false brilliance and gloss of the petit-bourgeois world found itself interspersed with the livelihoods of the garret and basement dwellers, the citizens of the well-like tenement courtyards (*obywateli podwórzy-studni*), grafters and craftsmen, the lumpenproletariat and the unemployed." Today, however, "On the rubble of the old city center, the new Poland is raising its ceremonial forum—a great, unified project covering a near-50 hectare space, constituted by an ensemble of buildings, parks, urban plaza-interiors, all devoted to satisfying the life, leisure and cultural needs of man" (ibid.).

In 1935, the (modernist) Marxists Chmielewski and Syrkus had written,

Nowadays, we know only too well, our proposal may seem purely utopian. As long as the city does not have at its disposal control over land, in a manner necessary for the satisfaction of overall social needs, its development will depend on the casual interests of the landowners, and projects like this one will have no prospect for implementation at all. . . . We are well aware that nowadays, when the socio-economic conditions are far from satisfactory ones . . . the only thing we can do is to prepare the theoretical premises for the Warsaw of the future. (cited in Malisz 1987, 261)

Just a decade later, the "socio-economic conditions" were suddenly rendered very satisfactory, and the "Warsaw of the future" moved quickly from "theoretical premises" to implementation. In November 1944, Sigalin delivered a presentation to the Reconstruction Committee of the Lublin Provisional Government, outlining what would become the basis of the BOS's approach to rebuilding the capital city. Among Sigalin's postulates, two are of particular interest here. The "building and development" of Poland's cities

requires "(d) A reform of urban land and property ownership . . . restricting of the rights of property owners' with the aim of 'enabling the smooth implementation of urban planning intentions, facilitating and accelerating expropriation procedures and protecting against the socially damaging effects of landlord self-interest.'" Point (f), meanwhile, almost alarming in its brazen embrace of the modernist spirit of the tabula rasa—especially when considered in relation to Sigalin's own doubtless sentiment for Warsaw—refers to "making use of the wartime destruction perpetrated by the occupier in order to ameliorate the condition of Warsaw's urban fabric and to realize more courageous urban planning concepts" (Sigalin 1986a, 42).[13]

These ambitions were given legislative codification on October 26, 1945, when the State National Council (the provisional parliament) issued the Capital City of Warsaw Land Ownership and Use Decree, commonly known as the Bierut Decree after the then-president of the council (and de facto Polish head of state) Bolesław Bierut. The Bierut Decree—the legal expression apparatus of what I call the Palace's "public spirit" (chap. 2)—passed ownership of all land within the prewar city limits, and de facto (though not de jure) most buildings standing on these plots as well, into the hands of the Warsaw municipality.[14] Four years later, once Stalinism was well consolidated in Poland and socialist realism had been declared the "mandatory creative method" (Baraniewski 2004, 104) in architecture, the same Bierut—now first secretary of the newly formed Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR)—launched the Six Year Plan. Bierut's speech contained the declaration "the new Warsaw cannot be a repetition of the old Warsaw" (Bierut 1950, 4). In Sigalin's assessment, "this position, as well as the drive (*rozmach*) of the Six Year Plan had an extraordinary appeal for us [architects and planners]" (1986a, 42). Bierut's speech referred to the prewar city and its postwar remnants as "a city of fragments, chaotically put together, full of fantastically overpopulated and neglected workers' districts and a few luxuriously appointed colonies for the rich. A city in which the natural right of human beings to space, light and greenery has been denied to the working class" (Bierut 1950, 4).

Warsaw architectural historian Waldemar Baraniewski has drawn attention to the "striking similarity" between the language of CIAM's Athens Charter, the 1935 Functional Warsaw program, and that of Bierut's seemingly antimodernist Six Year Plan. As Baraniewski (2009) points out, all of these documents put forward an "orderly vision of the city, which can be programmed" and each employed the same modernist-derived,

ideologized architectural "newspeak," which emerged from the avant-garde manifestos of the early twentieth century and culminated with the CIAM charter. Baraniewski also noted that many BOS employees (Szymon and Helena Syrkus, Jan Chmielewski, and Bohdan Lachert among them) were active in the prewar Warsaw architectural avant-garde. In Baraniewski's terms, "the very different aesthetics [of modernism and socialist realism] masked remarkable similarities" (2009). Modernists as much as Stalinists, said Baraniewski, tended to treat architecture as a "means rather than an end" and shared a programmatic prioritization of collective over private interests. Indeed, in architecture as much as in the arts, the case of Warsaw vindicates art theorist Boris Groys's (1992) still-provocative assessment that the Stalinists radicalized the program of the avant-garde, instituting its postulates on a scale that it had never itself been able to match. It is useful to refer here to Krisztina Fehérváry's notion of "communist modernism," a politico-aesthetic periodization that encompasses the Stalinist period and makes room for the fact that "socialist new towns carried forward many modernist city planning principles, particularly the notion of building on a tabula rasa and designing cities as organized totalities" (Fehérváry 2013, 12).[15]

But there were important differences too, beyond the "stylistic" or "aesthetic" ones:[16] it took much more than merely height and "spatial culmination" to make a successful Stalinist *dominanta*. The Central House of Culture and later the Palace were projects that imagined a much more *hierarchical*, *symmetrical*, and *holistic* relationship between the absolute center of the city and its remaining parts, in functional and social as well as in spatial, architectural, and aesthetic terms. For Goldzamt, BOS's first postwar plans were characterized by a "lack of unity and hierarchy of content and of composition." In his criticisms of the 1945–1948 schemes, Goldzamt singles out their "disurbanist" (1956, 421)[17] nature as well as their tendency to divide the central area of the city into clearly differentiated zones, corresponding to particular "functions" (421): financial-commercial, cultural-administrative, and residential. Furthermore, Goldzamt connects the zoning issue with modernist planners' attitudes toward Warsaw's "historically-meaningful" (421) architectural heritage, the greater part of which was destroyed during the war and then rebuilt—with exhaustive precision but also subject to significant functional and aesthetic alterations, introduced for planning and/or ideological imperatives (see Baraniewski 1996; Martyn 2007; Murawski 2009). In Goldzamt's words, "the 'functional zoning' of the city center was closely tied to a veritable 'historical zoning'" (1956, 421).

Goldzamt describes BOS between 1945 and 1949 as divided between a "conservative" faction inclined toward the reconstruction of historical monuments and a "left-wing" group of radical, avant-gardist modernists (Sigalin among them).[18] Since no one within BOS at the time was "capable of producing a conception of a living urban continuity [between the new and the old] and unity" (Goldzamt 1956, 421), the "conservators" and the "left-wingers" were able to coexist thanks to an unsaid "pact of non-aggression," on the basis of which "two Warsaws began to grow side-by-side—the modern and the historical" (421).[19]

For Goldzamt, only socialist realist planning, based on "continuity" between the present and the past and social and functional "unity" is able to overcome the contradictions inherited from the remnants of the capitalist city in a manner which is not merely "utopian" but truly "effectual in stepping up to the demands of an enormous and actual task: 'the socialist transformation of the city.'"[20] The key point around which Goldzamt's argument (and the Stalinist city) is organized is his understanding of the hierarchical relationship between the dominanta and other urban parts, "the imperative, ruling conception of the city and the *center* in relation to its particular, constituent arrangements" (Goldzamt 1956, 420, original emphasis).

Noncapitalist Verticality

One further issue that it is useful to expand on here—given my concern throughout this book with the Palace's centrality and enormous dimensions—is the relationship between a Marxist "economic aesthetic" and the question of urban verticality.[21] Should it not be precisely the capitalist city—driven by the imperative to squeeze maximum profit out of the tiniest slithers of land—rather than the communist city, which would tend toward maximal uprightness?

Although the project for the Moscow Palace of the Soviets was never realized (see Murawski 2015, 2017b; Schlögel 1993, 2012; Akinsha et al. 2014), Moscow nevertheless experienced a spate of "tall building" construction between 1947 and 1952. Seven towers, their heights ranging from 130 to 250 meters, were built at commanding sites ringing the central core of the Soviet capital (see Colton 1995; Kruzhkov 2014), itself to be constituted less by the Kremlin (nor the adjacent Red Square and Lenin's Mausoleum) than by the gargantuan "main social building," the Palace of the Soviets.[22] Indeed, Lev Rudnev, head of the Warsaw Palace's design team, came to
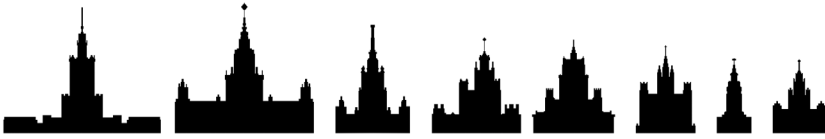
Figure 1.7. A scale comparison of the Palace of Culture with the seven built Moscow *vysotkas*. Image by Kasia Iwańska.

prominence as architect of Moscow State University, the tallest of the seven Moscow towers. The perceived correlation between capitalism and architectural verticality was an issue that the designers of the Soviet high-rises (the seven Moscow *vysotki*) and the ideologues of Stalinist socialist realism were very alert to address, all the more so given the extent to which Stalinist skyscraper architecture made use of stylistic and engineering solutions borrowed from interwar boom-era American skyscrapers. An illustrative 1953 article about high-rise construction in the Warsaw weekly *Stolica* cites Maxim Gorky's condemnations of American skyscrapers as "square, lacking any desire to be beautiful . . . bulky ponderous buildings towering gloomily and drearily" and diagnoses "the American skyscraper" as "a product of highly developed capitalism, at the kernel of which lies ground rent" (Kawa 1953, 7). According to the author of the *Stolica* text, the Soviet tall building constitutes the "absolute opposite of this image . . . in its entire figure one can see the will to a beauty, whose form is appropriate to its humanistic content" (ibid.).

Another Goldzamt citation, meanwhile, makes it clear that the difference between the American skyscraper and the Soviet tall building (*vysotka*) has to do not merely with architectural form but also—and especially—with the morphology of the city as a whole: "American skyscrapers reflect the chaos and internal contradictions of the capitalist economy. They pile up alongside one another in random, clumsy heaps. They grow thoughtlessly, without any consideration for function nor for composition. They grow without concern for the city, whose streets they transform into ravines. The tall buildings raised among the expansive squares and boulevards of the new Moscow, by contrast, form a system appropriate to the needs and structure of the city, attesting to the emotional unity of its figure and image" (1956, 329–330).

In the words of architectural historian Alessandro De Magistris, the Soviet tall building was the "culminating element and the expression of

the new urban morphology of Communism" (De Magistris 2009, 8). It was to be the negation (by appropriation, as De Magistris points out) of its capitalist corollary. These towers were set in sprawling expanses of empty space rather than piled onto one another; they fulfilled public or residential functions rather than revenue-accumulating ones; their appearance was dictated not by a will to profit but by a will to beauty; and they were to be distributed around the city not at random but according to a higher-ordained, total plan whose function it would be to reduce the complexity of the ravenous, chaotic, and fragmented city of capital. In chapters 2 and 3, I will enumerate how this urban metamorphosis was conceived, designed, and carried out in Warsaw—on the level of political economy, planning, and architectural design. Let me turn now to look at how the realization of the Palace of Culture, specifically in terms of the functionally integrated "program" planned for its interiors (in combination with the building's spatial, visual, and symbolic significance) ended up putting into practice the postulates presented above.[23]

Supreme Building: The Warsaw "House of Culture" as Stalinist Social Condenser

The 1950 drawing of the Central House of Culture (CDK)—which, as noted by Sigalin, had been considered for this site in successive architectural competitions and deliberations since 1948—was the first embodiment of the notion of a clear *dominanta* holding together the structure of the new Warsaw. The functional program for the House of Culture, as outlined in the conditions of the 1948 competition for Warsaw's central district (then known as NDK, Narodowy Dom Kultury—the National House of Culture), referred to the building as the "primary architectural accent of the city center and of the entire capital" (Knyt 2003, 115). Further, the "ensemble should be situated/located so that on the basis of its architecture a new urban plaza can emerge, which would play host to mass manifestations connected to meetings simultaneously taking place inside" (115). The competition conditions also stipulated that the House of Culture ensemble should contain a number of "monumental interiors," including "a great Congress Hall for around 10,000 spectators" and "a hall for ceremonial meetings with an entrance hall and other representative/state/ceremonial rooms" (Knyt 2003, 115). Furthermore, the ensemble was to contain the following "departments": "(a) Scientific (research centers, libraries, reading rooms); (b) Artistic: (exhibition

halls, art facilities); (c) Musical (concert halls); (d) Theatrical (two theatres for 1,200 and 400 spectators); (e) Cinematic (projection rooms, several theatres)" (115).

With some modifications, the above forms the basis for what would come to constitute the content of the Palace of Culture. This "program" was closely based on the canonical repertoire of the Houses, Palaces, and other types of what Khan-Magomedov describes as "new types of Soviet institutions,"[24] widely distributed throughout the cities, districts, and towns of the Soviet Union. The proposed 1922 Moscow Palace of Labor, which, according to Khan-Magomedov (1987, 400), served as a model for all future new Soviet Houses and Palaces, was to contain an eight thousand-seat auditorium; halls for "meetings, lectures, concerts, performances and films"; offices for the Moscow City Council and the Moscow Party Committee; a Museum of Social Sciences; a 1,500 seat dining hall; a radio station; an observatory; and possibly an airport landing strip. The House of Culture has been the recipient of a good deal of scholarly attention in recent years. In his ethnography of the Sakhalin *Nivkhi*'s existence within and without the "hybrid" universe of Soviet culture, Bruce Grant deploys the institution of the House of Culture as a metaphor meant to illustrate the manner in which the USSR devoted so much attention to making its model of culture explicit, visible, and articulated, "something to be produced, invented, constructed or reconstructed" (Grant 1995, xi). Lewis Siegelbaum (1999) develops Grant's insight to show how Soviet workers' clubs and Houses and Palaces of Culture were devoted—during the 1920s and early 1930s, when many were designed by constructivist architects like Konstantin Melnikov and the Vesnin brothers, as well as during the Stalin period—to the "aim of making form serve function," namely the creation of the "New Man" (Siegelbaum 1999, 84). This was achieved, says Siegelbaum, citing Regine Robin's typology of Stalinist popular culture, as the clubs comprised (through the activities that took place on their premises) a "cultural base of a total *vospitanie* [education]" that worked on the levels of the "cognitive (access to knowledge)," "symbolical ('a new social imaginary')," "axiological ('values or ideology')," and "cultural ('new social codes')" (84, citing Robin 1990, 19–21).

This model of transformative acculturation through architecture—directly taken over by the Stalinists in content though not in style from the modernist avant-garde of the 1920s and early 1930s—was most clearly expressed in the notion, put forward by the constructivist architects of OSA (Organization of Contemporary Architects) during the late 1920s, that "the

new type of club, Palace of Labor," together with communal dwellings and other collective facilities, should function as "*conductors and condensers of socialist culture*" (Khan-Magomedov 1987, 596, original emphasis).[25] Katerina Clark points out that this usage of the term "condenser," referring to an apparatus that brings about changes in physical processes through electricity, signals an ambition not merely to collect humans in one place but to intensify the sorts of social interactions that occur between them. In Clark's words, the task of the social condenser was to provide the material conditions of existence on whose ground, "through its *byt*, that is, through the ordinary and everyday, society would, paradoxically, attain the extraordinary" (596). I think this analysis suggests that the constructivists' "electrification" of architecture can be read, therefore, as a precursor of the socialist realist ambition to harness—and politicize—the power of the sublime in architecture.[26]

In a related vein, Siegelbaum emphasizes the crucial significance of Houses of Culture in functioning as material loci for a more informal kind of community building, as "sites for friendship-making and bonding, courtship, informal exchanges of information, sheer entertainment or fun, and a host of other purposes not officially acknowledged or sanctioned"[27] (Khan-Magomedov 1987, 85). Siegelbaum is right to point out that the success of the Soviet House of Culture lay in the entire gamut of social activities that took place in it, not merely those that were officially sanctioned—in this, he coheres with the primary argument made by anthropologists and other students of Soviet society and culture that state socialism has to be understood in terms of its unexpected as well as its intended effects. One of the points I make in chapter 7, however, is that the unexpected, extraordinary, or "untypical" was, in an important sense, already *designed into* the Palace of Culture. The Palace's success as an unchallenged dominanta lies in its ability to adapt to changing circumstances while closing off the sphere of possibilities within which these can occur. In other words, the Palace's social and aesthetic design ensures that it will always function at the center of whichever circumstances arise.

The sheer diversity of purposes for which people can and must come to (or at least near to) the Palace guarantees a functional prominence for the building within the city, whereas its gigantic size, its bombastic style, its symmetrical layout, and its nodal position at the heart of the city's transport network and layout of communicational and visual axes ensures its spatial and aesthetic significance—the city's inhabitants cannot help looking at it,

and whatever is built in its vicinity (and, to some extent, elsewhere in the city) cannot avoid making reference to it—that is, subordinating itself to it.[28]

In an afterword to a recent collection of essays devoted to tracing the changing fortunes of the House of Culture throughout the Soviet Union (Donahoe and Habeck 2011), Bruce Grant expands on his understanding of the Soviet cultural project as "unabashedly public, reified," simultaneously out in the open and monolithically articulated, as opposed to the "unsaid" but pluralist public cultures of states "driven by market economies" (2011, 265–266). What makes Soviet culture unique, says Grant, is "the bravura of trying to capture a single cultural project under one roof, as it were: literally, in Houses of Culture, and metaphorically, in hundreds of efforts large and small to foster shared sensibilities across eleven time zones" (266). Elaborating his argument, Grant invokes Heidegger's notion of the "equipmental whole," which refers to "equipment" (in this case, of culture) as always being "in terms of [*aus*] its belonging to other equipment: ink-stand, pen, ink, paper, blotting pad, table, lamp, furniture, windows, doors, room" (Grant 2011, 264–265). In the case of Stalinist urban design, what was extraordinary indeed was the bravura of trying to capture (or, in Heideggerian terms to *gather*[29]) an entire urban environment (culturally, socially, aesthetically, ideologically) literally *under one roof*. In order to grasp how this was carried out, one has to appreciate all the things, tools, pieces of physical and social equipment (within the Palace and outside it) that added up to glue together the Palace's status as the most important thing in the totality. One can only agree, then, with Grant's statement that to grasp and recognize this "profoundly public culture," "invested in articulating its centrality to the fullest," it is necessary to "recognize the [tangible, lived] forms of this cultural enterprise and not just its [abstract] contents" (Grant 2011, 273, my insertions). The Stalinist "cultural enterprise," of course, paid attention to both of these fields, as expressed in the formula "socialist in content, national in form." The point is, however, that the content (itself profoundly "material," certainly not limited to the abstract) was, ultimately, more important than the form. In the last instance, content determined form.

Although versions of these various "new Soviet buildings" were designed for provincial cities, city districts, and even work units, a quest was underway throughout the 1920s and 1930s to build one ur-House, -Palace or -Club in the Soviet capital, bigger and more spectacular than all the
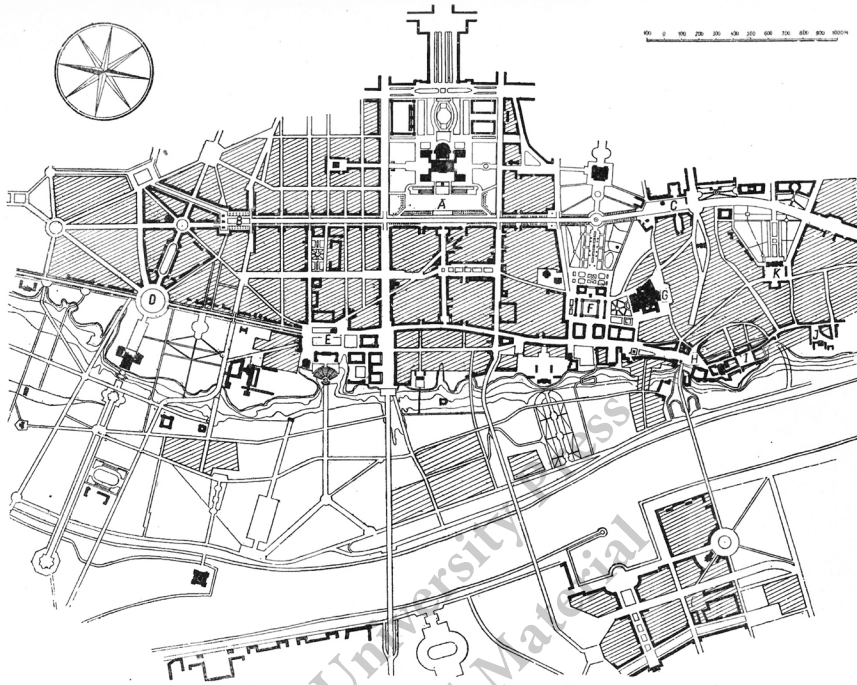
Figure 1.8. Plan of projected central Warsaw planning developments from Goldzamt (1956). The entire city is organized around the central dominanta, the Palace of Culture.

others, referred to as the country's "Supreme Building" (Khan-Magomedov 1987, 402). This project—which began with planned structures like Tatlin's 1919 Monument to the Third International and the 1922 Moscow Palace of Labor—culminated in the long-running competition for the Palace of the Soviets, whose construction was not officially abandoned until after the Stalin era. If it had been built, the Palace of the Soviets would have been the most important edifice in the entire socialist universe.[30] Of course, the Palace's "condensatory" influence is limited to the sphere of Warsaw (to some extent of Poland). Nevertheless, it is fair to say that in the absence of the Palace of the Soviets, the Warsaw Palace is the next best thing: it makes for the only instance in the world of a successfully built Supreme Building that constitutes a social and spatial focus for the entirety of a large city (if not for a whole ideological cosmos).[31]

Notes

1. For more about the relationship between Katyń and the Smoleńsk plane crash of April 2012, see Etkind et al. (2012). In Murawski (2011b), I analyze the impact of Smoleńsk on the Palace's relationship with Warsaw.

2. There was a broad social consensus that Katyń was a Soviet crime throughout the PRL period. According to Kołodziejczyk (2012), Sigalin never made his position on this question known.

3. A now-antiquated diminutive of the names Rajmund and Edmund.

4. As relayed by architectural historian Waldemar Baraniewski, who interviewed Goldzamt and Sigalin's widow.

5. Although this book constitutes the most comprehensive Polish-language formulation of Stalinist architectural thought, it is also its very last flowering. It was not published until 1956, just as the de-Stalinizing thaw was culminating, and Goldzamt tried to remove it from circulation, aware that its publication would do him no favors (Majewski 2012).

6. The English term *dominant* is in use as a noun but only in reference to music. With reference to architecture, the term is especially common in German ("*architektonische Dominante*" and "*städtebauliche Dominante*") and Russian. *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (1978) defines *dominanta* as "the dominant element in the composition of the ensemble. . . . Towering above the surrounding buildings, D. marks an important node of spatial construction in the ensemble." Thanks to Vladimir Paperny (personal communication) for help in establishing the usage of this term.

7. In Lefebvre's words, "There can be no such thing as a city without a centre. The very idea of the city incorporates within itself the fact of the existence of the primary catalyst of the urban organism: the central ensemble or arrangement" (Lefebvre 2003, 79). I juxtapose Goldzamt and Lefebvre's theories of centrality in more detail in Murawski (2017c).

8. This architectural power is concentrated within the built matter itself but is also exercised by the architect (on behalf of the political-economic regime).

9. Zygmunt III Vasa (1566–1532), elected king of Poland (1587–1632) and Sweden (1592–1599), moved the capital from Kraków to Warsaw in 1596. His twenty-two-meter-high column has stood in Warsaw's Castle Square (map 1, 11) since 1644. It was demolished by the Germans on September 1, 1944, badly damaged and repaired in 1949. Sigalin claims to have run into Zygmunt's figure in the snow. Traditionally one of the symbols of Warsaw alongside the Warsaw mermaid, both mermaid and Zygmunt have been eclipsed by the Palace in recent decades.

10. Poland's transitory, Communist-led parliament body, established in the Soviet Union in January 1944 and replaced in January 1947 by the new Communist-dominated Polish *Sejm* (parliament).

11. Nowicki (who moved to the United States in late 1945 but died in a plane crash in the Libyan Desert in 1950) drew up the plans for the new Punjab capital Chandigarh, which were taken over by Le Corbusier following his death (Barucki 1986; Mumford 1954).

12. The shifting boundaries of the Warsaw Ghetto ran through several parts of the Parade Square, from the establishment of the ghetto in October 1940 until its liquidation following the end of the suppression of the Ghetto Uprising, marked by the dynamiting of the Great Synagogue on nearby Tłomacka Street, on May 16, 1943. Anthropologist Zbigniew Benedyktowicz (1991) also comments on the Palace's connection to another subterranean world—that of death and suffering—by citing PRL-era oppositionist and writer Stefan Kisielewski's observation that the Palace and Square stand in place inseparable from images

of "tenement courtyards and wooden staircases, on which lies in wait, lurks the breath of murdered, forgotten Jews" (Kisielewski 1971, in Benedyktowicz 1991). The authoritative historical work on the Warsaw ghetto is Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak's (2009) excellent *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City*.

13. Modernist German architect Hans Scharoun, coordinator of Berlin's reconstruction in 1946, referred to the bombing and destruction of Berlin as a "mechanical decongestant" (Schivelbusch 1998; Bach 2017).

14. The Bierut Decree remains in force to this day (see conclusion).

15. In Murawski and Rendell (2017) and Murawski (2017) I expand further on the manner in which Stalinist socialist realism—as realized in the case of the Warsaw Palace—inherited many precepts behind the avant-garde constructivist idea of the "social condenser." Vladimir Paperny's seminal analysis also argues that constructivism and the Russian avant-garde in general were disposed against symmetry and centralization. My argument is that although Paperny's typology broadly holds for symmetry, a strong centralizing aspect can also be detected in constructivism and that the notion of the "social condenser" constitutes a key instance of this centralizing impulse. See Paperny (2006, 88–90 and *passim*).

16. For another perspective on the relationship between modernism and Stalinism in post-1945 Warsaw, see Crowley (2008).

17. "Disurbanism" refers to an influential school of avant-garde planners in 1920s Moscow whose work revolved around the imperative to dissolve the gap between city and countryside. See Stites (1989).

18. For more on the relationship between the "conservators" and "modernizers," see Majewski (2009).

19. The Stalinist vision saw these two Warsaws more seamlessly integrated, rather than spatially and aesthetically distinguished. The literature of the day presents the reconstruction of the Old Town and the construction of the Palace as two sides of the same city-building coin. A 1953 publication issued by a reconstruction foundation culminates in a triumphant description of the building of the Palace. Goldzamt himself was initially an enthusiast of rebuilding Warsaw's Royal Castle (not carried out until 1971–1984). According to Jakub Sadowski, "Many of the semiotic functions planned by Sigalin's workshop for the one-time royal residence, were taken over by another edifice: the Palace of Culture and Science" (2009, 175; see also Klekot 2012).

20. This "end of utopia" dimension was made apparent in a May 1953 edition of *Głos Koszaliński*, the local newspaper of the town of Koszalin in central Poland: "The great Italian humanist of the Renaissance, Campanella, dreamt of the City of the Sun. The English humanist [Thomas More] sketched an image of the ideal settlement, Amaurotum, the capital of the island of freedom and justice—Utopia. . . . For hundreds of years, dreams of a just social order without evil and suffering gave rise to visions of better, more beautiful, human cities and settlements. . . . The reality of socialist cities has exceeded these dreams. Scientific socialism, transforming the world not only in the imagination but in reality, has exceeded the noble utopias" (Olszewska 1953).

21. I expand on the relationship between verticality, centrality, and reduction of complexity in Murawski (2018b).

22. In Schlögel's description, "these seven High Buildings, which indeed still dominate the Moscow skyline today, were built at the seven most important and prominent points of the city. They all turn towards a single point of focus. This is not the Kremlin, but the *Palace of Soviets*—an intersection therefore that exists and yet does not exist" (Schlögel 1993, 182–183).

23. See also Paperny (2006, 116). For a detailed study of the seven "high buildings," see Zubovich (2016).

24. Bach (2017) comments on the overlapping German idea of the *Volskhaus*, "secular temples" promoted by nineteenth century German reform movements.

25. For an in-depth investigation of the social condenser's constructivist origins and later afterlives, see the contributions to Murawski and Rendell (2017). For an expanded discussion of the Palace as a Stalinist social condenser, see Murawski (2017b).

26. Clark (1995, 251) points out that this usage implies an identification with Lenin's 1920 dictum "Communism equals [Soviet power] plus the electrification of the entire country." A German-language text by fellow constructivist El Lissitzky (1970, 43) refers to the Soviet "club" as a "social force" (*soziales Kraftwerk*), which can also be translated as "social power plant" (see Siegelbaum 1999, 90). According to Lissitzky, the "power sources of the old order" (churches and the old Palaces) "can only be transcended by establishing power sources belonging to our new order."

27. See Humphrey (2005) on "excessive," "unplanned" communality in Soviet *obshchezhitie* communal residences.

28. As essayist Marta Zielińska puts it, "the further one gets away from the Palace, the more clearly its figure is drawn on the horizon" (Zielińska 1989, 123).

29. See Heidegger (1971, 161–185).

30. According to the 1931 competition brief, the Palace of the Soviets was to house (among many other things) the government headquarters, a cultural center, congresses and sessions of the Supreme Soviet, theatrical and musical performances, two congress halls seating fifteen thousand and six thousand, and four conference rooms for several hundred spectators each (Schlögel 1993, 177)

31. The Palast der Republik in East Berlin to some extent fulfilled a similar function during its brief period of functioning (1976–1990), although it was much smaller than the Palace and less visually prominent in the cityscape (Bach 2017; Ekici 2007). Writing in the 1990s (and citing Konwicki), Jan Kubik argues that "Polish Communists never succeeded in producing a symbolic spatial center [for communist Poland] . . . that corresponded to the Kremlin and Lenin's Tomb in the Soviet Union, although it seems that the Palace of Culture . . . was erected to fulfill this role. Yet it was never accepted by the majority of Poles as the symbolic center of the new 'socialist Poland'" (Kubik 1994, 68). While it is true that the Palace hardly functioned as the symbolic center of Poland, it did succeed, I argue in this book, in becoming the symbolic, spatial, and social center of Warsaw. Moreover, it continues to excel in this role today, despite the collapse of its parent regime.

2

PUBLIC SPIRIT, OR THE GIFT OF NONCAPITALISM

THE PALACE OF CULTURE AND SCIENCE WAS BORN at a very precise—
and abrupt—moment in time. The story below, recounted in Józef Siga-
lin's memoirs, is one that a surprising number of my Warsaw interlocutors
were able to recall with some precision. Sigalin recounts how, on July 2,
1951, he received a telephone call from Central Committee Interior Minis-
ter Hilary Minc forewarning him of a high-level conversation due to occur
the following day: "Tomorrow, in the course of your tour around Warsaw
with Viacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov [longtime Soviet foreign minister],
he is likely to come out with a suggestion to build in Warsaw a tower of the
same type as those Moscow towers, which they have recently been building
there and of which they are so proud. This is Stalin's decision, relating to an
obligation undertaken by the Soviets in 1945. The key thing is not to be too
surprised by this proposition, to respond to it in a generally positive tone
and to not get bogged down by details" (1986b, 422). Sigalin confirms that
the planned conversation did indeed take place. "A quick sentence, inter-
jected into the conversation by Molotov: 'And how would you like to see,
here in Warsaw, a tower like the ones we have at home?' My reply, 'Well yes,
I suppose we would'" (422).[1]

The "obligation undertaken" by Stalin refers to a Soviet declaration
of April 21, 1945, that the "Soviet government takes upon itself part of the
costs related to the reconstruction of the capital city" (Sigalin 1986a, 63–
64).[2] The architect Zygmunt Skibniewski recalls that the Warsaw Capital
Reconstruction Office (BOS—Biuro Odbudowy Stolicy) responded to the
Soviet offer of help in September 1945 by compiling a folder outlining prior-
ity areas in the reconstruction, which would benefit from large-scale Soviet
assistance. These included the first line of the planned underground railway

system (running north to south, eventually constructed between 1982 and 1995), a housing estate, an ensemble of administrative buildings, or a university campus.[3] As Skibniewski recognizes, the proposals outlined in the BOS folder never received a reply, and the Soviet offer of assistance did not materialize until Molotov and Sigalin's walk around Warsaw almost seven years later. Skibniewski points out that the nature of the Polish proposals probably gave rise to the longstanding legend that the Poles plumped for the Palace "in preference to" a housing estate or underground system. By the time I arrived in Warsaw in 2008, the Minc-Sigalin-Molotov exchange and Skibniewski's "rumors" had merged into a well-consolidated story told by Warsaw tour guides, and during numerous Palace-related conversations: "Stalin said to Bierut, 'The Soviet Union wants to make a gift to Poland. You can either have a giant Muscovite skyscraper, or an underground rail system, just like ours.' Bierut said, 'We'd love a metro system, please!' And so, Stalin instructed his architects to begin work on the Palace of Culture."

"For Nothing?"

The notion of the "gift of friendship," of obvious anthropological interest, was the primary narrative through which the Palace's origins were presented in the literature of the time, as well as constituting a fruitful avenue through which critics (in the 1950s, throughout the PRL era, and now) underline the brazen one-sidedness of its imposition on Warsaw. It is difficult to find another source that hammers home so relentlessly the "free lunch" message as the article from which the below citations are taken, by journalist Karol Małcużyński in a 1952 edition of the main party daily newspaper, *Trybuna Ludu*:

> There have been many gifts, it is true. Kings, holy men and magnates have been bestowing gifts upon each other since ancient times. . . . But for one nation to give something to another, to simple people? Never before. I have not come across another international treaty like that from 5 April 1952. An eye accustomed to cryptic diplomatic formulations searches despite itself for another section of this treaty. That in return, the Polish government . . . that the other party obligates itself to. . . . For nothing? As a proof and expression of friendship? To help a fraternal nation? The annals of diplomacy have no known no such values. . . . Perhaps one day this Warsaw treaty will be cited as a precedent in a new chapter of international relations.

If one was to search the archives of ethnographic knowledge for cases where the "notion of a 'pure gift' is a mere ideological obfuscation" (Parry 1986,

455)—and, as Jonathan Parry points out, such examples are not hard to come by—the case of Stalin's gift to Warsaw would surely be among the most brazenly articulated of these obfuscations.[4] I would like now to examine the details of precisely which interests were and were not vested in the gifting of the Palace and how these were responded to by contemporary observers (who, as inhabitants of Warsaw, were the intended *recipients* of the gift). Delving into the manner of the Palace's giving and receiving, some insights into the political-economic foundation undergirding the Palace's relationship to Warsaw come into view.

Beyond the *Trybuna* text above, the message of the donor's generosity and the recipient's fascination and gratitude was repeated ad nauseam in press reports and propaganda materials before and during the Palace's construction. Much was made, for instance, of a wooden observation platform erected on the edge of the building site, to which Varsovians were said to flock in enraptured droves, to "observe the work of the Soviet laborers and their powerful machines" (Loza 1953). Supplementing this, the Propaganda Section of the Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Construction of the Palace of Culture organized 212 mass trips to the site for a total of 16,262 people, but these figures were dwarfed by those of the Polish State Tourism Board, which hosted 432,534 visitors in 5,249 tours (Rokicki 2003, 172). On top of this face-to-face interaction with the gift, its presence in the countrywide news media, as well as in the broader didactic context of school curricula and work-group meetings, was overwhelming. The Plenipotentiary's Propaganda Office counted 4,966 texts devoted to the Palace in the press during the construction period as well as 291 radio recordings. And the Palace's figure was reproduced countless times, on posters emblazoning government buildings or carried at mass rallies, in propaganda materials distributed to children and adults countrywide, and in films and popular entertainment programs. Schoolchildren were encouraged to draw, paint, or make models of it; craft artists from the Kurpie region, famous for its intricate paper cutouts, took to integrating the Palace into their repertoire; and cake makers were tasked with rendering the Soviet gift in confectionery form. The material presented in chapters 5 to 7 will demonstrate just how this iconic reproduction of the Palace, despite the lack of a propaganda imperative, has anything but abated since the fall of the PRL in 1989.

On the other hand, the disingenuous nature of the gift was also remarked upon immediately. A contemporary of Leopold Tyrmand's, the

writer Maria Dąbrowska (whose opinion of the new regime was similarly unenthusiastic), wrote in her diary entry for May 2, 1952:

> *Urbi et orbi*, . . . the newspapers [have] suddenly started announcing a "great gift from the fraternal Soviet Union" . . . to be built not only by Russian machines, but also by Russian engineers and workers, put together from (allegedly) imported materials. The design itself is Muscovite, supposedly consulted with Polish architects, but who among them would be courageous enough to express their own opinion? This design, displayed almost every day in the newspapers, is—from above, from this and the other side—horrendously ugly, justified by nothing. The whole of Warsaw will lie at the feet of this monster. . . . It has been unequivocally announced, that "the whole nation has accepted this gift with the greatest enthusiasm and gratitude." In actuality, however, the whole of Warsaw has received this news with consternation, confusion, some with despair.[5] All sorts of comments are being made; here is a gentle one: "It's for Katyń, they want to show what kind of friends they are."[6] Others speculate about what the Russians' intentions could be. And that no one undertakes multi-billion investments of this sort in a foreign country from the goodness of their heart. The fact remains, that Russia is moving ten thousand of its own people to the capital of Poland, for whom it is building a whole little town in Jelonki. I heard that some of their laborers are already in Warsaw, and that there have been a few rather sharp disputes with our own jacks. Over better working conditions, and the dragging along of some women to their barracks by force. Of course, these could just be rumors. Either way, I have fallen into a sort of depressed humiliation. I was reminded of the building of the Orthodox Cathedral on Saxon Square. This was also the largest building in Warsaw at the time.[7] (Dąbrowska 2009, 135)

This relatively short page from a skeptic's diary nearly summarizes numerous of the impurities vested, or seen to be vested, within the Stalinist gift. The allusion to Katyń invokes the notion of a sort of "apology gift" or, rather, an "amnesia gift" meant to erase the potentially destabilizing memory of an untoward act committed by the giver. Or perhaps a gift whose oppressive power content is so clearly evident (all the more so through its continuity with previous gestures of architectural domination, notably the nineteenth-century Alexander Nevsky Cathedral on Warsaw's Saxon Square) that it constitutes a sort of direct architectural extension of the violence of Katyń rather than an attempt to atone or to negate it.[8] And the suggestion of sexual violence (which I heard invoked several times in Warsaw, especially when visiting the Friendship housing estate currently situated in the buildings previously occupied by Soviet laborers) suggests that the prostration of the city before the Palace predicted by Dąbrowska belongs more to the sphere of outright sacrifice ("contract sacrifice" in Mauss's [2016, 82] phrase) than to accommodation or reciprocity.
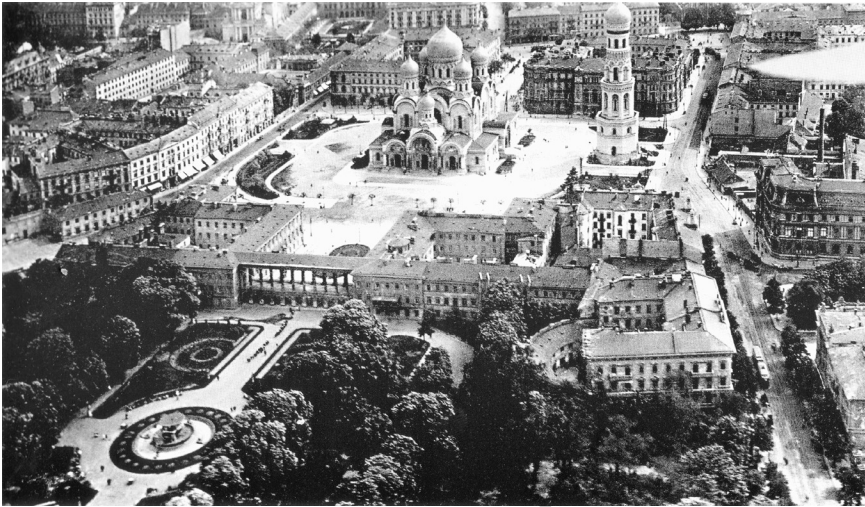
Figure 2.1. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in 1919. Built 1894–1912, demolished 1920–1926. It stood on what was then Plac Saski (Saxon Square, 1814–1939), later Adolf-Hitler-Platz (1940–1945), Plac Zwycięstwa (Victory Square, 1945–89), and finally Plac Piłsudskiego (Piłsudski Square, 1990–present). Created by user Jarekt on Wikimedia Commons.

Moving from urban legend to contractually codified reality, it is important to note the extent to which the recipient was formally obliged to contribute to the process of bringing the gift into being. In an essay on the Palace's origins (entitled "The Troublesome Gift"), historian Konrad Rokicki (2003, 139) compiles a systematic account of the "Polish side's contribution to the process of gift-construction, quite in contrast to claims repeated in countless publications and proclamations of the time, that: 'the entire costs of the construction are covered by the Soviet Union. This means that, starting from technical drawings and ending with the artistic decoration of interiors, everything is the work of Soviet people.'" In terms of raw materials and prefabricated elements, Rokicki (2003, 139) acknowledges that the Polish share of the effort is hard to express as a percentage, but it is known that local manufacturers contributed over twenty-five million bricks (around thirty-five to forty million), 60,000 cubic meters of stone (marble, granite, sandstone, and limestone), over ten thousand pieces of carpentry equipment, and an innumerable quantity of interior design elements (chandeliers, furniture, bas-reliefs, sculptures, friezes, and so on). Furthermore, although the Soviets built their own workers' accommodation and production base, the Poles were obliged to lay a railway line connecting the base to

Figure 2.2. The wooden houses built for Soviet workers in Jelonki, a suburb of Warsaw. Subsequently renamed the Przyjaźń (Friendship) housing estate and used until today, partly as student and faculty housing for the University of Warsaw. Photograph courtesy of the National Digital Archive.

the building site.[9] In terms of the Palace interiors, in line with the Soviet intent to render the building in a style that corresponds not only with "socialist content" but also with Polish "national form," or, as Rokicki (2003, 143) puts it, "to endow the building with a familiar climate, to make its spaces more inviting thanks to decorative motifs well known to its Polish users," the Soviet side placed multiple orders with Polish furniture designers and carpenters, interior architects, stuccoists, masons and sculptors, lighting technicians and chandelier designers, metalworkers, and carpet makers.[10]

Crucially, an agreement signed in the early stages of the design process (October 18, 1952) obligated the Poles to delegate no less than four thousand laborers to the construction. Furthermore, says Rokicki, the initial Soviet-Polish contract of April 5, 1952, stated that the Soviet government *consented* to the participation of Polish laborers in the project, in response to a proposition made by the Polish side (Rokicki 2003, 145). In a sardonic tone, Rokicki comments that the most "extraordinary" thing about the gift of the Palace was that the recipient participated in covering the costs of the present (153). These costs have not been precisely quantified, but in Rokicki's

account they arose from the substantial disparities between the sums billed by the Poles to the Soviet Palace Construction Directorate and the costs paid. For 1952 alone these disparities totaled over 22 million złotys, but similar accounts have not yet been discovered for the three subsequent years of construction. Furthermore, the Poles were—from the very beginning of the Palace project—tasked with designing and building Parade Square itself, the cost of which equaled almost 156 million złotys (157). Despite all this, Rokicki (157) concedes, the "greater financial burden for the construction of the Palace was shouldered by the Soviet Union," whose expenditure was "manifold" higher than that of the Polish side, whatever the precise proportions.[11]

The Gift of Noncapitalism

A number of scholars have drawn attention to and attempted to make sense of the marked prominence of gift dynamics in the culture, society, and economy of twentieth-century state socialism. Focusing on the public culture of the Stalin-era Soviet Union, historian Jeffrey Brooks (1999, 2003) has assembled an empirically broad catalogue of how Stalinist socialism in particular functioned as an "economy of the gift" (1999, 83–105). In Brooks's account, this economy was malevolent and disingenuous; it perpetrated a "theft of agency," relying on a "politics of obligation" to render the ordinary inhabitants of the Soviet Union (and, after 1945, of the entire Soviet bloc) into "debtors of the Party, and ultimately of Stalin" (2003, 52). Also with reference to the Stalin period, Bulgarian philosopher Ivalyo Ditchev has argued that Soviet gift dynamics revealed the extent to which communist societies—seemingly the most radically modern of modern societies—were in fact entirely consumed by an unceasing, archaic, violent "sacrificial flow" (2002, 88). In his own words, "under Communism, with the systematic destruction of contractual relations, the foundation of the social bond slipped towards pre-modern gift exchange" (86).

Framed around an examination of countergifts received by Stalin and other Soviet leaders, Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov (2006b), by contrast, theorizes Soviet gift dynamics as a radically noncapitalist "intervention in modernity." Ssorin-Chaikov points out that the centrality and discursive prominence of the gift in the everyday life (and national and international macropolitics) of state socialism is predicated on a conscious rejection of capitalist norms of economic interaction:

> The public nature of gift-giving constructed a political economy that followed gift logic, first, on the Soviet, and second, the global scale of the socialist world-system. In this extensive system of exchange, different forms of wealth were to circulate emphatically not in commodity form' [Ssorin-Chaikov 2006b, 13]. . . . Just like goods and services within the Soviet society were supposed to circulate without the market, international relations of the socialist states were built on the ubiquitous formula of "brotherly mutual aid."[12] (17)

Ssorin-Chaikov points out that most contemporary anthropological commentaries have tended to theorize gift relations as "antinomial to modernity" (2006a, 357). Indeed, he suggests, the practice of Soviet socialism does mirror anthropological theory in the manner of its reliance on a rock-hard binary between "gift" and "commodity." At the same time, however, in direct opposition to Maussian wisdom, Soviet culture represents the *commodity* as evolutionarily anachronistic and recasts the gift as the foundation for the political economy of the socialist future (as the *Trybuna* journalist's emphasis on the "never before" suggests). In Ssorin-Chaikov's terms, this is a "vision of modernity as a temporal negation of the commodity form" (358).

Following Mauss's own evolutionary logic, Jonathan Parry has argued that more differentiated societies are likely to place a greater "premium on reciprocity": "an elaborated ideology of the 'pure' gift is most likely to develop in state societies with an advanced division of labor and a significant commercial sector" (1986, 467). In the Soviet case, however, the claim to novelty and economic superiority is predicated precisely on the *impossibility* of reciprocity in any condition other than of a fraternal world resting on a foundation of the common ownership of the means of production (including property). At the same time, however, there is no doubt that this discursive "premium on reciprocity" is heightened by the extent to which the notion of the pure Soviet gift of socialism constitutes a dissimulation of ensnarement into very unequal power relations, for which the practice of gifting functions as consolidator. In Ssorin-Chaikov's description, "the 'gift—counter-gift idiom' summed up the entire [Soviet] society" (2006b, 17), not merely as a metaphor but as a determinant political foundation. The gift is thus at the heart of the "militant noncapitalism" (to borrow Stephen Kotkin's term, 1997, 53) that guides state socialist ideology, political economy, and culture.

Mauss's theory of the gift is pivoted around the famous Maori *hau*, the "master concept of the *Essai sur le don*" (Sahlins 1972, 149). Hau, the subject

of much discussion and rethinking among anthropologists, historians, and philosophers for the past hundred years, is defined as "the spirit of the thing given" (Mauss 2016, 69). Hau is the force that binds the gift indelibly—or inalienably—to the giver and that therefore constitutes the source of the recipient's "obligation to reciprocate." In Mauss's words, "*hau* pursues anyone who holds it" (72). Two aspects of Mauss's theory, and its subsequent reinterpretations, are of particular relevance to the Palace's gifting to Warsaw: the problem of the relationship between the spiritual or religious and economic or material aspects of hau and the related question of the gift's relationship to the totality of social life.

What sort of "spirit," then, could possibly dwell within Stalin's ungodly, heaven-storming present to the Polish capital city? And what is the relationship between the seemingly otherworldly category of "spirit" and the Palace's relationship to Warsaw's political-economic fabric and its transformation by the ascendant communists? According to Marshall Sahlins, it is misleading to treat hau as a purely spiritual concept animating an economic principle. We are dealing, says Sahlins, with a category "that made no distinctions, of itself belonging neither to the domain we call 'spiritual' nor that of the 'material,' yet applicable to either" (Sahlin 1972, 168). The hau, says Sahlins, really is a "total concept" that "accords with a 'society in which "economic," "social," "political" and "religious" are indiscriminately organized by the same relations and intermixed in the same activities'" (168).

Sahlins's point is that while some of Mauss's pronouncements may have appeared overly mystical, his analysis was not. The suggestion is that hau is a category with purchase for all aspects of sociality, including the economic sphere. Maurice Godelier embarks on his own interpretation of the significance of hau to Mauss's analysis. Godelier argues that Sahlins was correct to conceive of hau as a category of "yield" or "productivity" but that he left the underlying dynamics uninvestigated. Following Annette Weiner (1992), Godelier proposes that the key to hau lies in the original giver's inalienable ownership over the thing given: "the original donor does not forfeit his rights over the object he has given, regardless of the number of times it may change hands" (1999, 53). Extending the scope of Sahlins's demystification of hau, Godelier argues that the "indelible presence" of the giver in the object is not merely present as a "spirit" or "soul" but also as a "social reality," "a force present in the object, which controls and pre-defines its use and movement" (55).

This "force," on behalf of which Goldzamt's "architectural power" was to be exercised, represented—on the surface—the person and intentionality of Stalin the giver, leader, and friend.[13] In Alfred Gell's (1998) Maussian-inspired terms, the "primary" agency of Stalin was distributed into the "secondary" agency of the Palace.[14] Gell's focus on the creativity and intentionality of the human agent is useful to illuminate the extent to which the agentic link between the Palace and the person of Stalin accounts for the former's ability to impact on its surroundings; to paraphrase Gell's (1998, 231) account of the agentic connection between *kula* operators and the shell and arm necklaces associated with them, the Palace of Culture does not merely "stand for" Stalin in a symbolic way; for all intents and purposes it actually *is* Stalin.[15] However, as James Leach (2007) has pointed out, Gell's model of material agency locates the spur of the agentic chain in human creativity and intentionality. It is important to recognize, as Godelier does, that it is not just a human "spirit" at play but an entire social reality. "Stalin" was not acting merely for himself but on behalf of the Soviet state socialist political-economic and ideological system with which his person is synecdochical.

For Mauss and his interpreters, hau is the source of the obligation to reciprocate. Hau drives the "thing given" in one of two directions: either to return to its "place of origin" or—as in the case of the Palace—"to produce, for the clan and the soil from which it came, an equivalent that replaces it" (Mauss 2016, 73). In this case, the thing given seeks to re-create on the soil to which it has been transplanted a state socialist political-economic regime, organized around the eradication of commodity exchange and its replacement by a radically new kind of noncapitalist, high-modern (rather than premodern) gift economy. In Edmund Goldzamt's above-cited words, the role of the Palace gift is to assist in the "transformation of the infrastructure of social ties," to act as a material consolidator for the "foundational gift" of socialism, on which its very existence relies. The Palace's elaborately articulated "gifting" to the city was preceded by the mass expropriation of property from private landlords, instituted by means of the October 1945 Bierut Decree. The Palace's very foundation, then, rests on a logic of expropriation. In order for the gift to materialize, private property had to be taken away from its owners and turned into something quite different: public property. The Palace, then, is a material device for the consolidation of the social effects of the expropriation of private property and for the communalization of the city. This making public of property is thus the last-instance purpose

of the Palace's "architectural power," of its spatial and aesthetic, or morphological, characteristics.

Gifts, to reemphasize, are properly holistic phenomena that seep into every domain of social life. In Mauss's typology, they are "*total* social facts," "at the same time juridical, economic, religious and even aesthetic, morphological, etc." (2016, 193). Indeed, it could certainly be argued that the Palace—through the enormity of its bulk, the extravagance of its form, and the eclecticism of the functions it contains—weighs upon all of the above aspects of Warsaw's existence. In Warsaw, then, the Soviet version of hau, Mauss's "spirit of the thing given"—which binds the receiver indelibly to the giver—obliged Varsovians to approach the building with a certain official deference (while inspiring a great deal of private hatred) throughout the communist era. Following the fall of the Polish People's Republic in 1989 and of the Soviet Union itself in 1991 (and the withdrawal of the last Soviet troops from Polish territory in 1993), the Polish side's obligation to reciprocate (the interstate-socialist hau) collapsed. But the communist (noncapitalist) "economic morphological" and "economic aesthetic" infrastructure of architectural and social totality established between the Palace gift and the city—its *public spirit*—has not only lingered but has gathered in strength.

Architectural historian Jean-Louis Cohen has drawn a link between the Maussian "total social fact" and the role of large buildings. "Being 'external to the individual', social facts become total when they condense complex and manifold levels of relationships, just as large buildings such as skyscrapers do" (Cohen in Melvin 2005, emphasis added). What Cohen misses, however, is that it is not merely its visual prominence or its size, which determines whether a building can function to "condense" diverse domains of relationality: not every skyscraper can make for a total social fact. What renders the Palace a particularly effective "total service" is also the bewildering reach of its use value, the sheer volume of reasons that inhabitants of the recipient city have to go there, to look at it, to think, write, talk about it, and in other ways represent it to themselves and to others. The Palace is only able to act as, to paraphrase Bruce Grant (2011, 264), such a profoundly public building, invested in articulating its centrality to the fullest, because it was built by a regime that rejected private property and the commodity and because, after that regime's collapse, the Palace has (so far) managed to retain its public ownership status and to resist complete metamorphosis into commodity form. In other words, the Palace was able to *appropriate* so many public functions and to *be appropriated by* so many domains of the

city's public life because the land on which it stands was *expropriated* from its private owners (and has not yet been returned to them).

In chapter 5 and the conclusion of this book, I will elaborate on how, on the level of the Palace's relationship with the life of the city, this expropriatory animus constituted—and continues to constitute today—the kernel of the Palace's "public spirit." In chapters 5, 6, and 7, I examine how, following the fall of the PRL in 1989 (and of the USSR in 1991) and the collapse of the recipient's obligation to reciprocate, the Palace was finally able to be transformed and defiled without fear of reprisals meted out by the giver (the Maori *mate*).[16] I also examine the question of to which "recipient" the inalienable rights over the de-alienated gift were passed (conclusion): to the "inhabitants of Warsaw," to the market-capitalist political economic system that replaced state socialism, or to the municipality as a collectivity? And what were the consequences of this regime shift for the level of the Palace's domination over Warsaw? What happened when the gift became a commodity, when use value was supplemented by exchange value? How is that the gift—and its enduringly noncapitalist, *still-socialist* "public spirit"—came to dominate ever more pervasively, became an even *more total* social fact after 1989 than it had been before? But for now, let me return to the story of how the Palace came to be in Warsaw.

Notes

1. Ssorin-Chaikov has commented on the "performative and predictable political means" of ensuring that gifts presented *to* Stalin appeared "*as if* spontaneous" (2006a, 363). The Sigalin-Minc exchange shows that this worked both ways.

2. According to a press report from *Trybuna Robotnicza Stalinogród* (1953) entitled "Eight Years Later: The Contract of Eternal Friendship" and reflecting on the Soviet fulfillment of their obligation, "There is no other nation, which would have as many reasons for deep gratitude towards Joseph Stalin."

3. Zygmunt Skibniewski, cited in Konrad Rokicki (2003, 102). Sigalin gives a detailed account of these priorities in 1986a, 63–112.

4. It should be mentioned that in recent decades, several authors have attempted to put together ethnographic arguments for the proposition that a "disinterested," "pure," or "free" gift can, in certain circumstances, exist (Laidlaw 2000; Cook 2008; Venkatesan 2011). Needless to say, these arguments could not fruitfully be applied to the Palace.

5. During the PRL period, Varsovians were said to sing, to the tune of the national anthem and paraphrasing its third and fourth lines. "What the alien force has taken from us / We shall retrieve with a sabre" was replaced by "What the alien force has gifted us / At night we will pull down."

6. The Świętokrzyski Park next to the Palace of Culture was referred to by some inhabitants of Warsaw during the 1950s as *lasek Katyński*, the little Katyń Forest. With thanks to Waldemar Baraniewski (pers. comm.) for bringing the memory of this usage to my attention in the aftermath of the Smolensk Catastrophe (Murawski 2011b).

7. Dąbrowska (2009, 135) speculates about the economic value of the Palace: "There is some sort of economic nonsense here too. Russia, in its material civilization, impersonates America, in relation to which it has a secret inferiority complex. And it falls into absurdity. In America, especially in New York, where there is land speculation and land is unbelievably expensive, their use is driven by profit and skyscrapers are built with this goal in mind. Here (all the more so in Russia), this is hardly necessary, as all urban land is the property of the state. Maybe in reality it is just the concealment of church towers that is at stake here." It is interesting to compare this with a text from the Warsaw weekly *Stolica* (Kawa 1953) on American skyscrapers, cited in chapter 1.

8. For a comparison between the Nevsky Cathedral and the Palace see Paszkiewicz (1991) and Haska (2007). It is also important to note here the striking overlaps with Moscow's St. Savior Cathedral and the Palace of the Soviets (chap. 1).

9. The Jelonki Friendship estate, made of up wooden cottages, was handed over to the Warsaw municipality in 1955, for use primarily as student and faculty housing. Though under some threat from property developers, it retains this name and use today.

10. The existence of these locally-made elements served as one of the decisive arguments behind the decision to list the Palace as a historical monument in February 2007 (chap. 5).

11. The "human cost" of the Palace to both sides is also pertinent here. There is no totally reliable accounting of deaths and injuries. The Polish Health and Safety Inspectorate noted seventy serious injuries and seven deaths, but thirteen Soviet laborers are buried in a special plot at the Russian Orthodox Cemetery in Warsaw. Furthermore, at least two Polish laborers died on the building site, and at least three Polish pedestrians (including one child) were killed by Soviet drivers delivering building materials (compensation was paid to the victims) (Rokicki 2003, 158–161).

12. Bruce Grant points out that "kinship through conquest became a hallmark of Russian intervention" and that the "firmest political hold comes when one becomes a 'brother to the conquered'" (2009, 57).

13. Hence the Varsovian notion of "Stalin's curse," which, I argue, is broadly equivalent to the "Palace Complex" (Murawski 2011b).

14. In Gell's characterization, "the way to produce an 'anthropological theory of art' would be to construct a theory which resembles Mauss's, but which was about art objects rather than prestations" (1998, 9).

15. For other texts that employ the Gellian concept of "not just standing for" in relation to architecture, see Hoorn (2009, 8), Humphrey (2005, 54), and Yalouri (2001, 192).

16. Although the decline of the Stalinist hau began earlier, with Stalin's biological (1953) and political (1956) deaths, and then in bits throughout the PRL period (culminating in a papal mass on Parade Square in 1987). After 1989, serious proposals for transforming the Palace and Square began appearing en masse. But the spirit of the giver continues to resurface. In Murawski (2011b), I consider this in relation to the Smolensk Catastrophe. The inability to break the architectural and planning deadlock on Parade Square leads some to refer to the "Palace Complex" as the "ghost of Stalin."

3

DESIGNING ARCHITECTURAL POWER

Scale, Style, and Location

On 4 August, just after [Molotov's visit], we went to the Deputy Prime Minister and received an instruction to formulate our answer [to the Soviet "offer"]. The construction of the building, the USSR's gift, ought to begin swiftly—at the turn of 1951 and 1952—and to be completed equally fast, in around two years. The construction would likely be carried out according to the tried and tested design of one of the Moscow high-rises, perhaps the Moscow State University.

And that's it. Rather scarce they were, these guidelines. In all likelihood, they reflected the terseness of the information gleaned from conversations with Molotov. We were given very little time to produce our report—three, four days. We got to work [immediately]. (Sigalin 1986b, 422)

The task now being laid before Sigalin and colleagues was a daunting one: they were being instructed to distill—or to second-guess—what they had learned about the economic aesthetic of Stalinism and to adjust its parameters to the needs and circumstances of Warsaw. Or, put differently, to tell Molotov and Stalin how big their present should be, what it should look like and contain, and where it should be located.

The previous chapters in this book have sought to characterize the political, economic, and ideological animus of Stalinist social realism as well as to describe how the terrain for the construction of the Palace was created on the basis of Warsaw's wartime destruction and postwar revolutionary transformation. This chapter, however, tells the story of how Sigalin, his colleagues, the Palace's Soviet designers, and their respective political patrons came to endow the architectural power and public spirit (which I describe in chaps. 1 and 2) with tangible—scalar, stylistic, and morphological—characteristics. In particular, I delve into the question of the incorporation into the Palace's design of aspects of a Polish vernacular or national style, devoting special attention to the extensive discussions over

the relationship between the Palace's vast dimensions and that of the scale proper to the city itself (*skala warszawska*).

Drawing largely on Sigalin's memoirs, but supplemented by other historical and published sources, my focus in the following pages is on how the process of realizing the Palace was carried out in negotiation and dialogue with a diverse array of actors—with political authorities in Warsaw and Moscow and with the Palace's superordinate Soviet design team, as well as on the basis of serious and protracted consultations with Warsaw's community of architects and critics and even with the city's ordinary inhabitants. In particular, I devote substantial space to an analysis of the public and private discussions concerning the design of the Parade Square and its immediate surroundings beyond—referred to as its eastern and western "walls"—because it is here that the designers of Warsaw's built environment first encountered the Palace Complex in its spatial aspect. One of the things I am at pains to convey in this book is the symmetry between the 1950s, when the key design question was the issue of how best to underline the Palace's dominance over Warsaw; the period after 1989, when the imperative switched from underlining to undermining; and the post-Stalinist (but still-socialist) intermediary period between the late 1950s and late 1980s, when the relationship between the two terms was marked by ambivalence.

"Center of Gravity": Locating the Palace

Sigalin's report suggested five possible locations: option 1 (*Marszałkowska* A, which borrowed the Supreme Building template described in chap. 1) recommended a structure accommodating a National House of Culture, a Tourist and Hotel Center, a House of Youth and a Sports and Congress Hall for twelve thousand to fifteen thousand people in a spot broadly corresponding to today's Parade Square. Option 2 (Marszałkowska B) was similar to option 1 but reduced the overall volume from 800,000 to 400,000 cubic meters. The remaining variants placed the building in different parts of the city altogether and assigned to it not a *kompleksnyi* or condensatory medley of functions (in the Supreme Building mold) but singular uses, after the model of the completed Moscow *vysotki* (rather than the Palace of the Soviets), a building for Warsaw University located in the city's eastern Praga district after the model of architect Lev Rudnev's own Moscow State University, and administrative or administrative-residential blocks resembling Moscow's Smolenskaya Ploshchad or Krasnye Vorota towers, earmarked

either for the Mokotów district south of the city center or for Grochów, a southern district of Warsaw's eastern bank (Sigalin 1986b, 422–424).

The positioning of the Palace and Square at their present location was sealed on August 12, 1951, after Poland's political leadership examined the planners' report and identified the Marszałkowska (city center) variants as the most desirable. The decision-makers expressed the rationale behind their choice in terms that suggested its inevitability: "since this area must be reserved in any case for the great building of the House of Culture, the center of the city would continue to exist as a desert, disfigured by pro-truding stumps of buildings, for a period of around five years. . . . A con-centration of construction [in the center of Warsaw] is essential!" (Sigalin 1986b, 424–425). Edmund Goldzamt expressed the auspiciousness of the Marszałkowska/Aleje Jerozolimskie intersection in terms of terms of lo-cating the "social center of the city" in its "territorial and vital center of gravity" (1956, 22), from where the Palace together with its ensemble will be in a position to "emanate its impact on the city through the most impor-tant urbanistic channels" (cited in Sigalin 1986a, 425).[1] Goldzamt's descrip-tion conveys to the reader how this location was to tie the Palace with the old Warsaw embankment and the river Vistula; with the remaining flag-ship spaces of the Stalinist capital (Plac Konstytucji, map P.1, no. 14), Plac Zbawiciela (no. 15) and Muranów (no. 20); with outlying developments in Praga, Ochota, and Mokotów; and with the spatial axes that defined the polycentric core of prewar Warsaw.

Blessed with political approval and definitively located within the city, the project now moved at a breakneck Stakhanovite pace. Sigalin and two companions flew to Moscow and on September 7, 1951 took part in their first meeting with the Soviet construction ministry and the design team assigned to the project. At the outset, the Soviet side "assuaged a series of doubts" that had been plaguing not only the Polish architects "but also the [Polish] political leadership" (Sigalin 1986b, 426). Warsaw would not have hoisted on it a simple replica of one of the Moscow towers but a "new high-rise, whose location and program would be proposed by the Polish government; building work would be carried out by the Soviet government, deploying its own materials, equipment, even its own laborers and engineers" (Siga-lin 1986b, 426). During the Polish delegation's weeklong stay in Moscow, the Soviets expressed their preference for the Marszałkowska B variant, with a volume of around 600,000 to 800,000 cubic meters and a height of around 120 meters (426). As to style, "the form of the entire structure

and its architectural expression, according to the intentions of the project's Soviet authors and the wishes of the Polish side, would represent the Polish national style" (426). Sigalin claims that these "Polish wishes" were largely formulated by him: "I still had living memories of the 'gift of the Tsarist government'—the enormous Byzantine cathedral in the heart of old Warsaw, in the middle of the Saxon Square, which had been dismantled after Poland's independence in 1918" (426).

Soviet Field Trip: Polish Vernacular

The Soviet design team, led by academician Lev Vladimirovich Rudnev, famed author of the Moscow State University complex, arrived in Warsaw for an eventful two-week visit shortly after Sigalin's return to Warsaw on September 30, 1951. Sigalin recalls the Soviet delegation's "enormous interest, admiration . . . for Polish architecture, town-planning, art, culture, for the landscape and, of course, for our hospitality. These people were in the West for the first time in their lives! Only old Rudnev had been in Warsaw during his youth, in 1913" (Sigalin 1986b, 428). All sides took seriously their declared ambition to produce architecture in the "Polish national style," and the esteemed Soviet visitors were taken by their Polish hosts on a whistle-stop tour of Polish architectural history: "We presented to the Soviet architects the most distinguished monuments of Polish architecture, underlining their beauty and specificity" (229). Over a two-week period, Rudnev and his team were chauffeured around to become acquainted with "all the monuments of Warsaw, Krakow, Toruń, Kazimierz on the Vistula, Puławy, Płock, Czerwińsk, Nieborów and Kielce—they photographed and photographed. . . . They saw the Tatra Mountains, Żelazowa Wola, Nieszawa. . . . They were especially fond of the town hall in Chełmno (this turned out to of particular significance for the produced design)" (229).

Supplementing the touristic part of their voyage, the Soviet architects were given albums of Krasiczyn, Baranów, Sandomierz, and Gdańsk and were shown Bernardo Bellotto's (known by Poles as Canaletto) cityscapes of Enlightenment-era Warsaw.[2] In Sigalin's words, the Soviets "absorbed all of this. The walls of their Moscow workshop were covered by a veritable wallpaper of huge photographs of whole buildings, as well as of individual details. . . . They would say, 'Here, in our workshop—this is Poland.' They really wanted to create 'Polish' architecture, 'so that the Poles will like it'" (1986b, 430).

Figure 3.1. Mayor of Warsaw Stefan Starzyński presenting a model of the Warsaw Exhibition Grounds to Polish president Ignacy Mościcki, 1936. Photograph courtesy of the National Digital Archive.

There is a great deal of speculation among contemporary enthusiasts of Varsaviana about what the Soviet architects would and would not have seen or "absorbed" during their journey through the Polish national style.[3] Indeed, since 1989, various local as well as global (but non-Soviet) inspirations have been retroactively identified with the Palace by Warsaw's inhabitants, in a process of appropriation through simultaneous "vernacularization" and "cosmopolitanization" (Murawski 2012). These include several 1930s Warsaw urban design schemes (including plans for exhibition grounds in southern Praga, which included a two-hundred-meter tower, the proportions of which resembled the Palace to a striking extent—see Trybuś 2012, 39–67); an abstract "Warsaw atmosphere" that the Soviet architects are said to have been unconsciously affected by (in opposition to the formalized, conscious, quasi-ethnological "absorption" they aspired to undergo); and a variety of skyscrapers in New York, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, and elsewhere in North America. Even Sigalin indulges in his own piece of informed conjecture, noting that the 1950 Central House of Culture drawing
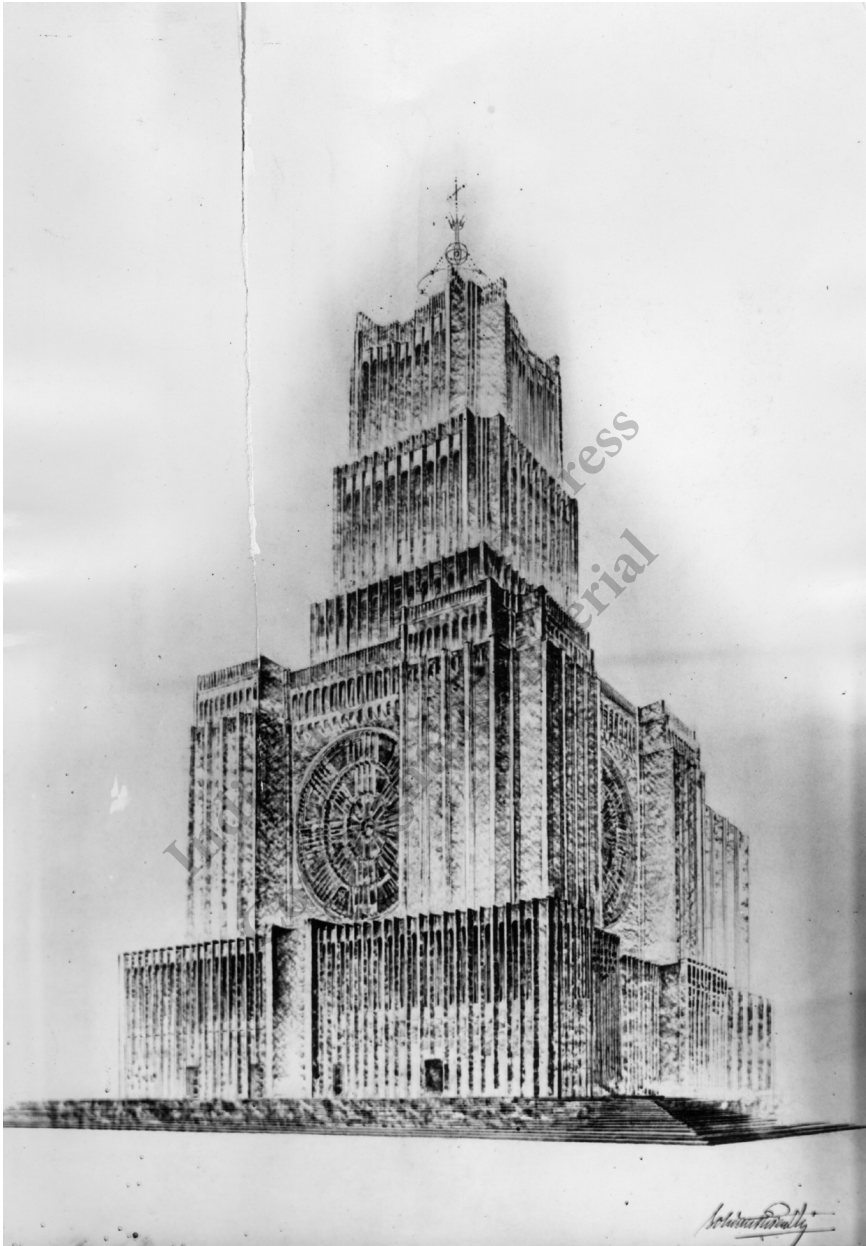
Figure 3.2. Bohdan Pniewski's design for Warsaw's Temple of Divine Providence is often cited as a likely inspiration for PKiN. This illustration is of a 1938 architectural model. Photograph courtesy of the National Digital Archive.

was featured in the January 16 issue of the Moscow journal *Sovetskoe Isskustvo*. "Its architecture? A mixture of Pniewski's pre-war design for the Temple of Divine Providence with . . . well, exactly. The Soviet architects of [the Palace] had read this issue, or so they hinted" (Sigalin 1986b, 430).

So, what exactly are the parameters of this Warsaw atmosphere that the visiting Soviets are said to have imbued? One episode in particular illustrates quite vividly the multifarious manner in which vernacular understandings and iterations of scale and style interacted with those proper to the Soviet homeland of Stalinist socialist realism—in other words, from what Marcel Mauss referred to as the giver's soil, from which the gift of the Palace first sprung.

Scaling the Palace: "Vertical Frenzy"

In all of its eccentricity, Józef Sigalin's description (1986b, 429) of how the height of the Palace came to be determined by "over a dozen of the most distinguished Polish architects" in the company of their esteemed Soviet colleagues is worth citing at some length.

> We gathered on the Praga bank. . . . Radio contact was established with the pilot of a *kukuruzhnik* (a Soviet biplane), flying on the axis of the future Palace along Marszałkowska. A balloon was hung from the tail of the plane. We started at 100 meters. Then 110, 120. The Soviet architects, Rudnev in particular, said: "Enough, this will be good for Warsaw's skyline, between 100 and 120 meters." We, however—not only as architects having in our sights future Warsaw high-rises, but also as Varsovians fantasizing about the future greatness of our city—*were seized by an inexplicable vertical frenzy.* After each approach of the plane, our disposition screamed, "Higher!" We stopped—unanimously—at a height of 150–160 meters. Why here? Perhaps, more or less consciously, we wanted to create *a greater scale for the new Warsaw* than that, which had been marked by the Prudential Tower or the Cedegren Building.[4] This is how the decision was taken. *We* made the Palace the height that it is. A "compromise," in its own special way: the side towers, 60 meters, like the Warszawa Hotel/Prudential Tower, the main tower—the body of the high-rise—120 meters, together with the narrower tower above, about 160 meters; Adding in the 70 meter spire, the total height adds up to about 220 meters. [Emphases added][5]

Sigalin and company's scale-shifting "vertical frenzy" was followed shortly thereafter by a return trip to Moscow in February 1952, to assess the initial Soviet designs. This time, the scalar preferences were reversed, though on the level of planning the dimensions of the Palace's surroundings rather than of determining the building's height. The Soviets, despite their initial

preference for a smaller Palace, favored a larger Central Square, with the Palace further removed from Marszałkowska than the Poles thought desirable (a 300m x 700m square was considered by the locals to be "inhuman and un-Varsovian" [Sigalin 1986b, 431])—and some alterations to the project were made on the basis of the Polish suggestions. In mid-April 1952, the Soviets returned to Warsaw, with a detailed series of proposals for the positioning of the Palace, the character of its surroundings (fountains, gardens, obelisks) and for the building's program. The presentation of the Soviet plans was followed by an extraordinary, eight-hour-long discussion held on April 18 and 19 by the Soviet designers and Polish political leaders and architects (already after the signing on April 5, 1952 of the construction contract by Polish Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz and Soviet Ambassador Arkady Sobolev [Rokicki 2003, 109]), from which Sigalin's memoirs provide partial excerpts, which, as he himself puts it, "give an interesting insight into the perspectives and ways of thinking and expressing oneself during the period of Socialist Realism in its ascendancy" (Sigalin 1986b, 434). In the following pages, I include a few citations from these transcripts that pertain to the Palace's and Square's domination over the city and to varied approaches concerning the extent and manner of the Palace's absorption of the Polish national style.

In his opening presentation, academician Rudnev declared, "this project has to have as its intention the creation of a unified image of beauty, which would be connected in one architectural whole with . . . old Warsaw" (Sigalin 1986b, 434–5). Rudnev's colleague and coauthor of the Palace design, Igor Rozhin, expressed his enthusiasm for the Marszałkowska axis location chosen by the Poles and noted that this fit with the "historical development of Warsaw's center from north to south." Furthermore, Rozhin remarked upon the contrast between the pre- and postwar uses of the area now allotted to the future Palace: "once occupied by tenement blocks, this space has now been cleansed and transformed into a wide, bright square, at the center of which will stand the monumental Palace of Science and Culture [*sic*]. This will constitute an important ingredient in the transformation of the city as a whole" (435). For Rozhin, the Palace, the surrounding square and parkland, and the adjacent suburban railway station will "together constitute the central ensemble of the future Warsaw," "the *favorite place of Varsovians*, just as the Łazienki Gardens are now, so that Varsovians will come here to walk, rest, and children will come here to play" (436).[6] Beyond this remark, relatively little detail is contained in Sigalin's transcript concerning

what was said either by Soviet architects or their Polish colleagues about the relation between the Palace's design and its functional program. Bearing in mind my interest in the Stalinist imperative to design for the unpredictable, however, I would like to highlight the significance of one remark of Rudnev's: "With regard to the nature of the building, it is assumed that it could be put to very diverse uses. It is difficult to predict in advance what demands life will make of a building, so it is necessary from the outset to design in a manner which accommodates elasticity . . . and adaptation" (435).

The response of the Polish architects was gushing at times, cautiously critical at others. Szymon Syrkus, coauthor of the *Functional Warsaw* charter of 1935, was particularly forthright in his praise: "This edifice will be . . . an immovable guiding star on our journey to transform old Warsaw, princely Warsaw, royal, magnates, burghers', capitalist Warsaw into socialist Warsaw" (Sigalin 1986b, 460). There were few protestations at this stage concerning the scale of the building; these were to surface in later public discussions (chap. 5). Indeed, some of the Polish architects' initial reactions seemed to continue in the spirit of the "vertical frenzy" that overcame Sigalin and his companions on the riverbank some months before. In the opinion of one architect, the dimensions of the highest section of the Palace tower, while "appropriate for old Warsaw, in the scale of the new Warsaw, of which the Palace of Culture and Science is to be such a weighty element, seem to me to be *too small*" (448, emphasis added). According to Sigalin's closing summary of the discussion, "the greatest opposition related to two matters. The first demands the Varsovianization (*uwarszawienie*) of this architecture.[7] The second . . . related to restraint" (456). With regard to Varsovianization, architect Marcin Weinfeld commented that the crenellations projected to crown the roofs of most of the building's sections and side wings "constitute an entirely new moment in Warsaw . . . taken from the *attics* of Kraków and from other towns" (442).[8] Following Weinfeld, Piotr Biegański concurred that "our Soviet colleagues seem to have been greatly influenced by their impressions of Kraków" (443), oversaturating the Palace with motifs taken from the Kraków Renaissance while overlooking the neoclassicism that dominated the architectural style of Enlightenment-era and early nineteenth-century Warsaw. These reservations notwithstanding (the objectors were rebuked by Goldzamt for displaying "constructivist and futurist tendencies" and by Romuald Gutt for seeking to reduce the national style to that of Warsaw), the Government Praesidium passed the bill

Figure 3.3. Neo-Renaissance "attics" above one of the main entrances to the Palace of Culture and on top of one of the side towers. Photograph by the author.

approving the draft design on April 21, 1952, giving the go-ahead for work to begin on clearing the building site and on the first phases of construction itself.

"Freestanding Edifice": Palace-in-Square

As the final incarnation of the Palace-as-building was being debated and approved, the question of how to determine the overall shape of Warsaw's center and the Palace's immediate surroundings became all the more urgent. On March 20, 1952, Sigalin (now chief architect of Warsaw) met with the Central Committee (CC) of the Polish United Workers' Party to lay out his team's ideas for the center, specifying as the first condition an "organic, functional and compositional unity with the square and with the Palace" (Sigalin 1986c, 8). Sigalin's proposals were amended, however, following an intervention by Goldzamt, who was concerned with ensuring that the proposed course of Marszałkowska would be straightened to give shape to it as "a triumphal artery leading to the Palace of Culture and Science" (cited in Sigalin 1986c, 11). This was necessary, reasoned Goldzamt, if the Palace

was to properly "influence the entire city, revolutionarily transforming it" (11) and if "the creation of a unified composition of the center on the basis of the Palace ensemble was to be achieved" (11). Goldzamt's interpellation to the CC presented his proposed changes as being "in the essential interests of the architectural unity of the city, and in the interests of the distribution of the aesthetic power of the PKiN ensemble throughout the city as a whole" (Sigalin 1986c, 12). Finally, in May 1952, the CC approved an architectural competition, stipulating that "the remaining elements [of the central region] should be harmoniously subordinated to the design of the Palace of Culture and Science" (10) and describing what was now being referred to as "Warsaw's Central Square" as "forming the frame and surroundings for the main architectural accent of the capital city, which will be [the Palace]. The square should possess the artistic features of grand, monumental architecture and form an architectural whole with [the Palace]" (16). In November 1952, Sigalin presented a summary of the competition jury's findings to the Central Committee.

In the immediate aftermath of the CC consultation (and the architects' symposium that followed), a note arrived at the CC secretariat, expressing the Soviet design team's opinions on the entries submitted so far. Rudnev and colleagues made known their preference for those entries that kept the Central Square completely empty of construction ("buildings, pavilions or colonnades") and concluded by stating that "the primary task standing before the Polish architects pertains to the question of how to link the new center with the existing structure of the city, in such a way that the one would become an organic part of the other" (Sigalin 1986c, 28–29). Any notion of a partially built-up Central Square was put to death by CC guidelines issued on January 8, 1953. Among the most important of these were stipulations that "the Palace-monument finds itself as that which it was designed to be: a free-standing edifice. This space should not contain any buildings other than the Palace itself" (Sigalin 1986c, 39). The same document also introduced the working name for the Palace's immediate surroundings, Palace of Culture and Science [PKiN] Square. Following Stalin's death in March 1953 the name of the square was changed (by an unconfirmed verbal decision of the CC secretariat) to honor the departed leader but soon morphed, at an unspecified point during 1954, into Parade Square (34).

The parameters of the square itself were discussed during the first half of 1953. In June of that year, the CC secretariat met to consider the possibility of situating a tribune on the square from which party leaders would

survey mass events as well as to confirm that a statue of Stalin ("roughly fifteen meters high with the plinth") would be located on the square and in front of the main entrance of the Palace bearing his name (Baraniewski 2001, 58). An Implementation Panel for Stalin Square was established in April 1954, headed by Sigalin, which planned and commissioned the paving stones, gardens, flowerbeds, lanterns, obelisks, and sundials that, distributed throughout Stalin Square, were to *optically and functionally shorten the square* (Sigalin 1986c, 51)—in other words, to break its monotony without challenging its uniformity. The most important of these spatial interventions came in the form of large fountains shooting streams of water twelve meters high on the square's northern and southern extremities, named Wisła (Vistula) and Odra (Oder) after postwar Poland's two main rivers.[9]

Eastern Wall: "Harmonious Subordination" and "Warsaw Scale"

On June 1, 1953, the central Warsaw design team began formally putting together plans for the so-called Eastern Wall of Stalin Square, along Ulica Marszałkowska. According to the guidelines of the architectural competition agreed at the June 1953 CC meeting, the Eastern Wall "ensemble," together with "the other walls of Stalin Square, would constitute an integral interior of the main square of Warsaw, harmonized with the *dominanta* of this interior—the Joseph Stalin Palace of Culture and Science" (Sigalin 1986c, 47). The Eastern Wall was to be organized on either side of the Palace's main axis, running along Ulica Złota, a historic Warsaw street leading from the city center to the industrial Wola district, whose course was interrupted by the Palace and Square but which (along with Widok, Chmielna, Śliska, Sienna, and Pańska—see map 3) continues to run on either side of it. At a further series of meetings in late 1953 and early 1954, architects, planners and politicians continued to make known their opinions about a desirable future shape for the Palace's surroundings. In its judgment of competition entries submitted in December 1953, the Committee of Architecture and Urbanism expressed its opinion regarding the proper function of the Eastern Wall buildings: "small, random offices" are inappropriate and would lead to a "jarring conflict between content and form." Instead, these structures of "capital importance" should house a significant social or state institution—for example, the headquarters of the Capital National Council

(Stołeczna Rada Narodowa, the eminently centralized PRL-era name of Warsaw's city government) or the ministries of schooling, higher education, or culture and art (53).[10] The most heated parts of the architects' discussions, however, revolved not around the Eastern Wall's future function but around questions of what it was to look like and how big it should be.

The main architectural requirement was, naturally, that the Eastern Wall exist in "harmony with the progressive, humanist traditions of our architecture and their development in the composition of the Palace of Culture and Science" (Sigalin 1986c, 55). Further, the character of the architecture should be "ceremonial and palatial" (55). The most desirable realizations of this imperative were judged to be those works opting for a "creative development of classical detailing," whereas those apparently attempting a "false modernization of form" or resorting to the "eclectic transfer of historical forms" were singled out for criticism (56).

Debates raged about whether the central fragment separating the two halves of the Eastern Wall (at Ulica Złota) should take the form of a triumphal arch or a gap in the facade in the form of an avant-corps, a double colonnade, or a propylaeum and how each of these solutions relates to the imperative to harmonize with the Palace. The triumphal arch, for example, was criticized for trying to rise above its station in the hierarchy of scale and bombasticism: "pretending to the role of a veritable architectural phenomenon, it appears superfluous when juxtaposed with its immediate neighbor, the essential *dominanta*, the Palace of Culture and Science" (Sigalin 1986c, 56). In other words, there was no discussion of any project attempting to undermine the dominance of the Palace of Culture—this option did not even register on the spectrum of possibilities. The issue was whether the Palace was being underlined in the right way.

This discourse between designers and decision-makers was thrust into the public sphere between February 7 and 14, 1954, when the proposed Stalin Square plans were laid out for public viewing in the reception halls of Warsaw's newly rebuilt National Theater. Large models of the Eastern Wall were laid out alongside information placards presenting different visions for the whole area of central Warsaw, and the architects behind each design were on duty to answer the questions of the curious visitors, whose numbers, in Sigalin's claim, reached twenty thousand over the course of the week. As Sigalin recalled in his memoirs, "the measure and reach of public interest seems quite incredible today" (1986c, 60). The public's responses were recorded by the duty architects, who were required to complete summary

forms after each shift, and in the transcripts of three long public discussions (February 11, 12, 13), the complete versions of which add up to 215 pages.

Sigalin's description of these public reactions, and particularly of the public discussions (1986c, 60–66), are of special interest to me because of the extent to which they—and other contemporary audience engagements with architecture, which have experienced a renaissance in twenty-first-century Warsaw—served as a model for my experiments in public ethnography (discussed in the preface and Murawski 2013).

Rather than delving into a detailed account of the participants' contributions, I draw attention here to comments made by one member of the public (identified in the transcripts as an "intellectual worker") that represent well the manner in which questions of scale were raised throughout: "The Palace has entered into the center of Warsaw in a completely unexpected manner. Every city has its scale. Warsaw also has it scale. . . . The Palace, which has entered Warsaw, *exceeds the city by a factor of several to one*" (Sigalin 1986c, 65). Accepting this fact as given, however, the intellectual worker draws some unexpected scalar conclusions: "Since it was impossible to adapt the Palace to the Warsaw scale, the Warsaw scale should have been adapted to that of the Palace. Instead, contrasting proportions have been applied, which were supposed to isolate, to distinguish the Palace. In my view, this is a mistake. These proportions do not allow for the Palace to be assimilated, to become, as it should, an element of Warsaw" (ibid.).

The discussion was concluded by Sigalin's answer to his critics, an exemplary piece of Stalinist teleological relativism (or magnitudinal teleology): "Is anything in the 'Warsaw scale', or not? The fishermen's huts, whose traces we found while building the Old Town were once in the Warsaw scale. After that, this scale was defined by the little houses of the Old Town or New Town, then the Saxon Palace, later the MDM (Marszałkowska Dzielnica Mieszkaniowa—Marszałkowska Housing Quarter), now the Palace of Culture and Science is becoming the 'Warsaw scale'. Scale is constantly developing, changing, and we create it ourselves" (Sigalin 1986c, 65).[11]

Another perspective on the same event, also concentrating on the problematic of scale, is provided in the 1954 diary of Leopold Tyrmand, the above-cited Warsaw diarist. His comments on the exhibition are interspersed with observations about the Palace itself and the theory and practice of socialist realist architecture. In Tyrmand's perspective, events like the city center exhibition demonstrate the extent to which—despite whimpers of opposition—the Stalinist mania for big scale and monumentality has

permeated the popular imagination: "the crowds of people at these [city design] displays attest to people's insatiable hunger for a new Varsovian Athens, the masses of the city pine after greatness. The communists want to give greatness a size, mass, physical scale, which, unfortunately, will never turn into quality, pedigree, praise of a higher value than the triumph of statistics. Warsaw, muffled by a monopolized press, doesn't know how to defend itself" (1999, 103).

The public discussion was followed by a culminatory architects' debate. In Sigalin's quantification, the "high temperature" discussion lasted for over six hours, featured "several hundred" architects, and produced a 193 page transcript (Sigalin 1986c, 67). I will reproduce here a few more comments (Sigalin 1986c) concentrating specifically on the scalar, aesthetic and functional aspects of the relationship between the Palace, the Square, and Warsaw as a whole.

In his introduction to the debate, architect Jerzy Gieysztor's stated that the issue of "architectural scale" should be the central concern for designers of the Palace's surroundings. If badly resolved, it might "*depreciate the scale and absolute enormity* of the Palace of Culture and Science." If dealt with "well and correctly," the scale of the Palace's surroundings becomes an "*asset underlining the monumentality of the dominanta*" (Sigalin 1986c, 69; emphasis added). Architect Jerzy Wierzbicki, drawing on the Place de la Concorde in Paris, Rome's Piazza del Campidoglio, and London's St. Paul's Cathedral ("an interesting approach to the Cathedral along a very narrow, softly-led street, only by the entrance does the gigantic, magnificent architectural composition emerge") suggests that the seven-hundred-meter length of the square be shortened to allow the Palace to grow better into the city (by building up its north and south sides) and to prevent its isolation.[12] Following scale in the hierarchy of importance were questions of architectural "character" ("harmony with the progressive, humanistic traditions of Warsaw architecture and their development in the composition of the Palace") and finally of the "program" to be realized by the central ensemble ("appropriate to the monumental architectural character of the Eastern Wall and its high economic value"). With regard to both these domains, the guidelines of the CC's Political Bureau, issued following the February 1954 discussion, were striking in their emphasis on restraint. The Political Bureau cautioned against the "overloading of facades with columns and details in favor of greater simplicity and modesty" (133) and recommended increasing the volume of housing in the city center, at the cost of office and administrative buildings.

In January 1955, the Warsaw daily *Życie Warszawy* launched a public survey encouraging its readers to send letters appraising two amended designs for the Eastern Wall (by Bogusławski and Knothe/Stępiński). In Sigalin's summary (1986c, 134–141), "almost all" letters expressed the opinion that the Eastern Wall ought to be substantially taller than the proposed height (ten to fourteen floors or forty to eighty meters instead of seven floors or twenty-seven to thirty-two meters), either to complement or counteract the dimensions of the Palace ("the towering height of the Palace dictates the necessity to render the area enclosing it appropriately tall"; "everything possible has to be done to reduce the Palace's glare . . . it should be surrounded by buildings at least twelve floors high" (Sigalin 1986c, 135). Other readers criticized the plans to locate the Capital National Council on the Eastern Wall: "the city hall should be a *dominanta* in itself. . . . The cramming of the town hall into the Eastern Wall should be considered an abortive idea—the Palace and the town hall—two mushrooms in a borscht" (ibid.); or suggested that, because of the importance of its function, it should be differentiated from the buildings on either side by being higher, set back from or forward toward the road, or distinguished by the addition of "some kind of clock tower" (ibid.).[13]

Other readers joined the chorus of complaints already articulated by several of the architects—that the lack of housing, shops, entertainment venues, and food outlets in the Palace's vicinity would lead to a dead and deserted city center at nights and on weekends: "in the evenings, the Eastern Wall should shine with thousands of lights and reverberate with the laughter and voices of thousands of inhabitants" (Sigalin 1986c, 136–137). In the majority of cases, says Sigalin, the readers' criticism of the architecture and program found their logical conclusion in the proposition to delay the realization of the central Warsaw plans for some time: "There's no need to rush into this project willy-nilly!"; "This matter is so important, that it's best to consider all the options, rather than to do something silly, which we won't even be able to fix later" (Sigalin 1986c, 140–141).

Anti-Palace? After the Thaw

The sentiments expressed by *ŻW* readers either made a big impact on the Central Committee or they were extremely accurate manifestations of a shifting political zeitgeist in the wake of Stalin's death (in March 1953) and in anticipation of impending formal de-Stalinization. On August 1,

1955 (ten days after the ceremonial opening of the Palace of Culture and eight days after the completion of work on the Parade Square itself, including green spaces, fountains, the speakers' tribune, and the entrance pavilions for the suburban railway station), the Central Committee rejected the revised designs submitted by Bogusławski and Knothe/Stępiński and recommended that the architects undertake extensive and vaguely defined "further work" on their design.[14] Furthermore, the idea of a Stalin statue to stand before the Palace—rather adventurous casts of which had been created by the sculptor Xawery Dunikowski—had for all intents and purposes also been abandoned by late October 1954. In Sigalin's rendition, this slowing of the tempo was no accident. The Polish party leadership was concentrating all of its attention on gauging the temperature of power shifts in Moscow, which were to culminate in Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956. Less than two weeks after hearing Khrushchev denounce Stalin's crimes and condemn his cult of personality, Secretary General Bierut himself passed away (in unexplained circumstances) in Moscow. In the world of architecture, changes had been afoot since at least 1954, accelerating following Nikita Khrushchev's famous speech denouncing "excesses" and "superfluities" in architecture at the December 1954 Congress of Soviet Builders and Architects. In Poland, the changes culminated during a path-breaking architects' summit in April 1956, which saw Prime Minister Cyrankiewicz declare that "the party will no longer lead architects by the hand" (cited in Skalimowski 2011: 192), and at which Sigalin himself delivered a frank examination of his personal engagement with power during the Stalinist period, disguised as a keynote address. Following public outrage in response to the brutal pacification of June strikes in Poznań by the security services, in October 1956 Władysław Gomułka—who had been imprisoned between 1951 and 1954—was elected general secretary of the PZPR (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza—Polish United Workers' Party).

At a huge open-air rally on October 24, attended by several hundred thousand people, Gomułka publicly condemned Stalinism and announced reforms that were to bring about the democratization of the political system. The rally, of course, was held on the recently opened Parade Square, and Gomułka spoke from the tribune designed by Sigalin and his team. The horizon facing Gomułka from the tribune terminated at the spot to be occupied by the future Eastern Wall. In autumn 1956, however, this horizon continued to be constituted by wartime ruins, half-destroyed tenement

Figure 3.4. Gomułka on Parade Square, October 1956. Still from the Polish Film Chronicle newsreel *Wielki Wiec* (The Great Demonstration), 1956. Courtesy of the Polish National Film Archive—Audiovisual Institute.

houses, and haphazardly built one-floor structures housing an unpredictable, unregulated assortment of service points, shops, and cafes unworthy of the soaring embodiment of the socialist future in whose shadow they stood. In Sigalin's description, "'ground-floor Marszałkowska,' miserable, but living and lively, with its commercial, cafes, bars, even a little cinema" (1986c, 145). One consequence of the words being spoken in their direction by General Secretary Gomułka was that the monumental plans for an Eastern Wall "harmonized with" and "subordinated to" the "absolute *dominanta*" of the Palace of Culture were never to come into being. As Sigalin puts it, "the matter of the Eastern Wall fizzled out completely" (143).

The matter of the Eastern Wall returned to the drawing board almost immediately, however. In Sigalin's rendition, once the "tumultuous 'autumn of freedom'" (1986c, 143) had died down, a decision was taken in December 1956 to completely change the planned program for the Eastern Wall. Out went the town hall and administrative offices, to be replaced by commerce and apartments, cultural institutions, and leisure outlets. A new

Figure 3.5. "Ground-floor Marszałkowska," the Eastern Wall of Parade Square, mid-1950s. Photograph by Zbyszko Siemaszko, courtesy of the National Digital Archive.

third competition was announced in July 1957 and won by the modernist Zbigniew Karpiński, who had been largely absent from Warsaw's architectural life during the Stalinist period. The new Eastern Wall was built in stages between 1959 and 1971. Its striking modernity is received by many in Warsaw as, in Sigalin's words, an "antisymbol" of the Palace of Culture (143). Its "spatial harmony," for Sigalin, is an effect precisely of the fact that its design is not motivated by an officially decreed "harmonious subordination" (Sigalin 1986c, 10) to the Palace, as had been the case for the plans still being treated as official two years previously. And at a packed lecture

Figure 3.6. The Eastern Wall of Parade Square, late 1960s, built according to the designs of architect Jan Karpiński's design team. Photograph by Grażyna Rutkowska, courtesy of the National Digital Archive.

devoted to the Karpiński Eastern Wall in February 2010, architectural historian Jarosław Trybuś rammed home the idea that the Eastern Wall was an "anti-Palace of Culture," an attempt by Warsaw to "turn its back to the Palace."

Nevertheless, Sigalin points to some important continuities between the pre- and post-thaw projects in terms of the content of the designs themselves but also in terms of the effects of the public consultation procedures undertaken during the Stalinist phase of planning. Not having been directly involved in the new design (Sigalin resigned from his position

as chief architect in May 1956), he speculates how far Karpiński and his team may have been influenced by the opinions expressed by members of the public and architects at the discussions of February 1954 and by the *ŻW* survey results (January 1955). He lists features of the Karpiński design that recall suggestions made by concerned architects and citizen laymen: the provision of a shopping passage behind the glass-fronted department stores forming the central core of the ensemble; the three residential towers forming the "background" of the horizontal row of stores; the "loosening" of the architecture at the northern and southern intersections; the roundabout at the Marszałkowska/Jerozolimskie junction; the "authentically modern architecture—glass and aluminum, monumentalism without an ounce of pomposity, unity through difference" (1986c, 144). Importantly, the parameters of the core part of the ensemble remained relatively unchanged from the 1952–1954 designs: a modest thirty-meter height, corresponding to the lowest segment of the Palace of Culture and the remaining prewar buildings in the vicinity; the long row of buildings, identical in character, interrupted only by an axial opening at Ulica Złota; and the shaded passages running beneath an arcaded segment of the stores' first floor.

Karpiński's Eastern Wall is the earliest structure with respect to which the schizophrenic Varsovian dialectic between underlining and undermining the Palace moved toward the latter term. On one level its three towers were supposed to distract attention from the Palace with their glass-and-concrete modernity. Standing at the Palace's main entrance, I would sometimes ask people—groups of art students drawing the view onto the Eastern Wall, tourists taking photographs, smokers or idling students— what kind of "attitude" they thought the Eastern Wall expressed toward the Palace. Responses were always mixed. When I tried this question out on a group of art history undergraduates I was about to lead inside the building, a fairly typical debate ensued: "Look," one student said, "the three towers are turned sideways, *away* from the Palace. They are shunning it." Another pitched in to polemicize: "No! Consciously or not, they are turned sideways so as not to *block* the Palace, so it can be seen better from the historic part of the city center." Somebody else added, "And the long body of the Domy Centrum (a glass-fronted department store facing the Palace) is actually broken in two, so as not to interrupt the viewing axis from the Palace's main entrance!"

Figure 3.7. <u>Underline</u>/undermine: A group of middle school art students sketch the Eastern Wall from the Palace's main entrance, September 2009. Photograph by the author.

Molotov's Thought

Sigalin is very conscious of historical continuity; the past is present in his account. Not just in terms of praise for those aspects of the national heritage that could be integrated into the socialist future because of their progressive status within the historical materialist temporal imaginary but in terms of those aspects of everyday social life (affective, aesthetic, economic) that were rendered expendable in the name of progress (whether in its modernist or Stalinist guise). Warsaw had a sentimental Haussmann: "This entire square, the roads, the pavements—all this is built on a tombstone laid on the foundations of what were once cellars, houses, inhabited by thousands of people. This is a truth about which we—the older generation—are unable to forget" (Sigalin 1986c, 146).

This sentiment was set in stone at Sigalin's initiative, in the form of memorial plaques installed in place of former roads and intersections: "Here stood the clock tower of the Vienna station";[15] "here was Ulica Pańska,

Figure 3.8. Underline/<u>undermine</u>: A group of art history university students examine the Palace, July 2010. Photograph by the author.

Złota, Wielka, Śliska, Chmielna. For some time still, older generations will be reminded of the streets of old Warsaw, streets along which they would have made their way every day. And to future generations and already to the youth of today, they will speak of the history of the Warsaw of their own time, of the transformations of the city and its life" (Sigalin 1986c, 147).

Some of these past-marking plaques are still visible today, but many have been destroyed or eroded by the years of haphazard planning and temporary structures inflicted on the Square since 1989. And some among today's commentators pass pious judgment on the cynical intentionality behind them, unaware or dismissive of Sigalin's expressed sentiments. The architectural historian Marta Leśniakowska (2004) refers to the plaques as "strategies of non-memory," countermnemonic devices erected by a totalitarian regime to enact the forgetting (via disingenuous memorialization) of an inconvenient past.

Sigalin's initiative also lay behind the distribution throughout the Square of objects clearly marking it as the pivotal centerpiece of a
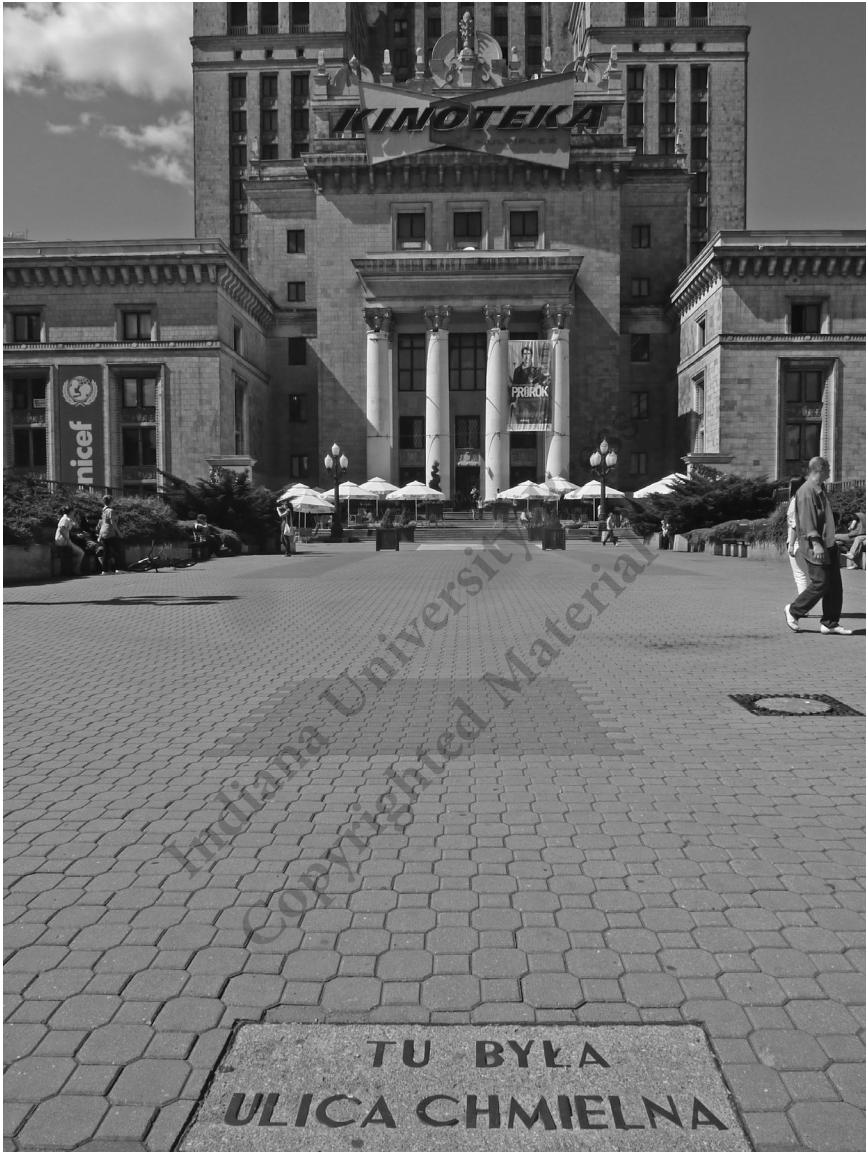
Figure 3.9. Sigalin's past-marking plaques: "Here was Ulica Chmielna" (visible here) has been awkwardly incorporated into new paving on the southern side of the Square; "Here was the intersection of Wielka and Śliska" is damaged, near the former KDT in the northeastern corner of the Square; "Here was the intersection of Chmielna and Wielka" had been lost underneath the MarcPol trade hall and was recovered following disassembly in July 2008.

cosmological universe: a tremendous granite milestone at the intersection of Marszałkowska and Aleje Jerozolimskie (moved in the mid-1990s to make way for the entrance to the Centrum station of Warsaw's underground railway), indicating the distance from the Palace (Warsaw's point zero, the spot from which distances to the center of the city are measured) to various European capitals and the most important Polish cities. Sigalin rams home its significance without ambiguity: "its utility to drivers may be negligible, but what symbolism! The crux is that these are distances to Warsaw, to the capital, to its center, to the central square! And from it—a window to the world!" (Sigalin 1986c, 147). Complementing this cosmological milestone, along with the two obelisks and the Vistula and Oder fountains, are two sundials at the Square's northern and southern extremities. Both dials are still present today but lost in the decentered, deregulated chaos of the post-socialist, late capitalist square.

In Sigalin's long-term assessment, the Palace has worked. It has been "sucked into" the center of the city (1986c, 147). Although almost all the transcript excerpts and citations peppered throughout his three-volume memoirs relate to architectural style, scale, and sometimes logistics and engineering, and relatively little is said about what people were to do and did do in the Palace, the architect clearly understands that it was the Palace's functional interactions, not purely its spatial totality of interactions, with the city that determined its success. In Sigalin's words (147),

> the uses to which the Palace was put were decisive. The different things that happen there on every day and on festival days! Every day. Every week, month. Throughout the year. Thousands of people coming to the Palace every day, for the most diverse reasons imaginable. The statistics are at the level of millions. They have grown accustomed to the interiors; they simply don't see them, they make use of them, the conditions they create are favorable, *they allow themselves to be adapted*. From the outside, they rarely look up or at the whole—they rush towards one of the entrances. Generally speaking, one can say: it is alien, but it has caught on. It is just there. [Emphasis added]

While this statement is a correct assessment of the banal, quotidian aspects of the Palace's social prominence, its spectacularity and sublime presence is not to be neglected either. Sigalin's other remarks, as well as the obsessive attachment to the question of scale he articulated, his contemporaries, and today's Palace-going Varsovians testify to this.

Indeed, says Sigalin, another decisive factor behind the Palace's success is the "overcoming of its isolation" (Sigalin 1986c, 147), primarily by way of

building a large amount of other high-rise structures in its vicinity. Sigalin lists the three Eastern Wall residential towers (eighty-seven, eighty-five and eighty-one meters), the sixteen-floor residential blocks on Świętokrzyska, the Hotel Forum (1972–1974, today's Novotel, 111 meters), and the high-rises foreseen in Jerzy Skrzypczak's 1972 Western Central Region development plan for the area around Aleje Jerozolimskie and Emilii Plater (in the vicinity of Warsaw's new Central Railway Station, opened in 1975), to which planners turned their attention following the completion of the Eastern Wall. "Whose idea was it," a journalist asked Skrzypczak in 2005, "to build high buildings around the planned Central Station. Architects' or politicians'?" Skrzypczak replied, "It was us—architects—we came to the conclusion that the domination of the Palace of Culture finally has to be broken. I always thought that its erection was an insult to Warsaw. This is why we wanted to create an ensemble of five buildings, within which it would disappear" (Bartoszewicz 2005).

The Western Wall masterplan foresaw the five towers as part of an integrated system of commercial and retail facilities, residential buildings, and transport infrastructure, linked by a system of covered walkways all the way from Ulica Wspólna to Ulica Świętokrzyska. It was never realized in its entirety; two of the 140 meter high structures were built before 1989, the Elektrim (now Oxford) office tower (150 meters, 1977–1984) and the LIM (Marriott) tower (170 meters, 1980–1989), and these were connected by a series of underground walkways to the Central Railway station. After the collapse of the PRL, bits of Skrzypczak's design were partially actualized, though in a much more laissez-faire, less integrated fashion than was intended: the enormous, bulbous-roofed Złote Tarasy (Golden Terraces, 2000–2004, designed by corporate Californian postmodernists the Jerde Partnership) shopping center adjoins the Central railway station in a manner that vaguely fulfills the retail aspect of the 1970s plan, and four further skyscrapers now stand on the site (adding up to a total of six, with several more dotted around the vicinity), but as completely freestanding edifices built by private investors. In addition to the midrise, modernist residential blocks built during the 1960s (and a few surviving prewar structures), the Western Wall site is completed by several smaller office buildings and hotels, some of them codesigned by Skrzypczak according to the broad spatial distribution (if not the spirit) of his plan.

From Skrzypczak's comments, it would appear that, already during the late 1960s, the obligating force of the Stalinist *hau* was seriously
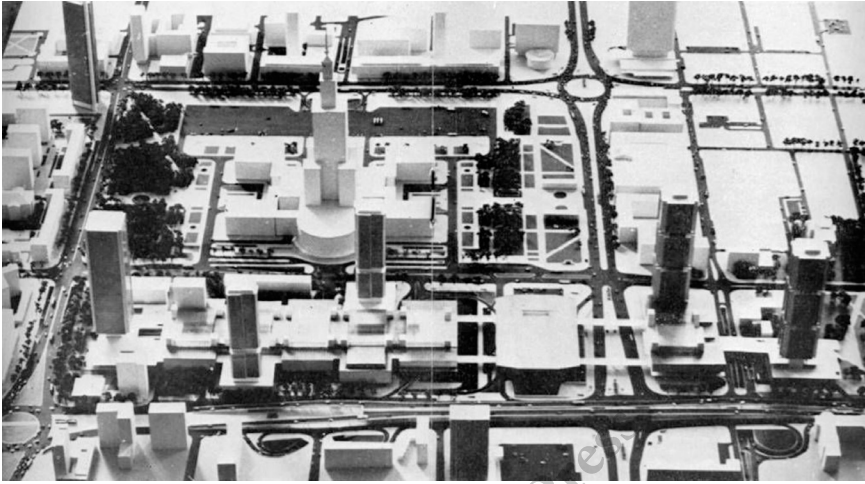
Figure 3.10. Model of the Western Wall, early 1970s, Jerzy Skrzypczak. Courtesy of Atelier J&J.

Figure 3.11. The Western Central Region in 2015. Lim (Marriott) and Elektrim (Oxford), the two rectangular towers closest to PKiN, were completed during the PRL period as part of Skrzypczak's plan. The remaining Western Wall towers were built by private investors after 1989. Photograph by Maciej Margas.

waning: "We were visited by Soviet architects. Some of them asked us why we weren't referring to the spatial layout of the Palace of Culture? And we were doing everything to disrupt it! The Western media picked up on this straight away. They wrote that we wanted to 'hide' the USSR's gift behind new towers" (Bartoszewicz 2005). But the politicians, says Skrzypczak, didn't interfere with their work. The most interesting thing about Skrzypczak's project, however, was the rather counterintuitive manner in which the proportions of these five towers were supposed to instantiate the act of disrupting Stalin's gift and breaking its dominance over Warsaw. "Why was a height of around 140 meters planned for each of the new towers?" asks the journalist. Skrzypczak's reply: "Because this is how high the main core of the Palace's tower [below the narrower segment directly underneath the spire] is" (Bartoszewicz 2005). In other words, the five towers, which were supposed to liberate Warsaw from the symbolic and spatial power of the Palace took their scalar cue directly from the proportions of the target building! It seems that in the very attempt to challenge the dominanta, the city was in fact being scaled precisely to its proportions—just as Goldzamt and Sigalin had intended. It is my contention that Skrzypczak's Palace-disruptors actually consolidated the sovereignty of the Palace as *Stadt-kröne*. To follow the Stalin-era words of planner Stanisław Jankowski, their construction—despite its subversive intentions—realized in built form the "necessity of introducing" to the city center a "certain number of decidedly high buildings, subordinated to the general *dominanta* of the Palace and complementing it in the new Warsaw cityscape" (1957, 520).

But Skrzypczak had another, even more radical project in mind (one that was recounted to me by several Warsaw architects and critics as a sort of professional legend). "We dreamed," he recounts, "that everything above 140 meters can one day be chopped off the Palace. Along with its four side towers" (Bartoszewicz 1996). This, of course, could not have been a realizable notion as long as the bond of fraternal unity with the USSR hovered over Poland, so it remained strictly in the sphere of fantasy. What did the dreamer do, then, once the conditions of possibility changed after 1989? "Do you still want to clip the Palace now?" asks the journalist. "We've all changed our attitude to this building," the architect replies. "Let's leave it. Let it stay as a *memento mori*, a souvenir after that system."

Unlike the Palace, however, the square itself—as Sigalin is happy to admit—is a failure, "the solitary, expendable remnant of the 'monumental ensemble'" (Sigalin 1986c, 148), already from the 1960s onwards reduced

Figure 3.12. Warsaw by night, 2015. Photograph from the *Warsaw on Air* series by Maciej Margas.

to the role of central Warsaw's primary car park. Sigalin fantasizes about replacing this "inappropriate" function with a vast garden, an extension of the Świętokrzyski Park throughout the whole Parade Square as well as onto the Palace's immediate surroundings, thereby removing some of its excess "pomposity." These limitations notwithstanding, Sigalin—writing at the beginning of the 1980s—feels able to arrive at an overall assessment that a multifunctional central region of Warsaw is in place and operational, more or less as it had been planned by its designers. "The thought tossed [onto Warsaw] in 1952 [by Molotov]," says Sigalin, "has borne fruit" (Sigalin 1986c, 149).

Notes

1. Planner Stanisław Jankowski describes Warsaw's communication arteries "as compositional connectors carrying the scale and thematic content of the city center to the centers of the city's districts" (1957, 520).

2. See Murawski (2009) and Martyn (2001) for more on the ideologized use of Canaletto's cityscapes in the postwar rebuilding of the city.

3. *Varsaviana* is the locally used term for academic and popular literature, historical documentation, and trivia devoted to Warsaw.

4. The eighteen-story art deco (sixty-six meter) Prudential Insurance Building (1931–1934) was the tallest building in Warsaw and second highest in Europe before 1939. Partially destroyed, it was reopened in 1954 as Hotel Warszawa, featuring some new Stalinist ornamentation courtesy of its original architect, Marcin Weinfeld. The first Warsaw high-rise, the neomedieval fifty-two-meter Cedegren/PAST telephone exchange building, was opened in 1908. It was the scene of heavy fighting during the Warsaw Uprising but stands in modified form today.

5. Goldzamt scales various Warsaw buildings to the dimensions of the Palace in even greater detail (1956: 481). See also Skrzypczak's comments later in this chapter.

6. Ogrody Łazienkowskie (the Royal Bath Garden) is a seventy-six-hectare park, the largest in central Warsaw, laid out in its present form during the final decades of the eighteenth century by King Stanisław August Poniatowski. Opened as a public park in 1918, the Łazienki Gardens were—intriguingly enough—managed by the Palace of Culture Administration Bureau between 1958 and 1973.

7. The Varsovianization of the Palace demanded in 1955 was achieved—in practice—partly as municipalization and formally consolidated in the aftermath of the fall of the PRL in 1989 (chap. 5).

8. *Attics* were roof crenellations widely employed during the Renaissance in Poland and considered from the nineteenth century onward as part of the Polish national style. They make a notable early appearance in Stefan Szyller's Warsaw Poniatkowski bridge. See Szyller (1916) and Omilanowska (2008).

9. The Odra had additional significance for the PRL government, as it marked the new eastern border with Germany, having been reclaimed from the former Reich in 1945.

10. During the 2000s, some politicians—notably the left-wing mayoral candidate Marek Balicki—raised the possibility of actually moving the city hall to the Palace of Culture.

11. The MDM (built 1950–1952 and designed by a team comprising Sigalin with Jan Knothe and Zygmunt Stępiński) was a large housing estate and a model piece of Stalinist urban planning, integrally connected to the Palace through its position just south of the Palace along Ulica Marszałkowska. I expand on this issue of the scalar relationship between the Palace and Warsaw, with reference to recent anthropological work on scale, in Murawski (2016, 2017c).

12. St. Paul's Cathedral also appears in the transcripts of recent architects' meetings devoted to the Palace (see chap. 5, p. 164).

13. Specifically, two different kinds of mushrooms in a borscht, a popular soup. A Polish culinary equivalent of "too much of a good thing."

14. During a public discussion I organized in June 2010, ex-Warsaw central district mayor Jan Rutkiewicz argued that it was partly the materials collected during these public consultations that convinced party leaders of the necessity to delay the plans. Rutkiewicz urged today's democratically elected decision-makers to be as responsive to the public as the despots of the Stalin era.

15. The Vienna Station was Warsaw's first railway terminus. Built in 1844–1845, it was replaced during the 1930s by Dworzec Główny (Main Station, destroyed during the war) and later the Central Station, sited a little to the west of the territory of the present Parade Square, between Ulica Emilii Plater and Aleja Marchlewskiego (today Jana Pawła II).

4

SITE-SPECIFIC

Varsovian Interpretations of the Palace

W HAT KIND OF THINKING ABOUT THE PALACE is done by the people who live in the city to which it was gifted? How have scholars, artists, and laypeople in Warsaw interpreted the ideological intentionality underlying the construction of the Palace as well as the Palace's interactions with numerous spheres of the city's everyday life? In other words, what kind of Palaceological work has been and is being done about the Palace in the field? This chapter is devoted to an examination of several different sorts of ethno-Palaceology: scholarly, artistic (site-specific) as well nonconscious or everyday Palaceology. These indigenous (or ethnomethodological) methods and perspectives served as points of departure for my own Palaceological work, whose contours I sketched in the Preface, in terms of the organization and categorization of my analysis as well as of my fieldwork methods.

Site-Specific Ethno-Palaceology

Most explicitly, the Palace functions as a context in the programs of the numerous artistic institutions located within or around it. Asked about the significance of site for their activities, the employees of the Dramatic Theatre (map P.2, no. 4), the Studio Theatre and Gallery (map P.2, no. 7), and the Museum of Modern Art (Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej, or MSN, map P.2, no. 24) keenly agreed that they could not imagine putting together their repertoires without incorporating substantial *Pałacowe* ("Palatial"; after my discussion above, I will use the term *Palaceological* here) elements into them. The notion of site specificity to which I refer has been interpreted by art critics in terms of the dialectic between "presence" and "absence" of physical space as well as discursive context (Kwon 1997, 2002), divided

into "assimilative" and "interruptive" categories (Deutsche 1992a, 1996) and examined in terms of its affinity to ethnographic practice (Foster 1996; Coles 2000).

My understanding of the Palace's impact on artistic practice taking place on-site relies a good deal on insights produced by the above authors, but their shared distaste for reductionist interpretations of the relation between site and work leads me back to Louis Althusser and his rendition of the Freudian concept of overdetermination. My justification for this deployment of Althusser is best expressed in the words of the Dramatic Theatre's dramaturge Dorota Sajewska (by training an anthropologist of theater), who told me, "My job in the theatre is to do context. And what's the point of inventing a new context, if there has been and already is something here, which is much more powerful than my own imagination?" By reference to the conscious on-site Palaceological activities of artists, dramaturges, and social scientists as well as the more or less unreflexive Palace thinking constantly underway throughout the building, I will expand a little on some of the ways in which a (necessarily limited) sample of the artistic activity taking place within and around the Palace feeds off this overdetermination.[1]

Director Paweł Miśkiewicz's reign at the Teatr Dramatyczny (2007–2012) was marked by three editions of the biennial Warszawa Centralna festival (Bodily Stigmatas 2008; Migrations 2010; Mystifications 2012), conceived by Miśkiewicz and dramaturge Sajewska as a systematic interrogation of the centrality (and marginality—understood in terms of cultural significance as well as spatial relation) with which the Palace and, by extension, the theater are saturated. In one of Miśkiewicz's characterizations, the idea of the project has been to investigate "what it means to *receive* a center as a 'gift' from someone, from an occupier, a stranger?" and the various ways in which the legacy of such a bizarre acquisition continues to play out today. The idea for the festival's name, Sajewska and Miśkiewicz told me, came from a German visitor to the theater who commented on the oddness of the name of Warszawa Centralna train station, located in the Palace's immediate vicinity. As Miśkiewicz said, "Warsaw must be the only city in Poland to have a 'central' railway station. All the other big stations are called *Główny* (Main)." Moreover, Sajewska described how the spatiality underpinning her team's interventions was far from being limited solely to the artistic aspects of the theater's activity. She made clear how far this interrogatory exercise constituted an attempt to critique, not merely to submit to the Palace's established spatial axes and corresponding social ties:

Figure 4.1. The main entrance to the Dramatic Theatre in 2008, during the first incarnation of the Warszawa Centralna festival. Created by user Cezary P on Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 4.2. The stage of the Dramatic Theatre, May 2010, during *Żywa Waluta* (*Live Currency*), a series of performances curated by Ana Janevski and the Museum of Modern Art. Photograph by the author.

"When we first arrived in the theatre as an alien, young body, we entered in an impudent way into the lives of the people working here. If somebody had sat in the same room for thirty years, we made them move their desk, say from the first to the second floor. We de-localised them."

Warszawa Centralna's second edition (which overlapped with another subproject entitled Plac Defilad, held in the year running up to the autumn launch of Migrations) was organized around the broadly interpreted theme of "migrations." Highlights included Greek director Michael Marmarinos's interpretation of Tadeusz Konwicki's Palace-centric novel *A Minor Apocalypse* (discussed below), entitled *Plac Apokalipsa*, which included sequences filmed in the Palace's cellars and immediate surroundings. In Sajewska's description, "we hired this Greek director and he juxtaposed Konwicki's book with Plato's *Republic* . . . we used Konwicki's book as a tool to make a play about Warsaw and the Parade Square." Meanwhile, a consciously ethnographic dimension was incorporated into a project by Dutch video artist Aernout Mik entitled *Communitas*, in which two hundred actors and extras were filmed in the midst of what appeared to be an occupation of the Palace of Culture by a political movement (prominently represented among which was Warsaw's Vietnamese community): cardboard models of the Palace danced around as the actors jostled with each other and waved banners.[2] From conversations with Mik, Sajewska, and Miśkiewicz, I gathered that the keywords were *ambiguity* and *utopia*.

Events were also staged in parts of the Palace into which the theater's program ordinarily did not stray ("intra-Palace migrations," "colonizations, annexations," as Sajewska described them), including American artist Julia Snapper's underwater opera in the Palace of Youth's marble swimming pool. Also notable was Swedish performance collective Poste Restante's "Asylum Frederic," so conceived to wrangle additional funding from the Polish Ministry of Culture's 2010 Chopin Year: an overnight sanatorium, attending to the "physical and spiritual" needs of tired city dwellers within the "safe haven" of Sala Mikołajska (a room once belonging to the theater, taken over by the Palace's administration for use in commercial events during the 1990s). In the words of the collective's members, this project constituted a transposition of "near-totalitarian Swedish welfarism into the ex-totalitarian context of the Palace."

Equivalent things were taking place in the other cultural institutions located within the Palace (though most had much smaller budgets than the Dramatyczny, Warsaw's best funded theater at the time). Over at Galeria

Figure 4.3. A still from Aernout Mik's *Communitas* (2010), showing a scene shot in the Palace's Congress Hall. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw.

Figure 4.4. Poste Restante's *Chopin's Heart*, a performance held in the Palace's Mikołajska Hall in November 2010. *Chopin's Heart* was commissioned by Teatr Dramatyczny in Warsaw and coproduced by Propaganda Foundation, MAP—Mobile Art Productions and the Polish Institute (Stockholm). At its premiere in Poland, the performance was called *Azyl Fryderyk*. Photograph by Dominik Czerski.
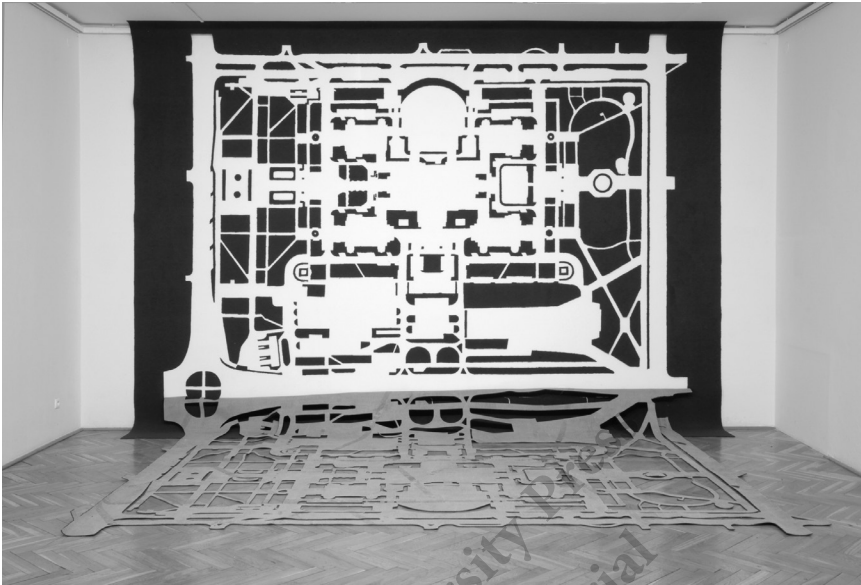
Figure 4.5. Simone Ruess's *Red Carpet* at her *Kręgosłup* (*Spine*) exhibition, Galeria Studio, 2010. Photograph courtesy of Simone Ruess.

Studio (part of Teatr Studio), artist Karolina Breguła planned to realize another explicitly ethnographic site-specific project called "Royal Apartment" in one of the Palace's halls: "ordinary people" ("for whom the Palace was always supposed to be, but never was," in Breguła's words) would be invited to spend a period of time living in the Palace and then to produce a "decree" (*rozporządzenie*) at the culmination of their residence, whether in the form of an artwork or a piece of writing, reflecting on their experiences with the Palace.[3] In October 2010, Berlin-based artist Simone Ruess held a solo exhibition at Galeria Studio, the starting point for which was a comment made by one of her Warsaw interlocutors that "our city doesn't have a spine." The artist claimed to have found the missing vertebra (*Kręgosłup*, the Polish word for spine, was the title of the exhibition) in the form of the Palace's core lift shafts. Among the other items in the exhibit, perhaps the most spectacular was a subjective plan of the Palace and Square (incorporating unplanned elements, like "desire lines" marked out by pedestrians in the snow) cut out from one of the Congress Hall's old red carpets (retrieved from a dog shelter to which it had recently been donated by the Congress Hall's custodian).

Figure 4.6. Simone Ruess carrying out a Palaceological interview with one of the Palace's lift operators in preparation for her *Spine* exhibition. Photograph by the author.

Of course, not all of the thinking that goes on within the Palace about the Palace is done by artists. Collegium Civitas is a private university for the social and political sciences, established in 1997 by members of the Polish Academy of Sciences and located between the Palace's ninth and twelfth stories. Around the time of the Palace's fiftieth anniversary celebrations in 2005, Collegium cosponsored two social science research projects about the Palace, which resulted in symposia held in the lecture theaters located in the Palace's ramparts and in two edited books of proceedings (Grębecka and Sadowski 2007; Wyka and Iwińska 2005). Indeed, a sort of applied anthropological aspect was incorporated into the very process of building the Palace. In accordance with an intention best articulated in 1954 by the architect Szymon Syrkus that "the construction of this edifice will be a great dialectical school for socialist construction, a mighty incentive for our [Polish] architecture . . . for our city design and our construction technology" (cited in Sigalin 1986b, 460), a Science and Research Station of the Polish Academy of Sciences was attached to the construction site. A minutely detailed
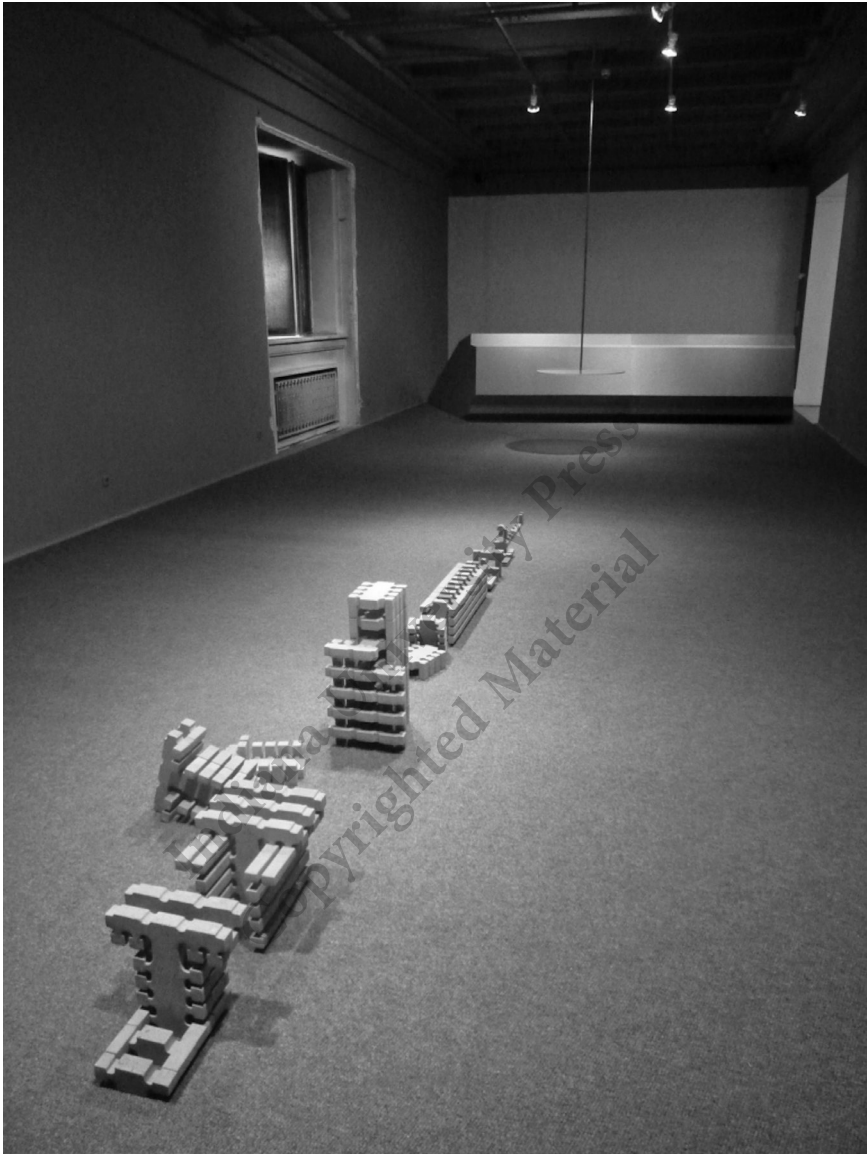
Figure 4.7. Simone Ruess's lift-shaft/spine laid out on the floor of Galeria Studio. Photograph by the author.

Figure 4.8. The Winter Garden in the Palace of Youth. Photograph by the author.

557 page book was published in 1957 (and reissued in 2005), consisting of twenty-three chapters dealing with everything from the hydrogeological constitution of the Palace's foundations (Marciński 1957), the mechanisms operating the Palace's high-speed elevators (Czujkowski 1957), the design of bricks (Gołąbek 1957) and prefabricated concrete elements (Wiślicki 1957b) to the organization of the construction site (Wiślicki 1957a; Thierry 1957) and the Palace's relationship with Warsaw's historical urban landscape (Jankowski 1957). In the words of Alfred Wiślicki's introduction to the volume, "The construction of the Palace of Culture and Science, carried out in the center of Warsaw, allowed our engineers, economists, technicians, construction masters and laborers, to acquaint themselves with Soviet methods of work not merely through specialist literature, but through their personal encounters with the 'everyday life' of Soviet construction" (1957c, 7).[4]

Furthermore, the Palace's architectural power also possesses a striking tendency to manifest itself visually, verbally, and physically, even when no sort of conscious Palaceological deliberation has taken place. I was struck, for example, while getting to know the Palace of Youth (PM,

Figure 4.9. Members of the Palace of Youth's IT workshop prepare their model of the Palace. Photograph by the author.

Figures 4.10 and 4.11. The fifty-fifth anniversary celebrations of the Palace of Youth, April 2010. Photographs by the author.
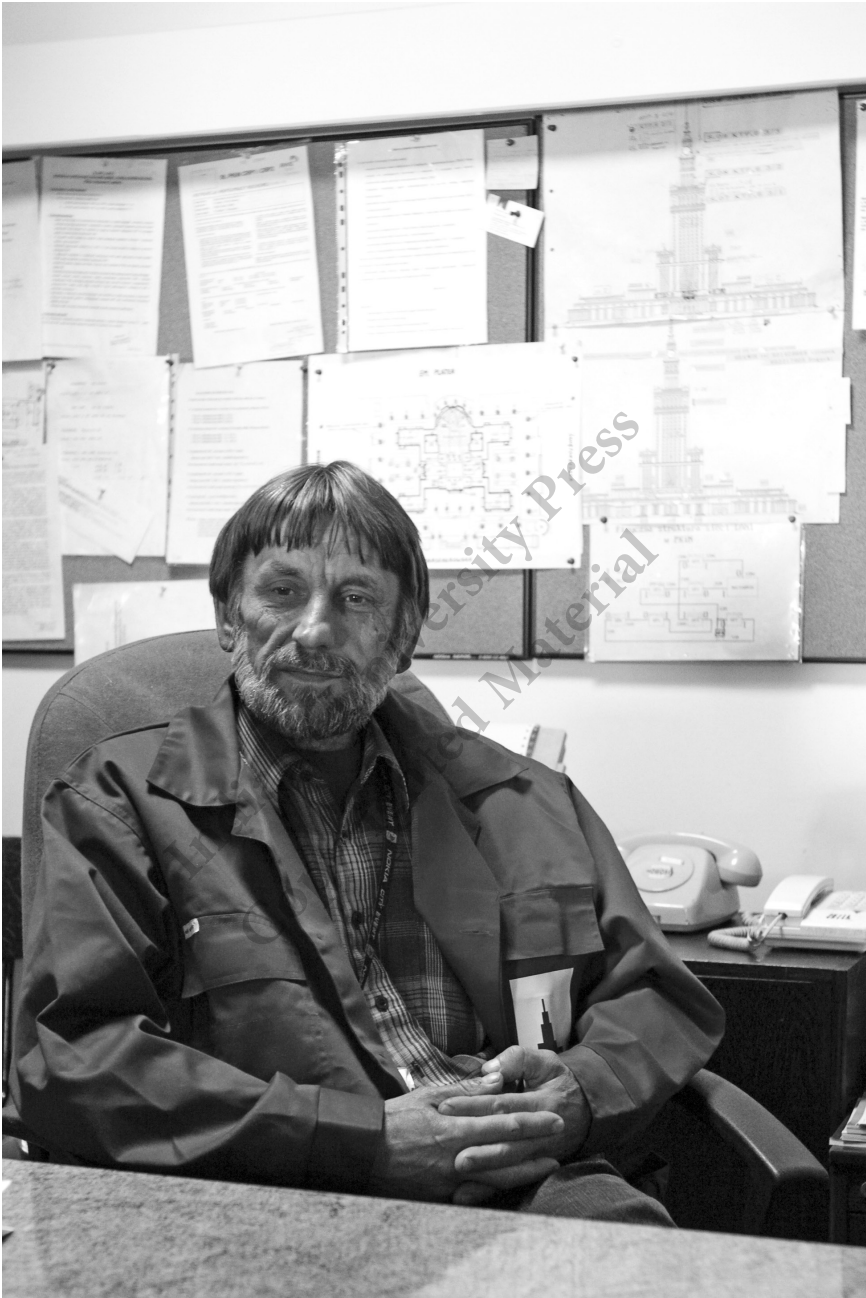
Figures 4.10 and 4.11. (*Continued*)

Figure 4.12. A Palace electrician in work clothes sporting the Palace logo, sitting in front of technical drawings of the Palace. Photograph by Bartosz Stawiarski.

Figure 4.13. Children's drawings, collected for the Palace's fiftieth anniversary celebrations in 2005, decorate the Palace corridors. Photograph by Katarzyna Iwańska.

or Pałac Młodzieży), by the proliferation of representations of the Palace's figure at every corner. While I was doing my ethnographic rounds, the PM was preparing for its own fifty-fifth anniversary celebrations: one half of the Winter Garden, its ceremonial indoor space, was occupied by an exhibition of students' paintings, etchings, and sculptures on the theme of Warsaw, the majority of which featured the Palace. Uncannily enough, the other part of the room was filled with members of the PM's Information Technology workshop, busily constructing an elaborate model of the Palace and its surroundings from old computer parts. Indeed, although the PM has its own logo, cardboard cutouts of the Palace's figure seemed to be scattered throughout the entire building and made for a copious presence on and around the stage at the PM's fifty-fifth anniversary gala in June 2010.

A similar over-representation (or "overdetermination," in the strict Freudian sense of the same thing being repeated in dream content "many times over" [Freud 1958, 283]) of the Palace's figure occurs throughout the remainder of the building: not only is the Palace administration's logo (since 1999, a minimalist representation of the building's shape set against a green background), ubiquitous on stationery, corporate gadgets (from USB sticks

Figure 4.14. An advertisement for a taxi company, featuring the Palace's logo, stands in a grand stairway connecting the Palace's second and fourth floors. Photograph by the author.

to confectionery), office doors, staff identification cards, and uniforms, but an oppressive profusion of children's drawings and paintings of the Palace (the spoils of a fiftieth anniversary national Palace-drawing competition for schools) also fills the administration's offices on the fifteenth and sixteenth floors as well as many communal corridors and lobby spaces elsewhere.[5]

Although my stated intention in this book is to engage with the multi-dimensionality of building-city relations, the data I have gathered has often taken a semiotic or discursive perspective as its point of departure. In other words, I frequently use an image of or narrative about the Palace (such as an architectural plan or an urban legend) to explore the many different levels of relationality that are attached to it. I was not always able to follow every thread far enough. Figure 4.15 is an image I hope encapsulates clearly what I mean by the above: pictured is a Palace of Youth fifty-fifth anniversary event for holders of the Gold Award, a much-coveted distinction for multidisciplinary achievement, bestowed on only 1,000 of the more than 350,000 young Varsovians who have passed through PM since 1955. Among those posing for my photograph—against the background, of course, of one PM's Palace-shaped cutouts—are four members of the Płochocki family (two sisters, father, and mother)—all of them Gold Award holders, with the exception of the mother, who, according to her daughter Monika, "feels pretty bad about it. She never went to PM, but she did sing on stage in the Congress Hall!" Monika told me later that she had even met her "first love" in PM.

I encountered many examples of this sort of transgenerational continuity—which coheres with the Palace's material permanence but bears no immediate association with its architectural form—while carrying out my fieldwork. In PM, I was introduced to art instructor Paweł Pośrednik. His name sounded familiar. I worked out that this was because my mother, my father, and architect Czesław Bielecki (see Murawski 2013 and chap. 6) had all independently named their recollections of *his* father, Ryszard Pośrednik, also an art instructor at PM, as a fond memory related to the Palace of Culture from their youth. Various other sections of the Palace also had a great number of employees who had inherited or gained their jobs through relatives or who had worked there for decades: a function and legacy, no doubt of the peculiar form of kin- and network-based job security that characterized state socialist labor economies (Pine 1995; Dunn 2000, 2004; Buchowski 2003; Stenning 2010). For much of the time I spent in the Palace, I was under the impression that the longest serving employee

Figure 4.15. Members of the Płochocki family pose at a ceremony for Gold Award holders in the Palace of Youth, April 2005. Photograph by the author.

Figures 4.16, 4.17, 4.18, and 4.19. Scenes from the Palace of Youth. Photographs by the author.

Figures 4.16, 4.17, 4.18, and 4.19. (*Continued*)

Figures 4.16, 4.17, 4.18, and 4.19. (*Continued*)

in the building was the official Palace chronicler Hanna Szczubełek—one of whose many Palaceological activities, incidentally, included the collection of untypical letters—who has worked on the fifteenth floor since 1960 (her position was briefly axed in 2003, but Szczubełek was reinstated after *Gazeta Stołeczna* wrote about her case—I elaborate on Szczubełek herself and the folder of letters in chap. 7).

However, I was eventually pointed in the direction of the director of the Museum of Technology, Jerzy Jasiuk, who has remained at the same institution—characterized as a "communist fossil" by some of my interlocutors, but attracting consistently high visitor numbers—since 1956 (and has been at its helm since 1972). What is more, while still a student, Jasiuk worked with the research station on the Palace construction site between 1953 and 1955 and wrote two of the chapters in the 1957 *Construction of the Palace* volume (Jasiuk 1957a, 1957b). Jasiuk finally stepped down as director in 2013 and passed away in December 2016. The institution, which he ran

Figures 4.20, 4.21, and 4.22. Scenes from the Museum of Technology. Photographs by the author.
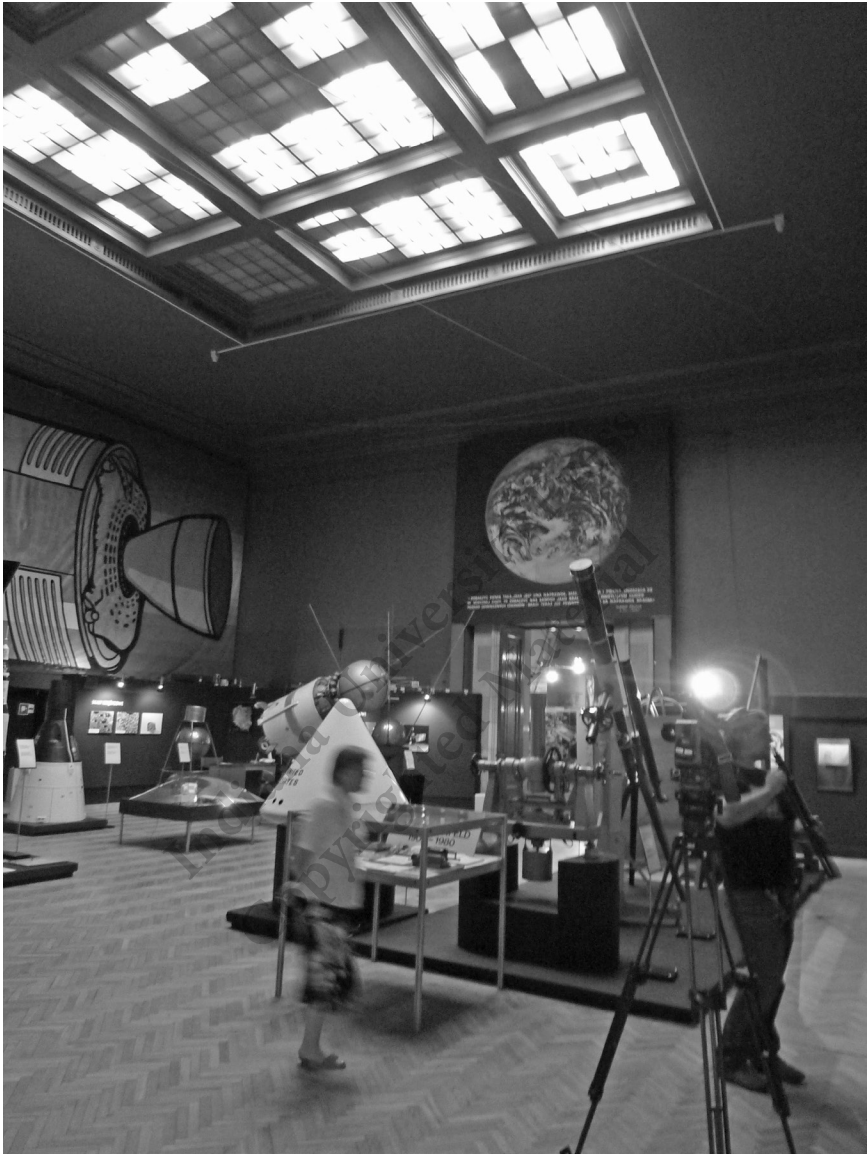
Figures 4.20, 4.21, and 4.22. (*Continued*)

Figures 4.20, 4.21, and 4.22. (*Continued*)

for so long and with which his name was synonymous, may well be passing away with him. The museum was restructured (in other words, financially downsized) following his retirement, its seventy-two remaining employees have their wages many months in arrears, and the Palace administration began issuing termination notices to the museum—a consequence of several years' worth of unpaid rent—in summer 2016.

To summarize the above observations, I came across plenty of material during my fieldwork that may have been conducive to juxtaposing with the insights produced by the large body of literature devoted to house societies or to understanding buildings (and cities) as transgenerational temporal *durées* or vectors of kinship structures (Lévi-Strauss 1982; Waterson 1990; Borneman 1992; Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995; Gell 1998; Vellinga 2007; Sissons 2010). Such an exercise would, however, necessarily have involved an all too extensive delving into the Palace's seductively interesting, very present, but all too rich past as well as too great a departure from the issue of the Palace's aesthetic and spatial relationship to its surroundings, which was intended to be and has remained my focus of this book.[6]

The manner in which the Palace is (consciously and unconsciously) present—visually, affectively, discursively, or otherwise—as an identifiable totality in the experiences of its users varies a great deal depending on place or context. Probably the larger part of people's everyday interactions with the Palace take place in the institutions located in its ground-level side wings—the Congress Hall, Kinoteka multiplex cinema, the Museum of Technology, the Palace of Youth and the theaters (including the puppet theatre; entertainment venues like the Dramatic Theatre's Cafe Kulturalna; the long-running (now extinct) Klub '55; and the Bar Studio, opened in 2013—and in the self-contained, large institutions located in the high-rise section of the Palace, like Collegium Civitas and the Polish Academy of Sciences (most of whose directorate and senior professors have offices in the Palace, between the twenty-first and twenty-sixth floors). Among my survey respondents, the most visited location was the thirtieth floor viewing terrace: over three thousand of them (60%) had been there; as an old Warsaw jokes goes, the Palace's terrace provides the best view in Warsaw because it is the only place from which you can't see the Palace.[7]

By comparison, the third most visited site (not counting the entrance lobby) was the Congress Hall (56%), the location for a wealth of momentous events throughout the Palace's history, the significance of some of which exceeded the context of the Palace itself. (See the appendix for a ranked list of most visited sites). Of course, the Polish United Workers' Party held its congresses here—party bigwigs would survey proceedings from a seventy-two-seat praesidium, mechanically lifted from under the stage before Congresses— including its eleventh and final meeting on January 30, 1990, when a despondent General Secretary Mieczysław Rakowski pleaded with comrades to hold their heads high and then dissolved the party as an angry mob waited outside.

But the Congress Hall was also the only venue in Warsaw big and prestigious enough to accommodate visiting Western superstars. The Rolling Stones played their first (and only) pre-1989 Eastern European concert there in 1967 (Mick Jagger ate a bunch of flowers onstage); the Jazz Jamboree festival, established in 1958 by diarist Leopold Tyrmand, was held in Kongresowa every autumn since 1965, hosting most of the jazz greats, including Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk, Dizzy Gillespie, Ray Charles and Ornette Coleman, not to mention two epochal concerts by Miles Davis in 1983 and 1988 (also Miles's only ventures beyond the Iron Curtain).[8] These events are remembered by my interlocutors, regardless of whether or not

Figures 4.23, 4.24, 4.25, and 4.26. Scenes from the Polish Academy of Sciences. Photographs by the author.

Figures 4.23, 4.24, 4.25, and 4.26. (*Continued*)

they were able to secure tickets, as totally electrifying, and although a Jazz Jamboree audience was unlikely to be occupied with detailed ruminations about the Palace's architecture, the affective and political intensity of their encounters with leading practitioners of the West's glamorous alterity (of course, concerts by top local performers were just as beleaguered, including those by officially approved folksy dance troupes) nevertheless consolidated their ties to the building and to an image of its totality.[9]

Coincidentia Oppositorum

Before I continue to unravel my own Palaceological interpretations, I'd like to first consider the ethno-Palaceological insights of two Polish theoreticians of culture whose interpretations of the ideological intentionality underlying the construction of the Palace (Sadowski 2009) and their fortunes in the culture of the Polish People's Republic between 1952 and 1989 (Benedyktowicz 1991) have influenced and guided my own. A 1991 article by Zbigniew Benedyktowicz, based on research carried out in the late 1980s and early 1990s, is the most widely cited anthropological analysis of the Palace to date. Benedyktowicz draws on a broad range of theoretical material, including Yuri Lotman's semiotics and Mircea Eliade's (1959, 1976) writings about the sacred, the profane, and the divine center. His empirical sources are also diverse—he does not make use of participant observation per se but relies on an expansive variety of press clippings from Warsaw and national newspapers and on materials taken from the Palace chronicles as well as from poetry, novels, diaries, and memoirs. Benedyktowicz's engages with Eliade's elaboration of the axis mundi as a symbolic expression of the confluence of worlds: the sacred and the profane, the high and the low, the living and the dead, the local and the foreign, the chaotic and the ordered. These worlds are often contradictory, seemingly incommensurable. Eliade's center is a *coincidentia oppositorum*, a meeting place of symbolic and mythical conceptual opposites.

Benedyktowicz brings in Lotman to undermine the dialectical stability of Eliade's analysis. His aim is to portray the "polyphony" and "polysemy" of the Palace, to underline its "unclear," "allusive," and "illusory" character, whereby "the content merely glimmers through the expression, and the expression merely hints at the content" (Benedyktowicz 1991, 18). Benedyktowicz depicts a Palace "filled with signs, gathering within itself diverse, often contradictory emotions. . . . A symbol concentrating contents alluding to

Figure 4.27. Students of the University of Warsaw's journalism department prepared a collective piece of writing about the Palace. Here, they divide their photographs of PKiN into "sacred" and "profane" categories, after Benedyktowicz (1991) and Eliade (1959). Photograph by the author.

the archaic symbolism of the world, but also underlining its illusory, un-real character" (18). Benedyktowicz refers to this dimension of the Palace's socialist-era existence, after the author Tadeusz Konwicki's (in whose work the motif of the Palace appears and reappears with obsessive frequency) rejection of the magical realist label, as a sort of "hyperPRLrealism" or "hyperPRLsurrealism" (Benedyktowicz 1991, 31).

Sequencing his account chronologically, Benedyktowicz begins with Stalin-era sources. He draws attention to a construction-era poem's oxy-moronic reference to the Palace as a "stone flower" (1991, 19). Benedyk-towicz shows how the poem's simultaneous presentation of the Palace's weightiness and eternity ("Solid as a rock!"; "Eternal like pride") is juxta-posed with allusions to dynamic spatiality and temporality ("Huge like a tower; Look, any time now / It'll catch up with the clouds"). Among poems produced during this time, Benedyktowicz locates a contrast between the cosmic, celestial sphere ("On the Palace spire / Where the wind whines / A crystal ball shines high in the sky," [Degler undated, cited in Benedykto-wicz 1991, 20]), the worldly domain of the everyday aboveground, and the mysterious, even demonic dimension of the subterranean. In the work of Hungarian poet Ferenc Pakozdy ("So it climbs above Warsaw, static below / A portent! A symbol! The heavens are stormed"[10]), Benedyktowicz sees a Marxist reinterpretation of Babel, via Lotman's reading of Tatlin's Tower as "'double inversion' of Babel: in the first place the values of heaven and earth were reversed, and in the second place the myth of the separation of the peoples was taken over by the notion of the union of peoples" (Lotman 1990, 111).[11]

The connection between the celestial, worldly, and subterranean realms is and has long been present in everyday urban and popular culture. Leg-ends about nuclear fallout shelters underneath the Palace, foot and railway tunnels connecting it to the speakers' tribune on Parade Square, even to the monumental headquarters of the Central Committee at the intersec-tion of Nowy Świat and Aleje Jerozolimskie (map P.2., no. 9)—and, in some version, stretching as far as Moscow itself—have been a source of fascina-tion for Varsovians since construction work began. The best known and most concerted articulation of these themes takes place in the novels of Tadeusz Konwicki, in particular *A Minor Apocalypse* (1983), which cul-minates in a sacrificial self-immolation at the Congress Hall steps, and *Wniebowstąpienie* (*Ascension*) (1982), which describes an ascent to purga-tory from the thirtieth floor viewing platform. Both books contain lengthy

sequences featuring the main protagonists wandering around a murky, chaotic labyrinthine world beneath the city.[12]

Despite the imaginary nature of this subterranean city—in actual fact, the Palace contains a mere two underground stories, quite modest for a construction of its height and bulk—Konwicki always insisted on its reality: "Underneath my own home, there are fifteen stories of nuclear shelter. And you're telling me that this is some abstract vision of a labyrinth!" (cited in Benedyktowicz 1991, 31). Indeed, as Benedyktowicz points out, speculation surrounding this tunnel-shelter-labyrinth was fed by censorship during the communist era, which shrouded information concerning the Palace's infrastructure in secrecy. What is more, the myth may as well have been true, even if it wasn't. The extent to which the notion of the underground city is "deeply embedded in reality" was laid bare after the Romanian revolution of 1989 revealed the existence of an enormous complex of tunnels and nuclear shelters underneath Ceaușescu 1980s neo-Stalinist People's Palace and the monumental axes of central Bucharest, which were built to correspond to it (32).[13] In chapter 7, I elaborate on the continuing existence of these subterranean themes in contemporary popular imaginings related to the Palace: how the Palace cellars have inspired the imaginations of theater directors, filmmakers, and former political dissident architects and how their feline inhabitants (and the falcons at the Palace's other vertical extremity) have become tamed, famed media darlings of late capitalist Warsaw; and how the notion of cellar shelters, inexecutable during the PRL era, has aroused the interest of municipal officials in the post-socialist city.

Benedyktowicz points out the universality of references to the Palace's gigantic scale in texts and descriptions of the building, "its height, heavenliness, its soaring movement. The height of the Palace fascinates, attracts, magnetizes" (1991, 21). But, as Benedyktowicz's sources acknowledge, it is not only the Palace's external dimensions that border on the incredible—the first visitors to the Palace's interiors reported becoming "dizzy from an excess of sensations" (Ciszewski 1955, cited in Benedyktowicz 1991, 26), whereas a journalist from *Życie Warszawy* admitted that the "enormity of the Palace's uses overwhelms. I stand filled with helpless admiration, faced by this mass of rooms. I have the feeling that never in my life will I be able to explore the entire Palace" (Koźniewski 1955, cited in Benedyktowicz 1991, 27).

It is worth noting that although neither Eliade nor Benedyktowicz refer to classical accounts of the sublime, there is clearly a strong overlap here.

Benedyktowicz notes how the Palace's association with various forms of visual, affective, or experiential excess forms "positive" and "negative" myths simultaneously. His observation, after Eliade, that the "*coincidentia oppositorum*" is also a "*coincidentia tremendum et fascinosum*" (1991, 28) strongly recalls Burke's rendition of the "delightful horror" (1958, 67) of the sublime. And the intensity with which the Palace's enormity was felt and expressed by users and designers brings to mind Kant's definition of the "[mathematically] *Sublime*" (Kant 2007, 78). Certainly, the manner in which figures pertaining to the Palace's dimensions were disseminated by newspapers, school group, and workgroup curricula suggests an intention to cultivate a suspended, a priori sense of scalar awe, as well as, if not rather than, to accommodate the Palace into a comparative, empirically apprehensible register of dimensions. As a February 1954 article in a local newspaper from the city of Szczecin felt confident to declare, any twelve-year old primary school pupil in the country is well prepared to respond "without hesitation" to a factual inquiry about the Palace by reciting, "The height of the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw is 227 meters; its facade is one quarter of a kilometer long; it has a volume of 800,000 cubic meters; the Congress Hall will accommodate 3,700 people" (*Gazeta Szczecińska* 1954).

Folder of Untypical Correspondence

Moving away from Stalin-period official texts, Benedyktowicz narrates the diverse themes contained within the "folder of untypical correspondence" held by the Palace's administration long-serving official chronicler, Hanna Szczubełek, as evidence that the Palace's "magnetism" draws Warsaw's inhabitants to itself not only visually and physically but also psychically (Benedyktowicz 1991, 27). The folder contains miscellaneous letters addressed to the Palace, classed as eccentric and not compatible with the competencies of any section of the Palace's administration. A large portion of these letters (many addressed "Dear Palace") constitute a *votive corpus* of requests to the Palace itself as an anthropomorphic entity endowed with causal agency or an administrative unit representing the Palace or residing within it, including the Palace's administration but also the general secretary of the party or a nonexistent body such as the "Palace President," to intervene in urgent social, political, or personal issues. In Benedyktowicz's summary, "faith in [the Palace's] power of dispute-settlement and need-fulfillment is mixed up here with the characteristic symbolism of the center" (ibid., 27).

Furthermore, says Benedyktowicz, these letters are "replete with pathology (also in the deeper meaning of the word: suffering) and madness, so often situating themselves in the vicinity of the *sacrum*. The Palace seems, like every *sacrum*, to attract madness" (ibid., 27).

For the vividness of these letters, and for the survival of many of their themes in the post-1989 period, I will devote a little space below to summarizing their contents, loosely following Benedyktowicz's own classification system. Broadly speaking, the letters pertained to the following categories: the Palace's sacred function ("Dear Father Christmas, I know you live in Warsaw in the Palace of Culture on the top floor. Pay me a visit at Christmas and bring me an air mattress"); dispute resolution ("Dear Palace, help, my neighbor has occupied my field"); a sort of ur-archival omnipotence (a letter addressed to the "Fortified Archive of the Palace of Culture" requests the provision of missing parts for a rare make of radio); demonic power (a letter addressed to the "State Palace of Culture, Department of Recruitment and Destruction" contains the following request: "please destroy . . . and her three children, named. . . . These are people needlessly punished with annihilation. Starve them at this last moment as quickly as possible."); business offers ("Dear Director of the Palace of Culture . . . I would like to sell objects worth approx. half a million złotys. Like objects for palaces, churches or museums"); requests for creative sponsorship (an artist inquires into the possibility of the Palace hosting Poland's only Museum of Matchstick Art, proposing to "break the world record for vertical constructions" by building matchstick models of the Palace[14]); for assistance with academic research (a retired physicist from Gdańsk would like to "begin recording lightning bolts on the Palace of Culture. Please allow me to install an isolated tip on the spire of the Palace, connected by a concentric cable to a recording instrument on the highest floor of the Palace. I will also require an apartment adjacent to this observatory because of night work, as well as two assistants"); offers of employment ("Wanda TL" advertises her services as, among others, "personal courier of the General Secretary," "Cheff of Security Service of Poland" [*sic*], the protection of embassies and other diplomatic territories and of "congresses and international meetings on the so-called antipodes"); abuse and grievances (one sender, upset at not having received a reply to his previous letter, complains that it must have "found its way into the hands of some mentally ill department head. I am not surprised, that you employ such mentally ill heads of departments. The whole of your socialist youth is mentally ill."); allusions to the Palace's "healing

power or its particular climactic characteristics"; appeals to the highest state authorities (one letter is addressed to "General Secretary Comrade Edward Gierek, Congress Hall" and contains an invitation to attend the 1978 Poznań Trade Fair; another, from 1989, to the "Ideational President of the WKPB-PRL in the Polish Republic" recommending that "Polish pharmacies" commence a "new geography of industrial production" divided according to "old maps" and encompassing myriad goods including "shoes, stockings, underwear, not only for women . . . except rapeseed oil and hemp fabric").

Another letter, from 1974, is addressed to the "CRZZ Congress Hall,"[15] complaining that "the youth goes around without overcoats" and proposing the creation of a "5% unemployment fund for citizens aged between 16 and 70. Refusal will lead to war or half-atomic bombs will fall on Warsaw, against which—as undersigned—protest the Inhabitants of Warsaw." Others have an eschatological dimension: a letter addressed to the "Polite Government of the Palace of Culture" from "I, Leon, the Son of the First Creator" threatens "the Real Government" that "the great troublemaker will overturn the earth's globe, because the time has come in full. For you to return at least some of my debts to me, via the postman." Others still appear to address the Palace's sacral, exotic, and local connotations simultaneously: a letter from 1976 addressed to "the Palace of Culture Hindu Burial Site at the junction of Zielna, Wielka, Złota, Chmielna, Śliska, Aleje Jerozolimskie"[16] contains a "poem for a negro melody, a song dedicated to the month of Warsaw."

Benedyktowicz, whose research into the Palace continued until the early 1990s, places some emphasis on the fact that no letter in the folder he examined dates from after 1989, the year the power center most of the above pleas and grievances were directly or indirectly addressed to collapsed. During my time in the Palace, I revisited the folder, which Hanna Szczubełek (who celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of her employment in 2010) continues to keep. The letters, in fact, have not stopped coming. If anything, they have increased in frequency, and the intensity of emotions articulated in them has not waned. I will update Benedyktowicz's analysis of these untypical letters in chapter 7.

Information Torture

Also invoking Lotman's text on St. Petersburg (1990), literary scholar Jakub Sadowski characterizes Stalinist urbanism as stifling the essential

self-organizing semiotic heterogeneity of the urban environment. "The city of totalitarian culture," writes Sadowski, "is a homogenous mythological narrative." In "non-totalitarian conditions," the city, "in a natural manner, constitutes a heterogeneous narrative containing sub-narratives pertaining to diverse mythologies" (Sadowski 2009, 115). "Totalitarian culture" is a "culture of mythological monopoly" that aspires to "transform into its own language all of the mythological narrations encountered in the city" (113).

Sadowski's most interesting observations pertain to what he calls, following architect Mieczysław Kozaczko, the "outscaled" and "information-poor" (ibid., 122) characteristics of the totalitarian city. These render its spatial and semiotic "density" equivalent to that of a "traditional small town" hierarchically organized around a central point rather than that of an ordinarily "polycentric" large city comprising a joined-together collectivity of previously discrete settlements (see chap. 6). According to an intriguing (but inadequately explained) quantification mechanism developed by Kozaczko and cited by Sadowski, the dimensions of Warsaw's Parade Square correspond to those of the maximum possible ensemble size in a polycentric large city (800 horizontal meters and 46 hectares, or 158 acres), but its low "informational content" (comprising only one major building) is equivalent to that contained within the maximum possible ensemble size in a small town or city district (250 meters and 6.25 hectares, or 15.4 acres).[17]

Deploying another of Kozaczko's unit measurements, Sadowski writes, "an urban fabric equipped with only one central frame of reference can carry a mere 9 bytes of spatial information [as opposed to 12]. And so, a large urban entity comes to contain the informational capacity characteristic of a small town, whose area, in a non-totalitarian cultural context, would not exceed 6.25 hectares" (Sadowski 1995, 123). To walk around the Parade Square, says Sadowski, citing Kozaczko's concept of "information torture," is like reading or listening to the same sentence repeated over and over again. Negotiating the six hundred meters along Marszałkowska (the very stretch to which Sigalin and the other planners of the 1940s and 1950s attached so much significance), one "remains within the sphere of one spatial *dominanta*: The Palace of Culture." Its figure, says Sadowski "dominates over the space of the entire ensemble as well as over the space of the entire city" (Sadowski 1995, 125). By contrast, an equivalent stretch of a "traditional city" would deliver to the walker several "new types of visual stimuli" (126).

Not only is the homogeneity of the socialist city reinforced by low spatial density and the visual monotony of its component parts, the entire urban organism is organized around its connection to only one central ensemble (I return to the issue of centrality in chap. 6). The homogeneity of the socialist city is predicated on its monocentricity. In the case of Warsaw, the construction of the Palace and Parade Square entailed the pushing of Warsaw's "traditional centers" (among which Sadowski names Plac Zamkowy, Plac Teatralny, Plac Saski, and the Old Town Square) into the "semiotic peripheries" of the city—Sadowski refers to this process as "semiotic violence" (ibid., 197). The Palace's location at the confluence of the city's most important communicational and visual arteries, its saturation with axial status markers, like the distance obelisk and the sundials, as well as its functional importance ensured that the Palace "organized the geographical and socio-cultural space of the national community, becoming the center of the Polish cosmos" (ibid., 197). Commenting on the debt owed by the Warsaw Palace to Moscow's Palace of the Soviets, Sadowski describes the imagined "role" of the Moscow structure as the "essence of the metropolitan text, the primary point of reference for the collectivity, the axis in the Soviet cosmos" (ibid., 223).

Unsurprisingly, given the tenor of Sadowski's analytical categories, he considers the semiotic strategies of the totalitarian city to be limited in their effectivity. "Informational torture" produces "informational discomfort" in the recipient and a refusal to absorb the communicated content as intended. In this rendition, the semiotics of the Stalinist city do not add up—they do not produce an effect consistent with their underlying intentions. One of the "cultural texts" cited by Sadowski is the ending of a heavily reproduced poem about the Palace, written in 1952 by one of the era's best loved poets, Jan Brzechwa (2009, 167):

> In Poland's heart, seen from afar.
> It will last, like faith in mankind.
> It will last, like the love for a child.
> Like friendship, of the Soviet kind.

Soviet friendship is no more, but—contra Sadowski—the Palace's semiotic (and nonsemiotic) bind with Warsaw has increased in intensity. To understand how this intensification of the Palace's relationship with Warsaw has occurred, it is time to look not only at the official architectural culture of Stalin-era Poland, which chapters 1 to 3 focused on, but also into broader

domains of the Palace's urban existence in twenty-first century Warsaw, which constitute the core concern of this book's remaining chapters.

Notes

1. Of course, the content of responses to the Palace site is always impacted by numerous other factors, including funding constraints, curatorial intentions, and the trajectory imposed by the artist's own oeuvre (see Gell 1989). For descriptions of the site-specific artistic experimentation that took place at Berlin's Palast der Republik (under the slogan *Volkspalast*) before its demolition in 2008, see Ekici (2007) and Bach (2017).

2. Mik may have been referring here to a regular event at the Congress Hall, which attracts over two thousand members of the Vietnamese community, who gather to listen to musicians and entertainers, some of whom travel from Vietnam itself or from other sites of the diaspora to perform.

3. Breguła was also the author of *Widzi Mi Się Pałac* (*I See the Palace*, 2005), a well-known series of photomontages featuring the Palace's shadow juxtaposed with iconic representations of various events from its fifty-year history. See Dorrian (2010) for an analysis.

4. A detailed, richly illustrated 2005 special issue of the architectural conservation journal *Renowacje i Zabytki* (Hardt 2005) constitutes something like a contemporary updating of *Budowa PKiN*.

5. This can be explored further in terms of its connection to "repetition compulsion," as explored in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud 1989).

6. Architectural historian Waldemar Baraniewski told me about his research on the three years of the Palace's construction (1952–1955): "I have almost a whole room of my house filled with papers and various documents from this research; I feel intimated just seeing it." This research has produced some articles, but the intended book—the definitive art historical account of the Palace's construction—is still (many decades) in the making.

7. Parisians tell an equivalent joke about the Eiffel Tower.

8. The Palace has also played a prominent role in the development of Polish alternative culture. The narrative of *Beats of Freedom* (Gnoiński and Słota 2010)—a somewhat propagandistic documentary about PRL-era Polish rock premiered in the Congress Hall—is organised around the Palace's "paradoxical role" as "the most hated building in Poland" and "embryo of resistance" at the same time; its heroes, aging Polish rockers (including Tomek Lipiński of Brygada Kryzys, whose first *samizdat* vinyl cover from 1982 features the Palace toppling over) are interviewed in the Palace lobby or at hotel room windows featuring views of the building.

9. American jazz perfomers' visits tended to be financed by the State Department's famous "jazz diplomacy" program (Eschen 2004; Davenport 2009; Hatschek 2010). At the Miles Davis 1988 concert, the master of ceremonies even announced that the event had been made possible thanks to generous funding from the American embassy. See Yurchak 2005 (158–238) on the "Imaginary West" in the fashion and music of the late socialist USSR.

10. This is a reference to Marx's comment that the Communards of Paris are "storming heaven" (Marx and Engels 1975, 221–222, letter to Kugelmann), also invoked by Lotman in his

remarks on the Marxist inversion of the Babel myth. Furthermore, in one of his descriptions of the activities of BOS, Sigalin is said to have written, "We are a squad of madmen, storming the heavens" (Kołodziejczyk 2012).

11. Lotman also makes this connection to Tatlin's tower, "easily recognizable as a recreation of the image of the tower of Babel in the picture by Breughel the Elder" (Lotman 1990, 110).

12. See chapter 7 for more about the "Palace as Golgotha" and its practiced and narrated link to tragic death. Eva Wampuszyc (2013) has written about the symbolism of the Palace in Konwicki's books.

13. Similar stories abounded about Beijing and Moscow's secret underground lines (see Colton 1995). For more on Bucharest's Palace, see Duijzings (2011).

14. This calls to mind Gell's (1992) reference to a matchstick model of Salisbury Cathedral in his text on art as a "technology of enchantment." Matthew Rampley (2005) has compared this to Kant's definition of the mathematical sublime.

15. Centralna Rada Związków Zawodowych (The Central Council of Trade Unions).

16. The prewar streets atop which the Palace and square now stand (chap. 3).

17. These happen to be almost the exact dimensions of the Parade Square. It is worth mentioning also Bruno Taut's characterisation of the city crown, a "rectangular area of 800 x 500 metres. It is a tangent to the main road arteries, which for reasons of traffic and beauty do not run through its middle, but tangent to it and radiate and wide arcs from there" (Altenmüller and Mindrup 2009, 128)

5

VARSOVIANIZATION

The Palace Complex after 1989

THE CENTRAL THREAD OF THE SECOND PART OF this book is a description of how Warsaw's Palace Complex has contributed to the unmitigated failure (so far) of a grand urban design project: the redevelopment of Parade Square, vaunted as a priority issue by successive city administrations since the fall of the PRL in 1989. What distinguishes the Warsaw case from the numerous twentieth-century planning flops familiar to students of anthropology and adjacent disciplines—among them James Holston's (1989) Brasilia, Stephen Kotkin's (1997) Magnitogorsk, Victor Buchli's (2000) Moscow Narkomfin Communal House, and Stephen Collier's (2011) Belaya Kalitva—is that failure here is not an unexpected consequence of overplanning. Instead, I argue, the post-1989 existence of the Palace in Warsaw makes for an unmistakable instance of the supreme effectivity of a state socialist economic aesthetic over a democratic-capitalist one, or, more broadly, of a high modernist economic aesthetic over a late capitalist one.

Although my description does connect the Parade Square planning morass (*marazm*) to the success of the Palace's design, I do not seek—like recent accounts of failure in anthropology influenced by assemblage theory, science, and technology studies and actor-network theory (Latour 1996; Hommels 2005; Miyazaki and Riles 2005; Weszkalnys 2010; Abram and Weszkalnys 2013; Buchli 2017; Jeevandrampillai et al. 2017)—to account for the symmetrical intertwinement of failure and success, to portray them as generative of each other or to problematize the dichotomy between them. I am interested in showing the interdependent relationship between success and failure, but one that does not undermine their categorical stability. The failure of attempts to overcome the Palace's social stranglehold over Warsaw is, then, in part a function of the Palace's (and its Complex's) own

remarkable success. More precisely, it is a function of the success of the economic aesthetic and economic morphologic of totality—and the noncapitalist public spirit—built into the Palace by its Stalin-era designers, patrons, and ideologues, and still somehow enduring today.

The Palace's 1989: Empty Plinths and Near Privatization

What immediate impact did the regime shift of 1989 have on the Palace's social, economic, and ideological lives? Writing about iconoclasm in post-Soviet Moscow, Russian cultural critic Mikhail Yampolsky points out that monuments were being taken down during the early 1990s, at a time when inflation was running riot, when the "cyclical stability of static time" (Yampolsky 1995, 108) that characterized the temporality of the Soviet regime was replaced by a mad lurch forward. Inflation is also accompanied by the rendering obsolete of metallic money, which is replaced with ever-higher denominations of paper: "The disappearance of coins—those micromonuments for personal use—like the disappearance of monuments on the public squares, marks both the destruction of cocoons of temporal stability and cyclical recurrence, and the switching on of a swift, linear time" (108). The suggestion in Yampolsky's text is that iconoclasm is a structural necessity at moments when fixed rhythms are toppled and no power is able to halt the unpredictable leap into the future.

Poland did experience a burst of hyperinflation after 1989, peaking at 586 percent in 1990 (Kołodko et al. 1992; Domański 2003), and several statues were indeed taken if not knocked down in the early 1990s, most notably that of Polish nobleman and Bolshevik secret police (*Cheka*) founder Feliks Dzierżyński. Correspondingly, the square named after him, Plac Dzierżyńskiego, was returned to its pre-1939 name (Plac Bankowy).[1] The Palace itself, however, remained relatively steadfast in the face of this tumult. Although loud calls to knock it down as an act of catharsis were made, numerous people who were close to power around the time of the transformation assured me that these were rarely considered as anything other than polemics: the expense would have been too great and was far outweighed by the diverse functions fulfilled by the Palace in a then near-bankrupt city. One properly Yampolskyan episode, which did occur during the capitalist Palace's infancy, centers around a monumental bronze statue ("Friendship") of an embracing Soviet and Polish worker unfurling a

flag. The piece is by Alina Szapocznikow—who, after a brief period of mid-1950s flirtation with socialist realism, left for Paris and became one of the leading avant-garde sculptors of her time (Jakubowska 2011; Filipovic and Mytkowska 2012)—and had stood on a plinth in the Palace's main entrance hall since its opening. In May 1992, the Palace's then-director Waldemar Sawicki wrote the sculpture onto a list of items (including a meat cleaver, a fake Christmas tree, and a kettle) destined for "physical liquidation" (Biełas and Jarecka 1998). That same year, the piece was sold for the price of scrap metal to an entrepreneur from the suburban town of Józefów and placed in the dead of night onto the back of a lorry; the outer arms of both of its figures had to be severed to fit the whole sculpture through the Palace's front doors. Although "Friendship" was tracked down in the late 1990s and photographed standing in the yard of a Józefów smallholding, various attempts to return it to the Palace (including my own) have failed (Urzykowski 2007, 2008). The plinth remains jarringly empty, although it serves as a Christmas tree stand every year, and well-informed tourists sometimes photograph themselves posing on it after the manner of Szapocznikow's figures.[2]

The most far-reaching wild capitalist scheme to appear during the early 1990s was the notion of actually privatizing the entire Palace. In May 1990, Polish-Virginian businessman John Kowalczyk signed a contract of intent with Warsaw mayor Stanisław Wyganowski—he planned to purchase the Palace from the city and to turn it into a profitable entity called Warsaw International Trade Center: The Palace (*Gazeta Wyborcza* 1991). Press reports from the time suggest that although Kowalczyk declared his intention to retain the Palace's unique features, he also planned to add glass appendages to the top of each of the Palace's four side towers, doubling their height and raising them up the level of the thirtieth-floor viewing platform. The Warsaw media expressed a keen interest in Kowalczyk's plans, but the developer broke off contact with his Warsaw business partners during 1991. The whole affair ended in tragedy when Kowalczyk was shot in the parking lot of one of his Virginia properties in May 1993, allegedly by his father-in-law, who objected to the developer's extramarital affairs (Jebb 2011).

Although the Kowalczyk episode's messy end put to rest any serious notions of the Palace's privatization, its ownership status did change after 1989. On May 27, 1990, the Palace was formally and freely handed over (that is to say gifted again, together with its public spirit) by the state treasury to the Warsaw municipality, and the municipality began renting office and leisure space within the Palace to private tenants. Some of these earliest tenancies

Figure 5.1. Alina Szapocznikow's sculpture *Friendship* in the entrance hall of the Palace of Culture, 1961. Photograph by Zbyszko Siemaszko, courtesy of the National Digital Archive.

Figure 5.2. Visitors photograph themselves on the empty plinth, 2010. Photograph by the author.

Figure 5.3. Queen's Casino, early 1990s. Photograph by Józef Mrozek.

were well saturated with the air of pioneering, untamed capitalism: in 1990, the somewhat ill-reputed Queen's Casino took over the old Kongresowa restaurant and nightclub underneath the Congress Hall, a notorious haunt of PRL elites and one of the socialist capital's only striptease venues (it was subsequently replaced by the flashy but small-time gangsterish Quo Vadis nightclub, and most recently by another gaudy venue, Klub Mirage). Between the 1990s and 2000, the old cinema wing of the Palace—home to three of Warsaw's best reputed studio cinemas, Przyjaźń (Friendship), Młoda Gwardia (Young Guard), and Wiedza (Knowledge)—was temporarily replaced by a haphazard but expensive department store.[3] In 1990, Palace Director Sawicki also began renting advertising space on the building's facade. The use of the Palace as a billboard stand is a practice that continued (although made recourse to fairly sparingly, at the discretion of the Palace's administration and the city's Architecture Bureau) until it was banned by Chief Architect Michał Borowski's 2006 local plan for Parade Square.[4]

The Square's 1989: Pope and Bazaar

A good moment from which to start examining post-socialist goings-on in the Palace's immediate surroundings is 1987, when change was already in the

Figure 5.4. The Palace's façade continues to be used for noncommercial advertising. Photographs by the author.

air but not yet secured. In June of that year, a sea (as opposed to a parade) of people converged on Plac Defilad again, for the first time since Gomułka's October 1956 rally. The occasion was the culmination of Pope John Paul II's third pilgrimage to Poland since his election in 1978. The Pope's visits had been unambiguously and intentionally politicized from the beginning: in August 1979 on Warsaw's Victory (now Piłsudski Square), he boomed, citing loosely from the New Testament and leaving little to the imagination: "Let thy spirit descend, and renew the face of the earth. *This* earth" (John Paul II 1979). In 1987, however, the set design and choreography of the event were of greater political significance (and are better remembered) than the words spoken by the pontiff during his hour-long homily.

Plans were initially made to hang a seventy-meter crystalline crucifix from the Palace's main facade in the spot ordinarily occupied by Lenin, crownless Eagles, or other elements of the PRL's symbology during May Day Parades, but these came to nothing (Passent 2004; Majewski 2011), apparently in the face of objections from the Soviet embassy, who did not want "any holy trinkets hung from our present" (Świerdzewska 2012). The Palace's facade remained bare, but an enormous altar, styled after organ pipes and centered on a crucifix wrapped in aluminum foil, was erected on top of the tribune, directly in front of the Palace's main entrance. As several hundred thousand people crowded into the square and surrounding streets, all eyes were focused on the altar. Although its pyramidal symmetry directly corresponded (and was therefore subordinate to) the form of the Palace, the weight of the occasion was such that the hierarchy was reversed: the Palace either seemed to become "part of" the altar (Zieliński 2012) or to be displaced by it (or even cosmically banished, as in Julian Bohdanowicz's 1987 cartoon).[5]

Dramatic as it was, the papal assault on the swaying Soviet hau lasted only for several hours. The day after the event, the altar was disassembled and Parade Square returned to its default late socialist configuration (by now, distinctly more car park than parade ground). Just two years later, however, the regime transformation gained irreversible momentum following the first (semi-) free elections to the Sejm, the Polish parliament, in June 1989.[6] Around the middle of 1989, the new order acquired instant material expression in the immediate vicinity of the Palace in the form of the infamous Parade Square bazaar.[7] After 1989, the regime lost the will and part of the legal framework for adopting repressive measures against street trade—which had been common throughout the PRL period but stifled by the
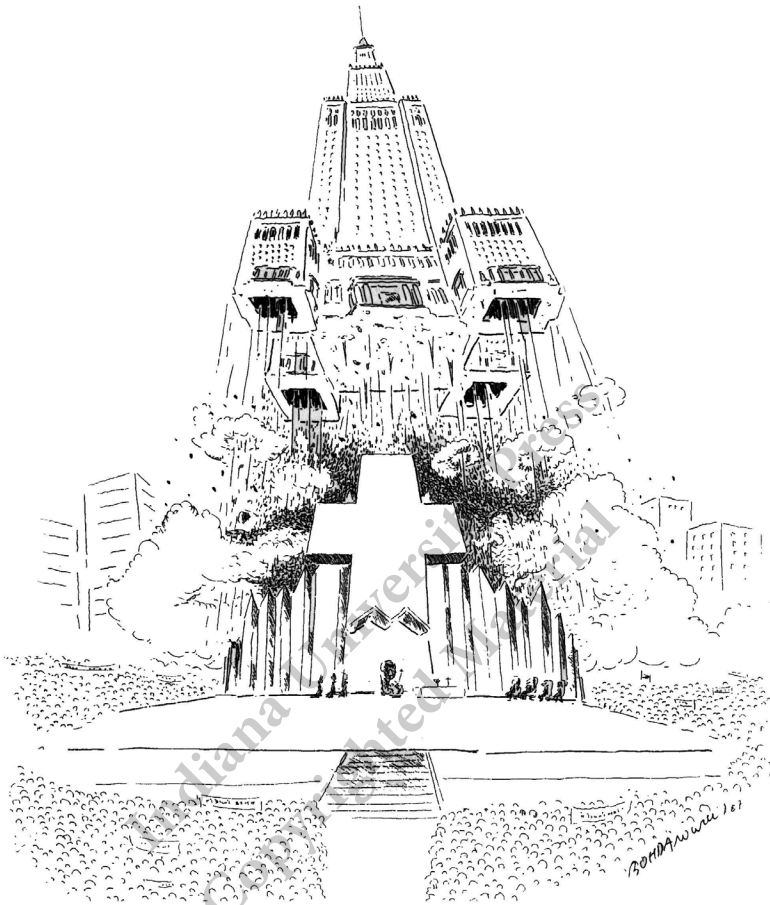
Figure 5.5. Julian Bohdanowicz's 1987 cartoon "Miracle on the Vistula." Courtesy of Rafał Bohdanowicz.

authorities—and al fresco retail became a prominent feature of life on the city's primary arteries. A concentration of entrepreneurs (Poles, Soviet citizens, Chinese, and Vietnamese) naturally converged on Parade Square—an enormous open space in the middle of the city. For the first couple of years, goods (clothes, cassettes, meat, consumer items) were sold from bits of fabric or plastic sheeting spread out on the ground, camp beds, and car boots as well as more or less permanent metal stalls, colloquially called jaws (*szczęki*) after their mouthlike double doors. In 1991, the municipality

Figure 5.6. The papal mass on Parade Square, 1987. Photograph by Lech Zielakowski, courtesy of the National Digital Archive.

Figure 5.7. Parade Square in 1994. In the foreground are the striped MarcPol and Universal trade halls and the Cricoland amusement park. Photograph by Piotr Gęsicki, Polish Press Agency.

embarked on a concerted effort to rein in the largely unregulated cosmopolitan collectivity of almost two thousand entrepreneurs in the Palace's shadow: having legalized the market toward the end of 1990, city councilors now banned movable trade on Parade Square, with the intention of clamping down on unregistered foreign merchants. Public functionaries stood on the square redirecting buses full of migrant stallholders to the stadium in Praga, on the other bank of the Vistula river.[8]

At the behest of Warsaw Central District (Śródmieście) Mayor Jan Rutkiewicz, the first pieces of architecture appeared on the square in the form of two matching corrugated market halls, into which stallholders (by now—in theory—all paying rent into the municipal coffers) were provided incentives to move: the red-and-white striped MarcPol (1991–2009), owned by infamous Warsaw retail entrepreneur and Parade Square property speculator Marek Mikuśkiewicz, and its blue-and-white twin Uniwersal

Figures 5.8 and 5.9. The Parade Square bazaar, early 1990s. Photographs by Józef Mrozek.

Figures 5.8 and 5.9. (*Continued*)

(1992–2005, fig. 5.7). Rutkiewicz's "pipes," however, accommodated only a small proportion of the merchants, and the problem of the jaws refused to go away until the erection in 1999 of the loftily named KDT (Kupieckie Domy Towarowe—Merchants' Department Stores), a mammoth, ten-thousand-square-meter covered marketplace that dwarfed the old pipes by a scale of three to one.

It is also crucial to note the existence on Parade Square between 1992 and 1995 of the raucous Cricoland amusement park, which eventually made way for the first (and so far only) permanent construction erected on the square since the Palace: the busiest station of the Warsaw metro system (named *Centrum*, of course), opened in 1998, together with the Frying Pan (*patelnia*, map P.2, no. 12), a small, submerged public space connecting the metro station to the network of pedestrian subways underneath the Marszałkowska/Jerozolimskie intersection.

Of particular interest is the extent to which Parade Square's post-1989 organic, microcommercial, and leisure infrastructure constituted an aesthetic (as well as political-economic and moral) negation of the Palace ensemble, as planned by Rudnev, Sigalin, and company.[9] Put differently, the most blatant testimony to top-down planning and state socialism in the

Polish capital immediately (in 1989) became enveloped by the city's most conspicuous material symptom of untrammelled laissez-faire capitalism. Some even embraced this development as a welcome exorcism of the square's Stalinist somberness: "I reacted with joy to the appearance of this bazaar at the foot of PKiN after 1989," wrote a well-known art critic in 1997; "at last this place has began to live" (Bartoszewicz 2008b).

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that the Parade Square's exorcism-by-chaos was to some extent a planned maneuver. Municipal officials themselves created the legal conditions of possibility for the bazaar to grow and develop in the first place (see also Kusiak 2012). What is more, these officials' actions were motivated not merely by pragmatic considerations but also by a conscious civic ideology (or anti-ideology) of anti-totalitarianism. As ex-mayor Rutkiewicz told me, "I put those sheds there in order to desanctify the Palace, to break the aura of a secular sacrum on Plac Defilad." And, he insisted, "even if these sheds achieved nothing else, for sure they did achieve this."[10]

Michael Herzfeld has drawn attention to the paradoxical way in which nation-states—via architecture and other means—attempt to paper over the cracks of functional and semiotic variability create an "illusion" of permanence (2014, 20, 33). In this regard, the municipal officials of 1990s Warsaw were doing something rather counterintuitive. In a reverse-Herzfeldian paradox of impermanence, they were attempting to shatter the Palace's own permanence by surrounding it with temporary anti-architecture. The double paradox here—as I describe later on in this chapter—is that the various pipes and sheds planted on Parade Square by successive administrators ended up themselves becoming much more permanent than they were intended to be.

The Many Failures of the Warsaw Central Region, 1992–2010

In May 1991, the Warsaw city authorities announced an international Competition of Ideas for what the accompanying pamphlet referred to—ignoring the undesirable presence of the bazaar—as the "empty and lifeless" (OW SARP 1992, iii) Warsaw City Core (ŚCW—Ścisłe Centrum Warszawy, encompassing Parade Square), supervised by the Association of Polish Architects (SARP) and the International Union of Architects.[11] On April 4, 1992, the jury, led by the postmodernist Rob Krier, selected from 297 entries

a design by the Brussels-based Warsaw architects Bartłomiej Biełyszew and Andrzej Skopiński.[12] Skopiński and Biełyszew's idea was simple and seductive: the Palace was to be surrounded (and concealed) by what came to be known as a circular boulevard (*kolisty bulwar)* of medium- or high-rise buildings (between eight and twenty-two stories, depending on the variant), also referred to as a *corso* or a crown (*korona*). In other words, if the Palace was already a Stalinist incarnation of Bruno Taut's *Stadtkröne* (chap. 1), then the B&S design crowned the crown. This concept, apparently unprecedented in the history of modern city design, was praised by the jury for its "successful approach to diminishing the symbolic position of the Palace of Culture, achieved mainly by the circular pattern, which divides the site and changes the axes" (OW SARP 1992, vii).

As might be expected, the idea immediately generated passionate controversies, and—bearing in mind that the 1992 competition results were not binding—the seventeen-year course (1991–2008) of their planned but ultimately unsuccessful implementation was anything but straightforward. Getting a grip on the progression of Parade Square's chimerical redevelopment is essential for understanding the sorts of spatial dynamics that emanated from and converged on the Palace during the two decades after the fall of the PRL. The brief rendition below is written from a perspective informed by Biełyszew and Skopiński's (embittered but good-humored) recollections of their adventures with the Palace Complex.

The first ten years following 1992 were marked by a stream of hiatuses and alterations. Following the formal and informal suggestions of planners, local and international experts, and agencies (notably the British Know-How Fund and the London consultancy firm Roger Tym & Partners), B&S broke their boulevard into more manageable subsections and altered the positioning of the streets surrounding the *korona* to make them correspond better to the pre-1939 layout.[13] The reason for this had as much to do with property law and economic imperatives as with aesthetic and ideological ones: the idea was to make it easier to involve prewar property owners in the development process. As architect Magdalena Staniszkis put it, "the closer the plan is to the old ownership structure (parallel streets), the easier it will be to realize." The "circular boulevard," she says, is "hardly practicable" if these plots are to be returned to the old owners (Gzell 2007, 5).

Biełyszew and Skopiński themselves, however—like post-socialist Howard Roarks (Rand 2005)—stuck steadfastly to the distinguishing characteristic of their design, the contest-winning crown, and—despite the lack

Figure 5.10. Biełyszew and Skopiński's winning competition entry for the Palace of Culture's surroundings, 1992. Image courtesy of Atelier B'ART.

of any tangible progress in pushing it close to realization—the korona survived a major municipal administrative reform in 1994 and the fancies of four successive Warsaw administrations, remaining the official face of the future Parade Square for the greater part of Warsaw's first two post-socialist decades.

And the architects had much vehement opposition to be steadfast in the face of. At a public debate on April 16, 1992 (reported in Frydrkiewicz 1992), less than two weeks after the competition results were announced, the well-known PRL-era satirist and actor Stanisław Tym (no known relation to the London consultant) argued that the winning design is "completely contradictory" to the competition conditions: "If you stick a compass in the Palace and make a circle, then this is magnifies the Palace, it doesn't diminish it" (ibid.).[14] He was seconded by the architect Jacek Damięcki, who alluded to the "monocentric" character of the totalitarian political order, which is opposed to the "polycentricity" proper to democracy (ibid.). Damięcki's remarks suggested in no uncertain terms that the very existence of the Palace

is an obstacle to the establishment of a democratic spatial order: "the point of the competition was to find a solution, which would allow us to pass from monocentrism to polycentrism. If no such entry was submitted, then this means that the premise of keeping the Palace in place is false" (ibid.). An equivalent judgment was contained in the 1998 British consultants' report, which pointed out that "despite the intention of distributing the spatial role of the Palace of Culture and Science by limiting views of the building and grouping tall structures around it, the circular boulevard increases its role, because the tower finds itself at its geographic center" (Tym 1998, 18).

Mayor Piskorski: Civic Intimacy

Biełyszew and Skopiński identify the mayoralty of Paweł Piskorski (1999–2002) as the golden age of the circular boulevard project. Although their attempts to translate the competition design into a legally enforceable local development plan were rejected by the city council during this period, Biełyszew singles out Piskorski as "the only one [mayor] . . . who wanted to see this project through to the end. If he had stayed on for one more term, it would have been done." Piskorski, recalled by many in Warsaw as a talented and effective decision implementer or expediter, resigned in 2002, having been dogged by allegations of procedural irregularities toward the end of his term. Piskorski's mayoralty is especially notable for the successful implementation of the only physical alteration carried out on the external body of the Palace since 1989: at the 2000/2001 New Years' Eve street party (in itself another of Piskorski's initiatives) on Parade Square, the mayor unveiled his brainchild, the Millennium Clock: entirely funded by the Polish telecommunications company TP, the four 6.3 meter-circumference faces of Piskorski's timepiece transformed the Palace into the then-tallest clock tower in the world.[15]

The relationship between prominent urban structures, time, and political power (or spiritual authority) has a long and global history.[16] Piskorski—a historian by training—told me that his idea was precisely to make reference to the "tradition of the town hall tower," whereby "the tower of the primary building in the city is a place for the integration of its inhabitants. The clock has a functional significance . . . but also a symbolic significance. It measures the time of the city's life, it integrates urban society."[17] In Piskorski's vision, the clock tower would be integrally connected with a large urban space directly beneath it, in which citizens would be

Figure 5.11. Mayor Paweł Piskorski presenting his design for the Millennium Clock, 1999. Photograph by Tomasz Gzell, Polish Press Agency.

able to gather: "whether you want to use the analogy of the polis, the agora, the medieval market square," said Piskorski, it is essential that Warsaw has an appropriate venue for "large, secular public gatherings. . . . And there's nothing better than coming together in a central place, under a tower. Of course, this has to be thought through at the right scale. In small towns, this is the tower of a little town hall at the height of the fourth story; in Warsaw this has to be rather higher."

The clock's old-fashioned form appears to have merged with the Palace quite seamlessly. Several of my interlocutors told me that they now frequently forget that the Palace hasn't always featured a clock at its summit. A number of survey respondents even indicated that they didn't know of there being such a thing as a Millennium Clock on the Palace. As one of them put it, "The clock has been on the Palace since it was built—What's special about renovating it and renaming it after the Millennium in 2000?" Those respondents who were of the opinion that the clock has "altered the character" of the Palace (43% yes, 33% no, 23% unsure) frequently characterized its effect in a manner strikingly continuous with Piskorski's vision of civic integration: "[the Palace has gained] the function of a traditional, civic town hall clock tower"; "it's town-halled it";

the clock has "de-Sovietified the Palace. Now it looks more like a town hall than a relic of Stalinist Poland."[18] The clock's role not only in the municipalization but also the Varsovianization of the Palace (the former category referring more to civic function, the latter to identity) is well expressed in a 2008 text by from *Gazeta Wyborcza*: "this simple move knocked out the Palace's imperial teeth with one blow to the head (a Warsaw specialty), turning its dangerous idealism into a trivial functionalism. Instead of demeaning the Poles, the clock now tells Varsovians the time" (Gutkowski 2008, 28).[19]

This metamorphosis from Stalinist-imperial thorn in Poland's side to strange but much loved Warsaw clock tower brings to mind Michael Herzfeld's (2014, 39–73) rendition of the "geopolitics of cultural intimacy." The Palace's emancipation from its Soviet encumbrance simultaneously depends on and conditions the building's ability to function—and to flourish—as an essential part of the Polish capital's culture and everyday life, a "Warsaw specialty" just as idiosyncratic, vernacular, and mundane as Gutkowski's tooth-smashing blow to the head. The processes of municipalization and Varsovianization, then, can be seen as twin engines driving the Palace's incorporation into the landscape of Warsaw's civic intimacy. The parameters—or social poetics—of this intimacy are, of course, as shifting, precarious and contested as ought to be expected. Indeed, some of the Palace's opponents do not agree that the clock has won any sort of victory over the Palace or over its Stalinist associations. In fact, most members of this dwindling but still vocal constituency tend to wax despondent about the effect of the timepiece, which has provided Varsovians with a determinate reason to glance in the direction of the Palace. In other words, the clock has exported the functional aspect of the Palace's existence outside the building proper, at least to within the roughly five-kilometer radius of the hour hands' discernibility.

The existence on Parade Square of Stalin-era chief architect Sigalin's sundials suggests that a temporal dimension had already crept onto the square at the time of its design—although these dials might more accurately be seen (after Sigalin's own interpretation) as markers of cosmological centrality rather than temporal regularity. Cultural theorists of the Soviet Union have variously pointed to the quasi-sacral timelessness (Dobrenko 2007) and the intense futurity and restlessness (Buck-Morss 2000) of Stalinist temporality.[20] Katerina Clark's analysis, on the other hand—which I follow here—contends that "Stalinist culture put an

extraordinary emphasis on space" (2003, 9) and that its "temporal dimension" tended to be either sidelined or implicit, perhaps because the "fragility of timelessness" (Ssorin-Chaikov 2006, 369) in Stalinism was too close to the bone to comfortably be laid bare. Either way, it is clear that Stalinist architects were not racing to accommodate the *bürgerliche* (or, on a skyscraper, even Taylorist) temporal connotations of clock towers into their designs: it is worth noting that none of the Moscow high-rises featured clock towers, whereas a number of the interwar North American beaux arts and art deco skyscrapers (such as Chicago's Wrigley Building [1924] and Brooklyn's Williamsburgh Savings Bank Tower [1929]) did.[21] Piskorski's clock tower, then, can be seen as a successful exercise not only in the municipalization and Varsovianization of the Palace but also of its integration into the new temporo-spatial regime of capitalist Warsaw. In the description of one respondent, "this relic of *komuna* now measures out the new times"; or, as another put it, "the clock has added a new trend to the Palace. It is adequate to the character of the city, where everything happens in a rush." But this is not the sublime rush (Buck-Morss 2000; Clark 2011) of Stalinist tempo; it is the greedy tick-tock of surplus-value accumulation (Mumford 1934; Thompson 1967; Marx 1976; Harvey 1990; Wolfe 2011).

Neither did Piskorski's clock mark the "wild" capitalist time of "everything fixed [going] up in smoke" (Marx and Engels 1967), Yampolsky's time of iconoclasm and hyperinflation. Indeed, as Piskorski emphasized to me, he came to the mayoralty "at a time when there was still a lively, serious discussion about knocking the Palace down." Seen against the background of his other most remembered Palace-related initiative (the final closure of the properly heterochronic and heterotopic Parade Square bazaar) and the construction of the KDT hall, it is clear that the installation of Piskorski's clock was a successful exercise in the taming and monumentalization of time (a reduction of temporal complexity) in the name of a new, stabilized, civic-capitalist political-economic system.[22] However, it is not just the regime that benefited. Whether the clock is interpreted as boosting or diminishing the Palace's prominence, it has endowed Warsaw's *dominanta* with yet another temporal level on which it interacts with the city (of which, Piskorski emphasized, the area around the Palace "must be made to function as the *absolute* center"). In other words, while reducing the temporal complexity of the city, the clock's effect has also been to add a new dimension—unplanned, but consistent with the spirit of the plan—to Warsaw's Palace Complex.

Would-be Mayor Balicki: The Palace of Democracy

The first direct elections for Warsaw mayor were held in December 2002, following the passing of a parliamentary bill concerning the reform of Polish municipal legislatures.[23] For the purposes of my account, the mayoral campaign was notable for the extent to which it consolidated the Palace's municipalization. The most notable Palatial aspect was injected into the campaign by the social democratic candidate Marek Balicki (a 1980s oppositionist, doctor, senator, and former health minister), whose flagship policy promise was to concentrate all of the scattered offices of the central municipal administration (located, as of 2013, in thirty-seven different buildings) within the Palace of Culture. Put differently, Balicki wanted to turn the Palace into Warsaw's town hall.

When I interviewed Balicki, I asked him to elaborate on his reasoning: why the Palace, of all places? His narrative about the building's civic function, it turned out, chimed very well with Piskorski's. He began by delimiting the criteria that a proper *Ratusz* ought to fulfill. The town hall should be "a representational building in the center of the city, with a tower." The "town halls built since the middle ages always had a tower . . . and a clock on the tower," explained Balicki. Town halls have historically been "visible from each part of the city," have functioned as sites around which "commercial and trading activity takes place," have had a "ceremonial, monumental appearance" geared toward showing off the "prestige and wealth" of their host city. "What other building," Balicki asked rhetorically, ticks all these boxes "if not the Palace of Culture and Science?" What's more, it's "located at the intersection of all lines of communication . . . in the very center of the city, of Poland." Crucially, of course "it's already owned by the city. And the City Council meets here now." In short, "everything adds up!"

But Balicki's proposal was not limited to the symbolic and actual relocation of municipal authority to the Palace. One of the "seven primary pledges" of his bid was to deploy the Palace as a setting for a sort of ritual of civic democracy. In the words of one campaign pamphlet, "every Wednesday, the Mayor will publicly answer questions from inhabitants of Warsaw and representatives of social organizations in one of the Palace of Culture's large halls." In Balicki's elaboration of his idea, these meetings would be held in one of the Palace's cavernous second-floor chambers (Ratuszowa and Marmurowa). These rooms are directly accessible from the

Figure 5.12. Marek Balicki's 2002 election flyer. The slogan above the arrow pointing at the Palace of Culture reads, "The mayor will answer your questions here." Courtesy of Marek Balicki.

main entrance lobby, he pointed out, "and could be arranged in such a way that they would be very agreeable for visitors (*przyjemne dla interesantów*)."

Now, the Ratuszowa and Marmurowa halls have a surface area of 1,150 sqaure meters each; both are seventy meters long and lined with disproportionately thick square pillars of gray marble. Their floors are laid with marble mosaics while light emerges from the ceilings via heavy, backlit plaster coffering and from twin sets of enormous, three-tiered Soviet-made chandeliers. The description of these halls in the Palace's promotional material as "alluding to the ambience" of "late-Renaissance castles" (PKiN.pl n.d.) is enough for the notion of any political spectacle taking place there to trigger associations with absolutist rulers receiving supplicants.

But these rooms (together with the swimming pool in the Palace of Youth) depart from the rest of the Palace in their severe, stripped-down classicism; in style and affect, their closest affinity is in fact to the Mosaic Hall in Albert Speer's Reich Chancellery in Berlin (Sudjic 2011, 15–64) or to the main corridor in Paul Ludwig Troost's Munich's Fuehrerbau (Speer 1971; Ladd 1998; Rosenfeld 2000; Fest 2007; Krier 2013). With all of this in mind, I jokingly asked Balicki whether, as mayor, he would also locate his

Figure 5.13. The Marmurowa (Marble) hall on the Palace's second floor, the site for Balicki's proposed public consultations. Photograph courtesy of the Palace of Culture administration.

office in either of these rooms. "That would be power in the Byzantine manner," he replied. "When a person has to pass through such a great hall, then they're made tiny by the time they get to the table. That's how the offices of Tsarist administrators looked! No, I would rather have my office on a higher floor, so I could admire how Warsaw is developing." Conscious, perhaps, that he had just revoked the imperial scale in favor of the God's eye view (De Certeau 1984), Balicki qualified his statement: "But in a way that would be friendly for the inhabitants of the city, not like today."

Balicki's direct democratic ambitions were no doubt sincere, and the sort of plebiscitary spectacle he had in mind has been successfully applied at myriad scales in many parts of the world, whether in American small towns, Ecuadorian traveling plebiscites, or Russian dacha communities (Bryan 1995; Abers 2000; Conaghan and de la Torre 2008; Caldwell 2011). What most intrigued me, however, was the disjuncture between Balicki's soft-spoken, mild-mannered demeanor and the vision of him presiding over mass political supplications in the Palace's Speerian halls. But Balicki's idea was founded on the (accurate) insistence that Warsaw's most conspicuously totalitarian edifice also happens to be the only building in the city's possession that provides, in his words, the physical "conditions of possibility" for "drawing Warsaw's inhabitants into democracy." And although the Palace didn't win Balicki the mayoralty, he outperformed expectations, coming second in the first vote and advancing to the final round.[24]

Balicki recalled that his "ideas for the Palace" received widespread support during the campaign and speculated that the Palace "may in fact have been a factor" contributing to his relatively successful performance. Indeed, eight years after Balicki's campaign, a substantial number of my survey respondents were still declaring their support for "townhalling" the Palace. It would seem that the Palace's scale and location, its aesthetic and affective content, and its prominence in Varsovians' imaginations—all of these things being direct functions of its authoritarian design—nevertheless contain within themselves the capacity to consolidate the Palace's already substantial presence in the political-administrative domain of Warsaw's (self-consciously democratic) urban existence.

It is worth noting that 74 percent of survey respondents were happy to describe the Palace as a building that "suits Warsaw" (23% disagreed). By comparison, only 13 percent opted to describe its architecture as "first of all Polish," against 51 percent who opted for "first of all foreign" and 35 percent who weren't sure. It seems the concerns aired by Warsaw architects to

Rudnev and his team in 1954 (chap. 3)—that the building would have an excessively "Cracovian" character—were unwarranted. Its Kraków Cloth Hall crenellations and Wawel Castle coffering have done nothing to impede the Palace's Varsovianization.

Indeed, the above figures suggest that one aspect of the Palace's design that did fail when measured against the designers' stated intentions was their attempt to incorporate the Polish "national form" into their design. Although many of my interlocutors knew about Rudnev's trips to Kraków and Kazimierz—I even witnessed an argument between two architectural history enthusiasts as to whether the proportions of the Palace's spire were inspired by the Renaissance town halls of Zamość or of Chełmno—most people were more likely to associate the Palace's protruding parts with Gotham City, gothic cathedrals, or—above all—the perceived Byzantine opulence of Russian Orthodox church architecture.

"Fit for a Dictator": The Corso's First Death

The onward march of the Palace's Varsovianization, however, did nothing to ameliorate the stalled fortunes of the Parade Square development plan. For better or worse, a major change of planning direction did take place following the mayoral elections of 2002. The winner—the late Lech Kaczyński—ran on a conservative but *etatiste* platform that promised to negate the crippling effects of excessive post-1989 fragmentation in the capital's legislature.[25] Kaczyński reintroduced the communist-era position of Warsaw chief architect (Sigalin's old job), which had been abolished in the decentralizing 1994 municipal reforms, as well as boosting the influence and prestige of the city's architecture and planning advisory council (now christened RAU—Rada Architektury i Urbanistyki).

On June 18, 2003, the council issued its recommendation that "work on the central region local plan should not be continued . . . in its current form" and opined in favor of specifying a twenty-eight to thirty meter maximum height for the buildings on Parade Square. Shortly thereafter, in July 2003, longtime Stockholm émigré Michał Borowski—whose views towards highrise or "signature" architecture are documented in the closing section of this chapter—took over the chief architect post. Although Borowski (who also took part in the 1992 competition) acknowledges that he found the images produced by Biełyszew and Skopiński to illustrate their design "infectious," he stresses that the *corso* was "unrealistic," fit for a "dictator, not for
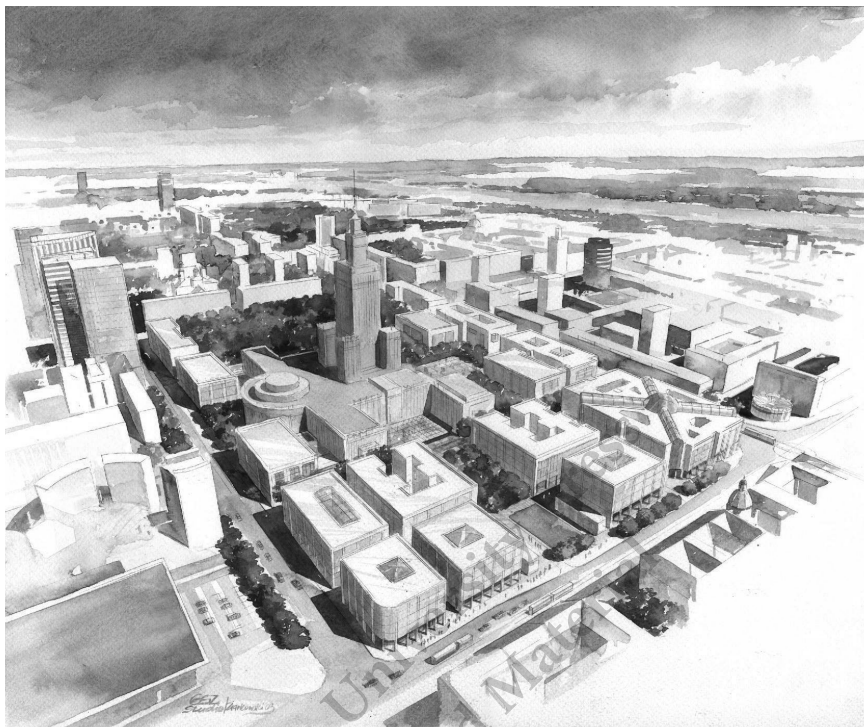
Figure 5.14. Chief Architect Michał Borowski's plan for the Parade Square, 2006. Image courtesy of the Bureau for Architecture and Spatial Planning of the City of Warsaw.

a local plan." He got to work on replacing the B&S boulevard with a plan of his own making, which—following the recommendations of the mayor's advisory council—alluded closely to pre-1939 grid layout of streets in central Warsaw, keeping all the buildings on the Parade Square at a height of around thirty meters. As Borowski puts it, "since we already have in Warsaw a given network of streets, every departure from it creates some kind of peculiarity—these circles, they can't be done. . . . I'm from Sweden, I'm normal. I think it's better to do something which can be done rather than to do something which can't be done."[26]

Biełyszew and Skopiński, who had received assurances from Borowski during September and October that they would be part of any reconfigurations of the plan, watched these developments with concern. In response to an angry letter sent to Borowski in November 2003, reminding the chief architect of the legal, verbal, and ethical obligations owed to them,

the authors of the corso were formally invited to take part in the work of putting together the new Parade Square local plan. This they did, and for almost three years, from January 2004 onward, they willingly worked alongside Borowski and the municipality's in-house planner-bureaucrats to produce a brand new grid-based local plan that incorporated almost none of the striking features that had marked their 1992 competition design. As Skopiński put it, "Borowski would come here to our studio, always with a bottle of good whisky, and we would draw together." And Biełyszew pitched in, "But we had to give up on our ring. We were doing a rectangle, a grid."

And so the combined Borowski/B&S design became the first Parade Square local plan to be passed by the Warsaw City Council, in March 2006. The diggers, nevertheless, did not move in. Kaczyński resigned his post as Warsaw mayor following his election as president of Poland in October 2005, and his duties were taken over by two temporary com-missioners, Mirosław Kochalski and Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, until the election of the free-market liberal Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz (the cur-rent mayor), who defeated Marcinkiewicz in the polls of December 2006. Former banker Gronkiewicz-Waltz immediately entered into an attempt to undo what she saw as the regressive legacy of Mayor Kaczyński. Not content with sacking Borowski in January 2007 (despite his overtures to her), she abolished (again) the position of chief architect, restructuring the Architecture Bureau once more—the Office of the Chief Architect became the Office of Architecture and Spatial Planning (BAiPP—*Biuro Architek-tury i Planowania Przestrzennego)*, and the chief architect's competencies were distributed to the city boroughs, to the head of BAiPP (Marek Mikos) and to two newly formed advisory bodies that replaced Kaczyński's for-mer RAU: the Architectural and Planning Commission (KAU—*Komisja Architektoniczno-Urbanistyczna*, March 2006) and Council for the Archi-tecture and Development of Warsaw (RAiRW—*Rada Architektury i Roz-woju Warszawy,* June 2007).[27]

"We Want Skyscrapers": The Corso's Second Death

It soon became clear that Gronkiewicz-Waltz and her team's desire to ne-gate everything associated with the Kaczyński administration would mani-fest itself through a return to a high-rise vision of Parade Square: "We want to climb skywards, we want skyscrapers," declared the new mayor after her election (Bartoszewicz 2008a). Improbably, this was the cue for Biełyszew

Figure 5.15. The 2007 resuscitation of the Biełyszew and Skopiński plan, merged with some elements of Michał Borowski's. Image courtesy of Atelier B'ART.

and Skopiński to bring the shelved corso back to life, and by April 2007 the press was announcing the return of the "circular boulevard" (Górecka-Czuryłło 2007), modified only to include Borowski's "agora" in front of the Palace's main entrance, flanked by two L-shaped low-rise buildings (one of these belonging to the Museum of Modern Art). Deputy Mayor Wojciechowicz (responsible for architecture and infrastructure) praised the "very interesting" new design: "Above all, it has been possible to return to the idea of the circular boulevard without making any dramatic changes to the binding plan." Rejecting outright Borowski's characterization of architectural "normalcy," Wojciechowicz boasted, "For sure, the buildings around the Palace will not all be square." No longer, declared the deputy mayor, would the Palace's immediate surroundings function as its "footstools, affording it even greater exposure" (Górecka-Czuryłło 2007). The same text cites Biełyszew (one half of B&S) describing the notion (until recently his own) of filling the "most attractive part of Warsaw" with low structures as nothing short of an "architectural and financial crime" (ibid.).

Figure 5.16. A 2009 rendering of the Bureau of Architecture's 2008 reworked plan, passed by the City Council in October 2010. Image courtesy of the Bureau for Architecture and Spatial Planning of the City of Warsaw.

This honeymoon period lasted until the beginning of 2008, when the mayor's two advisory councils—made up of Warsaw's stalwart architectural grandees, most of whom had been at best lukewarm in their support for B&S since 1992—formally condemned the new-old corso project, just as Mayor Kaczyński's council (made up of many of the same people) had done back in 2003. The transcripts of council discussions during the period between 2007 and 2010, when the current local plan was ratified—like those of the architects' discussions from the Stalinist 1950s summarized in chapter 3—provide a vivid insight into the seesaw between undermining and underlining that characterizes Warsaw discussions about architectural responses to the Palace.

During the early meetings, criticism was doled out to the low-rise Borowski grid and new-old B&S corso in equal measure. Planner Grzegorz Buczek pointed out that Borowski's allusion to Warsaw's prewar street network was illusory and in fact reliant (despite its intentions) on the Palace's

own spatial logic. In terms of the plan's relation to the "spaces beyond it," said Buczek, "the key issue ought to be the axial extension" of the now "external" (but, before 1951, "internal") streets: Złota, Chmielna, Widok, Poznańska, and Pankiewicza. In the binding plan, however, "the geometry of the communicational arrangement 'emerges' from the Palace, rather than from its outside." The committee members soon made it clear, however, that they did not "support the B&S plan as an alternative to the Borowski plan" and immediately started picking out its limitations: the corso was described as a "utopian" "architectural megasculpture" that "raises the value of the Palace instead of depreciating it" (Czesław Bielecki) and the product of an "architectural rather than a planning imagination." It was pointed out that the B&S plan relied on an irregular division of land plots ("slants and chunks of ellipse") that is "very disadvantageous to potential investors" and that the corso would have a detrimental effect on Warsaw's cityscape (especially on the view of the Old Town from the Vistula bridges). One member invoked London, "where tall buildings are always evaluated in terms of their impact on the legally-protected view of St Paul's Cathedral" (note that St. Paul's also made an appearance during the 1954 debates; see chap. 5).[28]

Instead of relying on the old Borowski and B&S designs, the adjusted plan ought, according to the council's summary of its position (November 2007), "to introduce tall buildings [of dimensions referring to the division of the Palace's body into forms of various heights, see chapter 3] on the side of Emilii Plater to complement the already-existing towers on the Palace's western side."[29] Furthermore, the council advocated a return to architect Czesław Bielecki's pet project, the Museum of Communism (see below), and recommended the creation of a public-private consortium to take over the implementation of the future local plan—an idea that successive consultants and advisory bodies have been tirelessly reiterating (to no effect) since the early 1990s. The mayor heeded this counsel, and on January 23, 2008, *Gazeta Stołeczna* announced, "The idea of a circular boulevard and a giant crown of skyscrapers around the Palace of Culture is dead" (Bartoszewicz 2008a), illustrating their headline with renderings of a brand-new Parade Square, featuring three tall skyscrapers standing behind the Palace's Congress Hall along Emilii Plater. Several council members responded to the publication of the new plan by venting feelings of regret: "I rejoiced prematurely and erroneously" at the shelving of B&S's plans, said one architect; another conceded that the corso possessed a "certain quality," a "new and interesting form, which is missing in the center of Warsaw." Deputy

Mayor Wojciechowicz's (whose sympathy for the B&S design comes across strongly in the transcripts) response to this outpouring was that this was exactly what the circular boulevard had been—he echoed Skopiński's self-description of his design, according to which the crown was unique on a "world scale," a planning intervention possessed of the (Palace-esque) cosmogenic capability to "transform the existing chaos into order."

The uninspiring character (*schematic* was the word favored by the committee members) of the municipal architects' design is hardly astonishing, since it had been drawn up as a compromise between numerous preexisting visions. The new plan, then, was the fruit of an attempt to merge aspects of Borowski's agora, Gronkiewicz-Waltz's high-rises, and the recommendations verbally articulated by the architects' advisory council. Despite (or because of) its diffuse provenance, others accused the plan of being still too symmetrical, too subordinated to the spatial dictates of the Palace. Advisory Commission (KAU) chair Andrzej Chylak implored the plan's designers to put more effort into producing asymmetry, to undermine the Palace of Culture's "axiality," emphasizing again that all Parade Square planning work should aim to "depart from the symbolism of crowning the Palace." Planner Grzegorz Buczek spoke out against the "attempt to form a symmetrical 'wall' or 'curtain'" of tall buildings on the Palace's western side, which would "strengthen its domination, and not weaken it," invoking an adage well-known among Warsaw architects: "symmetry is the aesthetic of fools." Another architect, Tomasz Sławiński, agreed that the "elimination of the symmetry in the Palace's surroundings" would be desirable. Ultimately, however, "in all the variants" presented so far for the council's evaluation, "*The Palace is underlined, and it has not been possible to avoid this*" (emphasis mine).

The mayors' two advisory bodies assembled for the last time (before the ratification of the local plan) in May 2010. Two and a half years after planner Buczek's observation at the first council meeting that the geometry of the Borowski's plan emerged from the Palace rather than the other way around, municipal planner Małgorzata Sprawka admitted that this problem was insurmountable: "*The existing axes are subordinated to the composition of PKiN, so any reference to the pre-war street network can only be partial*" (emphasis added). Meanwhile, the same Andrzej Chylak (chair of the advisory commission, KAU) who one year earlier had implored Warsaw's planners to devote all their energies to depriving the Palace of its crown now urged them to reconcile themselves to its architectural power: "The notion

of overcoming the Palace's domination is a pejorative one. It is impossible to fight with a structure written into the conservator's register [see below]." The upshot, in Chylak's summary of the final advisory discussion before the implementation stage, was that the municipal architects' new plan "subordinates itself to the Palace (its symmetry, its axiality)." And nothing could be done about it.

Before I pick up my account of the Parade Square planning process, I will make a few remarks—with reference to Warsaw's planned Museums of Modern Art and Communism and the process of registering the Palace as a historical monument—about how Warsaw's reconciliation with the Palace's architectural power has taken on particular ideological, scalar, and aesthetic content.

Warfare Versus Normality: The Anti-Ideology, Scale, and Aesthetics of Asocialism

The idea of building a new Museum of Modern Art for Warsaw (MoMAW) gained currency in the late 1990s, after a local newspaper spread word that Frank Gehry (architect of the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum) had visited the city and sketched his vision for a Guggenheim Warsaw on the back of a napkin. At the behest of then-chief architect Michał Borowski, MoMAW was included in the March 2006 local plan for the Palace's surroundings, and an architectural competition was held the same year. In the words of MoMAW press officer Marcel Andino Velez, "everyone expected that all the public money and effort would go toward securing a project by Frank [Gehry], Daniel [Libeskind], or Zaha [Hadid]" (Andino Velez 2008, 84). Frank, Daniel and Zaha all belong a category of international celebrity "starchitects," first-choice designers of the brash, expressive, and big iconic buildings (of which the Bilbao Guggenheim, credited with having catalyzed an urban rebirth in the flagging Basque port, is the best known example) that flooded the world's cities during the late 1990s and early 2000s.[30] In his manifesto-like endorsement of this phenomenon, architect and theorist Charles Jencks argues that cities everywhere now lust after the "icon" and the attendant "Bilbao effect": "Put me on the map, give my industrial city a second chance, make me the centerfold of Sunday supplements, the cover of in-flight magazines, the backdrop for fashion shoots, give me an iconic landmark, give me—architectural—Shock and Awe!" (Jencks 2005, 18).

In Warsaw, however, celebrity architects were sought after not primarily because their signature flourishes could make Warsaw stand out on the international map of cultural capital. Rather, they were felt to be the only ones capable of imagining a museum building that could stand up to the politico-aesthetic challenge laid down by the Palace. As a well-known curator and member of the museum's program board announced back in 2005, "The new museum for Warsaw should be so strong in expression that it can withstand the rivalry of the Socialist-Realist ornate architecture of the Palace of Culture. I think Zaha Hadid could be up to this job" (Milada Ślizińska, cited in Andino Velez 2008, 84).

Following a drawn-out controversy, the competition was won by Christian Kerez, a Swiss architect reputed for his sophisticated, stark minimalism. The jury's announcement was met with strong initial consternation: the nascent museum's director Tadeusz Zielniewicz, along with all but one member of its program board, responded by handing in their resignation letters and launching a public appeal headed "The Palace of Culture cannot triumph!" (Porębska 2007, 8). Similarly, some of my interlocutors and survey respondents derided Kerez's museum for its similarity to Warsaw's "box-like" heritage of 1960s and 1970s socialist modernist architecture, to bland capitalist hypermarkets, and to the temporary market halls ("Mayor Rutkiewicz's pipes"; see previous discussion in this chapter) built for the Parade Square bazaar traders during the 1990s, one of which (KDT) was taken down in 2009 to make way for the museum's construction. As one respondent wrote, "I would have preferred more extravagant architecture, perhaps some kind of blob, something that would look as if it had landed from outer space." Other critical voices echoed Director Zielniewicz's call to arms against the Palace: the problem with Kerez's design was said to boil down to the fact that it "underlines the monumentalism of the Palace of Culture," that "it will not dominate over the Palace" and "subordinates itself to the Palace." In the illustrative words of one respondent, which make reference to Moloch, the sacrifice-hungry Caananite giant-God, "it is great that the Museum of Modern Art will be established in the very center of the city, which makes it all the more upsetting that it will take the form a little flea alongside the Moloch of the Palace."[31]

I want to concentrate, however, on how the views expressed by the supporters of Kerez's design (which eventually won over many of its critics) are symptomatic of an anti-ideological architectural ideology emerging in Warsaw, which considers expressive refinement and scalar minimalism to

Figure 5.17. The museum design by Grupa 5 Architects from Warsaw and ALA Architects from Finland, 2005. Courtesy of Grupa 5 Architekci.

be appropriate responses to Warsaw's post-totalitarian condition.[32] By contrast, a desire to build high and wacky is represented as the pathological effect of traumas or complexes resulting from an unhealthy fixation within an oppressive, ideological past. Former chief architect Michał Borowski, the city official responsible for working MoMAW into the Parade Square development plan, told me that, having spent thirty years in Sweden (see

also Borowski's previously mentioned invocation of his "normality"), he does not suffer from the same "complexes" as many of his colleagues in Warsaw and therefore fails to see how skyscrapers or blob buildings can signify "democracy, civilizational advancement or the defeat of communism." Citing Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas's (1994) famous slogan, he pointed out that whereas the 1990s and early 2000s were dominated by an architecture determined to "fuck the context," this kind of thinking is already on its way out all over the world, and the second decade of the twenty-first century is not the time for Warsaw to begin trying to catch up with a missed "starchitectural" moment.[33] Asked how the Palace related to this extravagant trend in contemporary architecture, Borowski demonstratively stuck his middle in the finger in the air, suggesting that the Palace *really* fucked the context of Warsaw on a level far beyond the worst excesses of any Gehry or Hadid creation.

What, then, is the appropriate answer to the Palace's middle finger? Is it to respond to the provocation and get into a fight? In architectural terms, can the Palace be defeated by carrying out radical material alterations to its body or to its vicinity? Let me cite a few illustrative remarks made by blogger Roody102 (the pseudonym of Karol Kobos, a well-known architectural journalist). According to Roody102 (2008), Kerez's project for the museum "really has the potential to counter the oppressive might of the Palace of Culture. It won't conceal it, surmount it or scream over it, but it will undercut its foundations. . . . Under the weight of Kerez's architecture, the Palace will simply topple over and become laughable." Roody102 rails against dramatic proposals to "defeat" the Palace by screening it away from the city behind rows or rings of even more flamboyant structures that "recruit architecture as a weapon in an ideological struggle," a strategy "directly derived from the repertoire of totalitarian regimes." For Roody102, the counterpoint to grandiose "ideological" warfare is the delimiting of a more subtle language that "demands our intellectual engagement and doesn't murder our sensitivity by reducing debate about architecture to ideological and noisy gestures."

The journalist's remarks are seconded closely by architectural historian Małgorzata Omilanowska. "The more grandiloquent the approach [to dealing with the Palace's dominance over Warsaw]," says Omilanowska, "the further-reaching the grandiose plans supported by anti-communist ideology become, the less common sense seems to prevail" (2010, 136). Omilanowska also praises Kerez's museum design, which, in her view, "does not

try to compete with the abundant detail of the monstrously large Palace of Culture, but constitutes a well-balanced counterpoint to it" (133).

I often heard people in Warsaw remark that the most properly grandiose (and therefore Stalinist) response to the Palace would be to blow it up. Like the destruction between 1923 and 1926 of the Russian-built Alexander Nevsky Orthodox Cathedral in what had previously been Warsaw's largest public space, the Saski (now Piłsudski) Square, following Poland's unification and independence in 1918, a few of my interlocutors acknowledged that demolishing the Palace might have made sense during the Yampolskyan years of early 1990s' "wild" capitalism. But, according to an increasing number of Varsovians, such a move would not be appropriate now that things have settled down and Poland has allegedly become a normal, stable democratic country (only 17% of my survey respondents thought the Palace should be demolished, against 81% who disagreed).

Poland's flamboyant foreign minister, Radosław Sikorski, famous for his knee-jerk anticommunism, has made a habit of loudly proclaiming every few years that the Palace of Culture should be pulled down and replaced by a park or a lake. His provocations are recalled by many of my interlocutors as crazy talk—on at least two occasions, taxi drivers to whom I put a stock question about their attitude to the Palace while we drove past it voluntarily recalled Sikorski's rants and told me, angrily, that the minister must be mentally ill for suggesting such a thing twenty years after the fall of communism.

Similar argumentation was often resorted to by detractors of the SocLand Museum of Communism, an idea that ex-oppositionist, politician, and architect Czesław Bielecki has been trying to sell to successive municipal administrations for the last twenty years. Bielecki's latest design for SocLand envisages a toppled, decapitated statue of Stalin (imported from his home town of Gori, Georgia) lying on the piazza in front of the Palace's main entrance, between the Dramatyczny and Studio theaters, flanked by two seventy-meter-high pyramidal glass flagpoles.[34] The entrance to the museum itself is to be located directly beneath the piazza, with a transparent glass roof replacing the paving stones: the Honor Tribune (as Bielecki described to me, "turned into a dead museum piece, like the Pergamon Altar in Berlin") would be relocated into the entrance lobby, Stalin's disembodied head lying dejectedly in front of it while his grasping arm dangles pathetically over the glass ceiling. From there, visitors enter the main exhibition, located in the building's cellars, showcasing the horrors and absurdities of

communism. In this way, says Bielecki, the building would be "transformed from a Palace of oppression into a Palace of freedom." Although some of my Warsaw interlocutors liked Bielecki's idea, many more rejected it.[35] Bielecki "is either stuck in the past or wants to incite terrorism," said one municipal official while, according to an architectural historian, "this has nothing to do with communism or democracy, this is a monument to Czesław Bielecki's megalomania."

The debate over whether or not the Palace would preserve its physical integrity reached a legal endpoint after the Masovian Voivodeship Conservator wrote the Palace onto the list of protected historical monuments in February 2007.[36] Of interest here are the letters written by supporters and opponents of the decision to the offices of the conservator, the Voivode, the mayor of Warsaw, and the minister of culture, which I will refer to some particularly significant fragments of here. In their letter, the Association of the Caretakers of Warsaw's Cultural Heritage accused those attempting to block the Palace's listing of "making recourse to ideological arguments . . . repeating a type of behaviour which was typical for the Stalin period in Poland." A particularly sophisticated twist on this argument is expressed by architectural historian Stanisław Mossakowski, empowered by the president of the Polish Academy of Sciences (headquartered in the Palace) Michał Kleiber to represent the official position of the academy. In his letter, Mossakowski argued that the Palace deserves legal protection precisely because its form constitutes an excellent representation of a (necessarily dead) epoch during which architecture and culture *were* ideologized:[37] "Mixing political matters into the discussion over the entry of PKiN into the register is nonsensical from a conservation point of view. The Palace acquired the particular historical value which affords it the right to protection precisely because it was mixed up with politics." In other words, the current postideological age has an obligation to conserve the Palace precisely because of how ideological it is, a testimony to a bygone time when everything used to be political.[38]

I am suggesting here that a sort of aesthetic and scalar ideology was in the process of consolidating itself in early twenty-first-century Warsaw. Mikhail Yampolsky argues that the act of pulling down monuments expresses the "deep dependence of the masses" on the statue or building that they are attacking (1995, 105). According to Yampolsky, to effect a radical break with a suddenly undesired past by demolishing its material embodiments, the "switching on of the chronometer of history" necessarily condemns those carrying out this gesture "to be left behind" in the swirling

tide of change (110). Frank, Daniel, and Zaha, ex-MoMAW director Ziel-niewicz, the program board who allied with him, the advocates of "starchi-tecture," Minister Sikorski, Bielecki, and all "context fuckers" are rendered matter out of place (Douglas 1967), and, it must be added, out of time (Hamann 2008; Voss 2010). They are treated as remainders, in Yampolsky's terms "left behind" within the realms of a pathological, post-socialist, and post-traumatic economic aesthetic that should be alien to a city no longer in the throes of dictatorship or tumultuous transformation. In order to truly move out of the shadow of the Palace, it is suggested, Warsaw must aban-don the belligerent totalitarian dispositions that emanate from its walls and with them a predilection for arrogant, iconic architecture. An ideological value hierarchy of scale is established that identifies the achievement of an authentic, developed "normality"—no longer post-socialist but *over* social-ism (asocialist)—with minimalism, maturity, and restraint.[39]

MoMAW curator and cultural anthropologist Marcel Andino Velez reorients this anti-ideological narrative directly to the debate over iconic architecture, remarking that Warsaw's architectural landscape and the dis-courses surrounding it are under the influence of "decades of omnipresence of that arch-iconic building, the Palace of Culture and Science" (2008, 91) According to Andino Velez, Kerez's proposal for the neighborhood of the Palace "is the most radical negation possible of the prevailing, superficial, iconic understanding of architecture . . . if '*pure architecture*' really exists, it will be the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw" (2008, 91). As Roody102's and the proconservation lobbyists' arguments against the tendency to de-ploy architecture as an ideological weapon suggests, self-professed anicon-ics (to misapply Victor and Edith Turner's term, meaning "indifferent to icons") identify iconophiliacs (advocates of starchitecture) and iconoclasts (Sikorski and others who seek to do violence to the Palace) as creatures refusing the inevitable de-ideologization that accompanies the post-totalitarian condition. And as Andino-Velez's text makes clear, "pure archi-tecture" is posited as the opposite pole and remedy for the ideologization of architecture. Christian Kerez himself rams home his adherence to the principle of architectural apoliticality, insisting that his building does enter into a debate with the Palace of Culture but an exclusively "architectural" rather than an ideological one, and declares his unwavering belief in the autonomy of architecture. "Architecture speaks for itself and does not ex-press anything apart from itself. All other meanings—whether symbolic or political—are imposed from the outside" (cited in Jarecka 2008).

Figure 5.18. The final version of the museum design produced by Christian Kerez, 2010. Image courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw.

We know from Louis Althusser that the positing of a desired claim as nonideological immediately enters the protagonist into an ideological conversation and constitutes just about the most ideological standpoint that it is possible to take, that of succumbing to the "practical denegation of the ideological character of ideology by ideology" (Althusser 1971, 118). Whereas I am convinced that the social-science reflex to reveal the hidden political (ideological) content behind every claim to apoliticality is an unfinished task worth pursuing further, I agree with Matei Candea's (2011) caution that in the worst-case scenario an uncritical adherence to this kind of "hermeneutics" (Ricoeur 1970) or "metapolitics" (Badiou 2005) of "suspicion" can result in a blind dismissal of informants' own categories.[40] Following Candea, then, I am not concerned here with unmasking the "real" ideological motivations that lurk beneath claims of autonomy or apoliticality but in delimiting some of what the MoMAW controversy can tell us about the parameters of the apolitical in asocialist Warsaw.[41]

My argument is that post-totalitarian anti-ideology can acquire distinctive characteristics when materialized in built form. More precisely, apolitical architecture can be characterized in terms of its scale, its aesthetic, and its relations with context. Applying this three-part categorization,

I characterize asocialist architecture in Warsaw as aspiring to be small, restrained, and defined by an absence of domination with its environment. The materialized form of Warsaw's apolitics, in other words, is everything that the Palace is not. The Palace's massive scale, extravagant aesthetic, and relationality of domination with its surroundings represent exactly those traits that the asocialist architectural ideology associates with an anachronistic, totalitarian, pervasively politicized past. Intriguingly enough, however, architectural asocialism is just as hostile toward flamboyant attempts to undermine the Palace's presence in Warsaw—whether these involve knocking the Palace down (this might be referred to as dominophobia rather than iconoclasm) or defeating it with another architectural creation (dominophilia).

Notes

1. The Palace's Dzierżyński Hall was also renamed Starzyński Hall after the pre-1939 mayor of Warsaw Stefan Starzyński in 1990.

2. The plinth was finally removed from the Palace's entrance hall in 2014.

3. The connection with film was restored to the Palace in 2001, however, when BAS was replaced by the Kinoteka eight-screen multiplex (with its enormous neon logo) constituted by the renovated and subdivided halls of the pre-1989 cinemas.

4. For more on the interface between advertising and architecture in Warsaw, see Chmielewska (2005) and Kusiak (2012).

5. Kubik (1994) provides an extensive treatment of the symbolic domain of Polish anticommunist resistance and Karol Wojtyła's role.

6. The official renaming of the PRL to III RP (*Rzeczpospolita Polska*—Polish Republic) took place in December 1989.

7. The exact date is difficult to establish, but several of my interlocutors associate the first eruption of trade with the period immediately before the election. For more on the bazaar and its subsequent incarnation on the crown of the disused Tenth Anniversary Stadium, see Crowley (2003: 98–143), Warsza (2009), Erbel (2009), Wasilkowska (2009), Kreja (2006), Omilanowska (2010), Kusiak (2012), Sulima (2012).

8. See Humphrey (1995, 2002) on the stifling of street and kiosk trade in Moscow and elsewhere in the former USSR.

9. See Humphrey (1995) for an extrapolation of the aesthetics and ethics of consumption in post-1991 Moscow. For ethnographies of urban bazaars in post-socialist Europe, see also Rausing (2002) and Pachenkov (2011). Humphrey and Skvirskaya (2009) examine the "heterotopic" Odessa's container market.

10. Wasilkowska et al. (2009) incorporate the "emergent" dynamics of the marketplace into a formalized urban design and consultation process. See also Humphrey (2007a, 178) for a description of the desacralization of the state-party space of Ulan Ude's Square of the Soviets during the 1990s.

11. Although the initial competition conditions did not stipulate that the Palace had to be kept in place, during later rounds of evaluation the jury adopted working criteria favoring entries that diminished the spatial and symbolic position of PKiN while "keeping the Palace building as it is, integrating it with the surrounding area" (OW SARP 1992, vi).

12. Preparations for a design competition commenced in 1987, but, as the competition literature states, "only political changes and appointing self-government authorities [a municipal administration autonomous from the central state] after the 1989 elections enabled the implementation of our efforts" (OW SARP 1992, iii).

13. The British Know-How Fund was a UK government agency established on Margaret Thatcher's initiative in 1989 with a view to aiding ex-Soviet bloc countries in the implementation of market-led reforms. Hamilton (2013) provides a history of the BKHF while Ruth Mandel characterizes their activities in Kazakhstan as a "Marshall Plan of the mind" (Mandel 1998, 2002).

14. Whose toilet-flush had brought down the Palace in the 1991 film *Rozmowy Kontrolowane* (see this book's conclusion).

15. It lost it status when the 240 meter NTT Docomo Yoyogi Building in Tokyo added a clock to its facade in 2002. Warsaw and Tokyo were spectacularly surpassed after the opening in 2012 of the 601 meter Royal Makkah Clock Tower, adjacent to Mecca's Holy Mosque.

16. See Mumford (1934), Hung (2005), Dutton, Lo and Wu (2008), Erll (2008), Muraro (1984), Noyes (2013), Rorabaugh (1973), Verdery (1996, 39–59).

17. Here, Piskorski closely echoes Lewis Mumford's (1934, 14) observation about technics, time, and urban modernity: "the clock is not merely a means of keeping track of the hours, but of synchronizing the actions of men."

18. Respondents referred to the clock's civic or "town hall"-like character twenty-two times (twenty-five also compared it to Big Ben).

19. For more on the Palace and Warsaw's identity, see Madurowicz (2007). Humphrey (2007a) comments on the conscious crafting by municipal administrations of a symbolic, post-Soviet "idea of the city" in Russia, which—along with "heroic" (199) administrative maneuvers by chief architects and mayors—helped keep fragmenting cities operational during the turbulent years after the fall of the USSR (192).

20. Dobrenko refers to Stalinism's proper tense as concluded future (a kind of future pluperfect)" (2008, 6).

21. However, the Soviets (Leninist and Stalinist) admired and adapted Fordist and Taylorist labor practices (Buck-Morss 2000). For more on Taylorist time-space calculations and the urban time rhythms of capitalist modernity, see Harvey (1990), Crang (2001), May and Thrift (2001), and Castree (2009). Yampolsky (1995, 109) comments that "Russian watches ran, but time stood in place. The Kremlin's chimes were one of the central symbols of the country . . . but their function was mainly to mark the cyclical stability of static time."

22. For applications of Foucault's notions of "heterotopia" and "heterochrony" (Foucault and Miskowiec 1986) in post-socialist contexts, see Ssorin-Chaikov (2006) and Humphrey and Skvirksaya (2009).

23. See Humphrey (2007a) on the emergence of the mayoralty as a powerful political force in the post-socialist city.

24. Balicki received 21.85 percent of votes in the first round, to Lech Kaczyński's 49.58 percent and Andrzej Olechowski's 13.47 percent. Kaczyński received 70.54 percent of the vote to Balicki's 29.46 percent in the second round (Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza 2002).

25. See Murawski (2011b) for more on the Palace and the Smoleńsk catastrophe, in which then-Polish President Kaczyński was killed.

26. For more on post-socialist aspirations to "normality," see Rausing (2002), Fehérváry (2004; 2013, 27–52, 220–239), Kiossev (2008), and Murawski (2012). Refer also to the arguments mustered for the reconstruction of the prewar city layout in 1990s Berlin (Bach 2017).

27. The office of the chief architect (now called the city architect) was brought back into being, once more, by Gronkiewicz-Waltz in November 2016, largely in response to the restitution scandal.

28. See chapter 3. For more on the protected views of London and St. Paul's see Jacobs (1996, 38–69), Markham (2008), Kufner (2009), Appert (2011). Warsaw lacks a coherent policy on vista protection. See Oleński (2012), Wojtczuk (2011) and Zdancewicz (2008).

29. Recall Goldzamt and Jankowski's opinion that central Warsaw's architecture ought to make reference to the vertical sections of the Palace (chap. 3).

30. Even if it didn't really. In an empirical analysis of the Guggenheim's impact on Bilbao's economic fortunes, Beatriz Plaza (2008) argues that the museum simply gave added impetus to a carefully planned process of economic diversification in the Basque Country, which had already been going on for some years before the building was planned and completed.

31. *Moloch* is used quite frequently in Polish to refer to foreboding objects of gigantic scale. The usage recalls Milton's *Paradise Lost*: "First MOLOCH, horrid King besmeared with blood / Of human sacrifice, and parents' tears" (1821, 16).

32. Among the 82 percent of respondents familiar with the museum, 57 percent declared themselves for Kerez's design and 34 percent against. According to journalist Marcel Andino Velez (citing art critic Dorota Jarecka), many people became convinced of the Kerez building's merits over time, partly in reaction to the bizarrely "aggressive response" evoked in so many by "such a non-aggressive building" (Andino Velez 2008, 87).

33. Glendinning (2010) dates the beginning of the retreat from iconic architecture in 2004.

34. Xawery Dunikowski's monument to Stalin was intended to stand on this spot until the idea was dropped during 1954–1955 (chap. 3).

35. Twelve percent "liked" the idea, 20 percent called it "acceptable," 37 percent were against it, and 31 percent hadn't heard of it.

36. *Województwo* in Polish is the name for one of the country's sixteen provinces (Warsaw lies within *Mazowsze* [Masovia]). The Voivode (*Wojewoda*) is the political head of the province.

37. Article 3 of the historical monuments protection act defines a historical monument as an "immovable or movable entity, its parts or ensembles, being a work of human creation or connected to human activity and *constituting a testament to a past epoch or event*, the maintenance of which lies in the social interest, with regard to the historical, artistic or scientific value it possesses" (Minister Kultury 2003, emphasis added).

38. Bach (2017) refers to the use of similar arguments by opponents of demolishing the Palast Der Republik in East Berlin.

39. I discuss the aesthetic parameters of Warsaw's post-socialist normality and its pathologization of certain aspects of the socialist past in Murawski (2012). See also

Rausing (2002). Thanks to Mateusz Halawa for suggesting the term *asocialism* (personal communication).

40. See Badiou (2005) for a critique of Rancière's "apolitics."

41. Elsewhere, I have argued that it is a reaction against the politicization of everyday life that defines the desire to separate architecture from ideology in Warsaw (Murawski 2009). I consider the Palace's scale and its relationship to the building's centrality and affective characteristics in more detail in Murawski (2016, 2017c).

6

"THE CENTER OF THE VERY CENTER"

During the Stalin-era 1950s, three-dimensional models of plans for Parade Square's Eastern Wall were laid out in the grand, marble-decked halls of Warsaw's National Theatre. Architects stood on duty beside their models, diligently explaining their ideas to members of the public and jotting down their praise and criticisms (chap. 3). As Józef Sigalin noted in his memoirs, they transcribed 215 pages of comments from over twenty thousand visitors in the course of just one week. Something like this continues to happen today, if in a rather less grand manner. Following their positive assessment by the mayoral advisory bodies, all new Warsaw development plans are displayed for public consultation in the corridor of the Architecture Bureau's offices on the thirteenth floor of the Palace, with its authors on call—sitting on chairs in the corridor, eight hours a day for five working days—to answer questions from anyone who turns up. The procedure is fairly archaic, of course, since the development is also on display during this period on the municipality's web page, and the majority (though not all) of the public's comments and complaints are lodged online. Following this consultation period, the city council can vote on whether or not to accept the plan as a legally binding document. The Parade Square plan—still in force as of 2017—was eventually passed by the council by a margin of 33 to 7, on November 9, 2010, during the final session of Gronkiewicz-Waltz's first term as mayor.

Among the complainants' remarks (see Rada Miasta Stołecznego Warszawy 2010), of particular interest to me was a protestation leveled by the Residents' Committee of Gocław Housing Estate in Southeastern Warsaw, which beseeched the municipality to "codify in the plan that the dominating entity within its area should remain the Palace of Culture and Science." Back in October 2009, my own Palaceization proposal (described

in detail in Murawski 2013), presented at a public event in Warsaw's Museum of Modern Art, had—in a spirit of provocative irony—postulated that the museum's facade should be covered with a fake sandstone frontage alluding to that of the Palace. Intriguingly, it turned out that the Gocław residents put forward an almost identical (in fact, even more demanding) Palaceizing notion: that the facades of all remaining buildings to be erected in Parade Square should be finished in "warm shades of sandstone in reference to the Palace" (Rada Miasta 2010, 8–9). Unsurprisingly, this demand was unacknowledged by the municipal architects, but—bizarrely enough— the Gocław residents had overlooked (as I had) a clause that had somehow crept into the original draft of the plan actually requiring the museum to be clad in Palace-esque sandstone! Conversely, then, architect Christian Kerez's (complainant number six) request to eliminate this requirement was heeded by the municipal architects.[1]

The Gocław residents also advocated a four-story height limit for all buildings on Parade Square, with the exception of the two planned towers along Ulica Emilii Plater, whose height ought to be reduced so as to "not collide with the Palace's viewing terrace" (Rada Miasta 2010, 8). Even more radical than the Gocław residents in the latter regard was the Administration of the Palace of Culture (complaints number twenty and twenty-four), who asked for the two Emilii Plater towers to be lowered to just over a third of their planned height (from a range of 208 to 245 meters to only 90!) so as not to interfere with the electromagnetic radiation of the TV and radio aerials on the Palace's spire, and to limit the shadowing effect they may have on the Palace building. Both complaints were rejected, in the municipality's explanation, because the towers' "height and position" had been determined with the intention to "overcome the dominance of PKiN in the skyline of Warsaw" (Rada Miasta, 9). With regard to the Palace administration's request, it was added, "[the towers'] lowering to a height of 90 meters would totally obliterate this intended goal" (9).

Beyond poring over their responses to residents concerned with upholding the Palace's dominance over the city, the Architecture Bureau was obliged to organize a public debate about the plan. The Parade Square discussion was more widely advertised than is usual for a planning consultation and was held (apparently by accident) on July 22, 2010 (the day of the Palace's fifty-fifth anniversary) in the grand but windowless Rudnev Room on the Palace's fourth floor. Though the Palace's temperamental 1950s air-conditioning system and the lack of access to natural ventilation made

Figures 6.1 and 6.2. The Rudnev Room planning discussion, July 22, 2010. Photographs by the author.

Figure 6.3. Poring over the Palace Complex. Photograph by the author.

for an oppressive atmosphere, most of the audience of roughly one hundred attendees were engaged enough to dwindle only very slowly over the course of four long hours. Questions were fielded by Architecture Bureau director Marek Mikos, by bureau planners, and by Deputy Mayor Jacek Wojciechowicz.

A large chunk of the debate was taken up by the sort of self-contradictory ruminations over symmetry, geometry, and axiality that had occupied the Palaceological attentions of the mayor's architects' advisory bodies. In response to a question about the intentions behind the plans, Deputy Mayor Wojciechowicz explained that one "*conscious strategy*" involved the "avoidance of the simple symmetry, which is imposed by the Palace itself; we wanted to develop this area, acknowledging the existence of the Palace . . . without accentuating this building's domination in public space. . . . The Palace is a very symmetrical building itself, but there is no reason, according to us, to underline this symmetry even more." However, just a little later in the meeting, bureau employee Sprawka explained the plan's approach to

the Palace's axiality in terms, which couldn't have been more contradictory to the deputy mayor's: "We've tried to keep as many of the axes and viewing perspectives onto the Palace as possible. If you look carefully, you might be able to see our *compositional strategy*. In the horizontal perspective, *we really try to honor the axiality of the Palace and its ensemble.* And when it comes to the vertical, we have tried to *reflect the Palace's symmetry in the panorama of the city.* We've put a lot of effort in, if you look closely you can detect our quite proficient attempt to compose the entire ensemble, *to honor its axes*" (emphases added).

Sprawka went on to elaborate her understanding of the relationship between Palace and city:

> With the Palace, the matter really is quite ambivalent, everyone has their own opinions. Some say they really like it, for example, like we had it in the analyses done by the environmental psychologists: that we love the Palace, it's our symbol, hands off it.[2] Other say, let's hide this Palace at last, let's destroy it. Actually, I really think this shows that *the Palace determines us*, we always have to refer to in some way or other. We either want to conceal it or to honor it. This really shows that we're dealing here, *with this kind of tremendous . . . also . . .* sorry, perhaps I [inaudible] too much. Some people say this plan is devoid of an idea. But we've had this idea here, for 55 years, in the very center of the city. It's about the ability to refer to it. [Emphases added]

I seated myself next to an architect friend during these four hours, and my impressions of the proceedings were enriched by his satirical whisperings. For special attention, he jotted down one of the planners' remarks about the integration of the "underground square" with the "above-ground square," allowing commuters to emerge from the metro station directly onto Parade Square, thereby experiencing the sensation that "we really find ourselves in the center of the very center." A little later on, my friend observed how relentlessly the participants in the discussion (especially the panelists) were referring to "axes and axiality": "Axis? What axis? These are streets they're talking about, not axes!" To illustrate his point, he substituted the terms *łoś* and *łosiowość* (moose and mooseness) for *oś* and *osiowość* (axis and axiality) and produced a doodle depicting Warsaw's Urbanistic Moose (*Warszawska Łoś Urbanistyczna*) emanating right from the middle of the Palace's central axis.[3]

The larger part of the Rudnev Room meeting consisted of a vigorous series of interpellations by members of the audience. Of these, the most exciting and widely reported in the media was an appearance by Warsaw-born Californian Jerzy (George) Zagner. A mechanical engineer by training,

Figure 6.4. California-based engineer Jerzy Zagner presents his idea for a Palace pyramid to municipal officials in the Rudnev Room. Photograph by the author.

Zagner announced that he had developed his own vision for a "unique way to civilize" the Palace. "The general idea is that, around the Palace, we can build," he began, before becoming inaudible as he walked away from the microphone toward the table at which Architecture Bureau director Mikos and Deputy Mayor Wojciechowicz were sitting. Unfolding a number of drawings, he outlined his vision: to cover the Palace with a three-hundred-meter-high pyramidal structure, each of its sides supporting "brown-gold colored" ("to complement the Palace") horizontal blocks of glass-fronted office and leisure space at several points, adding up to 40 percent of the surface area, interspersed by gaps, so that the Palace wouldn't be totally concealed and so that people would still be able to see the clock tower. According to Zagner, not only would his pyramid provide Warsaw with an additional 50,000 square meters of commercial space, but it would also make for a "symbol of tolerance," replacing the Palace as Warsaw's primary identifier ("unique on a world scale") without committing the foolishness of destroying it.

Pyramids and Other Private Palace Visions

Zagner's was not the only pyramidal vision articulated for the Palace: the 1992 competition featured several entries that introduced some form of pyramid into the Square, including Bielecki's, which scattered an I. M. Pei-like structure, a dome, and a skyscraper topped by a half-square triangle into the Palace's immediate surroundings, in what looked like a conscious attempt to crowd out the Palace's symmetry. Two further entries enclosed the Palace completely within a pyramid, while another trapped it inside a Buckminster Fuller-like geodesic dome.

A few days before the Parade Square debate, meanwhile, I had encountered a potential rival and/or ally of Jerzy Zagner's (both men expressed a sort of disinterested amusement on being shown the other's plans) studying the Parade Square plan exhibit in the Architecture Bureau's corridor on the Palace's thirteenth floor. A middle-aged construction operative completing a diploma in architecture, Jacek Dejryng said he had been dabbling in a Palace-related project for the last thirty years and wanted to show it to me. Once he had carried out a short conversation with one of the bureau's planners and gathered some materials from her, I followed him down to his car, where he unfurled a series of professionally done architectural drawings (his diploma project, to be defended that autumn) showing the entire Palace and a large proportion of its surroundings completely encased in a transparent, all-glass tetrahedron.

The Architecture Bureau's plan, according to Dejryng, would be ineffectual. The Palace, "fringed" by other "random, tall and short" buildings, would be "totally unchallenged" as the dominanta. The only way in which the Palace could "disappear," said Dejryng, would be if several identical buildings were put up next to it (here, he echoed the words of Deputy Mayor Wojciechowicz, who had said during one mayor's advisory council session that the Palace could be "ignored" only if "four more Palaces were built on Parade Square, one in each corner"). Such a solution, however, would "glorify the Palace's form"; the best course of action, therefore, would be to "pack" the Palace within a form more simple and spectacular than itself while simultaneously retaining its integrity as a historical monument and a functional public building. Dejryng, like Zagner, complained that the pedestrian unimaginativeness of Warsaw's political and bureaucratic decision-makers was likely to function as an obstacle to the realization of his ambition.[4]

Figure 6.5. Warsaw engineer and architect Jacek Dejryng explains his idea for a Palace pyramid (his diploma project in architecture) shortly after the Rudnev Room discussion. Photograph by the author.

The proponents of these Palace ideas are frequently convinced that their visions have a sort of finality about them—that their realization alone would lead to the resolution of the Palace Complex. The media regularly reports on somebody or other who has managed to interest a journalist in his or her own Palace proposal. As many as 853 of my survey respondents (23% of those who answered the relevant question) admitted to having developed their own ideas for "what to do with the Palace." These included quite pragmatic proposals to give the Palace's facade a proper wash or to adapt it for comprehensive disabled access as well as much more ambitious ones. One respondent recalled—with some embarrassment—that a Palace makeover was his first architectural project: "I wanted to cover the Palace with golden glass and to remodel the Congress Hall as a UFO—but bear in mind that this was 1985." Quite a number of respondents repeated their desire to knock the Palace down, and there were several suggestions that the Palace be "attacked by greenery" or cleared of human activity and

left to the vagaries of nature. I also asked my respondents to specify their own reactions to (and/or knowledge of) a by no means exhaustive sample of well-known Palace ideas. These included schemes to strip the building of its sprawling side wings and/or of its decorative crenellations and colonnades; the idea to modernize the Palace by covering it with glass plates; the aforementioned glass pyramid vision; the notion of covering the Palace with ivy; and converting it to a Museum of Communism. While the popularity of the above varied (see appendix), each one found more detractors than supporters among my survey respondents. Fifty-eight percent of respondents indeed indicated that they would rather see the body of the Palace itself completely untouched by any substantive alterations.

This proportion stands in stark contrast to the level of dissatisfaction with the present state of affairs outside the Palace, on Parade Square. Only 9 percent of respondents thought that the square had been better managed during 2000 through 2010 than during other periods of its history. Twenty-five percent chose 1945 through 1989; just 2 percent chose 1989 through 2000; 31 percent didn't think the space had ever been well taken care of; and 29 percent weren't sure. On the other hand, there was a striking level of acceptance for most of the more prominent schemes proposed for the development of the square. Among those respondents familiar with each plan (although in most cases over half of respondents weren't), the 2010 municipal plan was accepted by 59 percent (although lukewarm supporters vastly outnumbered enthusiastic ones in all cases); the 1992 B&S corso plan was accepted by 52 percent (though the 2008 version was liked by only 40%); and 54 percent accepted the 2006 Borowski grid plan.

Before I return to elaborate on the possible reasons for the fact that nothing has been done to put these plans (for either Palace or Square) into action despite the profusion of ideas (52% of my respondents thought there were too many "Palace ideas," against 26% who didn't think there were enough and 21% who weren't sure), I will say a few things about the manner in which the centrality of the Palace and Square has been consolidated into an axiom of Warsaw's twenty-first-century urban existence.

Warsaw: Monocentric, Polycentric, Centerless, or Epicentric?

One striking thing about nearly all debates concerning the Palace's prominence in Warsaw—something that much of the material already cited above

testifies to—was the extent to which the citywide significance and centrality of Parade Square appeared to be beyond dispute. Despite the overwhelmingly dismal evaluation of Plac Defilad's performance as an urban space since its inception, a relatively high proportion of respondents (42%) agreed that this space does function as *the* center of today's Warsaw. More notable than their evaluation of the actual condition, however, was Varsovians' presentation of the desirable: more than 85 percent opined that Parade Square—a messy and incoherent space around a foreboding Stalinist skyscraper—*ought* to function as the center of today's (democratic, capitalist, post-socialist or, rather, asocialist) Warsaw; only 11 percent disagreed.

In survey respondents' answers to the question "according to you, what should Plac Defilad look like?" various forms of the word *center* appeared 473 times.[5] A comment by one respondent recalled Sprawka's characterization of the future Parade Square as the "center of the very center": "This is the main point of the entire city, the strict center." Somebody else recommended channeling Ulica Marszałkowska into a tunnel and "*enlarging* Plac Defilad, so that it would be the *absolute Central Square*, where Varsovians can meet each other."[6] In the words of another respondent, "The Square should become the real center of Warsaw—currently, the center is terribly diffuse—no one knows if the Square is the center, or the Central Department Stores [part of the Eastern Wall] or the Old Town with Krakowskie Przedmieście and Nowy Świat. Raising new buildings on the Square and improving communication trails for pedestrians and bicycles should help move the *center of gravity* onto the Palace itself" (emphasis added). I was able to find only one dissenting voice, a thirty-year-old Byzantinologist whose opinion was that the center of Warsaw is not located around the Palace but "between Plac Bankowy and the Old Town" (map P.1, nos. 3, 11, and 12).

What makes this all the more intriguing is the widespread notion in Warsaw that the city has no center and that this apparently unusual situation is linked to the effects of the war or of totalitarian city planning. As one Internet forum contributor put it, "Warsaw has not had a center since 1944" (login-xyz 2015). An alternative urban guidebook comprised of interviews with leading Warsaw cultural figures about their experiences of the city is entitled *Warsaw: In Search of the Center* (Sańczuk, Skolimowski, and Chaciński 2005)[7] while the historian Konrad Rokicki (see chap. 2) refers to the Palace's semiotic impact on the city in terms of the "de-centralization of Warsaw's symbolic terrain" (2003, 175) Elsewhere, journalist Tomasz

Markiewicz has lamented—reproducing with (unwitting) precision the spatial ideology of the Stalinist planners he condemns—that "Warsaw does not have a dominating tendency, something, which would clearly unite Warsaw in a single organism. . . . Today, we have at least three Warsaws" (Markiewicz 2003).

How many Warsaws were there before the war? Or, more precisely, how many centers did Warsaw have? There is no clear consensus on this topic among Varsavianistas and other scholars of the city, but many existing publications (Herbst 1978; Stępiński 1988; Mikos 2008; Wierzbicka 1995; Grochowska 2002) coincide with the opinion of the Byzantinologist cited above: prewar Warsaw's central region was most clearly marked by seven squares (dating from between the seventeenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries) to the south of the medieval Old Town, each within a roughly five hundred meter distance from the Saxon Gardens (Plac Saski, Plac Teatralny, Plac Bankowy, Plac Żelaznej Bramy, Plac Grzybowski, Plac Małachowskiego, Plac Dąbrowskiego; map P.1, nos. 1–7), the first of these—the site of the now-destroyed Pałac Saski and the Tsarist-built Orthodox Cathedral—being the largest and most significant of the above. Simultaneously, however, the core of Warsaw's commercial and communicational activity was gradually shifting in a southerly direction, following the opening of the Warsaw-Vienna railway station at the intersection of Marszałkowska and Aleje Jerozolimskie in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Although work began on Warsaw's new Main (*Główny*) rail hub in the southern section of what later became Parade Square during the 1920s, no direct references were made to the centrality of this site until after 1945. The planners of the postwar city, then, jumped onto the bandwagon of a preexisting historical trajectory and intensified it—on spatial, political-economic, social, semiotic, and ideological levels—far beyond the ambitions of their predecessors. As emphasized by cultural historian Jakub Sadowski in his remarks about the Palace's symbolic role in Warsaw (chap. 4), and by the architect Jakub Damięcki in the course of his condemnation of Biełyszew and Skopiński's 1992 circular boulevard project (chap. 5), the Palace and Parade Square transformed Warsaw from a polycentric city into a monocentric one. The Soviets, in other words, did not deprive Warsaw of its center. In fact, as Director Miśkiewicz of Teatr Dramatyczny put it (chap. 4), Warsaw "received its center" from the Soviets.

Besides advocating for the Parade Square's centrality, my Warsaw interlocutors and respondents frequently expressed their hope that this space

would become "normal" and that it would take on some of the various aesthetic attributes and associations of "normalcy." In the words of one respondent, the square should become like the central space "in every normal, civilized, European city: densely built up, with building facades facing the streets."[8] But what is "normal" for a large European or a Western city? Putting aside the question of architectural form and scale for now, is it possible to characterize an ideal-typical normal-civilized relationship between city and center in early twenty-first-century Europe or North America?[9]

Urban scholars across disciplines have moved away from the influential, early twentieth-century model of the monocentric city, tightly wrapped around a central business district (CBD, see Hurd 1903; Park et al. 1925) toward multinuclei (Harris and Ullman 1945), multicenter (Odland 1978), and numerous other decentered accounts of city structure. In recent decades, it has become widely accepted that inhabitants of medium-size and large metropolises on all continents increasingly live, work, and commute between "multiple urban cores" and "edge cities"[10] rather than merely moving between a peripheral dormitory and a nodal office and that new methodological tools, theoretical approaches, and geographical frameworks are necessary to understand these processes.[11] In the illustrative words of Edward Soja, after the model of Los Angeles, the twenty-first-century city is "polynucleated, complexly networked, multi-cultural, and polyglot" (2005). Indeed, even old-world cities like London, Paris, Rome, Moscow, and Beijing ("highly-centralized giant cities," in Peter Hall's [1966] formulation), whose concentricity has taken centuries to fan out from ancient centers of political or spiritual authority, are now characterized by movement and exchange between dispersed "polycenters" (Mace 1976; Hall 1997; Roth et al. 2011).

Warsaw is and has been for most of its history a substantially smaller city than Hall's benchmark metropolises. But it is a large European capital with a dispersed central district. Especially given its fast population growth and matching territorial expansion from the late nineteenth century until 1939, Warsaw's core district was, quite unsurprisingly, polycentric.[12] More so, in fact, than many other European capitals: as Professor Baraniewski admitted after bemoaning Warsaw's centerlessness in a 2010 lecture on Plac Defilad at the Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw's relegation to the status of a provincial commercial city in the Russian Empire meant that it never (certainly not until after 1945) underwent the process of constructing a "unified

urban *Gesamtkunstwerk*" experienced by many nineteenth-century European capital cities.

Now, the term *monocenter* tends to be used in the literature to refer to the entire central region in terms of its relation to the remainder of the urban organism, or even to an entire conurbation, agglomeration, or city-region. What I am looking, for, however, is a term that captures the spatial and social significance of an architectural dominanta's immediate surroundings, where these surroundings form an ensemble with this dominanta and where the dominanta dominates (or at least aspires to dominate) the entire city. In other words, I would like to formulate a term to express Warsaw planner's Sprawka's above-mentioned "center of the very center."

Following urban historians like Gideon Sjoberg (1960), Aztec urban archaeologist Michael E. Smith has attempted to create a framework for the comparison and analysis of preindustrial and non-European urban structure. He defines an "urban epicenter" as a "civic-ceremonial zone that serves as the seat of administration, ritual and display for a polity" (2007, 138). Smith points out that many scholarly analyses of preindustrial urban layouts have tended to overemphasize the cosmological dimension, either by means of a direct application of religious scholar Mircea Eliade's axis mundi to city form (see Rapoport 1993 and Wheatley 1971 for Beijing) or by independently creating their own cosmological schemas (such as Kevin Lynch's 1981 theory of "magical correspondence" based on Chinese and Indian examples). He gives the example of modern scholars (Gasparini and Margolies 1980) who went to desperate lengths to verify the claims of early Spanish writers that the Incan capital Cuzco had been designed by the king Pachacuti in the shape of a giant puma. Smith takes seriously the role that conscious intentionality played in (ancient) city design, but he points out that ideological, cosmological, or aesthetic visions for urban form do not tend to develop in isolation from concerns related to politics, provisioning, and natural landscape.

Following in this vein, Smith argues that the grid plan of the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan—centered around an enormous temple, widely known after Cortés as *Templo Mayor*, and the open space around it, which, as Setha Low (2000) observes, determined the location of postconquest Mexico City's epicentric urban space, the *Zócalo*—followed not the movement of the sun across the sky, as most scholars have argued, but the orthogonal layout of rectangular agricultural fields called *chinampas* and irrigation canals and causeways.[13] Even if the grid plan were endowed with "high-level"

cosmological meanings, these could well, says Smith, have been "created after the fact, applied to the pre-existing city layout to promote the interests of the state and religious institutions" (Smith 2007, 39). Just as—contra the "de-economizers"—various forms of state socialism did not arise purely on epistemic, aesthetic, discursive, or ideological foundations, so the Meso-american civilizations did not organize their cities purely on the basis of supernatural considerations.

I adapt Smith's usage, therefore, to refer to Parade Square and its immediate surroundings (the Eastern and Western walls) as the city's epicenter. As the content of the previous paragraphs hints, pivotal central ensembles are not exclusively features belonging to small towns, and Warsaw and Mexico City are not the only large urban entities in the world organized around an epicenter or a dominanta. Moscow's concentric structure is still very clearly focused on a tiny core composed of the Kremlin, Red Square, and the adjoining Kitay Gorod district. Even the plan to build the Palace of the Soviets would arguably have strengthened the domination of this ensemble rather than diffusing it (Goldzamt 1956; Schlögel 1993, 2012). Beijing's vast urban bulk remains concentrated around the Forbidden City and its former approaching axis, widened after 1949 and transformed into Tiananmen Square. Art historian Wu Hung (2005) shows how Mao consciously destabilized the imperial geomancy of Beijing's urban core but without undermining its epicentric prominence in the communist capital. The symbolic and economic importance of the Acropolis Mound and the Parthenon to contemporary Athens is still overwhelming, even if this space is totally detached from the urban everyday of Athenians (Yalouri 2001). Furthermore, its significance has only been strengthened in recent years by the completion of Bernard Tschumi's new Acropolis Museum (Beard 2010) and even by the context of uncertainty generated by Greece's sovereign debt crisis, in the face of which the ancient mound is said to generate a sought-after sense of stability and permanence (Souliotis 2013).

The Kaaba—a pre-Islamic thirteen-meter-high granite cube—is not only the navel of the city of Mecca but also the cosmological alignment point for the entire Islamic world (King 1982; Bonine 1990). The Kaaba is now practically enveloped by the Abraj Al-Bait, a 601 meter multipronged skyscraper complex completed in 2012 (bearing more than a passing resemblance to the Palace and its Moscow prototypes). Critics, Mecca residents, hajjis, and believers worldwide are divided as to whether this extraordinary

new spatial juxtaposition works to enforce or diminish the prominence and sacredness of the Kaaba (Noyes 2013).

These examples all refer to centuries-old spaces, buildings, and ensembles, or at least to structures linked to or created with reference to an older urban form.[14] Considered against this background, the uniqueness of Warsaw's Palace of Culture and Parade Square exists on two levels. Firstly, they came out of nowhere and rode roughshod over the spatial forms and socioeconomic arrangements of the preceding city. Secondly—and I cannot be sure about this without compiling an enormous amount of comparative data, but I am comfortable making this claim on the basis of my reading so far—the sheer intensity and diversity of intra-urban interactions, associations, and events that *condense* on Warsaw's dominanta and epicenter—of *centrality* in the sense of a "gathering together of whatever coexists in a given space" (Lefebvre 1991, 331)—is unprecedented and unmatched anywhere else in the world.[15] Moreover, this centrality, although very consciously launched by the construction of the sundial- and milestone-laden Parade Square (initially called Plac Centralny, see chap. 3), has accumulated over the decades, gradually but tirelessly: Dworzec Śródmieście (the midtown suburban railway station) was completed in its present guise between 1955 and 1963; Domy Towarowe Centrum (the Central Department Stores) became the most prominent feature of the Eastern Wall complex in 1969, providing Varsovians with a retail imperative to visit the Palace's environs; Dworzec Centralny (Poland's largest, busiest, and, as TD director Miśkiewicz points out, only *Central* as opposed to *Main* station) was opened with much fanfare four years later; the most beleaguered station of Warsaw's underground railway, metro *Centrum* came in 1998; and the Świętokrzyska station—which became the only interchange station on the system when the second line of the metro opened in 2015—followed in 2001.[16] The process of townhalling and Varsovianizing the Palace and Square previously described and currently ongoing constitutes a further intensification of this trajectory, which 85 percent of my survey respondents do not think has gone far enough! What I am trying to drive home here is the extent to which the thought "tossed," in Sigalin's phrase, by Molotov in 1952 (chap. 2) has had an uncommonly dizzying career.

I will return to expand on the extraordinary aspect of the Palace's relationship with Warsaw in the following chapter. But first, before I draw chapter 6 to a close, I will switch the focus of my discussion, from roaring success to unmitigated failure. How can it possibly be that none of the

countless schemes, visions, and plans (top-down, bottom-up, sensible, and madcap) dreamt up since the fall of the PRL for Parade Square have come even close to the implementation stage?

Cockfight: "Legislative Viagra" Versus the "Dwarflike Imagination"

My investigation of these issues came to a head during one of the public meetings I organized—the so-called *Archigadaniny*, or Archiblahblahs (Murawski 2013)—at which I asked participants to "embody" the single causal factor that they felt was responsible for causing the never-ending post-1989 Parade Square planning deadlock. Embodied agencies ranged from the obtuseness of Polish state railways (owners of a tract of land on the Square's southern side), the incompetence and lack of vision apparently characteristic of Warsaw (and Polish) bureaucrats and politicians, the absence of a comprehensive property restitution arrangement, the investor-unfriendly climate, and the total subordination of public functionaries to the whims of developers and speculators. These factors were all familiar to me from many conversations with informants and from the media—they replicated (and condensed) the terms of the established Parade Square debate closely, although certain aspects received much greater attention than others: the unresolved property situation on the territory of the Square seemed to be relatively less interesting for panelists and guests than its everyday prominence in the media might have suggested, and vaguer questions of administrative and bureaucratic incompetence and even impotence came to dominate the discussion.

Proceedings began to crystalize during a confrontation between the mayor's press officer Tomasz Andryszczyk (the only member of the municipal administration who accepted the invitation to take part), rightwing architect Czesław Bielecki (who, it turned out, would be the main opposition candidate for mayor of Warsaw in elections held three months later), and ex-chief architect Michał Borowski. Bielecki threw down the gauntlet right at the start of his presentation: "Today, I have become the embodiment of the lady currently occupying the position of Mayor of Warsaw, Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz." Listing the administration's record of being unable to see through investments begun under their predecessors, Bielecki concluded his energetic presentation by proclaiming, "There is no legislative Viagra for the impotence of executive power."

The city's press officer responded to Bielecki's provocation by pointing out that Gronkiewicz-Waltz's period in office saw the first moves away from mere Archiblahblah to "empirical action": the final designs for Mo-MAW had been presented on the Palace's viewing terrace several days before the meeting, and diggers had recently moved into Parade Square to begin work on the second line of the metro system. The press officer deftly countered Bielecki's Viagra remark by observing that "impotence is a male problem," arguing that the current mayor was forced to battle the effects of the inadequacies of previous (exclusively male) leaders of the city administration.

Andryszczyk's remarks were fiercely contested in turn by ex-chief architect Michał Borowski, who reminded the press officer that all currently active major investments (including MSN) were hatched and pushed through during the term (2002–2006) of Borowski's boss, the late Mayor (later Polish president) Lech Kaczynski. "Everything," shouted Borowski, "was imitated as a result of decisions taken in 2004 [and] 2005. I will not have this referred to as 'impotence'!"

All these emasculatory insinuations being made, it was only a matter of time before the phallic stature and causal potency of the Palace itself was alluded to.[17] A young architect, Ola Wasilkowska, interested in applying theories of emergence and complexity to the built environment and in particular to the relationship between the Palace, the Parade Square, and the city, suggested that the whole discussion, pining after "grand visions," "will power," and potency and "stuck within the paradigm of the strong hand," reflects the authoritarian character of the Palace itself.[18] "Do we really still desire power to be phallic, to be imposed top-down?" Wasilkowska asked, before suggesting that power should be delegated to the citizens and attempting to break the meeting's panel-moderator-audience hierarchy by "distributing" her microphone to the audience's free reign.

As the meeting progressed, the Palace itself came to be invoked as a morass-inducing causal factor. Planner and ex-mayor of the Warsaw Central District Jan Rutkiewicz (in office between 1990 and 1994), for example, returned to clarify that his named factor, the "dwarflike imagination of decision-makers," had not been intended purely as a comment on the human failings of two decades' worth of politicians and bureaucrats; the human inadequacies he referred to emerged in relation to the enormous bulk of the Palace itself. The decision-makers were and are dwarves, according to Rutkiewicz, because they are unable to bring themselves to deal with the

Palace's crushing vastness. The primary reasons for the Palace's obduracy, suggested Rutkiewicz, are spatial, not historical or symbolic: its own geometry and layout "demands that it is treated like a Palace." Construction in its vicinity can take place only "on the axes defined by the Palace itself," and all local plans hitherto have been unable to transcend the tendency to surround the Palace with "forecourts" and "side wings" totally subordinate to the spatial logic it lays out.

Another planner (and mayoral adviser), Grzegorz Buczek, seconded Rutkiewicz's remarks in line with comments he made during the mayor's advisory council meetings, lamenting that no one had come up with a "vision" capable of transcending the "geometry, norms, and scale imposed by the Palace." This line of reasoning was extended—but turned on its head—by former Warsaw chief architect Michał Borowski, who sought to interpret the building's spatial influence in terms of its productive as well as its debilitating impact: "If it wasn't for the Palace, there would be nothing in this place. It is the Palace which delineates the possible area for development, as well as the network of streets which surround it. It is the opposite of what everyone is saying—it is only thanks to the Palace's existence that development around it is possible at all."

Tomek Fudala, the MoMAW's architecture curator, agreed with Borowski, pointing out that "the Palace is paradoxically that factor which allows and enables us to act as well as not to act." This exchange culminated in Buczek announcing to the audience that among them was the head designer for the new Parade Square local plan, at that time being finalized by the municipality's resident architects. Buczek stopped short of naming the official in question but suggested that "it would be valuable to hear their opinion now, the person who knows most about the current plan. How does [it] deal with the dictatorship (*dyktat*) of the Palace? Does it neutralize it, sanctify, or even sacralize it?" The planner in question, who had turned down my invitation to take part in the meeting as a panelist, remained seated, head awkwardly shaking.

Several people I talked to after the meeting—friends as well as strangers—agreed that the Buczek/municipal planner exchange was an interesting moment: a particularly vivid culmination of a discussion focused on the relationship between the Palace's bulk (semiotic, social, and material) and the ineffectiveness of the city's post-socialist decision-makers, who were "helpless," in the words of architectural historian Małgorzata Omilanowska, "in the face of this legacy of totalitarianism" that exerted

its debilitating impact on the city "like the magic power of a giant" (2010, 135–136). It is not hard to detect, however, that it was not only the physical Palace that was being invoked here but also its status as the most powerful material and aesthetic legacy of state socialism, a system whose own decision-making potency was compared favorably by many of my informants with the squabbling, pettiness, and corruption of today's "immature" capitalist democracy.

"Stalin Knew What He Was Doing"

The Archiblahblah meetings and my Palaceological survey both constituted components of a hypothesis-testing process that I carried out toward the end of my fieldwork period. So how did respondents' answers to the survey question concerning reasons for the Parade Square morass correspond to the content of the discussion during the Archiblahblah?[19] The ten possible answers to this question (respondents were able to pick only one) loosely resembled the factors identified by participants in the meeting, which had taken place three months previously. Of 3,831 respondents, 71 percent chose answers pertaining to the broader category of "impotence," which had also dominated the course of the Archiblahblah, compared to a mere 2 percent who opted for "the resistance of the Palace itself."[20] In stark contrast to this figure, however, was the colorful language that many—even those who had not recognized the Palace as a causal factor in their multiple-choice answer—deployed to describe the Palace's capacities in the accompanying comments field. "The Palace does possess some kind of diabolical power," conceded one respondent. Others were more forthright: "You can't really blame the decisionmakers. The Palace is an abscess on the ass of Warsaw, only demolition could produce the conditions from which brave, visionary ideas might arise, there's too much responsibility, architects aren't able to cope, stalin [*sic*] knew what he was doing!"

This, in short, is at the core of the argument I make in this book. "Stalin [or, rather, his political and aesthetic commissars] knew what he was [they were] doing," but, like Marx's humans, "not under circumstances they themselves have chosen."[21] The political economy of socialist realism produced an extraordinarily efficacious aesthetic dynamic ("economic aesthetic"), which ended up far outliving its own conditions of existence. The following chapter will attest to this on another level, drawing on the extraordinary life of the Palace in Warsaw as its starting point.

Notes

1. Palaceization, it seems, really was already happening. I developed this point in an online article (Murawski 2010b) in which I pointed out that the shape of the Warsaw Agora resembles the "shadow" of the Palace, often photographed looming menacingly from the thirtieth-floor viewing terrace. See Dorrian (2010).

2. This is a reference to Skorupka and Szczepańska (2008), whose authors told me they were wary of the municipality using their (volunteered) report as an excuse for not commissioning or carrying out any further studies.

3. For more on axial controversies in 1980s London, see Jacobs (1996, 38–69).

4. This logic was taken further by artist Andrzej Fogtt, who told me about his plan to build a three-hundred-meter-high Tower of European Unity, inspired by the figure of a "burning woman's torso," on the Praga side of the river as a counterbalance to the Palace. According to Fogtt, "a work of art is born from the aristocratic mental heights of one person, not from a democratically-arranged architectural competition."

5. Sixty-four answers alluded to New York's Central Park.

6. Compare this to Goldzamt's proposal (chap. 3) to straighten Marszałkowska, to render it into a "triumphal artery" for PKiN (cited in Sigalin 1986c, 11).

7. See also Martyn (2007) and Nawratek (2007) on Warsaw's past and future centrality. Chmielewski and Syrkus's *Warszawa Funkcjonalna* was also to a large extent a project of placing Warsaw at the nodal center of the European continent (see chap. 3 and Chmielewski and Syrkus 1935; Malisz 1987; Crowley 2008).

8. A majority of survey respondents associated normalcy with low-rise architecture and a street layout resembling the prewar city, although a minority saw this in terms of high-rise buildings and more spectacular architectural forms.

9. High-rise architecture was frequently characterized as deriving from an "Asiatic complex," out of place in the center of a "civilized" European city.

10. See Dieleman and Faludi 1998, Garreau 1991, Berry and Kim 1993, Rowland and Gordon 1996, Hall 1997, Batty 2001, Clark and Huang 2003.

11. See Castells 1989; Cooke 1990; Sassen 1991; Knox 1993; Soja 2000, 2005.

12. The city had just 163,000 inhabitants in 1850 and 1.3 million in 1939, by which time it had become Europe's fifth largest city (Główny Urząd Statystyczny 2012; Gawryszewski 2009).

13. See Blumenfeld (1949) for more on agriculture and the grid city.

14. By no means an exhaustive survey; see also Silver 2011; Ford 1993; Rabbat 2012; Barnett 2006; Holston 1989; Meuser 2010; Laszczkowski 2011, 2016; Köppen 2013; Weizman 2007; Pullan and Sternberg 2012; Tafuri 1976; Hall 1997; Purchla 2000.

15. I am not referring here to extra-urban interactions, such as those between a single building or space and a regional, national, or global network (whether of consumers, receivers, or visitors), which in the case of some of the previous examples—such as the Kaaba and the Acropolis—clearly leave the Palace and Square far behind.

16. The Polish term *Śródmieście* is equivalent to the German *Stadtmitte*.

17. The phallic dimension of skyscrapers is frequently alluded to in popular discourse (this was certainly the case in Warsaw) but little explored in the literature. For analyses of skyscrapers through a gender lens, see Dolores Hayden's (1977) text on "skyscraper seduction/rape"; Leslie Weisman (1994) on "architectural machismo"; Woods (2006) on photography,

gender, and New York skyscrapers; Schleier (2009) on skyscrapers and film; and Betsky (1995) on skyscrapers and the construction of sexuality. See Murawski (2016) for a more in-depth discussion.

18. See Wasilkowska et al. (2009).

19. The survey question was phrased thus: "The results of the first architectural competition for Parade Square were announced in 1992. Since then, none of the plans put forward for the square have been realized. Why, according to you, are the preparations for the redevelopment of the Square taking so long?"

20. Of other answers, 2 percent went for the not unrelated "curse," 1 percent for "activities of speculators," and 1 percent for "lack of appropriate technical infrastructure"; 7 percent responded "don't know," and another 7 percent also chose to name another factor altogether in the comments field, most frequently citing lack of resources.

21. This line from Marx's (1973, 146) "The Eighteen Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" ("men make history, but not under circumstances they themselves have chosen") is often cited as the most cogent expression of Marx's views on the relationship between what sociologists later called the structure and agency problem.

7

THE EXTRAORDINARY PALACE

Palace "Fanatics"

In February 2010, Andrzej, an inhabitant of a small town not far from Warsaw, sent an e-mail to the Palace administration's events department, inquiring about the possibility of proposing to his fiancé on the building's thirtieth-floor viewing terrace. Here are the first few lines of his message: "First of all, let me explain to you why it is the Palace in particular, which interests me. Although we don't live in Warsaw, every time we come here we have to see, touch and admire it for a moment. . . . For us this is a magical place—in the midst of glass and nondescript skyscrapers there is He—the most extraordinary building [*niesamowita budowla*] I have ever seen in my life . . . that enormity . . . its extraordinary facade, its interesting history, etc., all make this place unique."[1]

Similar requests arrive in the administration's inboxes regularly, even if their language is not always quite so effusive. The viewing terrace—which occupies a monumental Stalinist cloister and features a licensed bar—is not only the Palace's most visited location (60% of my survey respondents declared having been there) but also a popular dating spot, especially during the summer months, when it is mood-lit in the evening and stays open until midnight. The terrace is also an obligatory stopping point for couples who choose to celebrate their weddings in the Palace; some host the actual ceremony there; others get married in a nearby church or registry office and host their wedding party (*wesele*) in the Palace. Typically, the bride, the groom, and their guests begin their romantic journey through the Palace by taking an elevator ride to the terrace. Cake or champagne is served as the guests admire the view, and the couple poses for photographs against the Warsaw skyline. Subsequently, the party moves to one of the marble- or stucco-laden halls on the second or fourth floor for the wesele itself.

Figure 7.1. Kasia and Maciek Chudkiewicz's wedding party in the Palace: champagne reception on the thirtieth-floor viewing terrace. Photograph by the author.

Among these events, the most extravagant that I witnessed was held on May 1, 2010 by Kasia Chudkiewicz (née Szarobura), an IT specialist, and her husband Maciej Chudkiewicz, a right-wing political journalist from Tygodnik Solidarności (Solidarity Weekly)." Following their wedding at a nearby church on Plac Grzybowski (map P.1, no. 3), wesele guests (who had not been told where they were going next) were led in a May Day-inspired parade to the Palace. After champagne on the terrace, a Polish People's Republic-style party featuring stuffed hogs, pickled herring, *ostalgie*-cally packaged snacks and soft drinks, copious amounts of vodka, and similar period trappings raged in the Broniewski Hall until four in the morning.[2]

Maciej and Kasia, who had initially tracked me down via my *Pałacologia* blog, allowed me to devote a post to documenting their May Day ceremony (Murawski 2010a). Readers' responses focused less on the politics of the event than on a discussion of the Palace's romantic aura: one comment ("this is all Łepkowska's fault—too many lovers' kisses in the Palace") drew attention to the prominence of the Palace and especially of the viewing
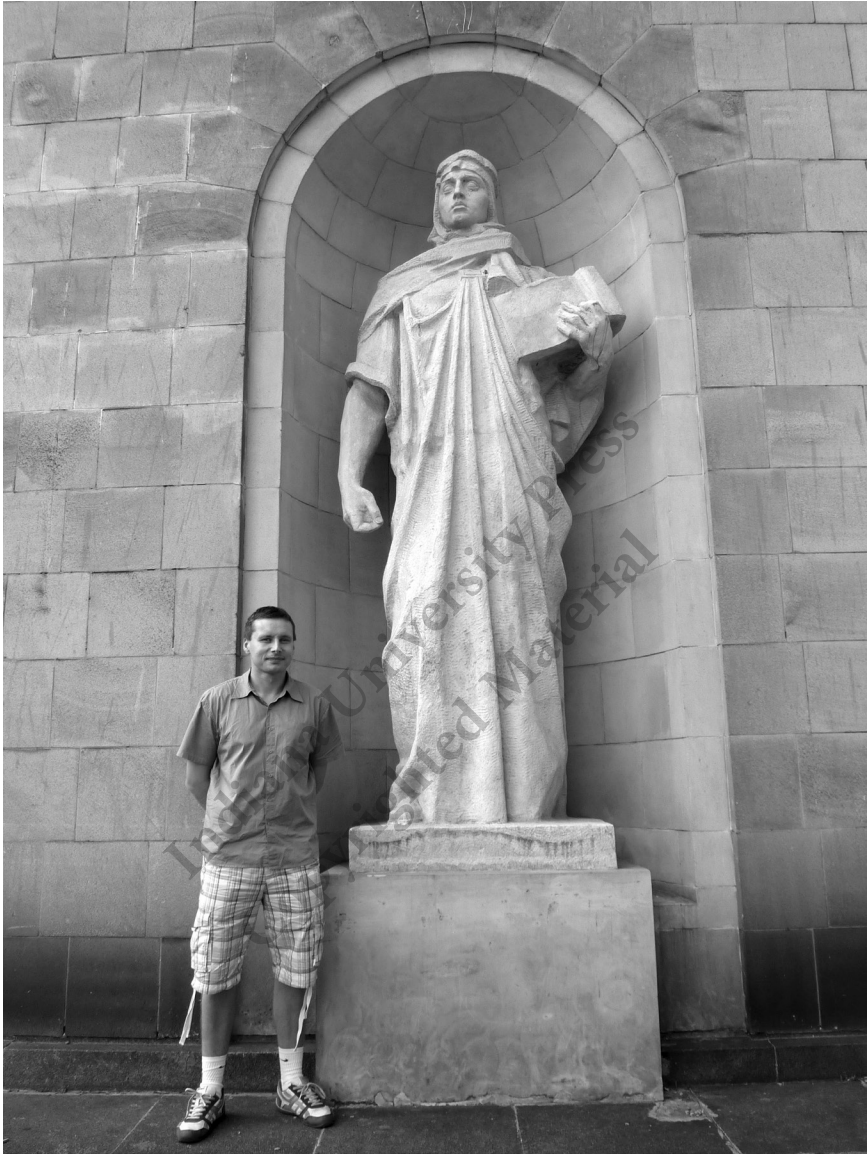
Figure 7.2. Palace enthusiast and collector Tomasz Dzierga standing in front of one of the statues lining the exterior wall of the Congress Hall. Photograph by the author.

terrace in 1990s and 2000s soap operas about Warsaw yuppies (*Magda M.*, *Teraz Albo Nigdy*, *M jak Miłość*), many of them cowritten or produced by Ilona Łepkowska. Others referred to their own experiences: "As a young boy meeting my beloved on the terrace, we used to scrawl hearts and our initials with a stone into the wall." Another comes from Woper, the pseudonym of a traffic policeman from Silesia (I will return to his story below): "ehhhh my adventure with the palace i think, is also romantic . . . that's why this building has such an effect on me."

Throughout this book, I seek to represent how a broad if not representative cross section of Varsovians and visitors perceived and experienced the Palace. In this chapter, however, my focus shifts toward the extreme fringes of the Palace Complex, to consider a variety of the unexpected, intense, and intimate—in other words nonmundane—levels on which the Palace interacts with the people and things around it. Indeed, throughout my time in Warsaw, I actively sought out Palace fanatics; I wanted to find out what drives these enthusiasts, who, in some cases, devote substantial portions of their lives to Palace lore and memorabilia. I wanted to develop some comprehension of what it is that motivates their obsession with what is, after all, just a building.

Tomasz Dzierga (the above-named Woper) is a traffic policeman from Siemanowice Śląskie, part of the industrial Katowice conurbation in the southwestern Polish region of Silesia. Though not a resident of Warsaw, he is a frequent visitor to the capital—visits that tend to be motivated by the incentive to return to his favorite building, the Palace. While there, Tomasz tries to gain entry to previously unexplored nooks and crannies and to collect various Palace-related souvenirs, ideally rare and unusual ones, not those available for purchase from one of the building's privately run gift shops. Since 2005, Dzierga has been running a website (www.pkin.org) on which he has catalogued his enormous collection, encompassing, as of February 2017, over four thousand gadgets, books, newspapers, videos, and photographs of the Palace of Culture.

The kernel of Dzierga's captivation with the Palace is tragic. As he freely admits, he cannot separate it from his feelings for a woman, his first love, whom he met on the viewing terrace in 2003, during his first ever visit to the capital, and who died young several years later, just as Tomasz's collection was beginning to expand. (The viewing terrace is widely associated with tragic love through the legend of a young couple who jumped to their deaths from the thirtieth floor in 1965.)[3] Dzierga is keen to emphasize that

his passion has taken on entirely new dimensions since this time. Sometimes, thinking about the Palace—whether about the various great events that have occurred there or about his own experiences—Tomasz gets goose bumps. Despite this layered relationship to the building, when I asked Tomasz to try to define what it is that directs his fascination about the Palace now, he had no difficulty answering: "As soon as I got out of the Central Station for the first time, the enormity of this building, it just blasted me . . . Of course, feelings play their role here. . . . But even now, when I came out of the station. It's huge. It's enormous. . . . Marriott and Intercontinental, they're just little boxes. It's not some glass, a strong wind blows and that's that. Even the bricks themselves make an impression."

A related sentiment was expressed by another Palace collector (over one thousand items) and webmaster, Michał Kadlec of Pałac Kultury Collection (pkc.2ap.pl). Michał is a native of the northern city of Toruń in his early twenties and an aspiring writer of crime literature, and his enthrallment has a more banal origin, deriving as it does from his enjoyment of the Palace-focused third season of *Ekstradycja*, the most popular police series of late 1990s Poland (discussed in the closing section of this chapter). Asked whether the Palace's interior or exterior aspect appeals to him more, Kadlec replied that although the Palace's interiors are charming, they're too "kitschy" and "changeable." What he really likes is the gigantic, pompous body of the Palace, decorated with its oversize crenellations and enormous colonnades. When I pressed Kadlec to formulate a concise definition of what it is about the Palace that appeals to him most, he explained, "You know, I like . . . big things. And the Palace of Culture is a sort of indicator of might. It's not only its height, it's also its girth, its broadness. It really is something of a *moloch*!"

Post-Stalinist Sublime

It is illustrative that these fanatics and others rarely made reference to the beauty or attractiveness of the Palace. Similarly, those of my interlocutors who felt positively disposed toward the Palace seldom described it in terms of its refined or pleasing aesthetic characteristics. Where appeals to beauty were made, these tended to emerge as ripostes to detractors, who, for their part, were much quicker to highlight the ugliness or even the grotesqueness or hideousness of the building. This didn't surprise me. Although I am clearly a Palace partisan, I would be very reluctant to describe the building

as beautiful; it is too bombastic, too heavy, too vulgar and tied up with un-pleasant associations.

It is interesting to see how this awkward positioning of the Palace to categories of taste is borne out by the survey statistics. Only 27 percent of respondents declared a positive aesthetic appreciation, against another 27 percent who found the building ugly. By far the greatest proportion, 45 percent, were uncertain as to how the Palace fitted into their spectrum of taste. These numbers contrast greatly with the overwhelming majority of respondents who declared their overall positive disposition toward the Palace (65% for, 20% ambiguous or indifferent, 15% negative). Even among those who professed overall affection for the Palace, only a little over a third (36%) were happy to attest to its beauty. By contrast, the Palace's detractors had no such qualms: a crushing 93 percent hit the "ugly" button. People, it would seem, do not find it easy to find the Palace beautiful. But this does not stop them from admiring it, from being fascinated by it, or for attesting to its genius (66% agreed that the Palace was an "extraordinary" building).

The philosophy of aesthetics, of course, has a name for this interface be-tween the beautiful and the fantastic, and I elaborate on the presence of the "planned cultivation of the sublime" (Heller 1997, 70) in Stalinist discourses on architecture, aesthetics, and urbanism in chapters 1 and 4 of this book. It is clear that the Palace's "planned sublime" was designed to last, and it has indeed managed to outlive de-Stalinization in 1956 and the political-economic transformation of 1989. This longevity is amply confirmed by my interlocutors and survey respondents, for whom the post-socialist Palace is not primarily a building to be appreciated for its refinement or beauty but for its awe-inspiring, reason-defying dimensions and characteristics.

To return to my discussion from chapter 3, the point I am trying to bolster here is that, to counter-paraphrase a pronouncement of Callon and Latour's (1981, 281), in Warsaw, not all actors are isomorphic and some are, by nature, bigger and smaller than others. The Palace remains "absolutely large" in real life and also—in Mayor Rutkiewicz's term—in the "dwarf-like imaginations of the city's decision-makers" (see chap. 6). I will return to consider the importance of magnitudinal absolutes and topographical as well as causal extremities in the closing section of this chapter. First, however, I would like to look at another aspect of the Palace's fantastical existence that failed to abate following the fall of state socialism in 1989: the continued expansion of Palace chronicler Hanna Szczubełek's folder of untypical correspondence.

Untypical Correspondence after 1989

The flow of miscellaneous letters continues despite the predictions of the folder's first ethnographer, Zbigniew Benedyktowicz, who identified it as a "votive corpus" (Benedyktowicz 1991), a phenomenon of the totalitarian centralization and sacralization of power (chap. 4). Although Benedyktowicz based his assessment on research conducted at the end of the 1980s, the folder continues to be referred to in the past tense in recent appearances in the media and popular culture. In response to a journalist's question, filmmaker Tomasz Wolski, author of a 2012 documentary about the inner life of the Palace, wondered whether perhaps the letters were "written by people from the countryside, who didn't know whom they can turn to with their problems, and the Palace was identified with power." Noticing that much of the folder's content is clearly produced by people suffering from mental illness, Wolski added that "today, people are more likely to give vent to their problems on internet fora" (Bogdziewicz 2012).[4]

And, of course, Poland's Internet fora are not short of grievances and anger expressed directly at or in relation to the Palace. I make reference to forum materials numerous times in this book, but I do so sparingly and reluctantly—numerous observers have discussed how heightened anonymity and other factors present in certain online communities give rise to the phenomena of "hating" and "trolling," the recourse to vitriol and extremity of expression by "online disinhibited" Internet users (Bargh et al. 2002; Suler 2004) "doing it for the lulz" (Phillips 2013; see also Herring et al. 2002; boyd 2007). But while it is easy to vent spleen on the Internet, it takes a different sort of commitment to put pen to paper, buy postage stamps, and dispatch an old-fashioned piece of "untypical" mail to the Palace of Culture. It is the continuing growth of Szczubełek's folder that constitutes a hard-case testimony for the Palace's continuing hold over Varsovians' (and other Poles') psyches in the twenty-first century.[5]

So how is that the letters keep coming? On hearing this question, Hanna Szczubełek and other Palace employees would typically respond with a variation on a one-liner: "there are still bonkers people around!" Beyond this insight, what can the letters' content reveal about the nature of the Palace's architectural power after 1989? The correspondence received during the last couple of decades encompasses almost all of Benedyktowicz's primary categories (Benedyktowicz 1991, chap. 2). The Palace's connection to the sacred, eschatological, and legal realms, as well as to dispute resolution,

demonic and healing power, public and intimate abuses, and grievances, all make frequent appearances. So does a new category, notable because of its connection to the political-economic aspect of the Palace Complex: that of ownership over the Palace—which, interestingly, came up in several of the post- but almost none of the pre-1989 letters. Another element not noted by Benedyktowicz is the strikingly gendered dimension to more than one of the letters (pre- and post-1989), which could be interestingly juxtaposed with my account of the café discussion about the Phallus of Culture in chapter 6. Beyond this, the folder also contains a number of references to the architectural or spatial (such as suggestions for alterations to the Palace or descriptions of the building) and ideological (attacks against or defenses of the Palace on historical-political grounds) domains.

A 2002 letter authored by the self-styled "Queen-Tsar" of the "Orthodox Catholic" religion brings together a striking array of these various old and new dimensions. Written on a long ream of notepaper featuring the header of a now-defunct Warsaw-based mental health charity, the Queen-Tsar provides a family-tree-like diagram laying out the power hierarchy of her church. Topped by an adhesive glittering love heart, the diagram features a photograph of the Queen-Tsar herself at the center, self-described as a "Vatican Varsovian"; other important figures co-constituting the highest levels of the religion's power structure include the composite figure of "God Lenin Wojtyła Tsar," as well as "Pope John Paul II (Pole by descent)" and another "Tsar" and "Queen-Tsar" identified by their own names, presumably acquaintances of the central Queen-Tsar.[6] The bottom part of the diagram describes the religion's legal structure, the highest instance of which is constituted by "Church Law"; lower levels refer to "Polish Military Law," the "Lawyer Kaczyński from 'Law and Justice'" (a reference to later mayor of Warsaw and late Polish president Lech Kaczyński, then gaining popularity as a hardline Minister of Justice), "Polish Civil Law," "Polish Prison Law," and several subcategories of Polish and international "Citizens' Law." The sacral-legal body of the letter is supplemented by a tragic-sounding ending, which seems to connect the Palace's "fuzzy" ownership status (see conclusion) with a gendered dimension: the Queen-Tsar requests a reply from the "Directorate" of the Palace regarding "my rights to the Palace of Culture and Science from 1952. Information necessary for a court case. Please note, I was an adopted child, whom since 1952 naïve men have been treating as their property."
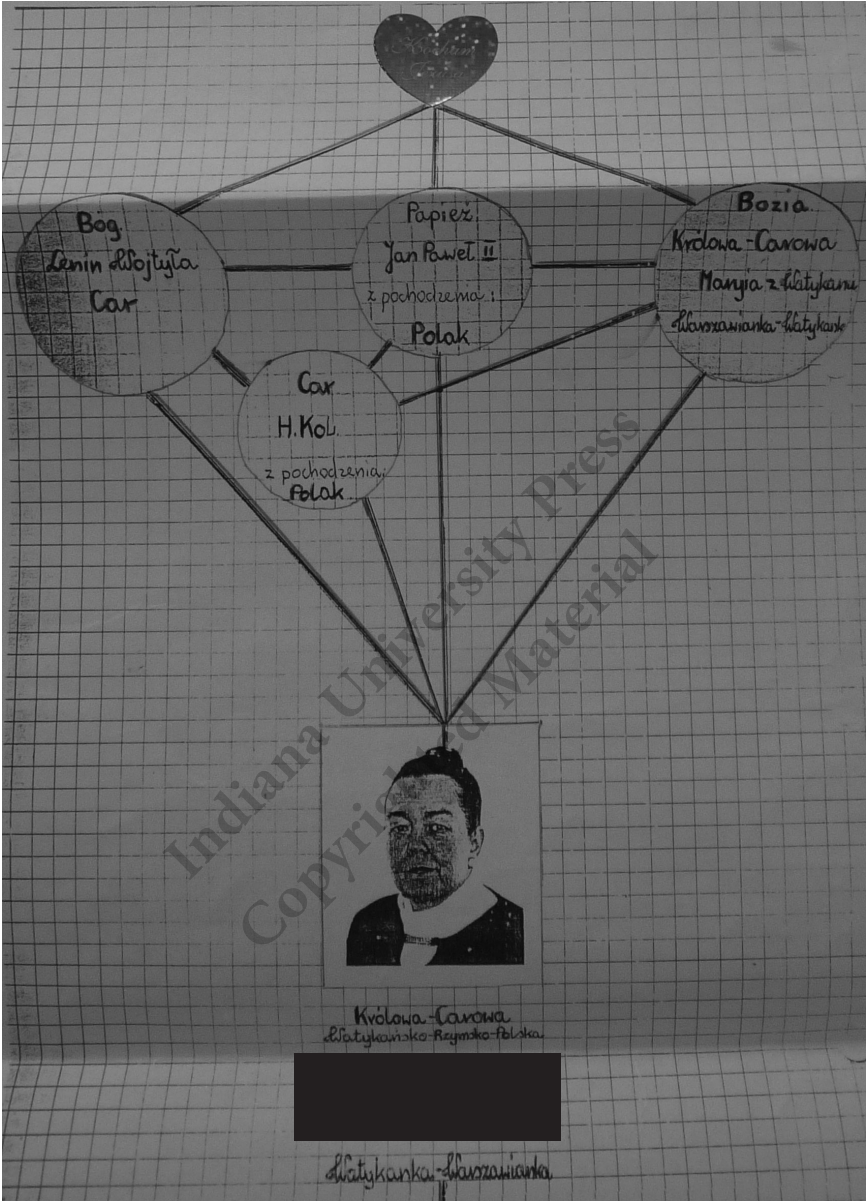
Figure 7.3. Correspondence sent to the Palace by the self-styled Queen-Tsar of the Orthodox Catholic Religion. Photograph by the author.
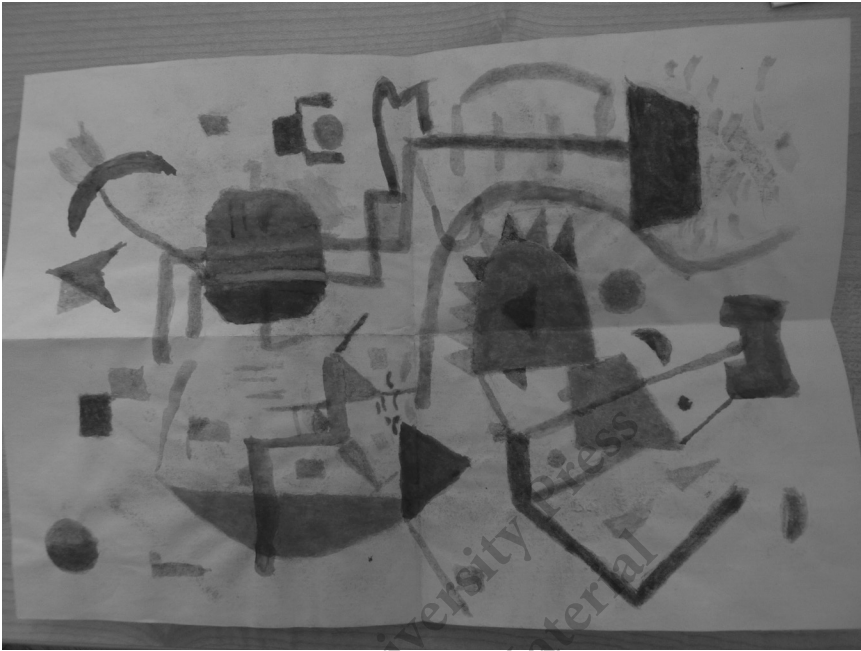
Figure 7.4. Letter addressed to the nonexistent ninety-second floor of the Palace of Culture. Photograph by the author.

The godly and/or otherworldly vein is continued by a 2008 "declaration of faith, with which I intend to pay witness to the Lord's truth" from an inhabitant of the northwestern Polish town Stargard Szczeciński. A resident of Katowice, meanwhile, produced several eschatological compositions containing seemingly meaningless collections of Hebrew characters, threats of destruction, and references to the Palace as a "testimony to the effects of clerical intolerance" and, again, "the theft of property." The tendency to sacred esoterica culminates in a 2004 letter, sent from a postbox in the Warsaw suburb of Pruszków, the location of Tworki Hospital, the city's largest mental health institution. Addressed to the nonexistent ninety-second floor of the Palace of Culture in "Warsaw Central," the letter contains some abuse directed at psychiatrists (a common theme) and suggests that its author thinks of the director of Tworki Hospital's office and the headquarters of TVP (Polish public television) as being located within the Palace. Most of the letter is composed of a series of slogans scrawled in multicolored felt-tip pens over two sides of a sheet of A4 paper; upper-case

conjuring of the prehistoric ("TO BE READ IN THE COMPANY OF DINOSAURS"), sacred and cosmological, abound. Particularly prominent and stretching across two lines is a declaration that seems to allude to the Palace's architectural form: "THEY CREATED A PYRAMID, HIPPIES OF SPACE, HERE IS SUCH A RECTANGLE COSMOS ON TOP."

The Palace's tendency to function as a locus for the presentation of grievances continues, and most of these can be connected in some way to one of the domains of interaction between building and city. Spurred presumably by the Palace's association with Warsaw's creative classes, a 1992 letter addressed to the (nonexistent) "Artists' Department" of the Palace, written in finely styled handwriting by a resident of nearby Ulica Hoża, berates artists as "the biggest fools and idiots," a "caste of the derailed . . . deviants, pederasts and halfwits . . . overgrown swinery." On the level of municipal order, a furiously scrawled 1997 note from an anonymous "Average Citizen" complains in the strongest possible terms about undisciplined behaviour in Warsaw's public space: "What sort of savages defile the statue of WITOS? . . . on bloody skateboards, Polish youth! Who is responsible for this?"[7]

Correspondingly, the Palace is called on by some as an arbitrator in disputes and a source of healing power: an erratic, appallingly spelled 1990 letter from a (presumably semiliterate) inhabitant of a village in Eastern Poland's Lublin Voivodeship calls for "help from Mazowiecki" (Poland's first post-communist prime minister) to rein in the "cheating" and "thieving" of other villagers—the letter writer, a widow, describes herself as helpless to deal with circumstances following the death of her husband.

A similar identification of the Palace as a center of national power appears in a 1996 petition to "His Highness, the President of Polish Republic." The author, a divorcé, "1st grade invalid," and "former delegate of the I Congress of the Union of Polish Socialist Youth," from a village in central Poland's Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, makes an implicit plea for help with health and personal problems. Although the Palace's identification with power and identity at the national level seems to wean away during the post-1989 decades, displaced by a greater emphasis on Warsaw-specific issues (such as land ownership), as late as 2008 the Palace's marketing manager received a request to overturn existing bookings in the Congress Hall for February 4, 2009, so that a "Congress of the Convent of National Unity, the White Eagle," planned to coincide with the birthdays of the Renaissance writer Mikołaj Rej and the eighteenth-century national hero Tadeusz

Kościuszko, could take place at the optimal time. In return for the marketing manager's efforts ("We trust that you, a great Polish lady, will help the nation to gather at this Congress when Poland is in need"), the congress's would-be founders promise the Palace an attendance of two thousand delegates, all of them "born in the year 1946 or members of *Społem*" (a cooperative retail institution) and the gift of a portrait of Kościuszko.

Several appeals to the Palace for intervention of a more abstruse kind—linking its architectural power directly to an otherworldly dimension—are made in a series of letters from a Warsaw-born female resident of Luxembourg, all quite disturbing in their tone, each addressed to the "Palace of Culture and Art, Capital-Warsaw, Polska-Pologne-Polen." One letter from 1995 asks for an adjustment to be made to the lyrics of a record by Mieczysław Fogg, a famous Warsaw tango crooner of the pre- and postwar period, so that they don't refer "to killing people." Another, from 1990, instructs the Palace to "please not lead my children . . . to other countries for holiday, because those who organize this trip for example to Amerika [*sic*] get from three to six months in prison" (this reference to lost children appears in other letters written by women to the Palace). The specter of Poland's traumatic twentieth century is raised by seemingly random invocations of "Potsdam" and "the planes that are bambarding [*sic*] Poland."[8] A further letter from the same year appears to link the Bierut Decree's 1945 nationalization of landholdings in central Warsaw to the subterranean legends associated with the Palace:

> Please make an inspection in Warsaw at No. 1 Ulica Złota. The building where our house used to be under the name . . . was changed into a goldsmiths and before that there was a . . . bank by Bulgaria . . . where our scientist make money because the precious ones were collected . . . or still are exists because in this bank by the street there were lifts and exit to an underground train. If they're not there then they were taken before and during the war. I am writing because now our family is not alone underground with this money and we cannot get out.

The content of a 2006 note from the resident of a mental health institution in the central Polish countryside draws attention to the pre-Palace ownership structure of central Warsaw in a particularly intriguing way: the envelope locates the Palace not at Plac Defilad 1 but at Ulica Marszałkowska 119, the now-defunct address of an early nineteenth-century tenement house. Before their nationalization and subsequent dismantling to make way for Parade Square in 1953, the ruins of no. 119 (the building had been badly

destroyed in 1944) were famous in the early postwar years for housing the legendary Cafe Fogg (Majewski 2007), an immensely popular entertainment venue established by the previously mentioned musician Mieczysław Fogg. The sheet of A4 paper inside the envelope features an abstract watercolor painting on one side and a concise note on the other, stating simply, "Please Mr. Director, That you would pay 50 złotys." Of course, one might assume that the artist is simply asking the director to compensate him for the artwork received. But in light of the above, it also becomes plausible to interpret this request as a subtle comment on the debt incurred by the Palace to the city it replaced.

As Benedyktowicz noted for the pre-1989 communication, the post-PRL segment of the folder also contains several pieces of anti-Palace hate mail, smearing the Palace by its association to the Soviet Union and communist ideology. Another mostly illegible Hebrew-smattered letter (1997), for example, by the same author as previously mentioned, specifies its addressee as "Palace of Culture: Symbol of the Sovetskoe [written in faux Russian] Occupation of Hearts and Consciousnesses . . . a testament to the rape against freedom."

Szczubełek's recent correspondence, however, is just as likely to take a pro-Palace standpoint. A 1999 letter signed under the unlikely name Gustaw de Journelle is one of the several addressed directly to Szczubełek herself (a sign of the Palace chronicler's increasing prominence in the media from the 1990s onward). "De Journelle" identifies himself as a welder who worked on the construction site, one of only three "Palace Stakhanovites now alive in Rzeszów [a city in Southeastern Poland] but already the others cannot walk." In barely comprehensible Polish, he laments the "many versions I hear about the Palace demolition," observes that "you would need atom bombs" to complete this task, and suggests "modernization" of the Palace, "that would be the best version." The welder proposes that he will return to Warsaw "with another person but only if journey costs are covered" to proffer his own knowledge of the building: "I will tell you what foundation the Palace stands on, how the 41-metre spire was erected" and so on.

Aside from several other letters of support, some addressed directly to Szczubełek, laying out the writers' experiences of leisure or work time spent in the Palace, the folder also contains a number of proposals regarding possible alterations to be made to the Palace's architecture. A 2006 note from a resident of Częstochowa, for example, states simply, "I write with a polite

request to make available the foundation charter of the Palace of Culture and Science, with a view to its further expansion and enlargement."

By far the most vivid proposal for alteration, which is simultaneously a grievance and an identification of the Palace as the source of a very specific sort of "demonic power," comes in the form of a 1989 letter from a female resident of one of the 1960s residential towers on Ulica Marszałkowska:

> Dear Director of the Palace of Culture!
>
> I live on the Eastern Wall, opposite the Palace. Every day in the night I have strong erotic experiences as a result of radiation from the television aerial on the Palace spire.
>
> This is extremely exhausting for me, so this is why I ask the technical department to conceal this aerial. I cannot change my flat and I am sure you will admit yourselves that orgasms experienced without willing them are not so good.
>
> I think that the directorate of the Palace will deal with this issue because otherwise I will be forced to come in person.

Hanna Szczubełek recounts how she was assigned to deal with the "orgasm lady" by the Palace's then-director. A plan was formulated for Szczubełek to lead the complainant to a terrace directly below the spire on the forty-second floor. Once there, she pointed out a spot from which it was claimed some television equipment had been removed; apparently, this story was accepted without hesitation, and the "orgasm lady" ceased to pursue her complaint.

Aside from the spectacular manner in which this story chimes with the phallic connotations evoked by the Palace, the story of the "orgasm lady" is interesting on two further levels. Firstly, it is worth noting that the letter was sent on June 12, 1989, a date that falls almost exactly between the two rounds of Poland's first semifree parliamentary elections (June 4 and 18), the landmark event of Poland's political transition from communism to democracy. The link between dramatic political upheaval and sexual or affective excess has been made for somewhat different contexts by several authors: Pierre Klossowski observed that the French Revolution saw the Marquis de Sade elected to the French National Convention (Waite 1996) while maverick Freudian Wilhelm Reich praised the "genitalic character" of the early years of the Russian Revolution (Reich 1972; Todorov 1995).

Closer to home, Szczubełek told me about several pregnancies that resulted from Polish soldiers' intimacies with the Palace's lift operators, when

the former were stationed on the viewing terrace after the declaration of martial law by General Jaruzelski in December 1981.[9] Indeed, a group of chance interlocutors to whom I recounted the story of the "orgasm lady" recalled that the heady atmosphere accompanying the ancien régime's dying summer days (which they remembered well) contributed to the circulation of a sort of sexual energy through town; they speculated that the Palace of Culture—in all its phallic centrality—may have been a natural place for some of this sexual energy to be discharged, "like a lightning bolt."[10]

The Radiating Palace

The association between the Palace of Culture and "radiation," or the circulation of various kinds of "energy"—most cogently expressed in Goldzamt's reference to "architectural power" (1956, 425)—is well established. The Palace's transformative impact on the city was spoken about in these terms—harking back to the Soviet avant-garde's fascination with electric power and radio waves—from the beginning. When Polish prime minister Józef Cyrankiewicz cut the ribbon outside the main entrance to the Palace on July 21, 1955 (in the presence of President Bierut and Soviet ambassador Panteleimon Ponomarenko) he announced, "From today, the opening day of the Palace, it will not be merely an image melted into the figure of figure of Warsaw. From today, it will be a building radiating its social and cultural content over Warsaw" (Sadowski 2009, 203). And today, the building's opponents refer in particular to the various kinds of "negative energy" emitted by the building ("red rays of death," in the words of one of my survey respondents). According to journalist Agata Passent, who published a bilingual book about the life and history of the Palace in 2004, "Every inhabitant of the city is struck by the Palace's rays, whether positively or negatively" (Kamiński 2004).

In his analysis of the infrastructure and architecture of Israeli occupation in Palestine, Eyal Weizman (2007) provides a striking example of how electromagnetic radiation itself can be deployed as a tool of political and military domination. Following the 1993 Oslo Accord, Israeli settlers developed an ingenious method for bypassing legal obstacles to the erection of their encampments on the West Bank. They would complain about bad cell phone reception on the highway leading from Jerusalem to the northern settlements; at the settlers' behest, a telephony provider (such as Orange) would erect a new telephone mast on a disputed hilltop. Settlers

Figure 7.5. *Nine Rays of Light in the Sky* by Henryk Stażewski (1894–1988), curated by the Museum of Modern Art in the Świętokrzyski Park in November 2009. In the words of one of the curators, this project "marked the territory" for the new building and institution in the vicinity of the Palace. But "it was done slightly off centre, we didn't want these rays marking the centrality of the Palace, this symbolism." Photograph by Jan Smaga, courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.

would obtain the military's permission to arrange twenty-four-hour security to protect the mast against Palestinian sabotage and under this pretext would gradually proceed to move (with their families) to the barren ground encircling the mast. The first of these mast settlements, Migron, expanded within five years to the dimensions of a large village: "By mid-2006 it comprised around 60 trailers and containers housing more than 42 families:

approximately 150 people perched on the hilltop around a cellular antenna" (2007, 2). As Weizman describes it, "The energy field of the antenna was not only electromagnetic, but also political, serving as a centre for the mobilizing, channeling, coalescing and organizing of political forces and processes of various kinds" (2007, 2–3).

In a sense, this entire book is devoted to exploring the ways in which the energy radiating from the Palace (Stalinist ideologue Goldzamt's "distributor of architectural power," chap. 3) seeped into so many different domains of urban life. But as the experiences of the "orgasm lady" show, this dimension exceeds the metaphor ("red rays of death") it gives rise to. An untypical potency is sometimes ascribed to the actual electromagnetic rays emanating from the Palace's spire: the staff managing the Parade Square car park told me that they frequently face complaints from drivers who claim that their cars were stolen because the powerful rays from the spire messed with the signal from their remote car locks; one employee of the Palace of Youth claimed that he once had to push his car two hundred meters away from the Palace before he was able to open the door. Meanwhile, many Palace-based office workers would bemoan the health risks associated with spending every day within the belly of such a powerful source of "radiation" (employees of the administration, however, would always be quick to rubbish such claims). One member of the Architecture Bureau's administration staff, for example, made a point of alerting me to the urgency of the intangible hazards wafting through the Palace: "I've been coming here every day for twenty years," she would repeat, "and my health sure isn't the same now as it was when I started out!" She promised to make a photocopy for me of an official document that proved beyond doubt the reasonableness of her worries; the document I received, however, turned out to be an old internal report compiled by the municipal Crisis Management Bureau on the Palace's preparedness for various kinds of dramatic incidents (fire, natural disasters, terrorist attacks, acts of war). It did include mention of radiation threats, but only with regard to the Palace's level of possible exposure in the event of an accident at a research nuclear reactor in the Warsaw suburb of Otwock, twenty-eight kilometers to the southeast.

Underground Bunker: From Myth to Reality

Positive and negative energy aside, the same report slams the woeful crisis preparedness of the building's two underground levels. The Palace's

designers "did not take into account" the requirement for incorporating into its Palace's cellars "the organizational-technical conditions for adapting and exploiting them as Type I shelters" in the event of emergencies. In other words—quite in contrast to the legends surrounding nuclear fallout shelters, tunnels to the Central Committee, and secret metro lines to Moscow (chap. 4)—the Palace's underground infrastructure is underwhelming, unglamorous, and of little use. But, as I hope the subsequent pages demonstrate, the old legend of the Palace's subterranean secrets—most vividly articulated by Konwicki during the PRL's final decades (chap. 4)—not only lives on but has acquired a new dynamism since 1989.

As I discussed this contrast between subterranean legend and mundane reality with one of my Palace office colleagues, he was reminded of some dealings he'd had several years previously with officials from Warsaw's Crisis Management Bureau. They'd gotten in touch to say they were looking to build an emergency shelter for the highest organs of the municipal administration and wanted to acquaint themselves with the Palace's suitability for this role. In response to this request, technical documentation was handed over, and the crisis management delegation was taken on an extensive tour of the building's cellars. A little astounded by this discovery, I was keen to find out more. Eventually, I got through to the erstwhile head of the Citizens' Protection Department of the Crisis Bureau, Wojciech Poletyłło, who confirmed that the Palace cellars had indeed been considered (at his own behest) as a possible location for the mayor's bunker and that preliminary phases of a feasibility study were carried out during 2005 and 2006. The idea died quickly, however: while Poletyłło and his team were still carrying out their reconnaissance, the Masovian Voivode amended the public safety act, removing the clause stipulating that the mayor's crisis command center had to be located at physical remove from the municipality's executive offices. But why, I asked, had the Palace been considered in the first place?

In Poletyłło's description, the Palace fulfilled some of the criteria stipulated in the Voivode's act very well. The cellars were spacious, centrally located but also at some distance from dense concentrations of housing. Furthermore, their "concrete checkerboard construction" was "exceptionally tight": the whole Palace, whose brick-and-steel construction was "insanely solid" anyway, "could collapse, but these cellars would endure, they wouldn't be destroyed." Mirroring the lamentations of the previously cited report, however, Poletyłło admitted that the current crisis readiness of the Palace's foundation levels stood out as shoddy, even against the background

of Warsaw's other office towers: "I've been to lots of places, places it isn't easy to get into. And they often have several stories underground, not just two, like the Palace. Everything there [in their shelters] is done, ready to the finest detail—they even have a public address system that withstands a temperature of 1,000 degrees centigrade. So that when the whole building is burning, the speakers keep speaking."

Poletyłło admitted to being surprised: "I wasn't conscious that in all these buildings, there is such an incredible underground infrastructure." All the more so, when he finally made it underneath the Palace, visiting "everything that there is down there," Poletyłło was "disappointed . . . [the Palace's cellars] ought to be spruced-up, smartened-up. At least, they should house the city's Central Archives, or something similar . . . there's nothing there, and there should be something there!" Except their pitiful state of repair, the only thing under the Palace that had stuck in Poletyłło's mind were "those cats . . . with their eyes, which shine in the dark! When you turn off the lights, it's like a Hitchcock film down there!"

I asked Poletyłło whether he remembered any of the urban legends about secret totalitarian command bunkers underneath the Palace. "Of course," he cut me short. "It's all rubbish, there's nothing there!" He insisted that there was no irony to the fact that he had seriously considered carrying out a project that, if implemented, would have, for all intents and purposes, turned these myths into reality. His considerations were "entirely pragmatic," and, as may be expected from a security professional, Poletyłło refused to acknowledge that anything but this pragmatism may have steered him toward identifying the Palace as a suitable bunker location. But when I shifted our conversation into an "off duty" register, Poletyłło wasted no time in admitting his lifelong curiosity for and fascination with the Palace, which he had first seen at the age of nine during a trip to Warsaw from his hometown of Białystok: "As a child, it was the Palace itself which made an impression me, when I stood on the viewing terrace and looked down at the city. This was something incredible. Ruins everywhere, and here, suddenly, *such* a construction! Even today, this is a huge, solid, tall edifice. But *then*? This was absolutely something incredible."

Under the Tribune

At roughly the same time as I interviewed Poletyłło, I tracked down Robert Bernatowicz, a journalist and broadcaster who has presented several radio

and television programs since the 1990s. Bernatowicz had written a blog entry about a "shameful incident in my life" from two decades previously, "during which I tried, of my own volition, to verify the legend about the existence of a secret [communist] tunnel" leading to a governmental "complex underneath the Palace of Culture" (Bernatowicz 2006). As we introduced ourselves at a crowded branch of the Coffee Heaven chain in central Warsaw, the first thing Bernatowicz did was pull a big crowbar out of his rucksack. As I photographed the broadcaster menacingly wielding the crowbar, he described that this was the very same tool that he'd had with him back in November 1987 when he, together with two friends, had embarked on a mission to find the secret tunnel linking the Palace, the tribune under Parade Square (map P.2, no. 2), and the Polish United Workers' Party Central Committee headquarters, less than a kilometer down the road. "I am anticommunist from beginning to end," explained Bernatowicz. "I decided to do something which would mark my name in the annals of Independent Poland," he continued (with tongue firmly in cheek). "I decided that I would be the person who would break into the Palace cellars, and prove that there is this tunnel, I would take pictures, show them to the world [there was an acquaintance in the Warsaw office of Reuters] and become a national hero! There would be schools named after me, you know, streets, the whole works!"

Bernatowicz and his collaborators wrote farewell letters to their parents—they were convinced they would be arrested, maybe even trapped in cavernous bowels of underground Warsaw forever—and made their way in the dead of a rainy night (to guarantee maximum cover) to the tribune, in the middle of which an iron handrail and a couple of awkwardly placed concrete slabs looked suspiciously as if they concealed a staircase leading down to a subterranean realm of secret power (figures 7.6 and 7.7). Lifting away the unsealed slabs, the group's hearts were set racing: a narrow set of stone stairs led to a metal door, located about one meter underground. The door was locked, and after a long discussion with his companions ("I may be anticommunist, but I've got a social conscience, and the prospect of destroying public property was noxious to me"), they eventually decided to break open the door. With the help of said crowbar, they passed the threshold. "As soon as I got in there, I was shocked! A few little rooms, kitsch communist interiors, like in the Palace, a horrendous Soviet toilet. Everything dilapidated, a complete tip. . . . We thought that this whole *komuna* [a derogatory colloquialism for the Polish People's Republic] reached

Figure 7.6. Robert Bernatowicz with the crowbar that he used to break into the rooms beneath the Parade Square tribune. Photograph by the author.

at least seven stories underground. But there was nothing. A crappy little cellar and a pigsty. There really was fuck-all there."

After forty minutes spent looking for trapdoors and secret passages concealed in the timber wall panels, the would-be national hero surfaced with a ripped jacket and a solitary souvenir: a tattered 1973 copy of Party mouthpiece *Trybuna*, from which it was possible to deduce that Bernatowicz and friends had made history of sorts by entering a part of the Palace ensemble where no other soul had spent a significant amount of time during the previous fourteen years. What they had found was an underground lounge that had been designed to allow party bigwigs waving to the masses during May Day and other parades to gather their strengths away from the public gaze. Badly ventilated, the lounge was stifling, uncomfortable, and rarely used (as, indeed, was the tribune itself, which came to be neglected from the early 1960s onward in favor of a wooden platform erected right by Ulica Marszałkowska itself).[11] During the 1990s, the surface of the tribune found a new use as a summer beer garden, with a toilet, an office, and

Figure 7.7. The stairs leading from the tribune to subterranean recreation rooms for PRL-era dignitaries. Photograph by the author.

storage space in the underground rooms (according to the owner of the rival Bar under the Spire, a year-round venue whose wooden hut and marquee hugs the square's northern obelisk [map P.1, nos. 13–14], "Pub Grota" closed around 2003).

Since the 2000s, the seedy mysteriousness of the tribune has acted like an artist magnet. In 2006, two Warsaw artists, Nicolas Grospierre and Olga Mokrzycka, convinced then-Palace director Lech Isakiewicz, known for his fondness for off-the-wall ideas, to let them fill the lounge with a photo tapestry of game animals stuffed by an eccentric Georgian taxidermist. (Isakiewicz reigned in the Palace between 2002 and 2007, during the Kaczyński years.) In recent years, the Museum of Modern Art has exercised a particularly intense patronage over the space *above* the tribune (the post-2007 Palace administration views the lounge itself as a potential PR embarrassment and keeps it under lock and key), in particular during successive editions of the Warsaw Under Construction design festival. Figure 7.9 shows British artist Ryan Gander's 2011 sculpture *Shiny Things That Don't Really Matter Anymore*. Of course, it is difficult not to read this resplendent ball of junk sitting on an enormous plinth—just off center in relation to the axis emanating from the Palace's entrance—as a comment on the blatant contrast between the tribune's present-day futility and the splendidness of its intended function. This interpretation is reinforced all the more by the goings-on in the photograph's foreground. For the last decade or so, the tribune's primary use has been as what might be called the monumental waiting wall of central Warsaw's favorite semiofficial intercity bus station, yet another of the two-a-penny indexes of irrepressible post-socialist urban chaos and impermanence scattered throughout Parade Square. This does not mean that the old tribune is devoid of attractiveness, however. As the glorious shininess of Gander's ball suggests—and as the tribune's popularity as a place of urban spectacle and tourist photography confirms—the useless waving place of communists past, located right between the Palace and the city, maintains its capacity to seduce and fascinate. (One of the most striking visions developed for the tribune so far comes in the form of the Museum of Communism; see chap. 5).

I would like to elaborate on a few more thoughts stemming from my interview with Robert Bernatowicz. As our conversation progressed, my interlocutor reminded himself of more and more episodes during which his world had collided with that of the Palace. As it turned out, Bernatowicz's Palace biography constitutes something like a microcosm of the various

Figure 7.8. Nicolas Grospierre and Olga Mokrzycka, *Mausoleum*, 2007. Photographs of an exhibition located beneath the Parade Square tribune, courtesy of Grospierre and Mokrzycka.

domains in which the building interacts with the city: fondly remembered childhood outings to May Day parades; romantic episodes; the fulfillment of a lifelong ambition to appear on the stage of the Congress Hall (as a speaker at a 2004 esoterica gathering); and even the instigation (in 2003) of a successful attempt to break the world record for riding a bicycle down the side of a skyscraper (said Bernatowicz with a mixture of pride and amusement, "Thanks to me, the Palace is the tallest building in the world to have had a bicycle ridden down it"). As he put it to me at end of our interview, "It looks like I've been ill with Palace disease! . . . I'm really becoming conscious

Figures 7.9 and 7.10. Ryan Gander, *Shiny Things That Don't Mean Anything*, 2011–2012, an installation located on the Parade Square tribune. Photographs by Bartosz Stawiarski, courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.

now of the enormous role, the incredibly positive role, that the Palace of Culture has ended up playing in my life!"

Bernatowicz spoke of his tribune experience as a transformative moment. For most of his youth, he had hated the Palace and fantasized about blowing it up ("by sword and fire, I wanted to eradicate that communist wart"). However, following his 1987 voyage into the moloch's underbelly, he gradually began to "endow the Palace with a great deal of warm sentiment." During the 1990s, he started to conjure "ideas for the Palace": Together with an acquaintance, he dreamt up a vision—inspired by the Palace's resident falcons—of turning the Palace into a "nature reserve" in an attempt "to put a lid on the whole communist past, to flood it with nature, with a wilderness of flora and fauna!"[12] In this vision of "apocalyptic ecologism" (see Ellis 1990), a properly global bestiary would be imported and set loose into the Palace, with particular sections of the building assigned to correspond to each of the world's continents and eco-regions (the higher, the more exotic); a giant glass tube (inspired by Verne's *Journey to the Center of the Earth*) would be looped in and out of the building so that "you could observe deer running around on the 17th floor, wild boars copulating on the 35th, and so on."

Whereas Bernatowicz happily admits that the above vision was fantastical, meaning impossible to realize, the culmination of his encounter with the Palace belonged to the (for him, very real) domain of the paranormal. The Palace, it turns out—entirely expectedly, given all its cosmic connotations—has a special significance for Warsaw's community of UFO spotters. Not only is it a prestige location for uploaders of flying saucer films onto YouTube, it is also home to the "legendary UFOVIDEO"—in Bernatowicz's description, "the most renowned organization of UFO spotters in Poland and one of the oldest such groups in the world" (registered around 1978). UFOVIDEO stores its voluminous records ("the oldest and the best UFO archives in Poland!") in the Museum of Technology and continues to meet occasionally in a tiny cranny underneath one of the Museum's staircases. So it is hardly surprising that when Raël—a French former rally driver turned white-cloaked founder of Raëlianism, the world's second-largest UFO religion after Scientology—came to Warsaw in 2004, he met his followers inside a cavernous Palace auditorium. Bernatowicz, who had arrived at the meeting prepared for a confrontation, describes the event thus: "Along came Raël, with his lackeys. I waited all the way until the end of the lecture, then went right up to him and told him straight to his face

Figure 7.11. "UFO in Warsaw (Palace of Culture and Science)." YouTube user: moratoriumfilms. Uploaded March 31, 2010.

Figure 7.12. A UFOVIDEO meeting in the Museum of Technology, June 2, 2010. Photograph by the author.

that he's a fraud and a liar! Raël boiled up in anger, and he threw a curse at me: he told me that I will be cloned on a planet of slaves! I told him he can stick his planet of slaves up his ass, because he's lying!" Summing up his story, Bernatowicz exclaimed, "So you can see how much this building has impacted on my life? The only curse that anyone has ever thrown at me was thrown at me in the Palace of Culture!"

Hansen's Flying Saucer

In February 2005, Polish architect and artist Oskar Hansen (of Norwegian-Russian descent)—a towering figure among Poland's generation of postwar modernist architects—created a sculpture called *Dream of Warsaw*. This was Hansen's own "idea for the Palace" (see chap. 6) and the final piece of work he produced before his death in May the same year. In the 1950s, Hansen formulated his theory of the Open Form in architecture, and he regarded the Palace as a paradigm of the Closed Form, the embodiment of everything bad about architecture.[13] In his own words, "The Palace—uncontested in its enormity and aggressive in its form, subordinates to itself all the remaining elements of Warsaw's landscape by means of the contrast of form and scale" (Hansen 2005b). The problem with the Palace is also related to its oneness: "The cityscape of Warsaw educates us. Now we live in a world dominated by a single element" (Żmijewski 2005). But the skyscrapers that have sprouted up in central Warsaw since the 1980s are of little help: "instead of weakening the effect of the Palace, they strengthen it. It looks a bit like the King surrounded by his servants" (ibid.).

Hansen's remedy is not to "destroy, conceal or screen" the Palace, but to "polemicize" with it, to enter into a "conversation with it" (ibid.) His solution, a model of a proposed building—a tall concrete shaft topped by a wide elliptical crown—took the form of a tall sculpture affixed to the branches of a tree providentially positioned just outside the Palace-facing windows of the Foksal Gallery Foundation. For Hansen, this would constitute a "civilized," dialogic negation of the Palace: "The Palace of Culture grows wider at the base, and this grows wider all the way up. It's a sort of reversed pyramid" (ibid.).

In Artur Żmijewski's film documenting the setting-up of the exhibition, Hansen's demeanor is restless and fragile; what he says about his health suggests that he is not reconciled with death. But when he speaks about his

Figure 7.13. Oskar Hansen, *Dream of Warsaw*, 2005, Foksal Gallery Foundation, Warsaw, exhibition view photographed by Jan Smaga, courtesy of the Foksal Gallery Foundation.

work, he emanates total confidence. When the assisting artists and curators ask Hansen to confirm what material he wants to use for the sculpture, he retorts, "This is not a material, this is immaterial! . . . This is simply a conversation between shapes" (Żmijewski 2005). Hansen's solution not only turns the Palace's shape on its head; he also aspires to lighten the tyrannical materiality of the Palace by deflating its weighty three dimensions to a low-density two. But is it merely an accident that Hansen's tower—with LED lights flashing up its spine and across the ellipse—comes to take precisely the form of a flying saucer, captured from the cosmos and anchored to the real world by a monumental lift shaft (or plinth)? The paper cutouts illustrating Hansen's article (Hansen 2005b), juxtaposing the cityscape's "Current condition" ("contrasting scale, subordination, *dominanta*") with his "Proposal" ("contrasting shape, partnership, dialogue"), suggest that a sort of effective spatial reconfiguration might take place even if the effect would be a doubling of the dominanta rather than its distribution into the

Figures 7.14 and 7.15. Artur Żmijewski, *Dream of Warsaw*, 2005, film stills courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw and the Foksal Gallery Foundation.

Figures 7.16 and 7.17. Oskar Hansen, concept drawings for the *Dream of Warsaw* exhibition, courtesy of the Foksal Gallery Foundation: "Current condition" ("contrasting scale, subordination, dominanta"); and "Proposal" ("contrasting shape, partnership, dialogue").

cityscape. However, achieving this requires a flight into the cosmos and an appropriation of cosmic forms.[14]

Architectonics of the Big Picture

The Palace of Hansen—like that of Bernatowicz, Poletyłło, Benedyktow-icz's *coincidentia oppositorum*, Szczubełek's letter writers, and numerous other artists and writers (I have not had space to expand on the post-1989 "great flowering" of the Palace's literary prominence here), architects and politicians, survey respondents, and cats and falcons (Murawski 2015, 292–306)—shows how far the levels of the fantastical and the otherworldly are almost always connected to those of the mundane and everyday.[15] To my mind, the data I collected in and around the Palace coheres neatly with Boris Groys's description of Stalinism's "perfect building," which "was to serve the needs of the people and at the same time generate a sense of celebration and the extraordinary" (2003, 114).[16] What is particularly interesting about these untypical experiences of the Palace is their concentration at (and movement between) the subterranean and celestial realms: Bernatowicz's most intense Palace-related experience pertains to cellars and UFOs and to "extreme" methods of descending from high to low; lovers congregate on the viewing terrace; suicides plummet from it to their deaths; Szczubełek's letters are full of spires, cellars, caves, cosmic pyramids, and a past long buried underneath the Palace's foundations. As in Lévi-Strauss's rendition of the Tsimshian myth of Asdiwal—whose protagonist incessantly climbs and descends from earth to heaven and back again—there is an oscillation of "maximum amplitude" between the subterranean and celestial realms (1967, 20). And where the structure of the Palace's "untypical" dimension—whether it is called mythical, fantastical, uncanny, or sublime—emerges from dialectical lurches between basement and attic (Bachelard 1964), both constituting pathways to extraordinary worlds of a more and less murky ilk, so too is the relationship of the untypical to the everyday, of myth to reality, dialectical. As Mary Douglas puts it in her summary of Levi-Strauss's discourse on myth, "there is a feedback between the worlds of mythical and social discourse" (1967, 57).

Bruno Latour observes that those modernist models of social action that posit a hierarchy of effectivity or magnitude between different kinds of actors often mirror their irrationalist predecessors in positioning the causally more powerful or bigger entity at a topographical extremity, "'above'

or 'below' the interactions" (2005, 177). As he puts it, the "angels and de-
mons that had pushed and pulled our humble souls" have been replaced by
"crowds, masses, statistical means, invisible hands and unconscious drives"
(43). Latour advocates "keeping the social flat" (165–172) so that the irreduc-
ible, intricate heterogeneity of its constitutive elements is not drowned out
by the deterministic reductivisms or inflationisms of "big picture" social
explanations. To illustrate his point, Latour deploys the construction site as
a metaphor: lots of humans and nonhumans lie and scurry around, assem-
bling and disconnecting to/from each other, nothing is yet "standing," and
everything could "still fail" (88–89). The messy horizontality of Latour's
construction site pointedly resists the celestial panoramas and "God's eye-
views" (see De Certeau 1984) of the modernist demiurge. In Latour's own
words, "No panorama enables us to 'capture all of Paris' in a single glance"
(2006, 4); "no bird's eye view could, at a single glance, capture the multiplic-
ity of these places which add up to make the whole Paris" (32).

Latour's construction site also rejects the architectural metaphor of
the finished edifice frequently encountered in the work of nineteenth- and
twentieth-century social theorists (Marx 1970 and Althusser 1969, 1971, have
been reconsidered by Karatani 2008; and Lévi-Strauss 1982 by Carsten and
Hugh-Jones 1995). The best known of these, of course, is the Marxian base-
superstructure duality itself (the original German terms *Basis* and *Überbau*
are much more explicitly architectural than their English translations; see
Leach 1984, 10 and Picon and Ponte 2003), as formulated most clearly in the
preface to *A Contribution of the Critique of Political Economy* (Marx 1970,
11): "The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic
structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political
superstructure to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness."

Louis Althusser's rearticulation of this dichotomy, meanwhile, sees the
agentic capacity of the economic base as "overdetermined" by a potentially
endless, antagonistic myriad of superstructural factors acting reciprocally
on the base, according to their own "relatively autonomous" agentic dy-
namics. In Althusser's model, the entire "building" constitutes the "social
whole," encompassing both base and superstructure; the foundations cor-
respond to the base, and each of the superstructural upper floors possesses
varying levels of "relative autonomy" and capacities for "reciprocal action"
on the base (Althusser 1971, 90–91). Of course, this does not mean that cel-
lars are completely subjugated to the laws of the command economy or of
capital accumulation, whereas roofs (or viewing terraces) are swarming

with revolutionaries or dissidents. However, for the purposes of this argument, I would like to claim that Althusser's metaphor suggests two useful things: that the relation between architecture and the mode of production is richly complex, variegated and vibrant, but ultimately held together by a reasonably concrete structure; and—to take the metaphor more literally than it was intended to be taken—that the foundational (or overarching) importance of that which happens at the extremities (the "above" and "below" of a building as well as of a topographical model of social causality) cannot be rejected a priori.

I will illustrate my point about the causal architectonics of Warsaw-Palace relations with a brief discussion of the Palace-obsessed third series of *Ekstradycja*, the most popular crime series on Polish television during the 1990s. A nefarious alliance of ex-secret policemen (Tuwara), bent ministers (Osowski, foreign secretary), dodgy dignitaries (General Góra, head of the secret services), crooked Luxembourgish bankers of Polish extraction (Jean-Pierre Mega / Antoni Fiduk), and various other mafiosos meet in their rented lair, located on the fictional level -3 of the Palace cellars (the corridor scenes are in fact filmed on level -1 while the office interiors are those of the Biedermeieresque Polish Academy of Sciences Directorate on the twenty-sixth floor). Leading their pursuit is a triumvirate of incorruptible but troubled law-enforcement functionaries (policemen Komisarz [Lieutenant] Halski and Inspektor Wrona plus a former intelligence chief known simply as Jerzy), whose summits take place high in the clouds, on the Palace's thirtieth-floor viewing terrace.

The plot, of course, is political-economic in the last instance. The dark characters are engaged in an impossibly baroque and rather imprecisely worked out evil scheme to gain control of Poland's gas and oil pipelines, motorways, financial system, and government as well as the entire European continent and so on. But what they seem most excited about is their plan to purchase the Palace of Culture. (The entire operation is revealed to have been hatched when Tuwara, Góra, and Fiduk attended an orphanage together; they affirmed their kin ties to each other by scrawling their names in blood on the back of a Palace postcard). Foreign Minister Osowski, who becomes deeply complicit in the group's dealings, is portrayed as a great enthusiast of the acquisition: as the project's potential financiers meet around a maquette of the Palace, the minister, having constructed a smaller likeness of the Palace from sugar cubes, points at his object of desire and exclaims, "Let's start with *this*! We have to have this!" In a later episode,

Figure 7.18. Scene from the TV series *Extradition 3*, directed by Wojciech Wójcik; photography by Piotr Wojtowicz. Two of the conspirators examine the Palace's three fictional underground levels—stuck by the filmmakers onto an original 1950s maquette of the Palace—in Tuwara's subterranean lair, actually filmed in the Polish Academy of Science Directorate on the Palace's twenty-sixth floor.

the baddies are shown getting drunk on whisky in their underground lair; General Góra, in a moment of doubt, gestures at the maquette (which has by now migrated here) and asks Tuwara, the ringleader and brains of their outfit, "What the hell do you want this piece of shit for anyway?" Tuwara responds animatedly:

> Boguś, money, even big money, is only a means: a means with which to win power; and for simple folk, power is simply the magic of place, scale, enormity. The man-in-the-street has to *see* power. Do you know a better place than this? Do you know a better place, which can be seen from every corner of our boondocks? Do you? I don't. . . . Any moment now, they're going to build a real, ultra-modern *city* in a circle here [see chap. 6]. They're going to be building on *our land*, do you understand? On our land! The pipes and roads will get taken over the state sooner or later—but this, such a *wow*, this will be ours! You understand?

Figure 7.19. Scene from *Extradition*: the cops gather on the Palace's viewing terrace—filmed on location.

Figure 7.20. Scene from the TV series *Extradition 3*. Potential financiers of the Tuwara conspiracy gather around a model of the Palace. Source: TVP.

Figure 7.21. Scene from the TV series *Extradition 3*. Corrupt foreign minister Osowski constructs a likeness of the Palace of Culture from sugar cubes during the conspiracy financiers' meeting.

Getting hold of the eminently fuzzy terrain on which the Palace stands (Fiduk and Góra examine the Palace's foundations in figure 7.19), however, proves to be a stumbling block (see this book's conclusion). In the words of the minister, "Gentlemen, you can't just procure the Palace as if it was some old shitter!" An assassin is thus hired to do away with those lawmakers who object to Tuwara's shadowy consortium acquiring the land rights—Minister Osowski is blackmailed into providing a list of names—and the government approves an exclusive lease for the Palace to Tuwara and company. (By this stage, everyone seems to have forgotten about the pipelines and motorways). By now, however, Halski, Wrona, and their allies have figured out enough details to put an end to the plot. It also materializes that Tuwara may or may not in fact be a GRU (Russian Foreign Intelligence) agent, but there's a twist: Sumar, the assassin, has a beef with the consortium—they snitched on him after he completed his operation—and with Halski, who's on his tracks and whom Sumar lures into the Palace by

kidnapping his love interest. He also suspects that Tuwara is working for the Russians and happens to be the leader of a neofascist paramilitary organization the Real Patriots.

Sumar's men steal 120 kilograms of Semtex from an army base, load it onto a train, park it at the secret PZPR delegates' railway station in the underbelly of the Palace, and attach a two-hour time delay fuse. This way, the assassin is multitasking: he prevents the takeover of Polish national property by—in the words of a warning he sends to a newspaper before the attack—"foreigners" and "Jews and postcommunists," therefore carrying out his ideological duty against the enemies of Poland; he is destroying the most blatant material testimony to its subordination, the Palace of Culture; he is taking revenge on Tuwara; and he is covering his tracks by killing Halski. Everything is set for this even eviler plan to succeed.

The Interior Ministry's crisis management team cannot locate Sumar's train because—as one of its officials permits himself to quip—"there are too few details in Konwicki's books"; the worst-case scenario is that the combined collapse of the Palace and explosion in the railway tunnel will "take down a massive chunk of the city." The series's producers fail to resist the temptation to flash a before-the-fact animation of the Palace's hypothetical demise across the screen. But at the last minute, a mute boy of about ten who had been trapped in his mother's office in the Palace overnight, and over whose legs Halski had tripped outside the Palace's lifts in a previous episode, finds the komisarz dangling from a rope in the neo-Renaissance Gałczyński Hall on the Palace's sixth floor, sets him free, and switches off the bomb's timer (with two seconds to go) by pressing the "enter" key on a laptop. Cheesy music plays as Halski and the boy emerge from the Palace bathed in dawn sunshine.

The dynamics may be different, but the topography of a construction site is similar to that of a landscape after a demolition or an explosion: everything is flat. Now, visions of "flattening" the Palace articulated during the communist era (as featured in the film *Rozmowy Kontrolowane*; see conclusion) represented the building as codependent on the political economic regime that erected it. The obdurate Palace having outlived its guarantor system, any notions of demolishing it today (like former foreign minister Radosław Sikorski's oft-repeated demand to knock the Palace down and replace it with a park) tend to be represented by most Varsovians as pathological and anachronistic (chap. 5); at the same time, they are relegated into the domain of the impossible, the fantastical, first of all

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PRZYJAZNY PLASTIK
TWORZYWA SZTUCZNE CHOĆ ŻYWE

SEKS NA ŚRODKU DROGI
ANTYCZNE SPOSOBY NA OPOZYCJĘ

✧ Dzieci na medal ✧ Największy polski aquapark ✧ Politycy kontra satyrycy ✧ Maluch po supertuningu
✧ Mały ptaszek a może ✧ Nowa generacja warzyw ✧ Najwyższy most świata ✧ Bebechy petrochemii

Figure 7.22. The Apocalyptic Palace. The headline reads: "The end of the era of humankind: What will remain after we've gone?" (*Focus*, 2009).

Figure 7.23. The Apocalyptic Palace. The headline reads: "The end of the world: What are we afraid of, and should we be?" (*Polityka*, 2009).

Figure 7.24. The Apocalyptic Palace. The headline reads: "2012: the year of world's ends: The Apocalypse will happen at least 70 million times" (*Focus*, 2012).

by reference to the "insane" solidity (in Poletyłło's words cited above) of the building's construction ("you would need atom bombs," as one of the "untypical" letter writers puts it) and second to its costliness and economic unfeasibility. Mayor Gronkiewicz-Waltz, for example, a representative of the same monetarist current as Sikorski, pointed out that the idea of replacing "prime real-estate with parkland" testified to her political colleague's "weak free market instincts" (Gazeta Wyborcza 2009). Indeed, as a survey of Polish news magazine covers relating to the 2012 Mayan prophecy and similar themes shows, the destruction of the Palace today seems to be coextensive with a much bigger picture than before 1989: it does not refer any longer merely to the collapse of a localized political-economic system but to global apocalypse.

Impossible as it would be to actually flatten the Palace, I also feel that it would be inaccurate and disingenuous to produce an account of Palace-Warsaw relations, which "keeps the social flat." Whichever part of the Palace's social life is being looked at, big elephants, political economies, cosmologies, eschatologies, and various other aboves, beyonds, and underneaths come into view. Of all these big pictures, I make a sustained attempt to account for the political-economic determination of the Warsaw-Palace interactions. In the concluding chapter of this book, I will account for the manner in which this political-economic big picture expresses itself most clearly in the domain of property relations and in the attendant processes of expropriation and appropriation.

Notes

1. *Niesamowita* is also the Polish translation of the Freudian term "uncanny." Anthony Vidler (1992) comments on the affinity between notions of the sublime and the uncanny in application to architecture.

2. For more on *ostalgie*, referring to postcommunist nostalgia in East Germany, see Berdahl (1999, 2000), Berdahl and Bunzl (2010), Boyer (2006), and Ringel (2012).

3. Starting in 1958 and until a protective metal mesh was installed on the terrace in 1974, the Palace chronicle and other sources record eight people as having killed themselves by jumping from the terrace (Szczubełek 1955; Passent 2004; Zieliński 2012). A number of longstanding Palace employees told me that they remember seeing human figures flying past their windows before hitting the ground with awful thuds. It is worth noting that several epidemiological studies of links between prominent buildings and suicides have been carried out (Beautrais 2007; Chen et al. 2009).

4. The notion of the Palace Complex as a pathology or disorder (on a city-wide as well as subjective level) is briefly explored in terms of the Freudian notions of overdetermination

and repetition compulsion in chapter 2 and discussed by Benedyktowicz (1991) in terms of the connection between madness and the sacrum. For ethnographic and sociological work exploring data collected from mentally ill people, see Buss, Fischer and Simmons (1962); Goffman (1956, 1961); Weinstein (1972). Discussions of related themes can be found in Kleinman (1987, 1988), Good (1997), López and Guarnaccia (2000), Csordas (2002), Biehl (2005), Parish (2008), Garcia (2010). For more on madness and architecture, see Foucault (1977) and Topp, Andrews, and Moran (2007).

5. Palace employees would occasionally forward me unusual, disturbing, or amusing e-mails they received, but they admitted to deleting most of their "weird" correspondence. Chronicler Szczubełek herself does not have an e-mail account.

6. Wojtyła is John Paul II's family name.

7. A reference to the statue of interwar Polish statesman Wincenty Witos on Plac Trzech Krzyży (Three Crosses Square) in south-central Warsaw, a popular spot for young skateboarders.

8. Presumably these are the mothers of children who have died or been taken into care. Thus begins a 1997 letter to the Palace administration sent by a female inhabitant of a town in Eastern Poland: "Please Administration, This Is My Little Son, Mine Dear and nice. Whom I Love Very Much and I Like. Please Write Back to Me What He Is Doing There My Nice. His Name Is . . . My Nice Kid My Nice Son I Love Him. I Want to Have Him With Me And Look After Him Nicely."

9. A baby boom also followed the introduction of martial law. See Balicki (2010) and Brzostek (2012).

10. According to Vladislav Todorov (1995, 44) Reich's politicization of sexuality was Leninist, and he dreamed of a "new centralized political government of the world's sexual energy."

11. The abandonment of the original tribune is discussed in Sigalin (1986c, 145) and Szczubełek (1955).

12. It is also worth noting how Bernatowicz's vision corresponds to a vibrant "apocalyptic ecological" (Ellis 1990) strain in the culture of post-socialism, readable as a reaction against the uncompromising "battle against the wicked forces of nature" (Dobrenko 2007, 80, citing Maxim Gorky; see also Widdis 2003) characteristic of Stalinist and state socialist culture more broadly.

13. On Open Form, see Hansen 2005a, 2005b; Lachowski, Linkowski and Sobczuk 2009; Crowley 2008; Ronduda and Kęziorek 2014; Stanek 2014; Murawska-Muthesius 2014.

14. David Crowley (2008, 2011) has analyzed the cosmic dimensions of Cold War modernism (of which Hansen as well as Rudnev might perhaps be seen as practitioners) extensively. See also Andrews and Siddiqi (2011).

15. According to literary critic Paweł Dunin-Wąsowicz (2008, 2011), the "great literary flowering of the Palace of Culture and Science happened only in sovereign Poland, after 1989. Censorship barriers disappeared, and the Palace—until then a rather passive element of the background, began appearing in visions of alternative, futuristic, fairy-tale like Warsaws." For Dunin-Wąsowicz, after 1989, "the Palace became indisputably the biggest—and not only with regard to its dimensions—Polish literary hero" (2008). Further, the author specifies that "Fantasy has been the primary literary calling of the Palace" (2008).

16. In a similar vein, Leonid Heller describes Stalinist culture as a "fusion of the sublime and the everyday" (1997, 70).

CONCLUSION

Complex Appropriations

Market Riot: Parade Square Landgrabs

Around the middle of 2012, the Palace Complex—in its negative guise as the Parade Square planning deadlock, or Stalin's curse on Warsaw—took its most recent scalp: Swiss architect Christian Kerez's Museum of Modern Art (MoMAW), the apparent triumph of whose "aesthetic of asocialism" is discussed in the final section of chapter 5. In order to understand what happened between the city and the museum, it is necessary to go back to May 2009, the final chapter in the feud between the city and the merchants who took over Plac Defilad in the immediate aftermath of the fall of the PRL in 1989. The final covered market hall (KDT—Kupieckie Domy Towarowe, or Merchants' Department Store), erected in 1999 on the initiative of Mayor Piskorski, was due to stand for only three years before the merchants moved to another location to clear space for the development of Parade Square. Currying favor with the traders' lobby in advance of the 2006 municipal elections, the City Council (dominated then by Law and Justice, or PiS [*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*], the right-wing populist party led by the Kaczyński brothers), however, extended the traders' right to do business on the square for another thirty years and committed the city to build a new, long-term base for KDT in the form of an L-shaped building symmetrical to the Museum of Modern Art (map P.2, no. 24b), on the Ulica Marszałkowska side of Parade Square. After her election victory, Mayor Gronkiewicz-Waltz avoided putting her signature to the bill (thus rendering it nonexecutable) while simultaneously making noises about incorporating the traders' new HQ into the revised Parade Square local plan, on the condition that the KDT surrendered its thirty-year lease. Nevertheless, all attempts to negotiate an agreement ultimately collapsed; the traders' valid lease to the hall expired on January 1, 2009, and a date was set for eviction on July 21, 2009, to make way for construction of the second line of Warsaw's metro system and the Museum of Modern Art.

That hot summer's day in 2009, one of Warsaw's worst twenty-first-century riots broke out on Parade Square. Hundreds of traders, most

wearing distinctive KDT-branded reflective jackets, barricaded themselves inside the hall (some, allegedly, with their children); others surrounded it. Private security guards—the Zubrzycki agency were hired to "protect" the bailiff—riot police, and city guards (*Straż Miejska*) used batons, tear gas, and shields to besiege the KDT hall and were met with fire extinguishers, sticks, and various other missiles while a water cannon and horse-mounted police units dispersed bloodied and battered protesters along Marszałkowska. The traders and their allies chanted allusions to the Nazi gestapo or to ZOMO, the PRL's notorious riot police units; they waved Polish flags and made various patriotic and jingoistic declarations ("Warsaw is defending itself," "Poland for Poles," "Enough Jewish rule"). Each side questioned the other's motives: politicians and spokespeople representing the mayor (a former Central Bank chief) and her political party (the center-right, broadly neoliberal Platforma Obywatelska [PO], or Civic Platform, which led Poland's governing coalition between 2007 and 2015) said that the traders were dishonest—they claimed that they were defending their livelihoods, but they were in actuality making an illegal land grab for an extremely valuable piece of real estate in the city center. Some opposition politicians from PiS accused the mayor of putting the interests of big business and property developers ahead of hard working Varsovians. Opinion polls, however, indicated that a sizeable majority of Warsaw's inhabitants supported the traders' removal from Parade Square, though not the manner in which it was carried out.

In the heat of the moment, the traders' own descriptions of the situation had a particularly vehement character: one man assured me that "the Jew, Gronkiewicz-Waltz, wants to steal Polish land" while a woman chimed in to clarify, "Not Jews, just cunts. They're not gonna build no museum. This museum is just an excuse for them to get our land." This forecast was echoed by numerous opposition politicians, one of whom (a Law and Justice MP) declared prophetically on national TV, "I will bet your viewers that there will be *nothing* built on the place of the old KDT hall two years from now!" The city hall's creatively destructive intent, meanwhile, could not have been expressed any more plainly than it was on a bright yellow billboard hung by the demolition firm hired by the city to disassemble and auction off the emptied KDT hall. The sign featured, in very big letters, a logo spelling out the firm's rather unambiguous name (KRUSZER) and an optimistic declaration: "Here will stand Line II of the Metro and the Museum of Modern Art." The museum itself has attempted to make an engagement with this

Figure C.1. KDT merchants on the roof of the trade hall during the 2009 riots.
Photograph by Paweł Kula, Polish Press Agency (PAP).

Figure C.2. Artur Żmijewski, *KDT*, 2009, film still. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw and the Foksal Gallery Foundation.

awkward legacy into an aspect of its artistic program. Artur Żmijewski's film (2009) documenting the KDT riots, which closes with a shot of the Kruszer sign, forms part of the museum's collection while MoMAW's *Report from the First Years of Operation* (2010) features *Here Will Stand*, a January 2010 photograph by Jan Smaga of the KDT's shell (disassembly was not completed until June 2010, nearly a year after the siege/eviction) and the Kruszer sign partially obscured by an ominous mound of muddy snow.

I, for one, was fooled by the dramatic finality of the KDT riots and their aftermath. *Mayor Gronkiewicz-Waltz may be something of a cynic, but she means business*, I thought. *Surely it is inevitable now that the Museum of Modern Art, the pioneering element of the Plac Defilad development plan, is going to be built soon enough.* I dismissed the doubts expressed by many—not just by politicians linked to Law and Justice but by various senior players in the city's local politics and architecture worlds, including diehard MoMAW supporters like Michał Borowski (ex-chief architect of the city)—as fatalistic, typically Polish doom-mongering. I noted the reluctant attitude in which many city officials seemed to hold the museum: the head of the Architecture Bureau's Public Aesthetics department told me he thought the final Kerez design looked "like a pair of Y-fronts" (*majtki*); the director of the Bureau for Urban Development (SZRM, Stołeczny

Figure C.3. Jan Smaga, *Here Will Stand*, 2009, photograph. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw.

Figure C.4. KDT during disassembly, April 2010. Photograph by the author.

Zarząd Rozbudowy Miasta), the municipal office responsible for realizing large-scale city investments, including the museum, confided in me that even *he* was only "averagely optimistic" that the MoMAW project would be completed. "Against all the odds, we might actually manage to put up an interesting building," he said, adding, "I don't think the people from the museum even know how much space they have. They don't even have a collection! This building is far too big."

I was aware of constant bickering between the architect and the city, over payment and additional tasks added willy-nilly to the architect's brief.[1] My convictions did flounder a little when, in spring 2010, the city announced that work on the museum would not start until after Summer 2012 because Plac Defilad had to be kept free for the outdoor Fanzone for 100,000 spectators during the UEFA football championships to be cohosted by the city that year. But I was convinced that the project was so far advanced already, had so many millions of euros of municipal and European funding already invested in it (and hundreds of millions more secured) that the museum at least—if not necessarily the rest of the Parade Square plan—would eventually emerge triumphantly from the morass. My confidence was further bolstered by the fact that the city had embarked on a much-publicized systematic attempt to deal with the property restitution claims from prewar owners of tenement blocks that loomed over Parade Square.

In May 2012, however, the city terminated its contract with Kerez, citing the architect's failure to adjust his final design according to the municipality's specifications; coordination with the new Metro line and the building's underground levels, ceiling heights, and various other minor and major niggles were cited. Kerez, meanwhile, accused the city of pigheadedness and paranoia, pointing out that it couldn't in any case obtain a building permit without resolving the age-old question of property restitution claims on the proposed MoMAW site (Jarecka 2012). Deputy Mayor Wojciechowicz, however, rubbished Kerez's claim that property issues had any bearing on the situation: "This is for us to worry about, not the architect. We are on the case" (Kobos 2012).

Indeed, in spring 2013, the press reported that the municipality returned and bought back almost all prewar plots underneath the site of the proposed museum at approximately 80 percent of their proposed market value. "Of course, we negotiated the price," proclaimed Marcin Bajko, director of the municipal Estate Management Bureau (BGN, Biuro Gospodarki Nieruchomościami) (Bartoszewicz 2013). And several major investments

in Warsaw during the past decade have in any case been pushed through on disputed plots, with restitution being arranged post-factum, including the Złote Tarasy shopping center (2000–2004) and the National Stadium (2009–2012).

The breakdown of the Kerez-city agreement seems to have vindicated those who predicted that the current Thatcherite-technocratic Warsaw authorities never really wanted MoMAW built in the first place and abandoned their support for it after Warsaw lost its bid for the European Capital of Culture 2016 to Wrocław in June 2011 (Piątek 2012). Come June 2012, a pretty vivid suggestion that this supposition might have some grounding was provided by goings-on in the Parade Square UEFA Fanzone. The Square itself was transformed into a corporately sponsored and rigorously securitized open-air sports bar; the main entrance to the Palace was sealed off from the public and turned into a VIP/media zone, and all advertising belonging to nonsponsors was covered up. Finally, the exact spot that was to be occupied by the Museum of Modern Art's cafe was taken over by Europe's busiest (temporary) McDonald's restaurant, proudly serving five thousand portions of fast food every day.

Although metro construction has been proceeding apace since the UEFA championships—the new line having finally opened in March 2015—nothing tangible has yet happened with regard to the rest of the city's development plans for the square. At the close of 2012, however, a Christmas fairground and market installed itself in the same southeastern corner occupied by the infamous Cricoland amusement park twenty years before, prompting journalists (Bartoszewicz 2013) to announce that "wild capitalism" was back from the dead and that Parade Square had regressed right back to the chaotic days of the early 1990s.

De-Bierutization: Bloody Complicated

Is it possible to identify a logic or causality undergirding the Parade Square morass? To attest to whether the last-instance determinant of Warsaw-Palace relations manifests itself most clearly through the presiding structures of urban land ownership or broadly understood property regimes? The Bierut Decree of 1945, a comprehensive act of expropriatory property disambiguation (in other words, the instant and coercive establishment of a new property regime) created the conditions of possibility that allowed the Palace to be built and to function with such effectivity as a public-spirited

social condenser, as the consolidator of Warsaw's urban *Gesamtkunstwerk*. But the Warsaw of today is faced with a choice between two competing trajectories for appropriating the Palace and Parade Square, each of these associated with emerging (but not yet consolidated) property regimes. The first, which I call collective or public-spirited appropriation, unambiguously favors the municipal ownership of public space in the city. It would allow the Palace and Square to function as locums where social relations are condensed and where people are brought together to coproduce and intensify social relations on many different levels simultaneously: intellectual, artistic, recreational, didactic, and commercial, not to speak of the civically intimate and affective domains attested to in chapters 5 and 7. The second, a trajectory of *privative* appropriation, promotes the distribution of ownership rights to public land among private interests (whether these are investors, speculators, or the prewar owners of tenements expropriated in 1945).[2]

In his work on gentrification and civility in Rome, Michael Herzfeld has characterized the resurgence—paradoxically, during the term of leftist mayor Francesco Rutelli (1993–2001)—of the practice of *plannificar facendo* ("planning as you go") as a new incarnation of an ancient Roman lineage of "ad hoc arrangements to suit the wealthy and the powerful" (2009, 122). Just as in Herzfeld's Rome, Warsaw's uncodified and messy approach to the restitution of expropriated property (most keenly apparent on Parade Square) is one of the factors contributing to the increasing dominance of privative over public-spirited appropriation in the Polish capital. Furthermore, the ambiguity as to what kind of property regime exists in Warsaw and as to who or what owns the Palace and its surroundings, is—in a broad sense— the most important factor contributing to the Parade Square morass or to the city-debilitating aspect of the Palace Complex. Nevertheless, the ongoing existence of the *marazm* has so far meant that the opportunity to create a consequentially public urban epicenter for Warsaw—a city-building Palace Complex functioning as a municipal social condenser—has not yet been completely squandered.

Little anthropological work has been done on urban land restitution following the fall of state socialist regimes, and this area constitutes an important avenue for further research.[3] Katherine Verdery, however, has written extensively on property restitution in rural Romania, and it is with some of her ideas that I would like now to engage (although through an urban prism). Verdery emphasizes the diversity, complexity, and ambiguity of post-socialist property regimes, which cannot be defined according

to any set of universal principles, whether liberal or Marxist. "Each case has its specificity," writes Verdery (2003, ix), and the legal disambiguation of property rights (especially in the direction of private ownership) is not necessarily of benefit to all the stakeholders. For villagers who lack the resources (tractors, harvesters, outbuildings, cash for fertilizers and herbicides) to convert ownership of a plot into yield, a "system of overlapping claims and rights provides a far more satisfactory ownership arrangements than would exclusive and individual ones" (Verdery 1999, 179). In the context of an emerging neoliberal property regime, in Verdery's opinion, the maintenance of a "fuzzy" arrangement is sometimes more equitable and beneficial to the majority than is its simplification.

In a related vein, urban sociologist Joanna Kusiak argues, with reference to the case of Plac Defilad, that the top-down elimination of chaos does not always produce the desired effect (order). "Whenever we hear the word 'chaos', we should thoroughly search the pockets of order" (2012, 307), writes Kusiak, arguing that the case of Warsaw demonstrates the extent to which these two terms are inextricably intertwined. While fully accepting that a pure iteration of either term is chimerical and that chaos and order both possess complex characteristics and emergent dynamics, I would like my argument to do something other than to problematize the binary distinction between these two terms or to "blur the boundaries" (Stark 1996) between notions of public and private property. I would like to make the case for a systemic reduction of proprietary complexity and to argue that Warsaw—which currently constitutes, as Kusiak recognizes, a "paradigmatic" case of what Verdery calls a "fuzzy" property situation—is in dire need of property-rights disambiguation.

The 1945 Bierut Decree nationalized all landholdings (although buildings themselves were exempt, in practice they were also seized by the state) within Warsaw's city limits.[4] Before 1939 (or 1943–1944, since this was when most of the buildings were destroyed) the cadastral map of what was to be Parade Square was constituted by a dense thicket of landholdings, each of which corresponded to a privately owned tenement block, most of these dating from the end of the nineteenth or beginning of the twentieth century. Unlike in most other ex-communist countries (see Marcuse 1996), no comprehensive, Poland-wide property restitution (*reprywatyzacja* in Polish, literally "reprivatization") law has been implemented since 1989, although a bill was passed by parliament in 2002 but vetoed by center-left president Aleksander Kwaśniewski. This means that the passage through the courts

of every single Polish property restitution claim relies on a treacherous medley of precedents, partial restitution bills (such as a 1997 law covering the return of religious communal property), local bylaws and leftover legislation from the PRL era—not to speak of changing political and financial pressures and incentives exerted by administrators, developers, and other interested parties.

Warsaw's Bierut Decree included an appeal clause: all property owners who registered complaints within six months of their plots being confiscated were eligible to have "permanent lease" granted for their expropriated parcels, as long as this didn't conflict with the binding local ordnance plan (of course, all appeals submitted during the socialist period were turned down).[5] The lack of any overarching legal framework for restitution since 1989 has meant, then, that landholdings could be returned to their prewar owners (or their descendants or, more often than not, property speculators who purchased their appeals from the owners' descendants at knock-down prices) only on the basis of the Bierut Decree. In other words, you could get your property back only thanks to the continued existence of the very same law that confiscated it in the first place.[6]

Several thousand Decree properties have been returned since 1989, in a process known as "small restitution" (*mała reprywatyzacja*).[7] The Palace of Culture and its immediate vicinity, however, were resistant to restitution until quite recently, with myriad reasons cited for this state of affairs. To begin with, more than eight in ten landholdings in this area belonged to Jews (against approximately one-third in the city as a whole, the latter figure corresponding to the prewar city's one-third proportion of Jewish inhabitants), and almost the entirety of Warsaw's Jewish population was murdered during the Holocaust: their properties being heirless, there was nobody left alive (or at least present) to file an appeal against the Bierut Decree in 1945, although the World Jewish Restitution Organization is lobbying the Polish government for a collective heirless property compensation deal. Ex-Warsaw central district mayor Jan Rutkiewicz (1990–1994), meanwhile, told me that he remembers having to "shoo out of my office" numerous claimants who presented him with German-issued title deeds that evidently pertained to Jewish properties confiscated by Nazis and then sold to favored Poles for knock-down prices.

The "heirless property" issue is far from resolved and tends to be placed on the back burner (or downplayed) by officials preoccupied with active rather than hypothetical claims and weary of igniting the knee-jerk

anti-Semitism that regularly emerges in relation to discussions over property restitution in Poland, especially in places—like Parade Square—where Jewish property ownership was concentrated. Further factors contributing to the Square's specificity as a piece of nonrestitutable land include the total lack of correspondence between the shape and position of the prewar plots and those corresponding to current and planned future uses of the square (ex-mayor Piskorski tended to refer to this as a "mosaic" whereas current mayor Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz prefers the term "confetti"); the cross-contestation of some claims between family members distributed around the world and property speculators; the extremely high value of land on Parade Square, whose centrality and excellent communicability makes these the most expensive parcels in Warsaw; the enormous size of the square, which magnifies all the above factors; and the rotten and rubble-infested condition of the infrastructure beneath the Square. As Mayor Piskorski, an enthusiast of restitution who returned around one thousand plots during his time in office, told me, "I couldn't touch Parade Square. Maybe if I had finished my term I could have done, but this place was just a different story altogether. It was so bloody complicated." Remember that the *Ekstradycja* baddies couldn't procure ownership of the Palace and its surroundings without engaging the services of an assassin.

The floodgates for Parade Square restitution were opened in 2008, however, when businessman Tadeusz Koss—the elderly grandson of a tenement block landlord—became the first-ever private owner of a Parade Square property plot. Koss had spent almost two decades dragging the matter through successively higher levels of the Polish court hierarchy before taking it to the European Tribunal of Human Rights in Strasbourg. Having regained ownership, however, he can do very little on it other than, as he put it optimistically back in 2008, "sit on a chair and revel in my ownership rights": most of the parcel in his name is occupied by a public park while other sections of it are reserved for a new Metro station. In frustration, Koss leased his corner of the park to a marketing firm in June 2010 (after formally obtaining the freehold to his plot), who made use of it to erect an enormous advertising billboard that obscured the view of the park from Marszałkowska. It stood for several months before being disassembled after the municipality was able to demonstrate that it fell foul of the binding local plan.[8] Koss (or his subtenants) continues to periodically return to the practice of erecting more or less bizarre temporary structures on the disputed plot; a new level of surrealism was accomplished in the summer of 2017,

Figure C.5. Tadeusz Koss's airplane fast-food bar, August 2017. Photograph by Kuba Snopek.

when the site played host to a decommissioned airplane housing a fast-food restaurant. This bizarre addition to Parade Square was nicknamed the Tupolev by Varsovians, in a darkly humorous reference to the Polish national livery with which the plane was painted, redolent for many of the infamous Tupolev presidential plane, which crashed in April 2010 outside the Russian city of Smolensk, killing the Polish president Lech Kaczyński and all of the remaining ninety-five passengers aboard.[9]

Since the collapse of the plans for Warsaw's Museum of Modern Art in 2012, meanwhile, the city has embarked on a concerted and widely publicized effort to purchase most of the disputed plot claims—at a cripplingly high rate equivalent to 80 to 90 percent of their market value—in the northeastern corner of Parade Square, in the area where the new Metro station is under construction and where the Museum is, in theory and according to official rhetoric, destined to stand.

Just as the Palace and Square continue to constitute post-socialist Warsaw's territorial and vital center of gravity, so do the tensions and complexities of the city's present proprietary morass manifest themselves there with exaggerated clarity. But the casualties of complexity are distributed throughout the city: public institutions—including some of the country's most treasured museums and universities—and even municipal or government offices in central Warsaw located within former aristocratic palaces are frequently turfed out, even if the buildings within which they are housed were destroyed during the war and rebuilt at the cost of the state. Both 2013 and 2014 saw the closures of a spate of schools raised during the 1950s and 1960s on land that has since been reclaimed by prewar property heirs or speculators.

But the property fuzz takes its most drastic and urgent form in situations involving conflicts between tenants and private landlords. On March 1, 2011, the charred remains of Jolanta Brzeska, a well-known tenants' activist, were found in a forest in the Warsaw suburbs. The investigation into her death has been fruitless so far, but many in Warsaw are convinced that Brzeska was murdered because of her work. Surviving old and haphazard prewar tenement blocks—much like those that populated Parade Square and most of Warsaw before World War Two—were nationalized and converted into communal housing under People's Poland. However, since 1989, much of this increasingly dilapidated housing stock—especially in Warsaw's impoverished right-bank Praga district—has been handed to private owners or investors. Landlords allow their blocks, many of which are situated in

well-connected and now swiftly gentrifying central locations, to fall into complete disrepair in an effort to force existing low-income subsidized tenants to move out. Several fires of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century tenements in Praga have been linked to landlord foul play, whereas legal and illegal evictions and demolitions are rife throughout the city.[10] The current municipal government, meanwhile, has repeatedly declared itself to be ideologically committed to realizing the "historical justice" of returning Warsaw to its prewar condition of cadastral hyperstratification.

It is hard not to note that the factors named as contributing to the singularity of the Parade Square property fuzz overlap substantially with those identified by participants in the second Archiblahblah meeting as lying behind the Parade Square morass itself. Katherine Verdery, it is illustrative to note, points to the manner in which property relations function as a "total system of social, cultural and political relations" (1999, 54); or, as she puts it elsewhere, property is "about everything: power, practices, institutions, land, the transformation of value, social relations, privatization, class formation, and so on" (2003, 32). Especially when it comes to questions of architecture, urban design, and city building, property is—literally—a foundational concern on whose ground the totality of attendant social relations assembles.

As I noted in chapter 6, the Archiblahblah participants—whose task it was to name and rank the causal potency of the factors behind the Parade Square morass—*ignored* the property question, focusing their discussion on seemingly vaguer issues of decision-making capacity and, once prompted, on the potency of the physical, social, and semiotic bulk of the Palace itself. I noted in my analysis of their discussion, however, that what its content really invoked was not the personal failings of bureaucrats or the materiality of the Palace in themselves but their status as epiphenomena of respective political-economic regimes: a discombobulated and petty postsocialist capitalist democracy and a soaringly choate, potent—and lingering—state socialism, manifested through the Palace's architectural power. What is at stake, then, is not just the question of who literally owns the land on Parade Square itself but the entire complex of social relations condensed on or triggered by the broader Parade Square property regime.

In the opinion of the two most prominent advocates of the Palace and Square's Varsovianization, ex-mayor Paweł Piskorski and ex-mayoral candidate Marek Balicki, the unresolved specter of the Bierut Decree ultimately constitutes the most important determinant behind the Parade

Square morass. In the Social Democrat Balicki's assessment, "The unregulated ownership situation is clearly the key thing. Here, the state has failed to deliver." Balicki continued in a fairly radical tone, "This should be regulated by law, and that's that. Just like it was regulated in part after the war," referring to the Bierut Decree as a model to emulate. "Maintaining this state of uncertainty is advantageous only for speculation, and for *speculators.*" For Balicki, "*reprywatyzacja* should have a very limited character. Property rights are not always more important than other things. [Private] property is not a sacred, inalienable right. But this is sort of how it is treated in Poland, and that's why this is all unregulated by law."

Piskorski, as a promarket liberal, has an utterly divergent ideological understanding of the importance of property rights from Balicki; yet his interpretation of the reasons behind the morass, and the correct way to tackle it, is similar. "If there had only been a restitution law" in place during his term as mayor, said Piskorski, then the *marazm* (morass) would already be on its way out by now. This new law could take any form as long as it was clear and decisive: "returning the plots to their owners, offering them compensation or even stripping them of their ownership rights altogether, whatever. If this had been in place, we could have put together a development consortium, even during my first term as Mayor."

Appropriation: Varsovianization Versus Restitution

In chapter 2, I referred to the "spirit of expropriation" attendant to the Soviet gifting of the Palace to Warsaw. Following Weiner (1992) and Godelier (1999), I linked the Palace's expropriatory hau to its inalienable connection to the Soviet benefactor, the "indelible presence" (Godelier 1999, 53) of the giver in the object, which acted to define the Palace's presence in the "social reality" of state socialist Warsaw. Thus, although the Palace's hau was an effect of the building's Soviet provenance, the relationship of totality that the Palace established—as a material consolidator of socialism's expropriatory dynamic—connected the PRL-era Palace just as consequentially and extensively to the social life of the city and its inhabitants as to the geopolitical economy of the socialist gift system.

In his study of alterations made by North London council-flat tenants to their kitchens, Daniel Miller (1988) points out that alienation is not only a property attendant to the commodity form—despite, or perhaps *because* they received their dwellings (or at least their rent subsidy) as a "gift" from

the state, the tenants often felt like "merely passive recipients of something they would otherwise have wished to have control over" (357). Against local authorities' imposition of tight restrictions on the kinds of alterations that are permitted in council-owned properties—which we might interpret as an attempt by the giver (the state, in the guise of the council) to police its inalienable connection to the thing given—the tenants engaged in their own "construction of inalienability" (354) through consumption and appropriation, whether by completely ripping out old fittings and acquiring a predesigned catalogue kitchen or by creating a new look through a bricolage of decorative strategies.[11]

Varsovians did carry out some limited, fleeting appropriations of the Palace before 1989, especially toward the end of the state socialist period (punk concerts, papal masses). But as long as the Soviet interstate socialist hau loomed, any physical alterations to the body of the Palace or its vicinity were out of the question. As late as 1987, the Soviet embassy is reported to have blocked the notion of hanging a crucifix off the building's facade on the occasion of the Parade Square papal mass and all architectural competitions for the Palace's surroundings (Eastern Wall and Western Central Region, before 1989, were won by designs that stuck to the letter of the PZPR Central Committee's 1953 stipulation that the "Palace-monument finds itself as that which it was designed to be: a free-standing edifice"). The Palace's inalienable connection to its Soviet donor was severed in 1989: the hau—understood as the obligation to reciprocate the receipt of the gift by demonstrating fealty to its giver—ceased (in theory) to exert any consequential impact on relations between city and building. Immediately, ideas for physical alterations to the Palace began to appear in the form of official and unofficial proposals for transforming the body of the building and its vicinity (although none of these, of course, have seen fruition), as detailed in chapter 5. Crucially, ownership of the Palace was transferred from state to city after the restoration of municipal self-government in Poland in 1990, thus setting the groundwork for one of the trajectories of appropriation that I identify here: that of the Palace's municipalization or Varsovianization, which constructs a new, post-Soviet (but still-socialist) public spirit: an inalienable connection between the Palace (understood as public property) and the city (understood as a collectivity).[12]

However, the increasing tide of restitution has marked out another competing path for the appropriation of what has become Warsaw's epicenter by individual legal descendants of Warsaw's pre-1939 bourgeois elites (with

the exception of heirless Jewish properties, which the current and planned restitution arrangements do not take into account). At present this process is carried out in a chaotic, unaccountable manner: the municipality returns properties and then repurchases those ones needed for public investments at close to their calculated market value, rather than providing compensation at a low percentage of the market value. This is a clear example of what Henri Lefebvre calls the "negative appropriation of space under the reign of private property" (1991, 319) or "privative appropriation" (350). The fact that the city seems to have moved away from building the Museum of Modern Art (a public institution, although one attracting—if not consciously targeting—an elite audience) while banishing KDT (a private institution, but one providing employment and cheap goods for low-income, economically marginalized Varsovians) and their indifference to the moral issue of even symbolic compensation of heirless Jewish property breeds the suspicion that the current mayoralty's preferred vision of an appropriate Parade Square is that of an office and retail district for the post-socialist "middle classes" (Humphrey 2002; Fehérváry 2002, 2011, 2013; Patico 2008; Buchowski 2009)—in other words, for an idealized late capitalist consumer bourgeoisie who live in gated communities (of which Warsaw is said to have more than the whole of France; see Gądecki 2012, Low 2003, Hirt 2013), work in the private sector, and spend their spare time in shopping malls or perhaps, in philosopher Magdalena Środa's model, at football games or in church.[13]

In his text on the Medical Hermeneutics circle of Moscow conceptualist artists, Boris Groys (2010, 161–168) presents the collapse of Soviet communism as the lifting of a totality that had "filled the whole evil world of pure chance with meanings" akin to the *tsimtsum*, a kabbalistic notion referring to "God's partial withdrawal from the all-unity, which creates the free space necessary for the world to exist." "Likewise," writes Groys, the "withdrawal of Soviet power, or the *tsimtsum* of Communism, created the infinite space of signs emptied of sense, this infinite surplus of pure chance" (168) that was ripe for being "colonized" by new imaginaries and symbolizations (such as that of Medical Hermeneutics). In Groys's account, contemporary art responds to the withdrawal of the communist totality with a "willful, individual occupation, a wild privatization of vacant spaces that have remained unpopulated after the *tsimtsum* of the great religions and ideologies" (2010, 168).

Furthermore, writes Groys, the process of contemporary art production involves "the individual imagination conquering symbolic spaces *that*

were once governed collectively, communally, and socially" (2010, 168). If we subtract the semiotic emphasis from this account and substitute the focus on art production with "architecture production" (meaning the political economy of post-socialist architecture and urban design), we arrive at an account of exactly what is in danger of happening on Parade Square: *a wild privatization of vacant spaces . . . that were once governed collectively communally, socially.* This, to my mind, constitutes a neat description of a powerful "privative" and exclusionary appropriatory dynamic in Warsaw's urbanism since 1989—a dynamic that is danger of being consolidated also on the epicentric space of Parade Square, which radiates architectural power throughout the city as a whole. What is needed in response is a radically collectivist disambiguation of property relations in the city: the constitution of the Palace-Square ensemble as a tremendous and consequential "social condenser" suffused with city-building public spirit, the epicenter of an urban property regime built in opposition to the multiple privations, discomforts, and injustices of the post-socialist city.

"Apparently Insoluble Antinomies"

Groys sees the fall of communism as the collapse of totality, but the lingering of a residual *mana*—a reference to the Pacific Islander concept that Mauss defined as a "magical, religious and spiritual force" (2016, 69) or "prestige" (67)—associated with the old system.[14] Groys follows Lévi-Strauss's de-magification of hau and mana ("I endeavor to reconstruct Mauss's thinking . . . without recourse to magical or affective notions," [Lévi-Strauss 1987, 49]), and his recasting of them in semiotic terms as "floating signifiers" (63), akin to a grammatical copula or any other "zero symbolic value" (63), universal to the functioning of all semiotic systems, "whose role is to enable symbolic thinking despite the contradictions inherent in it" (63). This, in Levi-Strauss's rendition, "explains the apparently insoluble antinomies attaching to the notion of *mana*, which struck ethnographers so forcibly, and on which Mauss shed light: 'force and action; quality and state; substantive, adjective and verb all at once; abstract and concrete; omnipresent and localized'" (64).

In chapter 2, I enlisted Sahlins (1972) and Godelier (1999) to show that hau (for the purposes of this argument, we can assume that the same applies to mana) is neither merely a spiritual nor a merely material entity. Nor then, it follows, can hau and mana be merely semiotic or communicational.

They are, as Mauss (and Sahlins and Godelier after him) made clear, total concepts that pertain to all domains of social life, but which, I argue, are ultimately reducible to a political-economic "structure-in-dominance" (Althusser 1969, 319–320). Hau and mana are indeed concepts that bring together "apparently insoluble antinomies" (Lévi-Strauss 1987, 63), but this bringing together operates on numerous levels that incorporate but exceed the semiotic. This discussion considers hau and mana in relation to the numerous other unifying (one might say "totalizing" or "centralizing" [Lefebvre 1991, 292–352]) notions, which I deploy to throw light on the sort of social totality that inheres between the Palace of Culture and Warsaw. These include axis mundi, coincidentia oppositorum, dominanta, Gesamtkunstwerk, property regimes, and various anthropological conceptions of holism. On the basis of these concepts and my ethnographic data, I have put together the notion of the Palace Complex, which brings together the political-economic, social, spatial-aesthetic, semiotic-discursive, and extraordinary levels of Warsaw-Palace interaction. Of course, it must be pointed out that the Palace Complex is itself antinomious: it complexifies and concentrates the social life of the city at the same time, and it is simultaneously possessed of the ability to function as a positive (city-building) and negative (city-debilitating) phenomenon.

Together with the lifting of the hau, which obliged Warsaw to demonstrate deference to its Soviet giver by leaving the body of the Palace untampered with, the political-economic and ideological totality of the state socialist regime vanished along with its attendant (expropriatory) property regime. But the Palace retained a prestige and a magical power of sorts (its architectural power)[15] because the total infrastructure of domination that it had established with the city stayed behind: this infrastructure manifests itself as the Palace Complex, a well-functioning social totality that constitutes a challenge to the inchoate, fragmented realities of the post-socialist, late capitalist city. Furthermore, the Palace's domination over Warsaw has intensified since 1989, because it is no longer tied up with an uncomfortable relation of subservience to a foreign geopolitical master, which was the defining property of the Soviet hau. Now, the path seems to be open for the Palace's architectural power to continue to intensify, whether in a city-building or a city-debilitating direction. This is the nature of the choice between the public-spirited and privatizing trajectories for the continuing appropriation of the Palace-in-Warsaw.

Condensing Complexity: "Only Bigness"

Architect Rem Koolhaas has made a conscious engagement with the Constructivist idea of the social condenser into one of the central planks of his practical and theoretical work. In *Delirious New York*, Koolhaas characterizes the (now closed) Manhattan Downtown Athletic Club (1931) as "a Constructivist Social Condenser: a machine to generate and intensify desirable forms of human intercourse" (1994, 152). Koolhaas argues that the club—an elite meeting place for rich New Yorkers; in Koolhaas's own words, "a machine for metropolitan bachelors" (159)—"represents the complete conquest—floor by floor—of the Skyscraper by social activity," putting into practice "the theoretical lifestyle modifications that the . . . 20th century European avant-gardes have been insistently proposing, without ever managing to impose them" (152).

One thing that Koolhaas's borrowings from the Constructivists have in common with those of Rudnev and the Stalinists is the conviction that skyscrapers make for the best social condensers. As Koolhaas puts it elsewhere, "only Bigness instigates the *regime of complexity* that mobilizes the full intelligence of architecture" (Koolhaas et al. 1998, 497). The primary distinction, however, between Koolhaasian and Stalinist uses of Constructivism concerns the mereology of building-city relationships, or the manner in which big buildings relate to the context of the city as a whole. Koolhaas describes the Downtown Athletic Club's architecture as a "complete surrender to the definitive instability of life in the Metropolis" (1994, 157). The Palace, by contrast, is the product of an attempt to—in the words of Poland's Stalin-era leader Bolesław Bierut—replace the old "city of fragments, chaotically put together" (1950, 4) with, to cite academician Lev Rudnev, "a unified image of beauty . . . connected to the city as a totality," linked in "an architectural whole with . . . old Warsaw" but also, in the words of Rudnev's colleague Igor Rozhin, "transforming the city in its entirety" (Sigalin 1986b, 434–435). In Goldzamt's characterization, meanwhile, the ambition was to create a "unified composition of the center on the basis of the Palace ensemble. . . . This is in the essential interests of the architectural unity of the city, and in the interests of the distribution of the aesthetic power of the Palace ensemble throughout the city as a whole" (Sigalin 1986c, 12).

The Palace's effectivity, then—as an actualization of this Stalinist-holistic economic aesthetic—is derived from its ability to interact with the

city as a totality, to function as an urban Gesamtkunstwerk. Recalling the Palace's provenance as a Soviet endowment to Warsaw, it can also be usefully represented as a Maussian total social fact, a gifted object possessed of the properly holistic ability to establish a relation with every domain of social life. In other words, the Palace Complex, as both a city-building and a city-debilitating phenomenon, works not by means of a Koolhaasian embrace of complexity, instability, or chaos. It succeeds for two reasons: because the Palace (in Goldzamt's words, "a large and complicated organism, embodying the richness and multi-faceted character of life," [1956, 21]) itself is complex, big, and well located enough to be able to concentrate (or condense) so much of the city's complexity in one place; and because public (municipal) ownership allows for the Palace's programmatic multidimensionality to be maintained.

Aesthetically Effective, Economically Defective?

One of the opening lines in Tadeusz Konwicki's *A Minor Apocalypse* describes the Palace, once a "monument to arrogance, a statue to slavery, a stone layer cake of abomination" transformed into merely "a large, upended barracks, corroded by fungus and mildew, an old toilet forgotten at some central European crossroad" (Konwicki 1983, 4). Meanwhile, the closing scene from Sylwester Chęciński's 1991 film *Rozmowy Kontrolowane*, set during the martial law winter of 1981, features the main protagonist, an accidental antiregime conspirator, fleeing from pursuit by the citizens' militia into the Palace of Culture, at the same moment holding a New Year's Eve banquet for SB (*Służba Bezpieczeństwa*, Security Service) top brass. Hiding in a toilet cubicle, the escapee pulls the flush to escape the suspicions of prying toilet users. Immediately, the entire Palace crumbles and topples over, an unambiguous allegory for the fragility of the repressive, conflicted, and unsustainable system the building represented. The culprit climbs out of the rubble, helplessly muttering, "We'll rebuild it." Despite these visions and multiple others, which have portrayed the Palace's supposed "transcendence as just as tacky and frayed as the entire reality of the PRL" (Benedyktowicz 1991, 32), the Palace has in fact transcended the collapse of its guarantor regime and continues to exert an electrifying, at once energizing and debilitating impact on the reality of twenty-first-century Warsaw.[16]

According to the Bulgarian philosopher Vladislav Todorov (1991, 363), communism produced "ultimately defective" economic structures

but "ultimately effective" aesthetic ones. To some degree, the material I presented throughout this book serves to uphold the validity of Todorov's assessment. However, I strongly distinguish my argument from the de-economization narrative, which Todorov exemplifies. My contention is that Rudnev's Palace of Culture is a better Constructivist social condenser than anything Koolhaas has designed because of the properly *kompleksnyi* social and aesthetic relationship of totality that Warsaw's Supreme Build-ing was able to establish with its host city. And it would never have been able to establish this relationship of totality if its design and construction had not been motivated by the communist "economic aesthetic" ambition to "revolutionarily transform the city" (Goldzamt, cited in Sigalin 1986b, 11) and to "transform the infrastructure of social ties" (Goldzamt 1956, 18) within.

In turn, the Palace's creation as a social condenser and its post-1989 consolidation was made possible first only by the Bierut Decree's establish-ment of an expropriatory property regime and subsequently by the Pal-ace and Square's transferal to municipal public ownership in 1990. But the Palace-Square ensemble will be unable to maintain its existence as a conse-quential enclave of still-socialist, public-spirited urbanity unless it contin-ues to be publicly owned and managed. Thus the publicness of public space is ultimately a question of political economy.[17]

Notes

1. Halfway through the design phase, the city instructed Kerez to incorporate a new home for the avant-garde Teatr Rozmaitości (Variety Theatre) within the building, and bitter arguments over the size of the architect's contract followed.

2. Writing about gated communities in post-socialist Sofia, Sonia Hirt (2013) speaks of the "privatism" characteristic of the postsocialist city.

3. See Humphrey (2007a) for more on the impact of privatization (of land, among other things) on the cities of post-Soviet Asia. Humphrey writes that whereas the "Soviet political economy of Ulan Ude" could have been described "in terms of a unified, hierarchical structure" (189), the post-Soviet city is undergoing disaggregation "as a result of the combined effects of economic collapse, privatization and the loss of overarching Soviet identity" (176). Buchowski (2009) has worked on the relationship between property rights, materiality, and social class in rural Poland. See also Marcuse 1996; Zerilli 2005; Chelcea 2006, 2012; Kusiak 2012.

4. A similar decree was passed in Moscow in 1918; see Hazard (1939). Peter Marcuse (1996) provides a survey of communist-era nationalization and postcommunist restitution in Soviet and Eastern European cities.

5. After autonomous local government was abolished in April 1950, decree land passed from the municipality to the state; the municipality, however, was saddled with the Decree properties again in 1990, after local self-government was restored (Kisilowska 2010).

6. Verdery (1999, 58) points out that Romanian collective farms were decollectivized on the basis of the same law, which nationalized them, and with an equivalent use of state violence.

7. No legal framework presently exists for compensating owners, as the relevant Decree clauses (8 and 9) expired during the PRL period.

8. The firm got around the ban by subleasing their sublease to another firm, who erected yet another near-identical billboard in November 2011. For more on Warsaw's advertising chaos and its role in the city's iconosphere, see Chmielewska (2005) and Kusiak (2012). Jałowiecki (2009, 2010) writes about the relationship between "ownership" over the city and Warsaw's billboard problem.

9. For an analysis of the Palace and Square's (non-)participation in the outpouring of public mourning that followed the Tupolev crash, see Murawski (2011b).

10. For summaries of issues relating to public housing in Warsaw, see Rakowska (2012) and the contributions to Erbel and Żakowska (2012).

11. Miller observes, "In general there was a marked antipathy to the council which was seen as failing to be present when needed (for repairs for example), but at the same time an alien presence around them" (1988, 365).

12. My argument here is consistent with the spirit and letter of the 1945 Bierut Decree, which expropriated urban landholdings on behalf of city rather than state.

13. In a critique of the current municipality's understanding of public space, Środa (2012) writes (sarcastically), "for the people, the city is something made up of stadiums, churches and shopping malls."

14. In Mauss's rendition, mana usually resides in human beings whereas hau is a property of "inanimate objects and vegetals (2016, 114)." Groys conflates hau with mana, misdefining the latter as "the power inherent in the gift itself" (2010, 167).

15. It would be mistaken, however, to refer to this power, after Groys, as its mana. Mauss refers to mana as a property of persons and spirits rather than things (see fn. 12) and as embodying "the power that the owner retains over the goods that have been stolen" (2016, 115). It might thus be the proper category for referring not to the Palace's architectural power but as a good way to distinguish between the Palace Complex and the idea of "Stalin's ghost" (Murawski 2011b). Caroline Humphrey has written about "personal and nondogmatic" (1998, vii) as well as infrastructural (2003) remainders of Soviet ideology and political economy in Buryatia.

16. The Palace's post-socialist longevity exists in marked contrast to comparable buildings like the Palast der Republik in East Berlin, whose existence was "brought to a screeching halt" (Bach 2017) two weeks before German reunification in 1990, after the uncannily timed discovery of an asbestos infection. The body of the Palast lingered on obdurately until 2007, however.

17. My argument here is in accordance with Jane Rendell's suggestion (after Jameson 1981 and Lahiji 2011) that the category of the social condenser is "architecture's political unconscious, an aspect, in Jameson's terms of the 'repressed and buried history' of class struggle" (2011, 131). See also Rendell (2008, 2012) and the contributions to Murawski and Rendell (2017). On "public space," see Varna and Tiesdell's (2010) attempt to establish a set "criteria" for publicness, which skirts around the issue of property ownership. For comparison, see also Allen (2006), Low (2003), Low and Smith (2006), Boyer (1993), Sennett (1992), Harvey (2000), Harutyunyan and Hörschelmann (2008). See also Deutsche (1992a, 1992b).

EPILOGUE

The Still-Socialist Palace and the War against Postcommunism

I N N OVEMBER 2015, P OLAND'S RIGHT-WING NATIONALIST L AW AND Justice Party won a surprise resounding victory in the country's parliamentary elections, having already taken the presidency in May that year. Secure in its control over both elected branches of government, Law and Justice—and in particular its leader, Jarosław Kaczyński, twin brother of late president Lech Kaczyński, who was killed in a plane crash over the Russian city of Smolensk in April 2010—has embroiled itself in an all-out war against what it perceives as unforgivably lingering communist influence in Poland's political and economic system. The consensual, negotiated nature of Poland's post-1989 political settlement, Kaczyński and his allies proclaim, led to a failure to carry out substantive decommunization in Poland. Communist elites and those linked to them continue to exercise power in politics as well as business, they allege, and those guilty of political crimes and abuses of power during the PRL period have not been held accountable for their wrongdoing. The task of the Law and Justice (PiS) administration is to extinguish the specter of communism haunting Poland and thereby to free the country from what Kaczyński and company refer to as its "postcommunist" condition. The use of this term in the reigning ideology of contemporary Poland, then, differs from the standard sociological or anthropological understanding of post-socialism. Postcommunism does not refer to a political or economic system or social fabric that is transitioning away from communism or state socialism; instead, it refers to a regime that, on some substantive level, is still communist.[1]

In this sense, Kaczyński's usage of the term *postcommunism* resembles the understanding of *still-socialism*, which I make use of in this book, differing only in terms of value judgment and ideological coloring. Whereas I contend that the survival of still-socialist aesthetics and spatio-economic arrangements in Warsaw—most clearly embodied by the Palace of Culture—is a good thing, Kaczyński characterizes postcommunism (understood as

still-communism) as a malevolent curse that must be stamped out at any cost. As Kaczyński put it in a speech broadcast by the Radio Maryja fundamentalist Catholic Radio Station—whose multimillion army of listeners overwhelmingly backed Law and Justice in the elections—delivered two months following his victory, on January 23, 2016. "The [current] Polish-Polish war is a struggle over postcommunism, over the repealing of all of that which postcommunism has created in Poland" (Kaczyński 2016).

One of the most vivid examples of PiS's decommunization drive is a law passed by parliament in April 2016 forbidding the "propagation of communism or other totalitarian systems through the names of buildings, objects and other public facilities" (Sejm 2016). Under the terms of this law, municipal authorities have been given twelve months to complete the process of decommunization in public space—a process that, like property restitution, has been gradually ongoing in Poland since 1989 but in a haphazard, stopping-and-starting manner. In this epilogue, I sketch and attempt to make sense of some of the rather surprising things that come to light when the Law and Justice government's radical campaign against postcommunism confronts Warsaw's still-socialist Palace. In particular, I focus on the contrast between PiS's enthusiasm for carrying out symbolic decommunization—for example by purging images of the Palace from the state TV network's flagship news program—and its apparently ambivalent attitude toward economic decommunization, as expressed in its hesitant approach to the restitution of nationalized land and property on Parade Square and elsewhere in Warsaw.

Symbolic Decommunization: Purging the Palace

On January 7, 2016, Poland's newly elected conservative president signed into law a highly controversial media bill endowing the minister of the Treasury with the unilateral power to sack and hire heads of public TV and radio. And, on the very same day, the minister appointed Jacek Kurski—veteran spin doctor of Poland's nationalist right—as director of TVP, the state television network. For some months before Kurski took up his appointment, TVP's flagship evening news program had begun with a computer-animated flyover above the cities of Gdańsk, Kraków, and Warsaw. Travelling at an unnatural pace, the camera swooped over landmarks old and new, gleaming stadiums and Gothic basilicas. The journey culminated amid Warsaw's skyscrapers, the camera homing in on the clock tower

atop the grandest and tallest of them all, the Palace of Culture and Science. For the remainder of the program's duration, the anchor presented the day's events against the backdrop of the Palace's ticking clock hands.

Following Kurski's appointment, the Polish right-wing commentariat began to stir. On January 8, the influential website wpolityce.pl ran the following headline: "TVP has a new boss, but the evening news title sequence is still haunted by the symbol of the Soviet rape of Poland—the Palace of Culture. Surely not for long." Kurski responded to the call on January 10, taking to Twitter to announce his first major decision as TV boss: "Soon, TVP News will no longer be presented against the background of the Stalin Palace. Instead—the Royal Castle in Warsaw #goodchange."[2] Already by the following evening, the title sequence had been cut by several seconds so that the flyover ends just before the Palace comes into view. Likewise, the backdrop was altered, the tower and clock of Warsaw's Royal Castle replacing those of the Palace's.

Attitudes to the Palace among the Polish conservative right, however, have hardly been straightforwardly negative. The Palace's fiftieth birthday was celebrated with great aplomb back in 2005 while Lech Kaczyński—late brother of Jarosław—was mayor of Warsaw. For years, Law and Justice was well known for holding its election night parties in the Palace's monumental, marble-decked halls. And it was a Law and Justice-appointed Warsaw district conservator who wrote the Palace onto the register of historical monuments in February 2007. Very few figures connected to PiS have expressed any interest in the notion of demolishing the Palace. Indeed, the sole influential political figure continuing to proclaim interest in this idea in recent years has been Radosław Sikorski, longstanding foreign minister in the liberal Civic Platform government, which PiS replaced (and which its lawmakers have the habit of referring to as the "postcommunist ancien régime"). What's more, Warsaw's Royal Castle—supposedly a more properly Polish symbol than Stalin's Palace—is, in fact, also a communist-era building. The original castle was destroyed during World War Two, and the current structure was rebuilt on the Polish United Workers' Party's initiative during 1971 to 1984.[3]

But it doesn't stop at architecture. In fact, a number of current Law and Justice MPs, ministers, and advisors are former members of the old Polish United Workers' Party. Most prominent among them is Stanisław Piotrowicz, a communist-era prosecutor and present-day figurehead of the government's ongoing assault against Poland's Constitutional Tribunal—an assault motivated by concern that the tribunal may scupper PiS's

planned radical reforms of Poland's political, legal, economic, and moral order. During a recent television interview, Piotrowicz made a slip of the tongue of the sort that had rarely been seen in the corridors of power since the early 1990s: "When it comes to a certain detachment of the judiciary from a sensitivity to social justice, then I believe it is relevant to draw attention to the fact that Article 2 [of the constitution] states that the Polish People's Republic . . . uhm . . . the Republic of Poland, is a democratic state, ruled by law, recognizing the principles of social justice."

Piotrowski's gaffe was interpreted by many Poles as a Freudian slip, a making manifest of the manner in which Law and Justice is, in fact, bent on bringing back communism, or at least some sort of vaguely authoritarian rule. The opposition parties, of course, have been quick to suggest that it is in fact Law and Justice who are the real postcommunists or communists. Opposition MPs have taken to chanting the old dissident slogan "Commies begone" ("*Precz z komuną*") during Piotrowski's parliamentary appearances, on one brutally awkward occasion even being mimicked by the object of ire himself; protesters regularly deploy the same slogan during antigovernment marches. In December 2016, protesters went so far as intone "Commies begone"—and the substantially more aggressive "First with a sickle, then with a hammer, [smash] the red rabble" ("*Raz sierpem, raz młotem, w czerwona hołotę*")—outside Jarosław Kaczyński's home on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the declaration of martial law by the regime of Wojciech Jaruzelski in 1981.

According to PiS's opponents, then, its anticommunist saber rattling is merely a front designed to conceal a deep ideological, symbolic—even aesthetic (or olfactory)—dependence on the very specter that it is trying to exorcise. As filmmaker and former Civic Platform senator Kazimierz Kutz put it in an interview with the private TVN news channel, "Kaczyński, excuse me, he *stinks* of PRL." On the foundational level of the economy too—and of the legal arrangements governing the economy's operation—Law and Justice's relationship to the communist past is difficult to characterize in one-dimensional terms.

Economic Decommunization: Anti-Soviet Still-socialism

It is illustrative that Piotrowicz's gaffe occurred while he was in the process of articulating his party's position on social justice. PiS is a welfarist-

conservative party, and a key part of their platform is a conscious opposition to the neoliberalism that has been the dominant trend in the Polish economy since 1989 and that, it charges, has been geared toward the interest of a liberal establishment who are indifferent to the plight of poorer Poles. This ideological commitment to social justice is reflected in the name of the party, the point of which is to emphasize that law and justice do not belong to separate realms of existence but that the former must be rooted in the latter. PiS's philosophy is rooted, Kaczyński insists, not in the communist past but in the traditions of Józef Piłsudski, former leader of the prewar Polish Socialist Party (PPS—*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*), who pursued a nationalist, statist, and authoritarian agenda, having seized power in a violent coup d'état in 1926. But it is also indebted to the antipositivist jurisprudence of Jarosław Kaczyński's PhD supervisor at the University of Warsaw, Stanisław Ehrlich—a doctrinaire party thinker during the Stalinist 1950s turned heterodox communitarian Marxist—to whose work Kaczyński has frequently and openly referred in his public appearances as well as in writing (Mazur 2016).[4]

As mayor of Warsaw, Jarosław's twin brother, Lech, was known for his hesitant attitude to restitution. Although he did approve the return of hundreds of properties to heirs as well as to speculators, his approach was much more cautious than that of his successor, Mayor Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz. As Tadeusz Koss—the first successful Parade Square property claimant—told me when I asked him what he thought about former mayor Kaczyński shortly following the latter's death in Smolensk, "There was a certain slowing down during [the mayoralty] of the late Lech Kaczyński, who ultimately was not a supporter of restitution. He was a socialist, but in the good sense of that word, because Piłsudski was also a socialist."

When the "wild restitution" affair finally erupted into a full-on scandal in 2016 following years of tireless work by activists and journalists, the Law and Justice government swiftly availed itself of the opportunity to make political capital out of it. The far-reaching, devastating nature of restitution's assault on Varsovians' lives and Warsaw's social and urban fabric, and the vast network of elite corruption underlying it, led many commentators to refer to the restitution affair as "the biggest political scandal in the history of the Third Republic" (the official name for the post-1989 Polish state—members of PiS sometimes characterize their own agenda as one of bringing a Fourth Republic into being).[5] Among its many ingredients have been allegations that a restitution mafia is in operation in Warsaw, comprising

municipal and national lawmakers, property speculators and lawyers; confirmation of the long-denied charge that Mayor Gronkiewicz-Waltz's husband had acquired part ownership of an apartment block confiscated from its murdered Jewish owner by the Nazis during World War Two (Tadeusz Koss told me back in 2010, "He bought the claim! And she 'sorted out the details.' . . . I'm keeping this up my sleeve for now"); and the revelation that a speculator, working in cahoots with municipal officials, had illegally obtained ownership of a Parade Square land plot valued at €40 million and earmarked for a 250 meter skyscraper. Among the affair's immediate consequences have been the dismissal of a number of senior officials explicitly or implicitly accused of coforming (or turning a blind eye to the operations of) this restitution mafia. Two of Warsaw's deputy mayors were among those sacked: long-serving Jacek Wojciechowicz, whose brief encompassed investments and municipal infrastructure (Wojciechowicz makes numerous appearances in this book, most notably in chaps. 5 and 6), and the more youthful Jarosław Jóźwiak, responsible for property and real estate—the same deputy Gronkiewicz-Waltz had sent to dance on the table with revelers at the Palace's sixtieth anniversary celebration in July 2015.

Another indirect consequence of the restitution affair was PiS-affiliated president Andrzej Duda's expedited approval of a Warsaw-specific "minor" restitution bill in August 2016—a law that Mayor Gronkiewicz-Waltz had been promising but failing to implement since 2012. Among the new law's provisions are restrictions designed to temper speculation on restitutable property by regulating the buying and selling of claims; new mechanisms granting the public purse the right to buy property claims without having to return them first (this clause would have saved the municipality a huge sum had it been implemented several years previously); and granting public bodies the right to refuse the return of war-damaged property rebuilt by the state.

The new law still leaves many questions unanswered and loose ends untied, however. Although evictions have slowed since the law came into force in September 2016, no guilty parties have so far been prosecuted (although the first arrests were made in early 2017), very few illegally restituted properties have returned to public ownership, and tenants' rights remain without substantive formal protection. PiS as well as the opposition are continuing to tussle over the details of a promised "major" restitution bill (Warsaw-specific or nationwide) that would supersede the August 2016 law. Law and Justice, possibly realizing that their time in charge of Warsaw

(2002–2006) and the Polish government (2003–2007) may have implicated some of their own lawmakers in the affair, have adopted an increasingly cautious approach to raising the issue of restitution in their condemnation of Civic Platform. Meanwhile, February 2017 saw a grotesque explosion of tree felling on restituted plots throughout central Warsaw as landlords took advantage of a bizarre legal amendment—pushed through by Law and Justice's environment minister at the close of 2016—permitting owners to cut down trees on privately owned land with impunity. By the close of February 2017, the chainsaws had reached Parade Square as Tadeusz Koss—or, rather, the subcontractor administering Koss's plot—inaugurated the chopping down of several dozen sixty-year-old lime trees that had cast their shadows over Warsaw for as long as the Palace itself.

Although "wild" restitution in Warsaw itself has temporarily been tempered, the restitution affair is continuing to unfold. Nevertheless, the paradox of the matter is that the rabidly anticommunist Law and Justice regime appears to be more inclined than the liberal Civic Platform was to protect the spatial and architectural residues of Poland's postcommunist—or still-socialist—past from privative appropriation by the untrammeled forces of the market (or at least to present itself to the public as doing so). In Law and Justice's Poland, it seems, symbolic and economic decommunization do not necessarily map directly onto each other.

News stories pertaining to decommunization as well as restitution are frequently illustrated with photographs of the Palace of Culture. In the summer of 2016, Poland's leading newspaper ran a cartoon featuring a conversation between a military-uniformed, Russian-speaking, mustachioed supplicant and two municipal administrators (or lawyers). One administrator said to the other, "This gentleman is 138 years old, and he would like to regain ownership of the Palace of Culture from the city." In February 2017, meanwhile, a friend documenting the progress of the chainsaws on Koss's Parade Square plot photographed a tiny signpost (styled, he pointed out, in a nostalgic prewar aesthetic) standing in the midst of the paradigmatically "wild capitalist" landscape—comprising tree stumps, felled trunks, falafel huts, and billboards—of landlord Koss's private Parade Square allotment. The sign was illustrated with the word "Returned" stamped over the shadowy outline of the Palace of Culture and encouraged prospective Bierut Decree claimants seeking restitution or compensation to get in touch.

Nevertheless, for now at least, the Palace's municipal ownership status does not appear to be under active threat, with no successful claims

having been made for land plots beneath the building. The Palace's public ownership status is—in theory—doubly shielded from restitution (although not from other forms of privatization) by the binding municipal zoning ordinance and the new minor restitution bill. And on the symbolic level, the Palace—despite being by far the largest, most tangible reminder of Poland's communist past—is not actually targeted by the new decommunization law's implementers. Commenting on the new decommunization law in April 2016, Minister of Culture and Deputy Prime Minister Piotr Gliński, for example, insisted that he does not think the Palace should be demolished: it ought to function instead as a "warning symbol, reminding us what we can be driven to by ideological madness" (Fronda.pl 2016).

The symbolic, aesthetic, ideological, and economic contours of post-socialist (or still-socialist, or postcommunist, or asocialist, or wild capitalist) Poland are continuously shifting, for sure. In Warsaw itself, one thing that does appear to remain constant among the turmoil—of burning tenement blocks, chopped-down trees, toppled monuments, and haphazardly raised office towers—is that the Palace of Culture remains adored, detested, and used in equal measures of intensity. The Square, which surrounds it, meanwhile—although a core battleground on which the chaos of the city condenses and manifests itself—steadfastly continues to resist attempts to be reappropriated into a profitable, well-functioning city center for the dreamed-of "normal" capitalist metropolis.

A Still-socialist Palace in a Leftless Country

In this book's introductory chapter, I suggested that the Palace of Culture does or could one day function as Poland's "left side of history" or even as its "communist horizon." In the context of the political climate of the late 2010s—with the left decimated as a political force in much of the world, and with reactionary phenomena, from Kaczyńskism to Brexit to Trumpism, on the ascendancy—this horizon may seem further fetched than it has for a long while. In Poland in particular, the political influence of the left has been crushed to a greater extent than anywhere else in Europe; following the 2015 elections, Poland became the only European country (both in the EU and outside it) without a leftist party represented in either chamber of parliament. The postcommunist SLD (Democratic Left Alliance)—the successor party to the Polish United Workers' Party—which ran Poland from 1993 to 1997 and 2001 to 2005 (and whose candidate held the presidency

between 1995 and 2005)—failed to gain any seats in parliament for the first time in Poland's post-PRL history.[6]

SLD had been tainted by a series of hugely embarrassing corruption scandals and had lost its credibility in the eyes of the electorate by partaking with enthusiasm not only in the rampant, cronyish privatization of Poland's economy but also through miscalculated, overenthusiastic involvement in Bush-era US-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—even going so far as to host secret, illegal CIA torture black sites in disused Soviet military bases. New left-wing or leftish parties have sprouted up from time to time. One party, the Palikot Movement (named after its founder, an eccentric libertarian vodka magnate) won over 10 percent of the vote in the 2011 elections before disintegrating. Another grouping, the well-organized *Razem* (Together) party, gained 4 percent of the vote in the 2015 elections, just under the 5 percent threshold for single-party parliamentary representation. Both the Palikot and Razem Parties, however, have attempted to present themselves as new kinds of left movements, tarnished by association neither with the communist past nor with the postcommunists (Razem's refusal to cooperate with the United Left in the 2015 election campaign was, it is reasonable to suppose, ultimately co-responsible for both groupings' failure to win any seats in parliament).

Opinion polls continue to show, however, that the postcommunist left is tarnished in the eyes of much of the electorate not by its association with PRL but by its direct involvement in and co-responsibility for the multiple privations of the post-PRL era. Surveys carried out by independent polling organizations consistently report over 40 percent of respondents evaluating the PRL period in a positive light.[7] The state socialist era is remembered by many as a time of fast modernization, rapid social advancement for previously marginalized members of the agrarian and urban underclasses, and relative economic security. Less-educated, poorer, and older respondents are much more likely to express sympathy for the communist past—an electorate overlapping to a large extent with that which would have once tended to gravitate toward the postcommunists, which is now overwhelming in its support for Law and Justice.

The new left, meanwhile, is conscious of the need to develop its historical politics (*polityka historyczna*) but persistently does so with reference to obscure pre-1939 left-wing activists or intellectuals. When I asked an acquaintance, a senior member of Razem, whether they would not like to appeal to the large, PRL-nostalgic segment of the electorate by hatching their

polityka historyczna onto some positive aspects of the communist legacy, I was told, "Of course we do! And we plan to, eventually. But we simply don't think the voters are ready for this yet." On the level of national politics, the Polish new left, it would seem, continues to be afraid of "stinking of the PRL." As long as this situation continues—as long as the Polish left thinks the people are not yet ready to be confronted with a past that they themselves have lived—Warsaw's favorite skyscraper will remain a still-socialist Palace in a leftless country.

The Gender of the Palace Complex

In March 2017, Aleksandra Fafius—the woman with the Palace tattoo—was photographed standing on the long table outside the Palace of Culture's main entrance once again. This time, she did so without the now-sacked deputy mayor—a casualty and, in all likelihood, a scapegoat for the restitution scandal rocking Warsaw and Poland. This time, she was not taking part in a birthday party hosted by the municipality but in *Manifa*, an annual feminist demonstration marking International Women's Day. That year's demonstrations were by far the biggest Manifas in post-1989 Poland, having built on momentum created by widespread women's protests in September 2016, held in opposition to the Law and Justice government's (subsequently abandoned) proposal to institute a complete ban on abortion—surpassing the already ultrarestrictive arrangements encompassed in the binding law, passed in 1993, permitting abortion only in cases of rape, incest, or fatal danger to the health of the woman or fetus (abortion had been legal and widely available during the PRL period).

When I interviewed Aleksandra Fafius in her Warsaw flat several weeks after the protest took place, she told me that she does not regard herself as a particularly political person and certainly not as an admirer of Poland's former communist regime. Her deeply felt attachment to the Palace is connected to her own past, to her involvement in events that took place there and institutions that were housed there (the legendary Rolling Stones concert of 1967, the Palace of Youth) as well as, to an extent, to her admiration for the eccentric form of the building itself. She has never viewed the Palace through a particularly political or even historical lens. However, in the present political conjuncture, with the country under the control of crusading, misogynistic Catholic fundamentalists, she agreed that she *could* see the Palace—a building possessed of the unique capacity to provoke the

Figure E.1. Aleksandra Fafius outside the Palace of Culture at the Women's Day Manifa demonstration, March 2017. Photograph by Sarmen Beglarian.

ire of right-wing reactionaries—functioning as a political symbol in the struggle against the Law and Justice regime's many retrograde initiatives. In the context of Law and Justice's combined assault on women's rights and contraception, and on what it perceives to be Poland's postcommunist condition, could it be that that the seemingly ultraphallic, domineering Palace could even be made to take on some feminist symbolic attributes?

This conversation with Fafius made me think of the fact that among the relatively few people I met who virulently disliked the Palace or who wanted to see it knocked down, I mostly remembered random encounters with young or youngish boys or men—patriotically minded, politically conservative activists in their teens or twenties—handing out flyers on the street or attending public discussions about the history of Warsaw, fueled by varying degrees of anger and nationalistic zeal. And indeed, the data from my Palaceological survey backed up this impression. Among the most striking figures revealed in the respondents' answers was the disparity between male and female attitudes to the Palace of Culture. Seventy-three percent of women but only 57 percent of men described themselves as "positively disposed" toward the Palace (64% overall). More strikingly, just 21 percent of the female but over half (51%) of male respondents thought that "Warsaw needs to have a skyscraper taller than the Palace of Culture," and almost three times more men (23%) than women (8%) expressed their desire for the Palace to be demolished!

During a public meeting in Warsaw's Museum of Modern Art in the autumn of 2010 at which I presented my survey results, audience members were unanimous in their psychosexual etiology of these figures: Warsaw's men are more aggressively disposed toward the Palace than are women because its vast dimensions—and perhaps its architectural power—leave them feeling belittled and intimidated. In other words, Warsaw's men are uniquely afflicted by the Palace Complex. A Facebook discussion that emerged following my presentation of these statistics during a lecture at Warsaw's Academy of Fine Arts in March 2017 also gave rise to a conversation about the relation between gender and the Palace Complex and about belligerent versus nonbelligerent attitudes to the Palace itself and to Poland's communist past in general. The conversation started lightheartedly: feminist philosopher and artist Ewa Majewska posted a photograph of my slide presenting the survey figures, accompanied by the comment, "It would seem that men are dangerous." "Rather, it seems that they have complexes," responded sociologist Kasia Kasiówna. Soon, however, the conversation

was joined by a male Facebook friend of one of the participants (who hadn't been present at the lecture). He expressed outrage at the idea that the Palace was being considered in a positive light at all. It was a terrible imposition on Warsaw; it ripped apart the whole prewar layout of the city, separating the western Wola district from the center! And he expressed even more consternation at the idea that gender was a relevant factor in attitudes toward the Palace, toward Poland's history, or toward everyday life in general.[8]

The paradoxically belligerent manner in which this protest against the belligerent nature of the Palace—and of the political system that stood behind it—was delivered reminded me also of the competitive, macho turn that the second Archiblahblah cockfight—described in chapter 5—had taken once several male members of the panel and audience began accusing each other of "impotence" or "dwarfishness." Right-wing architect and Law and Justice mayoral candidate Czesław Bielecki had even gone so far as to claim that he is in possession of the "legislative Viagra" (a phrase that Bielecki, as he emphasized, actually trademarked) to break through this so-called "administrative impotence."

I do not think that the language and atmosphere of these discussions, nor even the figures I gathered from my survey, actually prove anything concrete about the gendered nature of the Palace itself, of the social or political role it performs in Warsaw. Reflecting on this question did make it clear to me, however, that there is more to the Palace Complex than the stark distinction between a city-building *positive* complex and a city-debilitating *negative* one, which I introduced in this book's concluding chapter. The character of Warsaw's Palace Complex—although ultimately rooted in the political-economic parameters underlying the building's ability to continue to function publicly—affects, afflicts, and enriches the life of Warsaw on numerous uneven, contradictory, and complementary levels. Various working generalizations can be made, however, in order to try to make sense of (rather than to obscure) all of this complexity and contradictoriness. On a comparative, global scale, the Palace Complex does appear to be highly unusual in terms of the extent to which the attention of an entire city is concentrated on one architectural object. However, even if the Palace Complex is not exactly "normal," it is not pathological either: rather than being an affliction that only "the other Varsovian" has (see this book's introductory chapter), the Palace Complex permeates pervasively, if asymmetrically, throughout the social existence of twenty-first-century Warsaw.

To dwell a little more on belligerent versus nonbelligerent attitudes to the Palace, it is also clear that—contrary to an opinion I often heard expressed while in Warsaw—these are not distributed linearly according to age: older people are no more likely to dislike the Palace than younger ones.[9] Apart from gender, few demographic categories underlie substantial divergences in dispositions toward the Palace, with political opinions and attitudes towards Poland's communist past being among the few exceptions: unsurprisingly enough, 79 percent of self-described left-wingers were positively disposed to the Palace (only 5% negatively) while the corresponding figures for right-wingers were 45 percent versus 34 percent (57% versus 17% for political centrists). One hundred percent of respondents who evaluated the communist past in positive terms were fond of the Palace while less than half of those whose attitude to the PRL period was negative thought likewise. Even among this anticommunist demographic, however, it is interesting to note that the Palace had more admirers (47%) than detractors (30%).

For all its phallicness, then, the Palace—in its awesome capacity to provoke male belligerence—may, perhaps, be able to play an antipatriarchal role in Warsaw's symbolic-political landscape. For all its morphological centrality and symmetry, the Palace veers distinctly closer toward Warsaw's political left side than to its right one. As a tattoo on Aleksandra Fafius's leg during the Manifa; as an object of hatred and symbolic censorship for Poland's currently reigning nationalist right; as a powerful container and radiator of public spirit in a city of wild restitution and resurgent privation; as a vivid reminder of the extent to which Poland's socialist regime was as invested in the provision of new kinds of public culture and opportunity to previously dispossessed classes as it was in the withdrawal of old kinds of privilege from the feudal and bourgeois elites; and as a near-universal object of affection and fascination—even for the greater share of Warsaw's belligerent males, right-wingers, and anticommunists—the still-socialist Palace may, so long as its publicness remains intact, serve as a powerful agent and device for the reconfiguration of the leftless, patriarchal, and privationary economic, aesthetic, social, and ideological landscape of twenty-first-century Warsaw.

The Self-Immolation of the Ordinary, Gray Person and the Whole Palace Thing

On October 19, 2017, at 4:30 p.m., a man doused himself in flammable liquid and set himself on fire on the square in front of the main entrance to the

Figure E.2. Candles and graffiti marking the spot of Piotr Szczęsny's self-immolation on October 19, 2017. Photograph taken by Kuba Snopek on November 3, following Szczęsny's death on October 29.

Palace of Culture. He died in hospital ten days later. Before setting himself alight, he set up a megaphone to play a '90s Polish political rock song ("I Love Freedom") and threw several copies of a highly politicized, highly articulate letter into the air. The man's name was Piotr Szczęsny. He was fifty-four years old, from the town Niepołomice in southern Poland. Piotr Szczęsny did not name himself in his letter. He called himself "an ordinary, gray person" (*zwykły szary czlowiek*). His letter was a manifesto. It was made up of fifteen postulates, each starting with the phrase "I protest against . . ."

He protested against the Law and Justice regime's attacks on the constitution and the rule of law, on the independent judiciary and the natural environment. He protested against its divisive political rhetoric, its discriminatory attitude toward minorities, its xenophobia, sexism, homophobia, and Islamophobia. He protested against its neglect of the health service and the overcentralization of the state.

Szczęsny's self-description as an "ordinary, gray person" was not random. It was a clear invocation of Ryszard Siwiec, a philosopher who self-immolated in 1968 in Warsaw's Tenth Anniversary Stadium, in protest against Poland's participation in the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia. Siwiec had also distributed a letter to the crowd as he set himself alight. The most famous line in his letter read, "Hear my cry, the cry of a gray, ordinary person."

Szczęsny's act was highly redolent, also, of the plot of *Minor Apocalypse*, written in 1979, the best known book by the writer and filmmaker Tadeusz Konwicki, much of whose work revolved around his own self-proclaimed fixation on the Palace of Culture. Konwicki's protagonist, an autobiographical character named Tadeusz K., is convinced by dissident acquaintances to burn himself to death on the steps of the Palace. His sacrifice would be a protest against Poland's forthcoming direct incorporation into the Soviet Union. Throughout the book, Tadeusz K. walks all over (and beneath) Warsaw clutching a can of petrol, circumnavigating the Palace, searching for matches and agonizing over whether or not to carry out his plan. He ends his journey on the steps of the Congress Hall, where the ruling Polish United Workers' Party is meeting. Tadeusz K. holds the matches in his shaking hand and prepares to strike just as the Congress is coming to an end and the delegates exit the hall.

> *The agents begin to open the heavy doors of hell or heaven. . . . I begin to walk slowly towards the stone platform at the summit of these not-so-high steps.*

Konwicki's Tadeusz K. was modeled on Siwiec. It seems highly likely that Piotr Szczęsny modeled himself on Siwiec and Tadeusz K. His self-immolation was the enactment of the culminatory moment of the best-known fiction book written about the Palace of Culture. The entrance to the Congress Hall is on the other side of the Palace from the spot where Piotr Szczęsny's self-immolation took place. He lit his fire just as a meeting of the Warsaw City Council, which convenes biweekly in the Palace, was coming to an end.

Among the first people to witness the self-immolation were Warsaw city councilors, one of whom—a member of the left-wing Polish Initiative (*Inicjatywa Polska*)—uploaded photographs of Szczęsny's manifesto onto his Facebook page. The political opposition were quick in their attempt to make political capital out of Szczęsny's death. On November 6, just days after Szczęsny's death, the Warsaw municipality—controlled by the opposition Civic Platform—inserted a simple granite plaque into the paving, marking the spot where Szczęsny set himself alight.

The plaque reads, simply, "I, an ordinary, gray person." It complements the flowers, candles, and graffiti with which the site of tragedy has been adorned since Szczęsny's death was announced. The plaque was erected on the initiative of Warsaw mayor Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, a member of Civic Platform. The city owns the part of Parade Square directly in front of the Palace, thus it was easy for the plaque to be erected quickly and with minimum fuss. Government-controlled media and pro-government social media users were quick to condemn what they perceived as the hypocrisy and cynicism of the mayor's plaque.

When will the city honor the tenants' rights activist Jolanta Brzeska, whose charred remains were discovered in a forest outside Warsaw in 2011? one Twitter user asked. When will they erect a plaque commemorating the attempted self-immolation, also in 2011, of a man outside the prime minister's office—when the prime minister was Donald Tusk from Civic Platform? TVP, the government-owned television network, did not mention the self-immolation of Piotr Szczęsny in their evening news bulletins on October 19 and October 29.

In an extraordinary layering of irony, Jarosław Kaczynski had also been in the Palace of Culture on the day of Piotr Szczęsny's self-immolation. He had attended a ceremony in the offices of the Warsaw City Council on the twentieth floor, where one of the rooms was named in honor of Olga Johann, a longtime Law and Justice Warsaw councilor and activist who

died in 2006. One of Olga Johann's personal passions was the decommunization of streets and monuments. She campaigned for decommunization as a member of the Municipal Commission for Street Names, which met regularly—of course, in the Palace of Culture, in the council offices on the twentieth floor.

I have already remarked in this epilogue on the Palace's own seeming immunity to decommunization. On November 14, 2017, just two weeks after Piotr Szczęsny's death—and several days after sixty thousand nationalists and neofascists marched through Warsaw to mark Polish Independence Day, carrying racist banners and chanting obscene slogans—a curious series of events unfolded. Minister of Culture and Deputy Prime Minister Piotr Gliński—who back in 2016 had said that the Palace of Culture will not be subjected to any sort of destruction and decommunization—appeared to change his mind. Asked by a journalist whether the Palace of Culture could be destroyed on the occasion of the centenary of Polish independence forthcoming in November 2018, Gliński replied:

> I wouldn't have anything against this myself. But we would have to put something sensible up in its place, as soon as possible, because this hole in the city stands empty, because somehow the stewards of the city are incapable of making good decisions.

The following day, another deputy prime minister, Finance Minister Marek Morawiecki, joined in even more enthusiastically:

> I am absolutely for this, that this relic of communist domination would disappear from the center of Warsaw. I think that over the course of a couple of years on its place new houses and buildings would appear . . . I have been dreaming of this for forty years.

One day later, the deputy minister of Defense, Bartosz Kownacki, declared—also in a radio interview—that the Polish army would be up to the task of destroying the Palace "without a doubt":

> I think this would be a cool [fajne] training exercise for our soldiers. . . . It would be a cool present to us all after the return of independence.

Echoing his ministerial colleagues, Kownacki was quick to refer to potential real estate investments that would replace the Palace:

> There would be room for several skyscrapers there, very interesting architecturally, and there could also be higher education institutions, and state institutions and theatres—there wouldn't be a problem—and a series of offices and other things.

Just as it appeared that a remarkable momentum was building and that the common wisdom—that pulling the Palace down would be foolish—had been challenged, Deputy Prime Minister Gliński boomeranged back to his previous position and claimed that the entire conversation had been a media manipulation. On November 20, during a press conference at the Ministry of Culture, Gliński said:

> *Ok, let's finish this whole Palace thing. I would like to propose moving this entire discussion into the realm of jokes.*

Perhaps "this whole Palace thing" was really nothing but a joke; perhaps, as some commentators suggested, it was a classic red herring, a spin doctored attempt to distract attention from negative coverage of violence and racist slogans at the 2017 Independence Day march. Or perhaps, as others—including the Razem Party's Andrzej Zandberg—have implied, it indicates that Law and Justice is just as interested in lobbying for the interests of real estate developers as was Civic Platform.

Perhaps, in fact, this "whole Palace thing" would not have gathered momentum had Piotr Szczęsny's self-immolation not imbued the terrain of the Palace and Parade Square with a new tragic, agonistic energy. Whichever course "this whole Palace thing" will take, the remarkable events of autumn 2017 have done a great deal to consolidate the transformation of the Palace of Culture and the area around it into an arena for contestation of the reigning political order. Protesters continue to gather regularly on the spot of Piotr Szczęsny's self-immolation and at vigils to commemorate his death in cities and towns throughout Poland. It is not yet clear to whose benefit the martyrdom of the ordinary, gray person will be spun and exploited. Much will depend on how the volatile political terrain of Law and Justice-era Poland will settle and unsettle. However, more than ever before, the still-socialist Palace has become an active symbol and a tool of protest—not only for the late capitalist city but now for the entire leftless country.

Notes

1. Kaczyński's usage derives from analysis by influential Polish political sociologist Jadwiga Staniszkis, published in English as *Postcommunism: The Emerging Enigma* (Staniszkis 1999).

2. "Good change," or "*Dobra Zmiana*" in Polish, was the official election slogan of Law and Justice in the run-up to the November 2015 elections, which they won. Its lawmakers

have continued using the slogan as a sound bite marking their regime's radical program—much like Trump's "Make America Great Again" or Brexit's "Take Back Control."

3. For an ethnographic and art historical analysis of the Royal Castle's role in the ideological landscape of twentieth-century Poland, see Klekot (2012).

4. PPS was incorporated into the Polish United Workers' Party in 1949.

5. See, for example, Dubiński (2016).

6. The United Left Alliance won 7 percent of the vote as the dominant segment of a United Left coalition; a multiparty coalition, however, is required to pass an 8 percent threshold to win parliamentary representation.

7. According to one polling organization, 44 percent had a positive view of PRL in 2000, 2009, and 2014; a negative view was held by 47 percent, 43 percent, and 46 percent (Boguszewski 2014). According to another, the positive score was 38 percent in 2014 and 35 percent in 2014; the negative score was 37 percent in 2014 and 43 percent in 2016 (Krassowska 2016). The continued sympathy for PRL differs markedly from the number of respondents declaring left-wing political opinions: 14 percent in 2015 (against 31% right-wingers), down from a high of 32 percent in 2001, against 21 percent right-wingers (Kazanecki 2015).

8. Many thanks to Ewa Majewska for initiating and relaying this discussion to me.

9. In fact, the greatest enthusiasm for the Palace was among the oldest and youngest groups. Among fifteen- to twenty-five-year-olds, 66 percent of respondents had a positive disposition to the Palace, and 12 percent had a negative disposition; among twenty-six- to forty-year-olds, the figures were 64 percent positive, 16 percent negative; among forty-one- to sixty-year-olds, 59 percent were positive, 19 percent negative; among those aged sixty-one or more, 63 percent were positive, 13 percent negative.

APPENDIX

Palaceological Survey: Summary of Results

Total number of respondents: 5,281.

Responses are summarized below by respondent numbers rather than by percentages. The percentages referred to in the body of the book exclude unfinished or blank responses. Please note that some figures in the book are broken down by demographic category, which the summary below does not account for (for example, 45% of current Warsaw dwellers have a view of the Palace from their windows but only 41% of all respondents).

Category 1: The Palace of Culture

1. In your opinion, which of the below functions as the most recognizable and most important "symbol" of Warsaw?

The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier	42
The Warsaw Mermaid	647
The Central Railway Station	32
The Palace of Culture	3,328
The Royal Castle	359
The Presidential Palace	25
The De Gaulle Roundabout Palm Tree	11
The "Fighting Warsaw" symbol	32
The Pekao Bank Rotunda	7
The National/Tenth-Anniversary Stadium	17
The Temple of Divine Providence	2
The Warsaw University Library	5
The Yellow and Red Flag	0
The Ghetto Heroes' Statue	3
Stefan Starzyński	15
Wars and Sawa	8
King Zygmunt's Column	599
I don't know	10
Other (please specify)	40
No answer	107
Unfinished	1

2. Below are a number of statements about Warsaw. Please indicate which you agree with and which you don't.

    (a) The Palace of Culture exerts an impact on Warsaw.

I strongly agree	2,158
I mostly agree	1,658

I mostly disagree	531
I strongly disagree	234
I don't know/hard to say	364
No answer	308
Unfinished	1

(b) Warsaw needs a building taller than the Palace of Culture.

I strongly agree	1,271
I mostly agree	717
I mostly disagree	1,045
I strongly disagree	1,085
Don't know/hard to say	734
No answer	431
Unfinished	1

(c) The Palace of Culture suits Warsaw.

I strongly agree	2,158
I mostly agree	1,685
I mostly disagree	531
I strongly disagree	234
Don't know/hard to say	364
No answer	308
Unfinished	1

3. Please indicate those aspects of urban life in which, according to you, the impact of the Palace of Culture can be noticed.

Architecture	2,758
Planning	2,572
Urban Culture	2,268
Literature	667
Art	1,435
Film	1,742
Fashion	132
Politics	705
Urban psychology or mentality	1,918
Other (please specify)	343

4. Do you think that the impact exerted by the Palace of Culture on Warsaw is primarily positive or negative?

Strongly positive	901
Mostly positive	1,077
Simultaneously positive and negative	1,156
Mostly negative	271
Strongly negative	337
Other (please specify)	18
No answer	83
Unfinished	1,438

5. If you were responsible for destroying all but one of the Warsaw buildings below, which one would survive?

The buildings on the Old Town Market Square	1,042
The Royal Castle	1,677
The Central Railway Station	78
The Pekao Bank Rotunda	29
The Palace of Culture and Science	672
The Warsaw Citadel	131
Supersam (no longer standing)	41
The Cathedral of St. John	235
The Presidential Palace	118
The Praga Roundhouse (no longer standing)	23
The Warsaw University Library	277
The old Central Committee HQ	20
Other (please specify)	116
Don't know/hard to say	484
No answer	337
Unfinished	1

6. How would you characterise your attitude toward the Palace of Culture?

Very positive	1,328
Mostly positive	1,462
Simultaneously positive and negative	583
Neither positive nor negative	313
Mostly negative	287
Strongly negative	406
Don't know/hard to say	10
No answer	105
Unfinished	787

7. Below are several statements about the Palace of Culture. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of them.

    (a) The Palace of Culture should be destroyed.

Strongly agree	541
Mostly agree	207
Mostly disagree	333
Strongly disagree	3,155
Don't know/hard to say	65
No answer	193
Unfinished	787

    (b) The Palace of Culture should not function as an advertising billboard.

Strongly agree	2,338
Mostly agree	933
Mostly disagree	401
Strongly disagree	430
Don't know/hard to say	143

No answer	249
Unfinished	787

(c) The facade of the Palace of Culture is a good place to hang noncommercial hoardings relating to important anniversaries and other events.

Strongly agree	1,032
Mostly agree	1,617
Mostly disagree	671
Strongly disagree	744
Don't know/hard to say	173
No answer	263
Unfinished	787

(d) The Palace of Culture is an extraordinary building.

Strongly agree	1,245
Mostly agree	1,557
Mostly disagree	510
Strongly disagree	517
Don't know/hard to say	399
No answer	266
Unfinished	787

(e) The Palace of Culture should NOT have been listed in the register of historical monuments.

Strongly agree	735
Mostly agree	365
Mostly disagree	782
Strongly disagree	2,084
Don't know/hard to say	298
No answer	230
Unfinished	787

(f) The Millennium Clock changed the character of the Palace of Culture.

Strongly agree	704
Mostly agree	1,106
Mostly disagree	879
Strongly disagree	508
Don't know/hard to say	980
No answer	317
Unfinished	787

8. How did the Millennium Clock change the character of the Palace of Culture?

Written answers	474

9. Why do you think the Palace of Culture is an extraordinary building?

Written answers	1,803

10. Why do you think the Palace of Culture is NOT an extraordinary building?

Written answers	621

11. Below is a list of several important municipal or national anniversaries and other events. Please indicate which of the named anniversaries and events should and which should not be announced on hoardings on the facade of the Palace of Culture.

   (a) The outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising on August 1, 1944.
Should	2,051
Should not	496
No answer	269
Unfinished	2,465

   (b) Christmas.
Should	940
Should not	1,433
No answer	443
Unfinished	2,465

   (c) The anniversary of the Smolensk catastrophe on April 10, 2010.
Should	321
Should not	2,026
No answer	469
Unfinished	2,465

   (d) The anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War on September 1, 1939.
Should	1,770
Should not	672
No answer	374
Unfinished	2,465

   (e) The Frederic Chopin year (the 2010 bicentenary of Chopin's birth in 1810).
Should	2,233
Should not	286
No answer	297
Unfinished	2,465

   (f) The anniversary of the Soviet Union's invasion of Poland on September 17, 1939.
Should	921
Should not	1,374
No answer	521
Unfinished	2,465

   (g) The Euro 2012 football championships.
Should	2,087
Should not	422
No answer	307
Unfinished	2,465

   (h) The anniversary of the free elections on June 4, 1989.
Should	1,631
Should not	760

No answer 425
Unfinished 2,465

(i) International Women's Day, March 8.
Should 839
Should not 1,467
No answer 510
Unfinished 2,465

12. According to you, is the Palace of Culture a beautiful (*ładny*) building?
Very beautiful 422
Quite beautiful 735
Simultaneously beautiful and ugly 1,933
Quite ugly 584
Very ugly 591
Don't know/hard to say 86
No answer 143
Unfinished 787

13. How would you characterize the Palace of Culture's architectural style?
Written answers 3,131

14. According to you, is the Palace's architectural style above all "Polish" or above all "alien"?
Above all "Polish" 561
Above all "alien" 2,166
Don't know/hard to say 1,479
No answer 288
Unfinished 787

15. With which of the below architectural styles do you most associate the Palace of Culture?
Art Deco 148
Baroque 41
Empire 187
Gothic 111
Classicism 107
Modernism 112
Renaissance 39
Socialist Realism 3174
Other (please specify) 118
No answer 457
Unfinished 787

16. With which other buildings do you most associate the Palace of Culture?
Written answers 2,903

17. Various "ideas for the Palace" (proposals for what to do with the Palace) regularly appear in the media. In your opinion, is the Palace of Culture in need

of alteration? This question refers to the building of the Palace of Culture itself, not to the development plans for Parade Square.

The Palace should remain as it is	2,478
The Palace needs changes	1,494
Don't know/hard to say	250
No answer	272
Unfinished	787

18. If you've heard about them, please indicate which of the below "ideas for the Palace" appeal to you and which don't.

(a) Czesław Bielecki's Museum of Communism.

I like it	498
It's OK	799
I don't like it	1,481
I don't know it	1,226
No answer	490
Unfinished	787

(b) Covering the Palace with ivy.

I like it	416
It's OK	579
I don't like it	2,312
I don't know it	722
No answer	465
Unfinished	787

(c) Painting the Palace pink or another bright color.

I like it	141
It's OK	215
I don't like it	3,283
I don't know it	388
No answer	467
Unfinished	787

(d) Mariusz Adamiak's Palace of Artists, with a trumpet replacing the spire.

I like it	130
It's OK	243
I don't like it	2,468
I don't know it	1,159
No answer	494
Unfinished	787

(e) Enclosing the Palace in a glass pyramid.

I like it	206
It's OK	303
I don't like it	2,825
I don't know it	680
No answer	480
Unfinished	787

(f) Removing decorative elements from the Palaces (attics, columns, spires, etc.).

I like it	158
It's OK	230
I don't like it	3,024
I don't know it	563
No answer	519
Unfinished	787

(g) Leaving the Palace as a freestanding tower without its side wings (the theaters, the Palace of Youth, Museum of Technology, etc.).

I like it	153
It's OK	273
I don't like it	3,117
I don't know it	457
No answer	494
Unfinished	787

(h) Developing the four side towers with restaurants connected by glass walkways.

I like it	496
It's OK	1,099
I don't like it	1,627
I don't know it	790
No answer	482
Unfinished	787

(i) Covering the Palace with glass panels.

I like it	498
It's OK	799
I don't like it	1,481
I don't know it	1,226
No answer	490
Unfinished	787

19. Have you heard about any other "ideas for the Palace"? Which do you consider to be the best and worst? This question refers to the building of the Palace itself rather than to development plans for Parade Square.

Yes	460
No	2,458
I don't know/hard to say	833
No answer	743
Unfinished	787

20. Have you ever developed your own "idea for the Palace"? This question refers to the building of the Palace itself rather than to development plans for Parade Square. If so, please summarize your idea.

Yes	853
No	2,844

No answer	797
Unfinished	787

21. Do you think that there are too many or too few "ideas for the Palace"? This question refers to the building of the Palace itself rather than to development plans for Parade Square.

Much too many	1,281
Rather too many	858
Rather too few	788
Much too few	285
Don't know/hard to say	873
No answer	409
Unfinished	787

22. Do you know any legends associated with the Palace of Culture? If so, please describe your favorite legend.

I know many legends	62
I know several legends	1,123
I don't know any legends	2,363
I don't know/hard to say	472
No answer	474
Unfinished	787

Category 2: Parade Square

23. According to you, during which period did Parade Square function best?

1955–1989	965
1989–2000	91
2000–2010	363
Other (please specify)	143
Never	1,222
Don't know/hard to say	1,119
No answer	161
Unfinished	1,217

24. According to you, what should Parade Square look like?

Written answers	2,522

25. Below are several statements about Parade Square. Please indicate to what extent you agree or don't agree with each of them.

(a) Parade Square currently functions as the center of Warsaw.

Strongly agree	693
Mostly agree	898
Mostly disagree	1,148
Strongly disagree	962
I don't know/hard to say	103
No answer	260
Unfinished	1,217

(b) Parade Square ought to function as the center of Warsaw.

Strongly agree	1,945
Mostly agree	1,317
Mostly disagree	272
Strongly disagree	162
I don't know/hard to say	150
No answer	218
Unfinished	1,217

(c) It's a good thing that the trade halls have been removed from Parade Square (Uniwersal in 2005, MarcPol in 2008, KDT in 2009).

Strongly agree	3,528
Mostly agree	210
Mostly disagree	50
Strongly disagree	65
I don't know/hard to say	47
No answer	165
Unfinished	1,217

26. What is your assessment of the 2010 local development plan for Parade Square, currently awaiting ratification by the City Council?

Very positive	165
Quite positive	738
Quite negative	423
Very negative	210
I don't know this plan	2,177
Don't know/hard to say	149
No answer	202
Unfinished	1,217

27. Please indicate how you assess each of the Parade Square development plans below.

(a) Skopiński and Biełyszew's winning competition design from 1992 (the "circular boulevard").

I like it	249
It's OK	449
I don't like it	638
I don't know it	2,138
No answer	590
Unfinished	1,217

(b) Former chief architect Michał Borowski's plan from 2003 through 2006 (low-rise construction). The current [October 2010] binding plan.

I like it	292
It's OK	762
I don't like it	884
I don't know it	1,558
No answer	568
Unfinished	1,217

(c) The updated version of Skopiński and Biełyszew's plan from 2008.

I like it	307
It's OK	447
I don't like it	1,096
I don't know it	1,648
No answer	566
Unfinished	1,217

(d) The Forum for the Development of Warsaw plan from 2008 through 2010.

I like it	404
It's OK	382
I don't like it	311
I don't know it	2,364
No answer	603
Unfinished	1,217

28. Have you ever made use of the market that was located on Parade Square until 2001 or of one of the trade halls (MarcPol, Uniwersal, KDT) that replaced the market?

Often	158
From time to time	673
Rarely	1,886
Never	1,145
Don't know/hard to say	21
No answer	181
Unfinished	1,217

29. What is your assessment of the design for the Museum of Modern Art (the first significant structure that is to be built on Parade Square before 2014)?

Very positive	486
Quite positive	1,295
Quite negative	687
Very negative	376
I don't know this design	717
Don't know/hard to say	301
No answer	202
Unfinished	1,217

30. Please summarize the reasons for which you assess the Museum of Modern Art design positively.

Written answers	1,084

31. Please summarise the reasons for which you assess the Museum of Modern Art design negatively.

Written answers	841

32. The results of the first architectural competition for Parade Square were announced in 1992. Since then, none of the projects announced for Parade

Square have been realized. Why, according to you, are the preparations for developing Parade Square lasting so long?

Lack of ideas	175
Administrators' incompetence	1,382
Legal problems	218
Lack of political imagination	359
Too much discussion	774
Restitution claims from prewar owners	176
Speculators' activities	55
Lack of necessary infrastructure	37
A curse	63
The resistance of the Palace itself	91
Another factor (please specify)	242
I don't know/hard to say	259
No answer	233
Unfinished	1,217

33. Do you think that the fact that Parade Square has remained undeveloped for so long constitutes a fundamental problem for Warsaw?

Fundamental problem	447
One of many problems	2,534
Insignificant problem	639
No problem	220
Don't know/hard to say	13
No answer	211
Unfinished	1,217

34. What should Parade Square be called?

Parade Square (Plac Defilad)	2,291
Central Square (Plac Centralny)	356
Chopin Square (Plac Chopina)	122
Captain Pilecki Square (Plac Rotmistrza Pileckiego)	52
Stalin Square (Plac Stalina)	15
Warsaw Square (Plac Warszawy)	214
Palace of Culture Square (Plac Pałacu Kultury)	141
Freedom Square (Plac Wolności)	263
Other (please specify)	146
Don't know/hard to say	246
No answer	218
Unfinished	1,217

Category 3: Respondents' Experiences of The Palace and Square

35. Do you have a view onto Parade Square from your place of work or residence?

Yes	1,524
No	2,234

Don't know/hard to say	31
No answer	107
Unfinished	1,385

36. According to you, from which side is the main entrance to the Palace of Culture and Science?

From Ulica Świętokrzyska	73
From Ulica Marszałkowska	3,090
From Aleje Jerozolimskie	301
From Ulica Emilii Plater	139
Don't know/hard to say	193
No answer	100
Unfinished	1,385

37. How often do you frequent the Palace of Culture and Parade Square?

(a) The Palace of Culture.

Every day or several times per week	103
At least once per week	164
At least once per month	487
Several times per year	1,417
Once a year or rarely	1,166
Never	93
I used to visit the Palace regularly but no longer	287
I don't know/hard to say	60
No answer	119
Unfinished	1,385

(b) Parade Square.

Every day or several times per week	411
At least once per week	622
At least once per month	935
Several times per year	1,047
Once a year or rarely	237
Never	21
I used to visit the Palace regularly but no longer	152
I don't know/hard to say	30
No answer	441
Unfinished	1,385

38. Which parts of the Palace of Culture have you ever visited?

Viewing terrace on the thirtieth floor	3,169
Congress Hall	2,978
Main Hall (entrance from Marszałkowska)	3,074
Klub Mirage (formerly Quo Vadis)	661
Klub 55 (formerly Jazzgot)	644
Kinoteka (formerly Przyjaźń, etc.)	3,098
Teatr Dramatyczny	2,173
Cafe Kulturalna	1,071

Galeria Studio	336
Teatr Lalka (Puppet Theatre)	1,302
Palace of Youth	1,694
Palace of Youth swimming pool	1,068
Museum of Evolution	993
Museum of Technology	2,741
Concert Hall (currently the Żebrowski theatre)	489
Exhibition halls on floors two, four, and six	1,223
Museum of Children's Books	82
Warsaw City Hall sessions on floor four	194
Municipal offices in the Palace tower	408
ZPKiN offices in the Palace tower	135
Private or municipal offices in the tower	472
Collegium Civitas	365
Wszechnica Polska (continuing education institute)	143
Directorate of the Polish Academy of Sciences	378
Side towers (ramparts) on fifteenth floor	84
Cellars	276
Technical floors	119
Current Trokja restaurant	138
Former Trojka restaurant	415
Former Polish Academy of Sciences Library	234
Former Warsaw University Mathematics Faculty	177
Former Polish Academy of Sciences Bookshop	371
Other (please specify)	156

39. Which municipal offices located in the Palace have you visited?

Municipal Architecture Bureau	245
European Funding Bureau	59
Bureau of Ownership Supervision	24
Bureau of City Promotion	162
Bureau of the City Council	135
Bureau of the Historical Monuments Conservator	61
Other (please specify)	22

40. Please indicate which activities you have carried out during your visits to the Palace of Culture.

Study	474
Paid work	464
Volunteering	154
Going to concerts	2,411
Going to the theatre	2,524
Going to the cinema	3,092
Going to professional or commercial exhibitions	2,555
(e.g., the Warsaw Book Fair)	
Going to art exhibitions	1,236
Going to classes at the Palace of Youth	1,054

Going to restaurants or bars	1,392
Going to a museum	2,414
Other education or sports activities	802
Visiting the viewing terrace	2,841
Attending to affairs at a municipal or other office	558
Other (please specify)	258

41. Please indicate all the activities that you carry out or have carried out during visits to Parade Square.

Public transport (changing from metro to tram, etc.)	3,178
Car parking	1,902
Shopping or trade in KDT	1,935
Shopping or trade in MarcPol	1,502
Shopping or trade in the old Parade Square market	1,422
Sport in the open air (please specify)	346
Other open-air social events (please specify)	1,110
Recreational visits in Świętokrzyski Park	1,720
Photography, urban tourism (please specify)	757
Participation in mass events	1,907
(e.g., festival, New Year's party, mass; please specify)	
Food and recreation (in a bar or kebab van)	1,196
Other	147

42. Several activities connected to the Palace of Culture are described below. Indicate those you engage in or have engaged in. Please add supplementary comments if necessary.

I have painted or drawn the Palace	990
(privately or as part of a class or organised activity)	
I have built a model of the Palace	753
(from building blocks ore other materials)	
I have assembled a Palace-related collection	213
(of postcards, stamps, or other objects)	

43. Please indicate those statements below that refer to your experiences. You can fill in your answer with further details if necessary.

I have childhood memories associated with PKiN	2,533
I have childhood memories . . . Parade Square	1,637

Category 4: Demographic Questions

44. Respondent's gender.

Female	1,374
Male	2,341
No answer	136
Unfinished	1,430

45. Which year were you born in?

Minimum	1920

First quarter	1968
Median	1978
Third quarter	1984
Minimum	2000

46. What is your level of education?

Incomplete primary	0
Primary	3
Middle school (*gimnzajum*)	44
Basic vocational	14
Incomplete secondary	23
Secondary general	325
Secondary vocational	137
Postsecondary	199
Incomplete higher	372
Higher licentiate or engineer's qualification	433
Higher *magister* (master's) or equivalent	1,729
PhD or equivalent	460
Other (please specify)	40
No answer	72
Unfinished	1,430

47. Please specify your current life situation.

I work	3,028
I study	764
I am retired	209
I am unemployed	70
I am a home keeper	145
I don't work	64
Other	95

48. In which discipline do you study?

Life sciences	131
History of art or similar	18
Other humanities	322
Health sciences	13
Architecture or similar	52
Other technical studies	78
Fine art	16
Another discipline	115
No answer	19
Unfinished	4,517

49. What kind of work do you carry out, and what is your professional position?

High-level managerial	116
Middle-level managerial	481
Highly qualified specialist	1,638

Uniformed personnel	14
Administrative or office work	485
Trade or service personnel	102
Line management or manual laborer	9
Qualified laborer	18
Unqualified or agricultural labourer	0
I have never worked	0
Another kind of work	105
No answer	62
Unfinished	2,253

50. Were you born in Warsaw?

Yes	2,156
No	1,600
Don't know/hard to say	11
No answer	84
Unfinished	1,430

51. Which city district were you born in?

Bemowo	47
Białołęka	10
Bielany	115
Mokotów	396
Ochota	133
Praga South	194
Praga North	154
Rembertów	9
Śródmieście (City Middle)	521
Targówek	48
Ursus	17
Ursynów	50
Wawer	32
Wesoła	0
Wilanów	7
Włochy	22
Wola	242
Żoliborz	117
Another district	19
No answer	23
Unfinished	3,125

52. Do you currently live in Warsaw?

Yes	3,108
No	611
Don't know/hard to say (please specify)	42
No answer	90
Unfinished	1,430

53. Which district do you currently live in?

Bemowo	177
Białołęka	155
Bielany	159
Mokotów	444
Ochota	194
Praga South	307
Praga North	111
Rembertów	24
Śródmieście (City Middle)	338
Targówek	131
Ursus	72
Ursynów	369
Wawer	67
Wesoła	30
Wilanów	52
Włochy	61
Wola	236
Żoliborz	138
Another district	16
No answer	27
Unfinished	2,173

54. Do you regularly read a newspaper (at least once a week), either in printed form or online?

Yes	3,594
No	157
No answer	100
Unfinished	1,430

55. Which of the newspapers below do you read regularly (at least once a week)?

Gazeta Wyborcza	3,256
Fakt	99
Super Express	93
Metro	815
Dziennik Gazeta Prawna	651
Rzeczpospolita	1,133
Życie Warszawy	590
Przegląd Sportowy	141
Echo Miasta	227
Another newspaper (please specify)	522
Don't know/hard to say	16

56. Below are several statements concerning your interests. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or do not agree with each of them.

  (a) I am interested in the history and contemporary life of Warsaw (so-called *Varsaviana*).

Strongly agree	1,212
Mostly agree	1,483
Mostly disagree	617
Strongly disagree	200
Don't know/hard to say	184
No answer	155
Unfinished	1,430

(b) I am interested in architecture and urban space.

Strongly agree	1,283
Mostly agree	1,627
Mostly disagree	486
Strongly disagree	136
Don't know/hard to say	165
No answer	154
Unfinished	1,430

(c) I participate in cultural events (exhibitions, theater shows, film screenings, etc.).

Strongly agree	1,221
Mostly agree	1,756
Mostly disagree	459
Strongly disagree	101
Don't know/hard to say	152
No answer	162
Unfinished	1,430

57. Please indicate which of the below categories pertain to your use of the internet.

I use the internet daily	3,784
I regularly visit the website or blog of the Warsaw in Construction design festival	197
I have a Facebook profile	1,826

58. Which of the below options best describes your political views?

Very right-wing	49
Right-wing	454
Centrist	1,675
Left-wing	796
Very left-wing	106
Other (please specify)	320
No answer	426
Unfinished	1,426

58. How would you characterize your attitude toward the period of the Polish People's Republic (PRL)?

Very positive	25
Mostly positive	166
Simultaneously positive and negative	1,398

Mostly negative	974
Very negative	859
Other (please specify)	62
Don't know/hard to say	218
No answer	124
Unfinished	1,455

59. How would you characterize your attitude toward the changes that have occurred and are occurring in Poland since 1989?

Very positive	970
Mostly positive	1,419
Simultaneously positive and negative	1,153
Mostly negative	96
Very negative	33
Other (please specify)	14
Don't know/hard to say	31
No answer	110
Unfinished	1,455

60. According to you, which of the following postwar periods was the best for Warsaw in terms of the city's development?

1945–1949	183
1949–1956	180
1956–1970	147
1970–1980	152
1980–1989	14
1989–2000	197
2000–2010	1,762
Another period (please specify)	156
Don't know/hard to say	894
No answer	141
Unfinished	1,455

61. How do you assess the Warsaw mayoralty of Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz?[1]

Very positively	681
Mostly positively	1,581
Simultaneously positively and negatively	733
Mostly negatively	360
Very negatively	169
Other (please specify)	14
Don't know/hard to say	156
No answer	132
Unfinished	1,455

62. Elections for mayor of Warsaw are to be held on November 21, 2010. Which candidate do you plan to vote for?

Czesław Bielecki	151
Danuta Bodzek	6

Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz	1,966
Janusz Korwin-Mikke	163
Katarzyna Munio	66
Wojciech Olejniczak	308
Piotr Strembosz	6
Romuald Szeremetiew	12
Another candidate (please specify)	53
Don't know/hard to say	605
No answer	490
Unfinished	1,455

63. Do you take part in religious services?

Yes, several times per week	56
Yes, once per week	453
Yes, once or twice per month	272
Yes, several times per year	1,013
No, I do not take part in religious services	1,732
I don't know/hard to say	30
No answer	270
Unfinished	1,455

64. Independently of your participation in religious services, do you consider yourself to be a person of faith?

Devout believer	150
Believer	1,071
Mostly a believer	786
Not a believer	1,059
Don't know/hard to say	381
Other (please specify)	109
No answer	270
Unfinished	1,455

Note

1. These figures have dropped sharply during Gronkiewicz-Waltz's second term in office. Current polls put her approval ratings at about 30 percent (Bartoszewicz 2013).

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