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Abstract

“Imagination Under Supervision. The History of Selected World War II Memorials in Częstochowa from Years: 1945-1989”.

Places directly connected with the events of the Second World War, which were properly commemorated after the war had ended, and then remained under the care of local authorities and residents, had and continue to have an important role not only in the process of historical education but also in the collective memory of next generations of Poles. The long list of victims and losses suffered by the citizens of Częstochowa in the second of global conflicts grew continuously from the outbreak of the war until gunfight between German formations and the first Soviet troops attacking from the East stopped on the streets of the city. Short but fierce fights in this area between Polish soldiers and the overwhelming forces of the enemy were fought in September 1939, after which the planned process of extermination of the Polish and Jewish nations inhabiting these territories carried out by the German occupier began. The occupier was stopped only in the face of a total military defeat of The Third Reich, which was approaching the Spiritual Capital of Poland along with the rumble of the tracks of the Soviet combat vehicles. The mentioned events made the symbolic forms of commemorating these tragic events inseparable parts of the historical landscape of Częstochowa. It would not be possible, however, if not for the initiatives aimed at providing appropriate care for places connected with the history of Częstochowa and its citizens which were imposed both from the top-down by the state authorities and from the bottom-up by local communities. Their implementation was carried out through various architectural forms, amongst which there were impressive monuments as well as slightly more modest memorial plaques, crosses, and commemorated burial places. Thanks to them it was much easier for the citizens of Częstochowa to honour the memory of the tragic events among next generations. Various forms of secular anniversary ceremonies that have taken place in these places for over several decades, consisting of solemn appeals, hourly bugle-calls, or oaths have engaged almost all social and professional groups in Częstochowa in a more or less voluntary manner. We must not forget that the years in which works on architectural forms commemorating the events of the Second World War were commenced in Częstochowa were characterised not only by strong emotions contained in the vast majority of erected monuments. Some of the described objects were better or worse camouflaged forms of propaganda presenting ideological content, which, according

to people who ordered them from the authors, were to fulfil specific agitation functions amongst the local community. In practice, it consisted in creating and then consolidating an official, largely simplified communist vision of history. One of the main goals of the official state propaganda of the Polish People's Republic was to emphasize the merits of only the Soviet soldiers who during the Second World War pushed the Nazi occupiers out of Poland. Almost simultaneously, there were attempts to remind everyone of losses and suffering suffered by the Polish nation during the German occupation, which officially ended only by the victorious Soviet offensive. At the same time, it was forbidden to raise the matter of losses suffered by Poland and Poles due to not less destructive activity of the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the intrusive way in which the propaganda emphasized the participation and support of military actions on the Eastern Front by Polish troops established under the Soviet auspices was politically desirable. The idea of the brothers-in-arms established between the Poles and the Soviets on the battlefields of World War II evolved after the war into a friendship between the Polish People's Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. This fact was strongly emphasized by the propaganda of the new Polish authorities of communist origins. Polish communists who joined the fight for power in post-war Poland could count on both political and military support from Joseph Stalin and other Soviet leaders. Thus, it should not be of any surprise that they were often the initiators for erecting monuments, which were called "the monuments of gratitude" to the Red Army.

The national campaign to build "monuments of gratitude" covered Częstochowa as well. The significant role of the Jasna Góra monastery in the history of Poland and the development of Polish patriotism resulted in the fact that it was often referred to as the Spiritual Capital of Poland. This fact, combined with an internationally renowned centre of Marian cult that has centuries-old tradition, which is the destination for many pilgrimages, certainly did not make the work easy for local communist activists and their associates responsible for practical implementation of top-down propaganda guidelines. However, both younger and older citizens of Częstochowa were gradually forced to take a more or less active part in celebrations organized by local authorities based on the idea of close cooperation with the power nation hostile to religion. The extent of ideological defeat suffered by the communist propaganda, including coordinators of numerous parades, assemblies, and hourly bugle-calls was later evidenced by crowds of Częstochowa citizens who welcomed the Polish Pope, John Paul II, spontaneously and who listened to his teachings during papal pilgrimages to Jasna Góra. Nevertheless, we must not forget that apart from monuments devoted to the Soviet soldiers, favoured by the state authorities, places sanctified by the blood of

compatriots, such as places of execution of civilians or the graves of the soldiers who died in the September campaign were commemorated and cared for by the city authorities and local citizens until 1989.

Considerations that have been undertaken in this dissertation are an attempt to find answers to a number of the below research questions, namely:

1. How did the communist authorities try to use the presence of "gratitude monuments" for the Red Army in Częstochowa for propaganda purposes to counteract the influence of the centre of the religious cult at Jasna Góra?
2. Was the relationship between church and state authorities uniform in the context of commemorating the events of the Second World War in the city?
3. How were monuments and commemorated places used for purposes connected with the promotion of the city during the period of the Polish People's Republic?
4. What were the forms of citizens' opposition to erecting the monuments?
5. Was there any content connected with the Częstochowa memorials of the Second World War present in the process of educating children and adolescents in local educational institutions?

Source materials in the form of documents, drawings and photographs necessary in the process of drawing up this dissertation were provided by the results of inquiries in the following national archives:

- Archives of New Files in Warsaw
- State Archives in Częstochowa
- State Archives in Katowice
- State Archives in Kielce
- Archives of the City Hall in Częstochowa
- Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance.

Moreover, in the course of works, it was possible to reach to interesting and so far little-known archival materials in the form of documents and maps concerning the newest history of Częstochowa, published on the Internet by the Central Archives of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation (Russian: ЦАМО). The archival materials are supplemented by the memories of the citizens of Częstochowa, eyewitnesses of the described events, which were collected and recorded by the author and which important fragments were used in the text. What is more, numerous reproductions of photographs and drawings published in the local press were used as illustrative material for the articles, the citations of which were also used as written sources during

the deliberations concerning the subject matter of this dissertation. The importance of this dissertation can also be seen in the fact that the author used his collections as source materials, including postcards, medals, match labels, and postage stamps.

Political transformation in Poland after 1989 resulted in the fact that some of the objects lost their privileged status, and then they were permanently erased from the Częstochowa landscape through their demolition. That is why, there was an urgent need to write a new study, dedicated to a selected fragment of the history of Częstochowa in the period of the Polish People's Republic based on an extensive scientific apparatus, including the latest research results from many related fields. This dissertation may significantly facilitate the implementation of the above-mentioned postulate, contributing to the popularization of the rich history of Częstochowa. Its text layer, as well as carefully selected illustrative layer accompanying the author's narrative, may also turn out to be a valuable source of information for historians, regionalists as well as teachers, students, and pupils, thanks to which it will significantly facilitate the process of historical education of a young generation.

Keywords: Częstochowa, PRL, medal, medallion art, propaganda, soviet army.
monument, tank, socialist realism, postcards, Second World War.