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Modernity and Compromise: The Church of St. Michael the Archangel in Warsaw and its Designer Władysław Pieńkowski*

Polish church architecture in the period of the People's Republic of Poland (PRL) still awaits a synthetic representation that would be comparable to Filip Burno's monograph relating to the inter-war period.¹ Churches dating from the first two decades of PRL have aroused the least interest among scholars specialising in contemporary church architecture in Poland.² Few churches were built from 1945 to the mid- 1960s.³ Attempts were made to document new structures at the time of their construction;⁴ but the main object of scholarly interest were churches being reconstructed from ruins at that time, as well as surviving objects of historical

* "I would like to express my gratitude to Kinga Pieńkowska-Owsińska M.Arch. for her kindness, for the long hours we spent on invaluable conversations, and for allowing me access to her father's archive; also to Dr. Marek Czapelski for his help and discerning comments.

1 F. Burno, *Świątynie nowego państwa. Kościoły rzymskokatolickie II Rzeczypospolitej* [Temples of a new state. Roman Catholic churches in the Second Republic], Warsaw, 2012.

2 The research by Cezary Wąs constitutes an exception; e.g. C. Wąs, "Budownictwo kościołów w Polsce po II wojnie światowej. Próba syntezy uwarunkowań politycznych" [Church construction in Poland after the Second World War. Conjectural synthesis of political conditions], *Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka*, 2005, 3, pp. 365–386. Among the newest works on the topic of church construction in the beginnings of the People's Republic of Poland is the study on the rebuilding of churches in the Archdiocese of Szczecin-Kamień: J. Gierlasiński, *Organizacja struktur kościoła katolickiego na terenie obecnej archidiecezji szczecińsko-kamieńskiej w latach 1945–1989. Problematyka odbudowy obiektów sakralnych ze zniszczeń wojennych i powojennych* [Organisation of Catholic Church structures in the present-day Archdiocese of Szczecin-Kamień in the years 1945–1989. Problems of reconstructing ecclesiastical edifices after the war and post-war damage], Toruń, 2017, esp. pp. 51–72 and 147–157.

3 Cf. *Nowe kościoły w Polsce* [New churches in Poland], photographs A. A. Mroczek, text K. Kucza-Kuczyński, Warsaw, 1991, no page numbers.

4 E.g. *Kościoły Warszawy w odbudowie* [Warsaw churches rebuilt], Warsaw, 1956.

significance.⁵ In the waning years of the People's Republic Andrzej K. Olszewski,⁶ followed by Andrzej Majdowski,⁷ made attempts to develop a typology of post-war churches. An album with texts by Konrad Kucza-Kuczyński was an outstanding work of popularization.⁸ Studies documenting the difficulties encountered by the Church in constructing ecclesiastical buildings⁹ and monographic works pertaining to concrete edifices, regions or designers¹⁰ have also been published.

Due to political reasons, the designs for churches built in the period of the People's Republic of Poland rarely gained any fame at their time of construction; currently, despite the changed social circumstances, little is still known about them. The guidebook to contemporary churches¹¹ published in 2016 is but a harbinger of a change in the assessment of post-war ecclesiastical architecture in Poland.

The fate that befell Władysław Pieńkowski, the designer of the church of St. Michael the Archangel at 95 Puławska St. in Warsaw, indicates how easily even an important architect may be forgotten. After all, Tadeusz Przemysław Szafer asserted that "the evolution of Polish church architecture can be traced through the example of churches designed by Władysław Pieńkowski",¹² Konrad Kucza-Kuczyński deemed

5 E.g. *Kościół w Polsce odbudowane i wybudowane 1945–1965* [Churches in Poland, built and rebuilt 1945–1965], ed. M. Bukowski, introduction by J. Zachwatowicz, Warsaw, 1966; studies by Lech Dunin, e.g. *Podziemia kościołów starej Warszawy: archikatedra Św. Jana, kościół N.M.P. Łaskawej* [Subterranean levels of Old Warsaw churches: the Arch-cathedral of St. John, the Church of the Gracious Mother of God], Warsaw, 1957.

6 A. K. Olszewski, *Próba typologii współczesnych kościołów w Polsce* [Tentative typology of contemporary churches in Poland], in: *Sztuka i sacrum* [The art and the sacrum], ed. N. Cieślińska, Cracow, 1989, pp. 85–105.

7 A. Majdowski, "Wzorce stylistyczno-kompozycyjne przedsoborowych kościołów w Polsce 1945–1965" [Stylistic and compositional patterns of pre-Vatican Council churches in Poland 1945–1965], in: *Modernizm w Europie – modernizm w Gdyni: architektura lat międzywojennych i jej ochrona* [Modernism in Europe – Modernism in Gdynia: architecture of the inter-war period and its protection], ed. R. Hirsch et al., Gdynia, 2009, pp. 97–106; A. Majdowski, I. Jastrzębska-Puzowska, J. Gierłasiński, *Inwestycje sakralne i architektura powojennych kościołów w Polsce. Metodologia i zarys problematyki badawczej* [Ecclesiastical enterprises and architecture of post-war churches in Poland. Methodology and the outline of research problems], Toruń, 2009.

8 *Nowe kościoły...*, no page numbers.

9 E.g. Rev. A. Boniecki, *Budowa kościołów w diecezji przemyskiej* [Church construction in the Przemyśl diocese], Paris, 1980; R. Wróbel, *Nowe kościoły w diecezji łódzkiej 1945–1989. Uwarunkowania i klasyfikacja rzymskokatolickiej architektury sakralnej* [New churches in the Łódź diocese 1945–1989. Development conditions and classification of Roman Catholic ecclesiastical architecture], Łódź, 2005; R. Gryz, *Pozwolić czy nie? Władze PRL wobec budownictwa katolickich obiektów sakralnych w latach 1971–1980* [To permit or to prohibit? The government of the People's Republic of Poland vs. Catholic church construction in the years 1971–1980], Kielce, 2007.

10 Cf. works cited by A. Majdowski: "Piśmiennictwo do stanu badań nad architekturą sakralną w Polsce" [Written sources concerning the state of research on ecclesiastical architecture in Poland], *Nasza Przyszłość*, 2006, 106, pp. 283–293, notes 13–15.

11 I. Cichońska, K. Popera, K. Snopek, *Architektura VII Dnia* [Architecture of the Seventh Day], Wrocław, 2016.

12 T. Przemysław Szafer, *Nowa architektura polska. Diariusz lat 1971–75* [New Polish architecture. Notes for the years 1971–75], Warsaw, 1979, p. 171.

him “the most senior among architects active in [the field of] church architecture”,¹³ and according to Tadeusz Chrzanowski, Pieńkowski belonged to those who preserved the dignity of Polish architecture.¹⁴ An outline of his oeuvre was provided by Michał Janocha in his MA thesis.¹⁵

In writing the current paper, I mainly drew from unpublished materials. My fundamental sources were archive materials made available to me by the architect's family and the parish of St. Michael the Archangel. The investigation of Władysław Pieńkowski's designs, drawings for separate details, diagrams for prefabricated elements and many other sketches made it possible to discover the history of the construction of this church.

The life of Władysław Pieńkowski

Władysław Pieńkowski (Fig. 1) was born on 28 May 1907 in Hleзна in Volhynia.¹⁶ He passed the school-leaving examination (*matura*) in Warsaw in 1925. Having failed to qualify for entrance to the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw Technical University, he enrolled into the Academy of Fine Arts; it was only in the year 1927 that he began his long-desired architectural studies. As a student, he was employed at the architectural studio of Kazimierz Tołłoczko (1927–1930). In 1935, having submitted a design for a power plant, he acquired the final certification; his supervisor was Aleksander Bojemski.

Having concluded his studies, Władysław Pieńkowski worked in Bohdan Pniowski's architectural bureau for a year, subsequently moving to the Bank of Poland (from 1936 to the outbreak of the war). At the same time he turned to teaching, as in 1938 he was a lecturer at the Noakowski Female School of Architecture in Warsaw. Two of his early designs for ecclesiastical architecture were completed before the war: the churches in Radom-Borki and in Toruń-Rybaki; their head designer was Stanisław Gałęzowski (1903–1945), the son of Józef, renowned architect. As a student, Pieńkowski was a member of academic organisations which later established the academic chaplaincy at the church of St. Anne in Warsaw. His texts appeared in the *Młódzież Katolicka* monthly.

In September 1939, Pieńkowski fought against the invasion, subsequently entering the structures of the Home Army. At the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising he was in the Lublin area, so he did not participate in it. In the years 1945–1946 he

13 *Nowe kościoły...*, no page numbers.

14 T. Chrzanowski, *Władysław Pieńkowski i jego kościoły* [Władysław Pieńkowski and his churches], cutting from an unidentified newspaper, the Pieńkowski family archive.

15 M. Janocha, *Budowle sakralne projektu Władysława Pieńkowskiego z lat 1935–1982* [Ecclesiastical buildings designed by Władysław Pieńkowski in the years 1935–1982], unpublished typescript, UKSW Library, 1982. This study, supervised by Prof. Andrzej K. Olszewski exists in several copies, but the album of photographs illustrating the text is now lost. Owing to the vast research field, Janocha only described particular designs summarily.

16 Bibliographic information obtained from Kinga Pieńkowska-Owsińska.



Fig. 1. Władysław Pieńkowski, unknown photographer, Kinga Pieńkowska-Owsińska's archive

taught at the School of Fine Arts in Zamość and later, until 1948, he worked as a lecturer in cultural history and assistant professor at the Chair of Architectural Composition at the Faculty of Architecture of the Mining Academy in Cracow, which was headed by Prof. Juliusz Żórawski. In 1948 Pieńkowski took up employment at the Warsaw Bureau of Industrial Architecture Design, where he worked until 1957. Until 1950 its head architect was Żórawski, who had been banned from residential or monumental architecture design and found his "industrial sanctuary" there.¹⁷

At the same time, in the late 1948 and early 1949, Pieńkowski developed the initial design for the church of St. Michael the Archangel. From this time onward, his career ran in two parallel directions: after his daily work in a state-owned bureau of design, he would draw designs for churches in his home office. During that period Pieńkowski completed, *inter alia*, the churches in Świerże Górne (1947), Głowaczów (1953–1954), Orońsko (1958) and Biadoliny (1959–1960).

In those years Pieńkowski continued teaching as well. From 1958 for over a decade he taught contemporary architecture at the Catholic University of Lublin, and from 1966 to 1979 was employed at the Noakowski State School of Architecture,

17 D. Błaszczyk; *Juliusz Żórawski. Przerwane dzieło modernizmu* [Juliusz Żórawski. An interrupted work of Modernism], Warsaw, 2010, p. 48.

where he gave lectures in the history of architecture and courses in design. In the years 1958–1964 he worked at Energoprojekt, from where he was discharged when he refused to join the Polish United Workers' Party. Soon he began to build a number of churches and came to regard the construction of religious buildings as his existential mission. He used to say that other architects were quite capable of dealing with residential and industrial design.¹⁸

In 1958 Władysław Pieńkowski was nominated to the office of the architect of the Warsaw Archdiocese. Three years later he became a member of the Primate's Council for the Rebuilding of Churches (Rada Prymasowska Odbudowy Kościołów), and from 1967 he participated in the works of the Art and Architecture Commission of the Warsaw Archdiocese. Also, from 1970 he was a member of the Church Art Commission at the Episcopacy of Poland. He died on 24 November 1991.

Pieńkowski's early post-war architectural output

After the war, Władysław Pieńkowski designed three office blocks, namely the seats of the Central Bureau of Trade of the Timber Industry, Central Bureau of Industrial Architecture Study and Design (head designer: Marek Leykam¹⁹) and the Ministry of Municipal Infrastructure in Warsaw, in the so-called District of Ministries.²⁰ The most recognisable feature of these buildings are famous vertical decorative elements known as "razors".²¹

Pieńkowski's output in the field of administrative architecture design is modest and does not stand out against the background of the "architectural production" of the era. The most significant influence on his later work on church architecture proved to be his contacts dating from period of his employment at the Warsaw Bureau of Industrial Architecture Design (e.g. with Jerzy Jeliński, Konstanty Jankowski and Janina Czerwińska) and his experience gained while cooperating with the leading architects of post-war Poland, especially Leykam, on whose designs Pieńkowski based his "razor" decoration.

Pieńkowski circulated in the milieu of Warsaw architects whose designs expressed their opposition to the norms and guidelines proposed by the communist authorities. He was on friendly terms with, among others, Jan Bogusławski and worked as an assistant to Juliusz Żórawski,²² a senior of Polish modernism who later fell into disfavour. Numerous outstanding architects educated before the war were restricted to constructing industrial structures, which were free from the burden

18 Information obtained from Kinga Pieńkowska-Owsińska.

19 M. Leśniakowska, *Architektura w Warszawie 1945–1965* [Architecture in Warsaw 1945–1965], Warsaw, 2003, p. 50.

20 See *ibid.*, p. 24.

21 They are created by deep embrasures of window openings placed densely in a network of vertical and horizontal lines made of concrete.

22 D. Błaszczyk, *Juliusz Żórawski...*, pp. 44–49.

of politics and prescribed symbolic meaning. Pieńkowski put it this way: "I deliberately moved away from residential architecture, because I considered the norms and regulations that had been imposed on it to be harmful, scandalous, impermissible in terms of both psychology and the space necessary for living [...]"²³

The acme of Pieńkowski's work in the field of industrial architecture was the design for the Adamów power plant (1959–1960). In cooperation with engineer Konstanty Jankowski, he designed gigantic cooling blocks resting on surprisingly thin, matchstick-like supports.²⁴ Industrial design forced Pieńkowski to place his trust in the potential of prefabrication, which he later used in church architecture as well. Due to their strictly functional nature, industrial structures are designed "from the inside out"; their design relies on the logical and rational arrangement of the components of a given plant and then on "wrapping" this arrangement in architecture as neatly as possible. Pieńkowski's church designs reveal a similar approach.

Before he designed the church in Warsaw, Pieńkowski already had the construction of three churches under his belt,²⁵ namely those of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus in Radom-Borki (1935), the Virgin Mary the Queen of Poland in Tarnów-Mościce (1943)²⁶ and St. Jacob the Apostle in Świerże Górne (1947). The first two structures he designed in cooperation with Stanisław Gałęzowski. The leading role of the latter architect, who was older and more experienced, must be underlined here. Also, in order to demonstrate the connections between these three designs and the church in Warsaw, it is necessary to mention their fundamental elements.

The church in Radom is a three-nave basilica consisting of additively grouped solids and covered with a tall gabled roof with a ridge turret. As Janocha correctly noted, being the work of Gałęzowski, it belongs to inter-war architecture in terms of typology.²⁷

The five-nave basilica of the Virgin Mary in Tarnów-Mościce is far more monumental. In terms of proportions, the outline of the church resembles Gothic structures. The ground plan is traditional in style owing to the short transept and the apse. The flat roof is topped with a tower. The façade is also crowned with a tall, slender, monumental tower.²⁸ The side elevations are pierced with tall and narrow windows, while the façade is framed with clearly accentuated brickwork projections of the walls closing the side naves; a similar feature is seen in the Warsaw church.

23 Sylwester Szefer's interview with Władysław Pieńkowski, a recording in the Pieńkowski family archive.

24 This design strikingly resembles the solution proposed earlier by the constructors of the chimney at Carling power plant (Centrale Émile Huchet, France, Dept. Moselle), see *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, 1949, 27, p. LXXIII.

25 Pieńkowski's early output in the field of church architecture is described by M. Janocha, *Budowle sakralne...*, pp. 21–45. Also helpful is the study *Kościół w Polsce...*, pp. 235–266.

26 For the history of its construction, see M. Smoła, *Mościce. Kościół i ludzie: dzieje parafii pw. Najświętszej Marii Panny Królowej Polski* [Mościce. The church and the people: the history of the parish of the Virgin Mary the Queen of Poland], Tarnów, 2011.

27 M. Janocha, *Budowle sakralne...*, pp. 31–32.

28 Janocha sees this church as influenced by Socialist Realism, describing its style as "a pretentious mixture of English perpendicular style with the Palace of Culture in Warsaw": *ibid.*, p. 34.

The church in Mościce reveals an important feature of Władysław Pieńkowski's later churches, one which has already been mentioned here, namely the fact that they are designed "from the inside out". The issues of the constructional solids or façades are of secondary importance in comparison with the needs of the liturgy; hence the outward unattractiveness of the edifice. This constitutes a clear change in relation to the Radom church, where the varied, disjointed shape of the exterior contrasts with the coolness and severity of the interior.

Apart from the above, relatively large churches, in the early post-war period Pieńkowski also designed the smaller church in Świerże, one which has a conventional, neo-Romanesque form without a transept.

The details of the church in Radom are typical of the "modernised Romanesque"²⁹ style of the 1930s. In Tarnów Pieńkowski would still design revivalist details and put in a tripartite portal chiselled in stone; but the design of the Świerże church is governed by modern aesthetics.

In his early period of work on church architecture design, Pieńkowski displayed a penchant for brick as a finishing material. The church of St. Thérèse in Radom-Borki was left without exterior plastering, and the chancel arch is decorated with a mosaic, so to speak, of bricks in various shades of red. In Radom, in turn, prefabricated elements were used in the construction of the bell tower, whose lantern consists of "razors" made of reinforced concrete. The small decorative modules are also prefabricated.³⁰ In Mościce, the monumental window in the façade is made solely of standardised elements. The reinforced concrete beams comprising the ceilings of side naves had also been prefabricated. The application of this technique gives the aesthetics of the edifice a modern character.

The earliest churches co-designed by Władysław Pieńkowski are based mainly on Romanesque forms; they have a traditional ground plan and are covered with tall sloping roofs. The Tarnów one (designed 1943–1946, constructed 1948–1956³¹) is an exception, clearly different from his other churches. Concurrently, this edifice opens the second stage of Pieńkowski's output with regard to ecclesiastical architecture, in which the architect discards the idea of repeating modified forms of medieval provenance and moves towards more individualistic designs. Here, Pieńkowski introduced a row of windows below a coffered ceiling in the main nave, characteristic arches in the side naves, and prefabrication used on a broader scale; all these concepts he would later apply in the church of St. Michael in Warsaw.

Church of St. Michael the Archangel

On 8 September, 1853 a cornerstone was consecrated and laid "for a future House of God for the inhabitants of the parish of St. Alexander in Warsaw resident in

29 Ibid., p. 24.

30 Ibid., p. 27.

31 Ibid., p. 179.

the Mokotów area".³² The first church to stand on the plot at Puławska St. was designed by Ignacy Essmanowski.³³ Precisely three years after that cornerstone was laid, Antoni Melchior Fijałkowski, the metropolitan bishop of Warsaw, consecrated the first church in the Mokotów district;³⁴ it was dedicated to the Birth of the Virgin Mary.³⁵ Soon the small church began to be altered. After the year 1917, when this subdivision of the parish of St. Alexander was transformed into an independent parish under the patronage of St. Michael the Archangel,³⁶ a bell tower with three bells was built (1924,³⁷ still standing today) and the church was further expanded.³⁸

The first church was a modest edifice in a restrained Baroque Revival style.³⁹ It was a single nave structure with a transept, its eastern end closed with a semicircular apse. A prominent, protruding cornice divided the façade into two levels. The fronton was decorated with the inscription "Bogu z Jego darów" [To God, from His gifts].⁴⁰

The church of the Birth of the Virgin Mary for the first time was seriously damaged in 1939 and then hit by several bombs during the Warsaw Uprising and thus almost completely destroyed.⁴¹ After the war, until the consecration of the new church, services were held in a makeshift chapel attached to what used to be the façade of the old church.⁴²

The Primate's Council for the Rebuilding of Churches was established in April 1947; its task was to coordinate efforts aimed at building and rebuilding churches in the capital city and to fairly allocate the resources available for their construction,⁴³ which was initially only permitted on land that had belonged to the Church before the war.

The parish church of St. Michael the Archangel is the first church to be built – that is to say, constructed according to a new design, not reconstructed after war damage – in Warsaw after the Second World War. The construction works,

32 *Kurjer Warszawski*, 1853, no. 235 (9 September), p. 1.

33 *Ibid.*

34 Rev. K. Bliźniński, *Informator parafii św. Michała w Warszawie* [Information book of the parish of St. Michael in Warsaw], Warsaw, 1935, p. 26.

35 M. Janocha, *Budowle sakralne...*, p. 45. The dedication of the church was unchanged until the construction of the post-war church.

36 K. Bliźniński, *Informator...*, p. 27.

37 Janocha, *Budowle sakralne...*, p. 46.

38 K. Bliźniński, *Informator...*, p. 27.

39 On the pre-war church, see A. Majdowski, *Kościół p.w. Narodzenia Najświętszej Marii Panny na Mokotowie* [Church of the Birth of the Virgin Mary in Mokotów], Warsaw, 1994.

40 A. J. Szymański, *Historia Parafii Św. Michała Archanioła w Warszawie* [History of the parish of St. Michael the Archangel in Warsaw], <http://digital.fides.org.pl/dlibra/docmetadata?id=720&dirids=1&tab=1>, 2007 [accessed 15 October 2017], p. 6. Despite its popular character, this study, issued for the 90th anniversary of the institution of the parish of St. Michael the Archangel, contains valuable information on the construction of the church, as well as many photographs.

41 *Kościół Warszawy...*, p. 27.

42 A. J. Szymański, *Historia Parafii...*, p. 9.

43 Cf. Gryz, *Pozwolić czy nie...*, pp. 28–29.

supervised by Władysław Pieńkowski, began in August 1950.⁴⁴ The cornerstone was laid on 8 December of the following year by Primate Wyszyński.⁴⁵ Bolesław Piasecki, the originator of the PAX Association, became the chairman of the Construction Committee, with Father Witold Martusiewicz or Father Stefan Piotrowski⁴⁶ and the writer Jerzy Zawieyski,⁴⁷ also PAX activists, as his deputies. Considering the difficulties which the Church encountered when attempting to build new churches, it may be assumed that Piasecki's involvement in the works of the Committee was crucially important to obtaining building permission.⁴⁸

According to Janocha, the design for the church of St. Michael the Archangel which Pieńkowski made in the years 1948–1949 won him “first prize in the Association of Polish Architects’ unofficial contest”.⁴⁹ This enigmatic and practically unverifiable remark is the only extant information regarding this contest.

The first design,⁵⁰ 1949 (1948?)⁵¹–1951

Pieńkowski's first drawing of the church of St. Michael is dated to the year 1949. It corresponds to the earliest design, extant in the parish archive (1950). This drawing shows a vision of a slender, monumental edifice, extremely similar to the one

44 A. J. Szymański, *Historia Parafii...*, p. 10.

45 Ibid.

46 K. Mętrak, *Budownictwo sakralne w Warszawie w czasach PRL (1945-1981)* [Ecclesiastical buildings in Warsaw during PRL (1945-1981)], unpublished typescript, MA thesis, UW Library, Warszawa, 2018, p. 68-69.

47 A. J. Szymański, *Historia Parafii...*, p. 10.

48 Cf. A. Majdowski, *Wzorce stylistyczno-kompozycyjne...*, p. 98: “In practice, the greatest efficiency in carrying out construction projects was noted in very particular milieus, especially the so-called patriotic priests, and more broadly speaking, the milieus in the orbit of the PAX Association”.

49 M. Janocha, *Budowle sakralne...*, p. 46.

50 The archive of the parish of St. Michael the Archangel contains two copies of the already mentioned collection of architectural and constructional drawing for the church. One of them bears the seal of the Primate of Poland and an annotation dated 12 May 1950: “These plans of the construction of the church of St. Michael in Warsaw, as designed by Wł. Pieńkowski M.Arch., are hereby approved”, signed by Stefan Wyszyński. The other copy, apart from the approval of the Church authorities (this time signed by the chancellor of the Warsaw Curia) bearing the same date, was approved on 18 Oct. 1950 by the Central Committee of the National Council of the City of Warsaw, which was the basis for applying for building permission. A proviso was added, however, that after the foundations are finished and before the walls of the ground floor are laid, a control committee from the CCNC would inspect the site; perhaps this was when the works were halted. Also, this copy of the design bears partially obliterated seals with the letters “B.O.S.” [Biuro Odbudowy Stolicy – Capital City Reconstruction Bureau] and the words “[in ink] Appendix to the opinion [handwritten] 135/9/50”.

51 In *Dyspozycja projektu wnętrza kościoła św. Michała w Warszawie* [Disposition for the interior design of the church of St. Michael in Warsaw] (8 pages, Ms. in the Pieńkowski family archive) Pieńkowski mentions “the initial design from 1948”.

in Mościce (designed 1941, constructed 1948–1956⁵²). Also the characteristic tower topped with slim pinnacles and a spire with a crown is a near-repetition of a solution used in Mościce. A vast stained glass window made of concrete latticework occupies the central section of the façade. It is flanked by monumental figures of saints placed one above the other (six on each side), bringing to mind medieval portals, and, again like in the Mościce church, clearly accentuated, undecorated side projections closing the naves.

Other features based on the Mościce church are the general proportions of the edifice (although slightly slenderer here), the row of low side chapels, the nearly flat roofs and the row of windows allowing more light into the main nave. Pieńkowski changed the shape of window openings to rectangular, however, eliminating arched forms altogether. He decided not to add a transept or decorative frieze of vertically arranged narrow “razors” below the roof. The windows that occupy nearly the entire wall surface in side façades are an innovation in comparison to Pieńkowski’s earlier designs. This audacious idea could be implemented because the church structure was made of reinforced concrete (Fig. 2, 3).

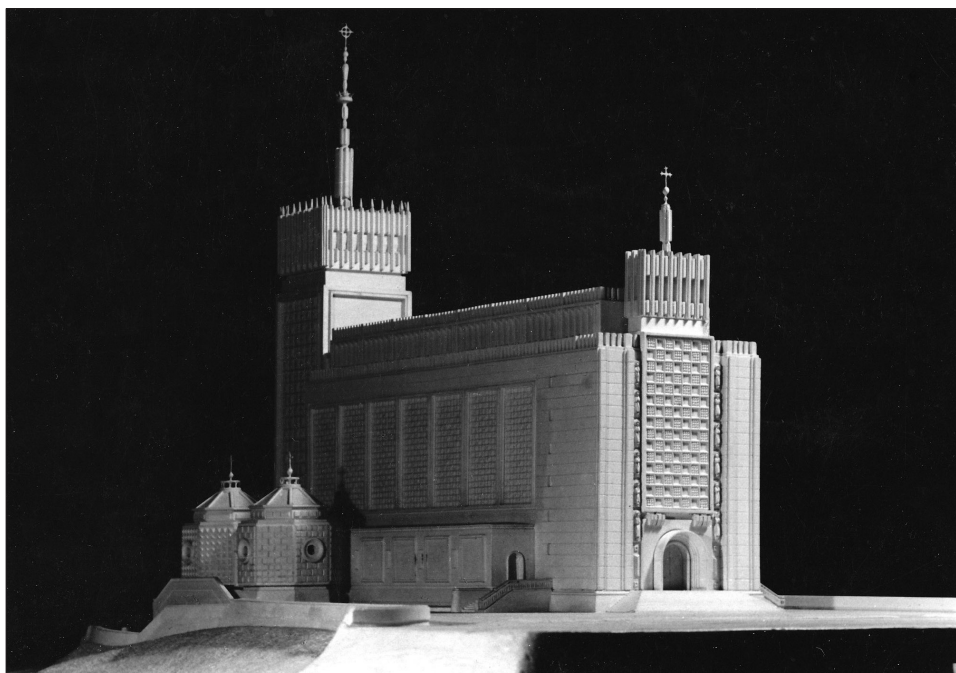


Fig. 2. Władysław Pieńkowski, model of the church, the first design, photo by A. Funkiewicz, Kinga Pieńkowska-Owsińska’s archive

⁵² F. Burno, *Kościół nowego państwa...*, p. 166.

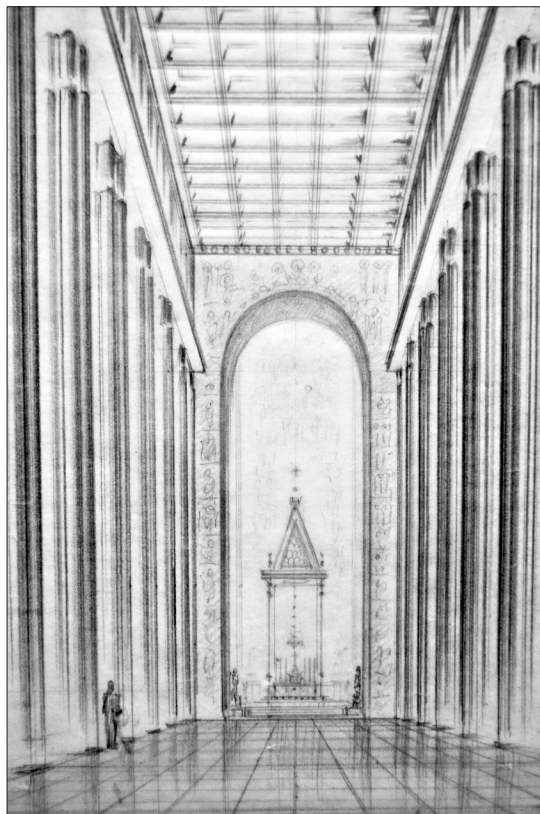


Fig. 3. Władysław Pieńkowski, concept drawing for the interior, the first design, 1951, Kinga Pieńkowska-Owsińska's archive

In terms of composition, the two chapels on the north side of the church are clearly detached from the general body of the church. Their octagonal ground plan, ashlar quoins and circular windows bring to mind the Renaissance tomb chapels seen in many Polish churches. It is worth noting that the designs for the north-east chapel feature an oval baptismal font placed three steps below the floor level. With this idea, Pieńkowski anticipated transformations that were to be postulated by the Second Vatican Council over fifteen years later, approaching solutions proposed by architects associated with the liturgical movement.⁵³

The architecture of the church is clearly rooted in the tradition of the inter-war period, its monumental quality being characteristic of the era. Pieńkowski attempted to simplify the façades, the body and the ground plan of the church, but he continued to employ a repertoire of forms typical of “Modernised Revivalism”. He still used decorative details and architectural sculpture, and made references to historical styles. Filip Burno cites the church in Tarnów-Mościce as a late example

⁵³ See Rev. Z. Wit, “Wymogi liturgiczno-prawne wyposażenia kościoła” [Legal and liturgical requirements for church furnishings], *Ateneum Kapłańskie*, 1989, 113, pp. 236–238.

of a “pylon façade”;⁵⁴ Pieńkowski adopted this solution in his first design for the church of St. Michael as well. It seems that the characteristic lesenes in the upper sections of the towers, ridge turrets with spires surrounded with crowns, as well as the said pylons, may have been inspired by Bohdan Pniewski’s unrealised design for the Sea Basilica in Gdynia (1933).⁵⁵

The second design,⁵⁶ 1954

Whereas the design for the church as discussed above referred to the architectural idiom of the fourth decade of the 20th century, the second surviving set of Pieńkowski’s drawings calls to mind the architecture of the first three decades of that century.

In these drawings, the ground plan remained essentially unchanged, since by the year 1954 the foundations for the lower church had already been laid; this restricted the architect’s room for manoeuvre. The general shape of the church, however, underwent essential and surprising transformations. A tall gabled roof was envisioned instead of a flat one. The tower above the chancel was eliminated; a presbytery that was noticeably narrower and lower from the main section of the church, clearly visible in the silhouette of the edifice, appeared in its place. The second span of the church, looking from the east, is crowned with a slender, delicate ridge turret similar to the Radom one. The façade also underwent a significant metamorphosis, as in the new design it has a triangular pediment. Underneath there is a semicircular entrance arcade, above which a window, its shape echoing the arch around the entrance, constitutes the dominant compositional element of the façade. The window is filled with pseudo-Gothic stained glass. The design envisaged the windows of side naves as filled with false tracery structures as well (Fig. 4, 5).

The second design is influenced by earlier constructions: the churches in Radom and Głowaczów. In both of those structures, and in the Świerże Górne church,

54 F. Burno, *Kościół nowego państwa...*, p. 166; on pylon façades: *ibid.*, pp. 163–166. A façade flanked by two distinct protrusions resembling pylons; often with an additional tall bell tower.

55 Cf. M. Czapelski, *Bohdan Pniewski – warszawski architekt XX wieku* [Bohdan Pniewski – a 20th-century Warsaw architect], Warsaw, 2008, pp. 70–77.

56 A file containing this set of drawings is held in the archive of the parish of St. Michael the Archangel, marked “III. 56”, which refers to the issue date of the building permission; however, the seal of the Warsaw Curia under the annotation: “The current design for the construction of the church for the parish of St. Michael the Archangel in Warsaw was confirmed by the Archdiocesan Authority by the decree dated 13 July 1954 No. 4206” confirms that the design was made in 1954. In the parish archive, number II is borne by the replacement (cost-effective) design for the lower church from the year 1953, which does not introduce material changes in comparison with the first design. This design is signed by Władysław Pieńkowski and Tadeusz Zieliński (as authors) and Prof. Z. Mączyński and Prof. R. Gutt (as consultants). Considering the absence of any other data regarding Zieliński’s participation in the designing of the church of St. Michael, it is difficult to make any pronouncements regarding the true extent of his involvement.

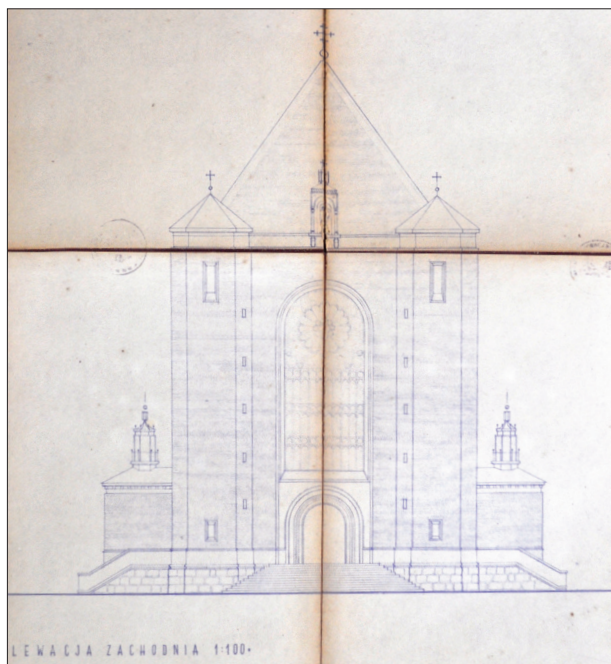


Fig. 4. Władysław Pieńkowski, western façade of the church, the second design, the parish archive

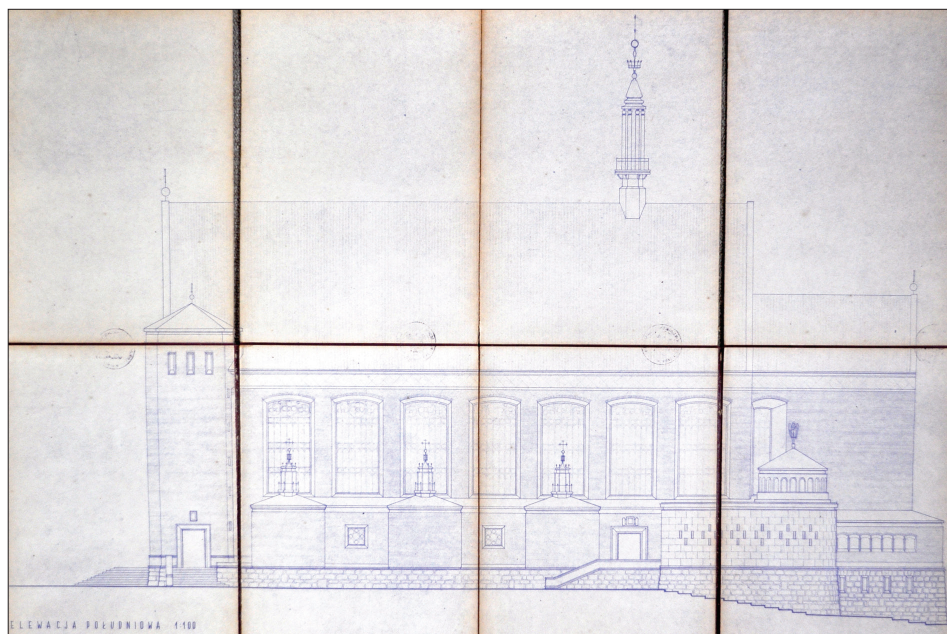


Fig. 5. Władysław Pieńkowski, southern façade of the church, the second design, the parish archive

Pieńkowski used the characteristic revivalist concept of a chancel that was lower and narrower than the nave. The monumental quality of the edifice, clearly greater than in the earlier churches, results from its slenderer proportions and from the significance of its projected site. Standing at the edge of the Vistula slope, the church – the only one in Mokotów at the time – was a prominent feature of the panorama of Warsaw as seen from Praga across the river. Aware of the advantages of the location, Pieńkowski thoroughly researched the church's appearance when seen from the east. Its dimensions were dictated by the sizes of the surrounding buildings; however, arranging it as a compositional element of the Vistula slope, the architect took pains to achieve a harmoniously shaped skyline (Fig. 6).

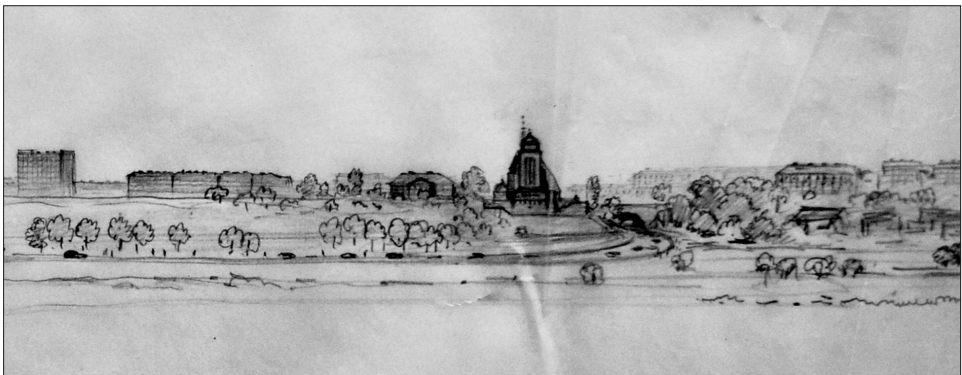


Fig. 6. Władysław Pieńkowski, panorama of the Vistula incline, fragment, 1953, Kinga Pieńkowska-Owsińska's archive; the silhouette of the church of St. Michael the Archangel, then being designed, is discernible

The fact that the two designs were produced by one and the same architect in such a short period of time may seem surprising. The second design, resembling the Gothic and Baroque style as seen in Poland, constitutes a return to traditional forms. The project was most probably influenced by the Socialist Realism current of the early 1950s. The young generation of architects, trained in the 1930s and 1940s, perceived the new principles of design as their opportunity to launch a brilliant career in their profession. Rapid changes caused by Socialist Realism accelerated the natural exchange of generations and favoured the emancipation of young creators.

It is, however, difficult to ascertain whether Władysław Pieńkowski was among those seduced by the vision of a new architectural style or whether his actions were solely pragmatic in nature. In all probability, the planning permission for a church designed in the shape typical of the 1930s (the first design) was revoked, so Pieńkowski produced a new one, this time closer in style to Socialist Realism, as promoted by the establishment. Although it would be difficult to find any Socialist contents in the second design, its form is a native one. Both the architect and his patrons probably assumed that such a church, being less distinctive and less eye-

catching, had more chance of being acceptable to the authorities than the concrete structure designed in 1949.

The final design, 1956–1961(?)

The original design for the church of St. Michael the Archangel has not been found. The parish archive contains a replacement design for the chapel of the Virgin Mary approved by the Chief Architect of Warsaw on 10 December 1959, bearing the note: “as a replacement for part of the church in relation to des. [...] dated 31 Jan. ’56”.⁵⁷ The Pieńkowski family archive, however, has been found to contain the cost-effective replacement design for the western façade of the church, dated to 1961.⁵⁸ Both these documents show the church as it was ultimately constructed. On the basis of the drawings of the chapel of the Virgin Mary (which also include the southern and eastern facades of the church) it may be ascertained that Pieńkowski created the final design after the year 1954⁵⁹ and before 1959,⁶⁰ and that the current shape of the façades was determined before the year 1961. It may be suspected that a final consolidated design for the church was never made; instead, replacement designs for particular sections of the church were presented to the authorities for approval, the previously approved façades being entirely modified as a result.⁶¹

Thus, the above-mentioned sets of drawings belong to the successive essential stage of designing the church of St. Michael – the last one. They demonstrate a departure from the stylistic costume adopted in the previous version and, at least in some aspects, a return to the initial assumptions. Pieńkowski went back to the concepts of pylons, now even taller than the central section of the façade, which was wholly filled with the reinforced-concrete latticework of the window. The idea for a tower crowning the façade on the street side was abandoned, while the basilica plan, flat roofs and the tower above the chancel returned. The new concepts were the division of the monumental eastern window and, above all, the distinctive outside wall of the chapel of the Virgin Mary made of the “razor” lattice.

The large family archive also contains study drawings for the facades of the church of St. Michael. The sketch for a section of a side façade, dated to 20 March 1956, is interesting in the context of changes introduced in the design for this church. This drawing shows a concept identical to that presented in 1959; this makes it necessary to move the date when the final conception of the church façades was

57 The second design for the church, in its revivalist guise, was confirmed for this date. The design for the chapel bears no. V in the parish archive.

58 Approved by the Head Architect in 1962; bears no. VI on the cover.

59 The year the second design was produced.

60 The eastern section of the church was consecrated on 21 Nov. 1959, A. J. Szymański, *Historia Parafii...*, p. 11.

61 This hypothesis is confirmed by the unbroken sequence of numbers on the designs held in the parish archive and in the architect’s archive (I–VI).

developed to March 1956, i.e. just two months after the second, revivalist project had been approved.

Pieńkowski's study for the façade with its focus on proportions and geometrical relations (1962) is particularly noteworthy (Fig. 7). The drawing shows the western façade of the church, on which Pieńkowski superimposed, in dotted line, a network of divisions showing the interdependencies between particular elements of the composition. This valuable document reveals medieval churches as his inspiration and illustrates his reflections regarding the logical composition of the façade. Of particular note is Pieńkowski's truly "gothic" conviction that a well-designed building should be describable by means of a sequence of parallel lines and circles.

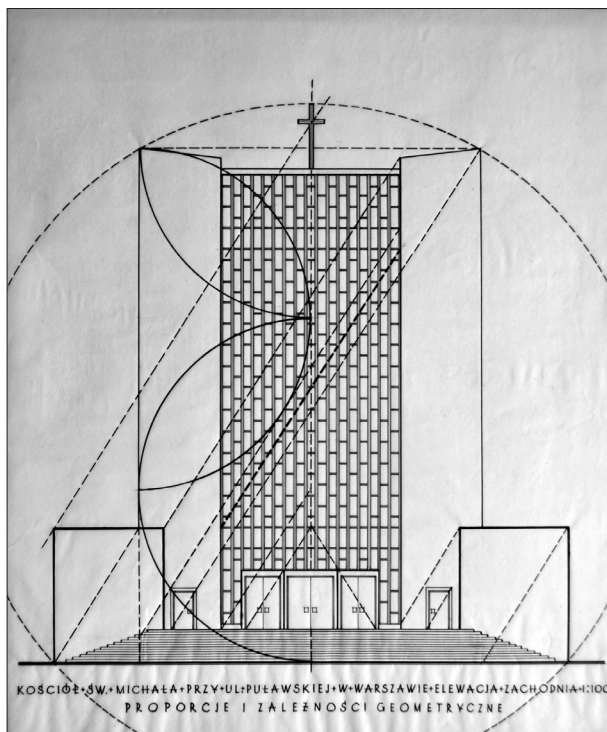


Fig. 7. Władysław Pieńkowski, a study for the proportions and geometrical relations of the façade, 1962, Kinga Pieńkowska-Owsińska's archive

The church of St. Michael was consecrated in 1966.⁶² Pieńkowski's drawing showing the view from the main nave towards the west wall and the north nave, in which the arrangement of elements resembles the existing one, dates from May 1964; thus, this date constitutes the *terminus ante quem* on the formation of the final conception of the interior.⁶³

⁶² A. J. Szymański, *Historia Parafii...*, p. 13.

⁶³ Apart from the changes enforced by the Second Vatican Council, e.g. the removal of the pulpit.

Before the building permission was revoked, the foundations and the lower church were ready, all made from bricks obtained from the dismantling of ruins. The interior has low vaults as its ceiling. The lower church lies below only the four eastern spans of the upper church. Work on the upper church began when construction resumed in 1957.⁶⁴ The church was built in two stages. The four eastern spans and the chancel, blessed by Primate Wyszyński on 21 November 1959,⁶⁵ were the first.

The work was finishing up over many years, with Pieńkowski's vigorous input in the furnishing of the church. Pieńkowski felt a strong attachment to his work; even in the late 1970s he was still turning in designs for altars, lamps and other elements of decor.⁶⁶

The church as it was finally constructed is a 70.5m long, 31.3m wide three-nave basilica with rows of low chapels adjacent to side naves. Under the proper church (area 3700 m²)⁶⁷ lies the lower church (area 1850m²).⁶⁸ The width of the main nave is 11.2m, and the width of the side naves is 2m. The length of the span is 6m. The main body of the church is slender in its proportions; the interior has the height of 21.50m in the main nave, 17.6m in the side naves, and only 4.3m in the chapels and in the lower church. The façade is 28.55m high.

The colour range used on the facades of the church is limited to two contrasting hues: the greyish white of prefabricated elements and the grey of rough plaster. The façade is topped with a 4-metre prefabricated cross. Its central section is dominated by a window, nearly 10m wide, made up of concrete prefabricates that create a structure filled with a mosaic of irregularly arranged modules. In the lower section of the openwork wall there is a tripartite portal with an inscription "BOGU+Z+JEGO+DARÓW" [To God, from His gifts] running above the door openings, referring to the pre-war church.

The central window is flanked with massive projections closing the side naves; they are slightly taller than the window and in their upper part they taper towards the centre. Narrow horizontal lines scored in the rough plaster, arranged irregularly but symmetrically on both sides of the façade, add some visual variety to the wall. These lines continue on the side façades of the false towers; adjacent to those are annexes closing the rows of side chapels. The side sections are nearly rectangular in

64 M. Janocha, *Budowle sakralne...*, p. 46. This date, confirmed only by Janocha's study, cannot be treated as certain.

65 Ibid.; A. J. Szymański, *Historia Parafii...*, p. 11.

66 The architect's family archive contains many unrealised designs. Many alterations were introduced without consulting Pieńkowski, which resulted in his issuing a statement: "[...] I must state that what was done is, unfortunately, not in keeping with the principle of the interior composition which I have assumed, whereas, following the regulations of the Constitution on Liturgy, the person responsible for this composition is the head designer" (undated document, the Pieńkowski family archive). The burden of responsibility taken by the designer is clearly discernible in this statement, as is his bitterness resulting from his inability to execute control over the work as its author.

67 M. Janocha, *Budowle sakralne...*, p. 179.

68 Ibid.

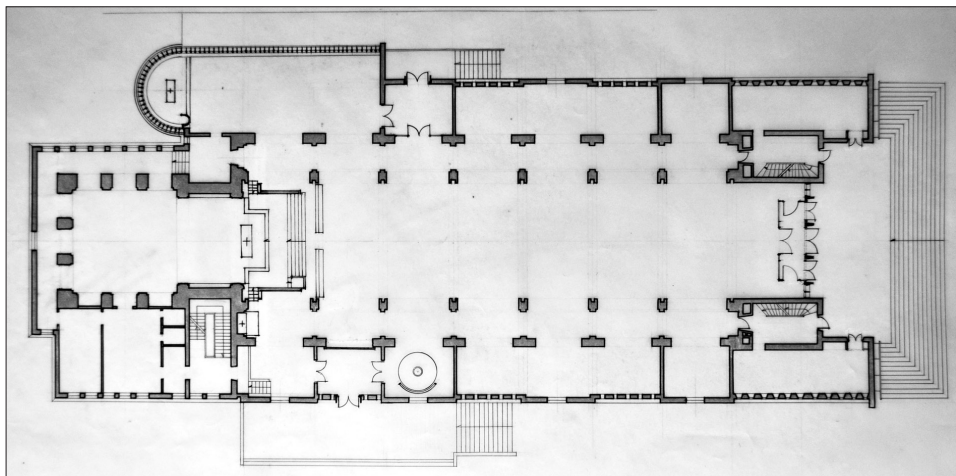


Fig. 8. Władysław Pieńkowski, ground plan of the church of St. Michael the Archangel, Kinga Pieńkowska-Owsińska's archive



Fig. 9. Interior of the chapel of the Virgin Mary, March 2015, photo by W. M. Głowacki

their proportions and clearly cubic, complementing the additive, revivalist character of the façade's composition.

The north and south façades are fairly similar to each other. To the west, they are closed with the already-mentioned projections of the façade. Further on,

towards the east, runs the massive body of the church, consisting of seven spans and ending with a tower. Monumental windows which give rhythm to the facades are made of openwork prefabricates in three sizes: 0.88 m, 1.25m or 1.62m in height with the uniform width of 0.88m. These prefabricates comprise a composition of five strips decorated with alternating square sections filled with eight circles surrounding a diamond and rectangular sections filled with a simplified and multiplied outline of a five-armed candelabrum. The windows are similar, but prefabricated elements are arranged differently in each window, which helped to avoid monotony. Window openings are flanked by narrow pilasters, which add dynamics to the form and break the horizontal rhythm of the design.

On the south side lies the chapel of the Virgin Mary of Częstochowa, which has the ground plan of a rectangle closed with a semicircular apse. It is 16.7m long with width close to 6.5m. Its outer wall is constructed solely of prefabricates with narrow "razor" divisions (Fig. 9).

Above the ambulatory there is a tower with the ground plan of a square with sides 11.3m long. The structure rests on reinforced-concrete corners made of prefabricates. The eastern wall is filled with a monumental stained glass window. The tower, designed as over 31m tall, finally reached only approx. 26m.

In the upper church, the element that emphasises the solids is the light that enters via the wide windows. In the main nave, the articulation is achieved by means of narrow rectangular frames of reinforced concrete, which create the division into seven spans. Above the side naves a row of rectangular windows in a brick wall brightens the interior. It visually divides the coffered ceiling from the rest of the edifice, giving it lightness. Rows of chapels are adjacent to side naves; some of those chapels are connected to create larger spaces which may serve ecclesiastical needs, e.g. creating space for confession. Arched openings lead from the chapels to the interior of the church. The upper church (Fig. 10) contrasts strongly with the lower church, which, because of its low ceilings, intimate size and the absence of windows, is close to Early Christian architecture.

The first design for the church of St. Michael is strongly dependent on the church of the Virgin Mary in Tarnów-Mościce, then under construction, as it makes use of the same repertoire of forms in a slightly modified body. Its characteristic features are revivalist sculptural details combined with a monumental scale. The second design constituted Władysław Pieńkowski's reaction to the architecture of Socialist Realism (or, more pragmatically, to the suspension of construction works) and it is characterised by a return to early 20th-century eclecticism. The final conception was reached soon after the completion of the second design. To some extent it meant a return to the original conception proposed in 1949, but the church acquired an unmistakably Modernist character. Pieńkowski abandoned the forms common in Polish pre-war architecture that he had used until that point, instead moving towards architecture that was far more severe and less decorative than the one envisaged by his first design.



Fig. 10. Interior of the church of St. Michael the Archangel, view towards the chancel, on the far side the monumental stained glass window designed by Tadeusz Wojciechowski, March 2015, photo by W. M. Głowacki

Prefabricates in the structure of the church of St. Michael the Archangel

Władysław Pieńkowski's use of prefabricates is an interesting issue. Promoted in Poland from the 1930s onward by the avant-garde circles of left-wing architects,⁶⁹ prefabrication became a necessity after the year 1949, when architectural studios became state property.⁷⁰ However, despite many texts on this topic being published in specialist journals, and despite the support of the officialdom, in Poland in 1955 this technology was still in the early stages of its development.⁷¹

In the construction of the church of St. Michael, however, prefabrication was applied on a large scale. The direct reasons for this were economic. The view that buildings made of prefabricates were of low quality is more or less generally

69 M. Czapelski, "A House from a Factory: Polish Architects and Prefabricated Residential Housing in the 1950s", *Ikonotheke*, 2013, 24, pp. 156–159.

70 Ibid., p. 164.

71 Ibid., p. 173; see *Ogólnopolska Narada Architektów* [The National Council of Architects], ed. T. Barucki, S. Pietraszek, Warsaw, 1956.

accepted.⁷² However, in contrast to residential architecture, in the case of the church of St. Michael the use of prefabricates is a key reason for the high quality of its construction. In fact, its use may be seen as a continuation of the building trade tradition, namely the so-called testing-ground production, conducted directly at the construction site,⁷³ not at an industrial plant (Fig. 11, 12).

The forms for separate elements – e.g. the ceiling coffers, window modules etc. – were made of timber and then put together according to requirements. When ready, the prefabricates were joined by frames poured from reinforced concrete. Only a few workers were involved in the production of modules. The elements were poured from concrete in which the admixture of sand was replaced with finely ground marble and the gravel with marble grit.⁷⁴ This method meant sacrificing the

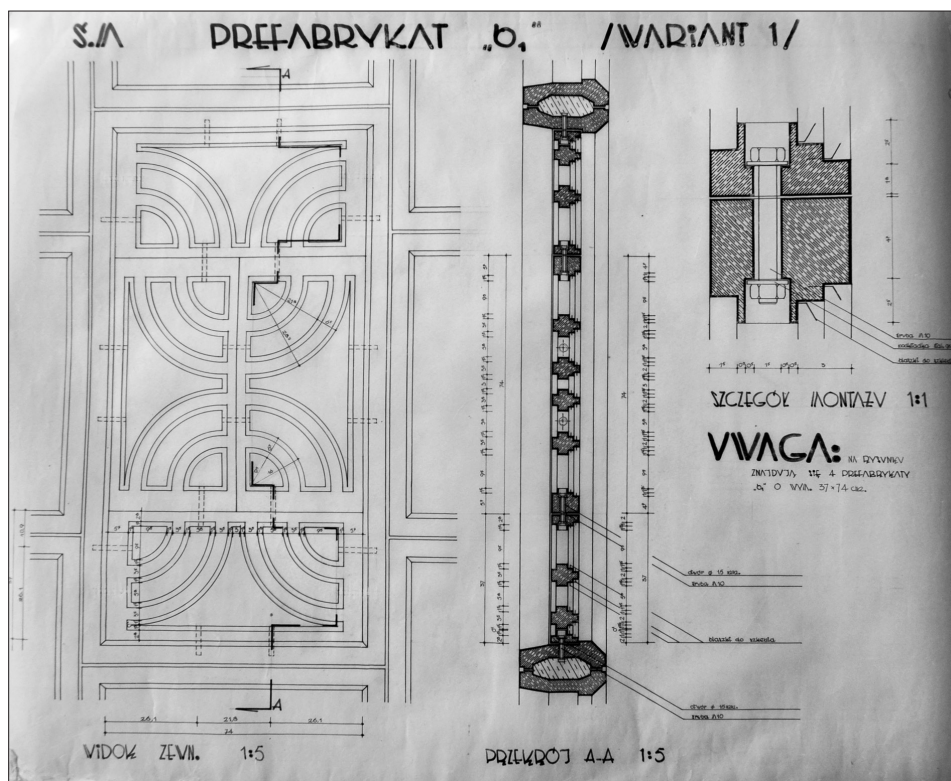


Fig. 11. Władysław Pieńkowski, design for the b1 window prefabricate, Kinga Pieńkowska-Owsińska's archive

72 Cf. A. Basista, *Betonowe dziedzictwo: architektura w Polsce czasów komunizmu* [The concrete legacy: architecture in Poland in the communist period], Warsaw, 2001, pp. 79–89.

73 Interview with Sylwester Szefer, recording in the Pieńkowski family archive.

74 Information on the prefabricate production technology was obtained from Kinga Pieńkowska-Owsińska.



Fig. 12. Prefabricated coffers of the ceiling being joined with reinforced-concrete frames during the construction of the church of St. Michael the Archangel, 1960s, unknown photographer, Kinga Pieńkowska-Owsińska's archive

material's resistance in order to make the resultant prefabricates light in colour; in that period white concrete was impossible to attain.

It seems that prefabrication served a twofold role in the construction of the church of St. Michael. Apart from being an eminently practical solution (its advantages being low construction costs, high quality, the option of working in winter, safety, and better acoustics in the interior), aesthetic criteria were of paramount importance. The use of prefabricates brought Pieńkowski closer to modern-day simplicity and emphasised the structure of the edifice. In residential architecture of Socialist Realism, the prefabricates were concealed; yet Pieńkowski, by creating stained glass windows from these elements, gave them the status of a work of artistic craft.

The church of St. Michael the Archangel vs. Polish church architecture in the period of the People's Republic

Few churches were built in Poland in the first post-war decade. Konrad Kuczukuczyński goes as far as to state that "in the years 1948–1970 it is difficult to speak

about church-building as a phenomenon, with the exception of sporadic cases of building permissions fought for successfully by desperate believers".⁷⁵ It was only in the 1970s that church architecture began to flourish.

Thus, having few local contemporary models, architects who designed churches could either enter a dialogue with the architecture of earlier eras or with the works of foreign architects, usually known from specialist journals (e.g. the periodicals *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* and *L'Art Sacré*⁷⁶).

Kucza-Kuczyński points to three 'symbolic churches' built in the years 1963–1970, i.e. the basilica of the Virgin Mary the Queen of Poland in Stalowa Wola (designed by Jan Bogusławski), the church in Władysławowo (designed by Szczepan Baum) and, as the third, the church of St. Michael the Archangel in Warsaw.⁷⁷ Whereas Baum's church introduces a revolutionary modification of the body, the two others constitute successful attempts at referring to the traditional silhouette of a church while making use of the new aesthetics.

In Stalowa Wola, the character of the interior is determined by its organic nature, by an allusion to the structure's natural emergence from the ground. The interior is dominated by tall windows with glowing stained glass. Features common to both designs are the designer's focus on the interior (more noticeable in the Warsaw church) and the axial quality of the composition, intelligibly leading towards the chancel. Pieńkowski's design is more conservative than Bogusławski's one; the latter, however, was completed only after the Second Vatican Council. Essential differences originate from aesthetic principles, not from programs of use.

In 1966 Władysław Pieńkowski assessed his Warsaw church in the following way: "At the moment, the church of St. Michael is no longer a modern church. The concept for it emerged in the years 1948–1949 [...] [and] was based on the medieval tradition of a three-nave church. But at that time it was said that it was... too modern".⁷⁸ The interior of the church of St. Michael began a new period in Pieńkowski's oeuvre, since from then on he designed interiors that were decidedly more ascetic and severe. In designing large churches (Opoczno, Włocławek, Kalisz, Toruń, Warsaw-Służew), he often returned to this spare formula, based on technical aesthetics which relied on accentuating constructional elements.

The church of St. Dominic in Warsaw, whose construction began in the 1980s, is worth recalling at this point. It is Pieńkowski's last work, his *opus magnum* that summed up his oeuvre. Despite obvious differences caused by the interval of four decades that separates the construction of the two Warsaw churches designed by Pieńkowski, similarities in the composition of the space are clearly visible. The forms of both are deeply rooted in the church architecture of medieval Europe. The similarity is further accentuated by the use of identical materials and techniques: brick, concrete, prefabricates, and relief elements in the walls.

⁷⁵ *Nowe kościoły...*, no page numbers.

⁷⁶ Władysław Pieńkowski was in possession of the issues of these periodicals which focused on contemporary church architecture; information obtained from Kinga Pieńkowska-Owsińska.

⁷⁷ *Nowe kościoły...*, no page numbers.

⁷⁸ *Słowo Powszechne*, 1966 (4), a cutting in the Pieńkowski family archive.

Pieńkowski vis-à-vis contemporary church architecture: inspirations and ideas

It is known that Pieńkowski was inspired by the designs of Gottfried Böhm and Rudolf Schwarz, the German masters of church architecture, and by those of Le Corbusier and Giovanni Michelucci.⁷⁹ His ease in using structures made of concrete, in turn, is similar to Pier Luigi Nervi. With regard to principles, he is not far from Dominikus Böhm, the father of the first of above-mentioned architects. Pieńkowski's familiarity with the oeuvre of these architects at the time he was working on church of St. Michael remains open to debate, however.

Pieńkowski is similar to Böhm Senior and Schwarz – architects of the earlier generation – in his empathy with the medieval tradition of church building, his ability to design a church interior as monumental, and his capable use of wide wall surfaces. However, he never came close to the extreme minimalism of Schwarz, who employed almost industrial aesthetics (e.g. the church of the Corpus Christi in Aachen, constructed 1928–1930).⁸⁰ The *Christkönig* church in Leverkusen, designed by Dominikus Böhm (constructed 1927–1928),⁸¹ seems especially important in the context of Pieńkowski's work. Its concave, unmistakably revivalist portal is filled with a concrete structure with divisions that clearly recall Pieńkowski's "razors" on the façade of the church of St. Michael the Archangel in Warsaw. The glass apse of the church of St. Engelbert in Essen (constructed 1933–1936),⁸² in turn, could have inspired Pieńkowski to design the openwork semicircular walls in the chapel of the Virgin Mary. The German architect tended to put arches both on the façades and in the interiors of churches (e.g. St. Joseph in Zabrze, constructed 1929–1931).⁸³ This may be the source for the arrangement of arches in side naves of Pieńkowski's churches (Tarnów, Głowaczów); in the Warsaw church, this arrangement was used in a reduced form.

In addition, Pieńkowski's design for the church of St. Michael is indebted to the oeuvre of Auguste Perret.⁸⁴ The geometrical, decorative arrangement of prefabricated windows seems to have been inspired by his church in Le Raincy near Paris. The notion of leaving raw materials and structures visible, as in the Warsaw church, also belongs to Perret's legacy.

It may be assumed that in the period of Pieńkowski's work on the design for the church of St. Michael (the late 1940s and the 1950s), the influence of Böhm the Younger, Nervi, Le Corbusier and Michelucci on his output was limited. The

79 In an interview with Sylwester Szefer, Pieńkowski referred to works by these four architects. In addition, his archive contains a sketch of an imaginary church interior with the southern wall resembling the famous window-pierced wall of the chapel in Ronchamp.

80 *Rudolf Schwarz and the Monumental Order of Things*, ed. A. Caruso, H. Thomas, Zurich, 2016, pp. 185–199.

81 *Dominikus Böhm 1880–1955*, ed. W. Voigt, I. Flagge, Tübingen, 2005, p. 135.

82 *Ibid.*, p. 149.

83 *Ibid.*, p. 86.

84 Cf. J. Abram, *Auguste Perret*, Paris, 2013, pp. 185–186.

works of Gottfried Böhm, especially his pilgrimage church in Neviges, were crucial to his later creative development, when Pieńkowski turned to Brutalism and began to shape the outer walls of this churches with more freedom (e.g. Kielce, Warsaw-Służew, Włocławek). Pieńkowski's assessed Giovanni Michelucci's church by the Autostrada del Sole and Le Corbusier's chapel in Ronchamp as highly conducive to religious feeling and thus most praiseworthy.⁸⁵

Pieńkowski mentioned his inspirations in his essay on the functional elements of a church interior included in the *Budowa i konserwacja kościołów* handbook.⁸⁶ Especially interesting are his references to ancient and medieval art,⁸⁷ as well as to contemporary architecture,⁸⁸ which present modern churches as a part of the "developmental cycle" of art. He cited the saying of St. Thomas Aquinas: *Conservatio est continua creatio* as reflecting his own attitude to the traditions of ecclesiastical art.⁸⁹ He also emphasised that, following the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, "no form of falsehood, counterfeit or pretence should be allowed" in a church⁹⁰.

Conclusion

The history of the designs for, and the construction of, the church of St. Michael the Archangel in Warsaw perfectly illustrates the key problems faced by ecclesiastical architecture in Poland in the first two decades after the Second World War. Władysław Pieńkowski's oeuvre evinces a clear desire to modernise the architectural idiom; but his concurrent predilection for conventional, almost anachronistic forms is nothing short of surprising.

The evolution of the design, clearly intelligible when its three stages are compared, did not proceed in a linear manner. The first concept was relatively modern in its aesthetics, even though the latter was still rooted in the 1930s; afterwards, the second phase effectively constitutes a return to historical solutions. The choice of a historical idiom may be perceived as a sign of Pieńkowski's willingness to enter into a dialogue with the then-current doctrine of Socialist Realism. The final design is, essentially, a modernised version of the first one; it may therefore be assumed that, in general, the concept for the church of St. Michael evolved in the years 1948–1949 and was subsequently modified until the late 1950s. Pieńkowski creatively internalised the tendencies of the era in which he was working on the church of St. Michael. Especially interesting is the fact that it was in the construction of this

85 Interview with Sylwester Szefer, recording in the Pieńkowski family archive.

86 W. Pieńkowski, *Elementy funkcjonalne wnętrza kościoła* [Functional elements of a church interior], in: *Budowa i konserwacja kościołów. Poradnik-vademecum* [Church construction and conservation. Handbook], Warsaw, 1981, pp. 115–138.

87 Ibid., p. 120. E.g. the Sainte Chapelle in Paris.

88 Ibid. Pieńkowski refers to Perret's churches near Paris (Le Raincy, the Montmagny chapel) and to his own church of St. Michael.

89 Ibid., p. 130.

90 Ibid.

particular church that Pieńkowski made extensive use of prefabrication, a technology much touted by the authorities,⁹¹ for the first time. From then on, it would be one of the distinctive features of his architecture. Pieńkowski's manner of using prefabricated elements differed from the architectural practice of the era, bringing him closer to the heirs of Perret, who were able to utilise the aesthetic potential of this technology. Moving in the sphere of "dissident" architecture, so to speak, he could permit himself to conduct some technological and aesthetic experiments.

Pieńkowski's desire to modernise the idiom of ecclesiastical architecture was inspired by his familiarity with foreign architectural achievements and with the contemporary theory of liturgy, and at the same time limited by the necessity to make aesthetic compromises. The architect was unable to fully realise the audacious visions he rendered in the concept sketches. The possibility of implementing modernising ideas was severely limited, the pressure resulting from the fact that, in the area of architecture, the primary goal of the Catholic Church in the People's Republic of Poland was to build the largest possible number of churches that would have the largest possible capacity. Pieńkowski created the church of St. Michael in an era when the sponsor was less concerned with the theoretical, theological aspect of the work than the designer. The field of Pieńkowski's creative freedom was limited still further by the modest financial resources allocated to this enterprise, and by difficulties in obtaining construction materials. In the Warsaw church, Guardini's ideas for a modern temple⁹² could be implemented only to a limited extent. Its modern character is, however, confirmed by some aesthetic solutions, such as, for instance, the severity of detail and the architect's unwillingness to simply imitate historical architecture; in the functional aspect of the interior, the same is indicated by the baptismal font and the chapel of the Virgin Mary, intended to serve as the so-called weekly chapel. Finally, the plan of the structure,⁹³ with a two-level church and rooms intended for religious instruction located in the basement, is also innovative, even though in this case it was enforced by the political conditions of the time.

The evolution of the design for the church of St. Michael the Archangel illustrates the transformations taking place in ecclesiastical architecture in the first two decades after the Second World War. The departure from pre-war forms, which is intelligible in the final concept, confirms the architect's independence; he had evidently developed his own idea for a church structure. Pieńkowski worked in entirely different circumstances than the majority of architects active at the time, as they were employed in state-owned enterprises. In addition, the process of the design's evolution is inseparably linked with political realities of the time. It must be noted that Pieńkowski not only achieved the primary goal, which was to construct a church, but in doing so, he managed to create a work of superior quality.

91 Cf. M. Czapelski, *A House...*

92 R. Guardini, *The Essential Guardini. An Anthology of the Writings of Romano Guardini*, ed. H. R. Kuehn, Chicago, 1997.

93 Cf. M. E. Rosier-Siedlecka CR, *Odpowiedź przestrzenna na nowe założenia liturgii i duszpasterstwa. Przegląd nowych kościołów Europy zachodniej* [A spatial response to new principles of liturgy and pastoral care. Overview of new churches in Western Europe], in: *Sztuka i sacrum...*, pp. 74–80.

The design for church of St. Michael is a caesura in the output of Władysław Pieńkowski also because by the time the church was nearing completion, the reforms of the Second Vatican Council had already become a reality. It belongs to the small group of post-Thaw churches,⁹⁴ the first important construction enterprises embarked on by the Catholic Church in Poland after the Second World War. Its design constitutes one of the first attempts to introduce modern models of church architecture, inspired by the Western achievements and the contemporary liturgical thought, to be undertaken in Poland after the year 1945.⁹⁵

The conditions in which the Warsaw church was built resulted in the fact that it did not become a model for later designs. Changes in the liturgy made Pieńkowski's conception to some extent obsolete, but later on the architect developed the solutions which he would then employ during the construction of the church of St. Michael, and would use in the decades to come. The history of the design and construction of this church demonstrates the difficult beginnings of post-Thaw church architecture. The church of St. Michael stands at the outset of the career of perhaps the only architect working in the People's Republic of Poland who devoted himself solely to ecclesiastical architecture. This is because he saw his activity not as work, but rather as a sacred craft.⁹⁶

Translated by Klaudyna Michałowicz

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94 Construction work started before the year 1956; this refers to the time the church entered into service.

95 See Rev. J. Nyga, *Architektura sakralna a ruch odnowy liturgicznej na przykładzie obiektów diecezji katowickiej* [Ecclesiastical architecture and the liturgical renewal movement as exemplified by edifices in the Katowice diocese], Katowice, 1990; C. Blanchet, P. Vérot, *Architecture et arts sacrés depuis 1945 à nos jours*, Paris, 2015, pp. 58–59. The authors juxtapose the Warsaw church of St. Michael the Archangel with three edifices in Western Europe: the *Allerheiligen* church in Basel (designed by Hermann Baur, 1947–1950), the church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Turin (1950–1955) and the church of the Holy Family in Bologna (designed by Raffaello and Rodolfo Bettazzi, 1955).

96 As mentioned by Bishop Michał Janocha, in a private conversation.

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Abstract

Despite the considerable influence he exerted on post-war church architecture in Poland, the designer Władysław Pieńkowski (1907–1991) is today an altogether forgotten figure. The current paper outlines his biography and his early oeuvre; this is because his experience in designing office blocks and industrial plants gained while working under the supervision of the most outstanding Polish architects of the mid-20th century, was to be of key importance to his later, independent designs for ecclesiastical buildings. The paper focuses on a particularly important work, one which in many ways constitutes a breakthrough in the architect's career, namely the church of St. Michael the Archangel in the Mokotów district of Warsaw.

This was the first entirely new church to be erected in the capital of Poland after the year 1945. Its construction depended on the dynamic changes in the balance of political forces. The church could be built owing to the support of the PAX Association circle, including the direct involvement of Bolesław Piasecki. In spite of their patronage, however, construction works were repeatedly halted and extended over several years, and the architectural design had to be reworked. The paper contains an analysis of three fundamental designs for the church, now held in the St. Michael the Archangel parish archive and in the architect's records preserved by his heirs. The first design dates from the period of 1948/9–1951, the subsequent one from the year 1954, and the final one from 1956–1961. The evolution of the design moved from the initial continuation of forms typical of the pre-war Modernised Revivalism, through a peculiar reference to Socialist Realism, to rigorous Modernism. The church of St. Michael the Archangel became Pieńkowski's testing ground; there, he tried out several solutions which he would consistently utilise in the subsequent years of his career, e.g. the large-scale application of prefabricated elements in both the construction and the decoration of the edifice. The construction of this church was concurrent with important events of a political (the Thaw) and religious nature (the Second Vatican Council). Tracing the history of the design for the Warsaw church and clarifying its connections with contemporaneous church architecture in Poland and in Western Europe made it possible to present the key problems faced by the Polish designers of ecclesiastical architecture in the first decades of the People's Republic of Poland.

Keywords: religious architecture, Roman Catholic Church, modernism, People's Republic of Poland, Warsaw