

POLAND

Industrial Heritage in Danger

(Before discussing the situation with respect to industrial heritage in Poland, it must be noted that there are still concerns about the preservation of wooden churches in the country. The threats that these structures face are well illustrated in the accompanying illustrations).

Poland and the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe are undergoing a process of industrial modernisation and adaptation to contemporary world standards. One of the most complicated and important tasks of industrial restructuring is the selection of unprofitable economic entities by means of their liquidation or bankruptcy. Restructuring includes ownership transformations, property privatisation and measures designed to increase efficiency, such as the exchange of machine parks and the implementation of modern technologies. Therefore, old machines are in many cases treated as scrap metal, and the historical machinery, left unat-

tended, is devastated. In many industrial facilities, machines and equipment over 100 years old still exist. There is a serious threat that some of this historical technical equipment or architecture will be considered worthless. This includes even valuable items, which would normally be preserved in local museum collections, as for example in the Victoria Mine in Walbrzych.

When production ceases in historical industrial buildings and there is no new user or investor, the process of building degradation is accelerated, leading to the devastation or even the destruction of a historical object. Lack of funds impedes even the maintenance of buildings listed as heritage objects, not to mention other historical sites. Due to the current economic circumstances, it is absolutely necessary to transform entire industries using the methods mentioned above, but we must also find effective ways to conserve and promote industrial heritage during this process.

Meeting Challenges

In recent years, special problems were posed by above-ground historical objects situated on the premises of liquidated coal mines, such as hoist towers, engine rooms with winding engines, ventilation buildings, boiler houses, coal sorting and washing plants or cokery complexes. The adaptation of these types of historical objects for other functions is a difficult task. Nonetheless, a number of positive examples exist in Upper Silesia. They include the adaptation of the former boiler house in the 'Kleofas' mine into a swimming pool and recreation complex, and the adaptation of former mine baths in the 'Murcki' mine (1908) into an office building. The tower of the 'Bartosz' drift in the 'Katowice' mine, along with an engine house and a winding steam engine from 1892, were adapted to form a small local museum. An excellent example of adaptation of industrial architecture into office space is the modernisation of the former boiler house from 1886 in the complex of the so-called slow filters in the Warsaw water main. Offices and a conference hall were created there, and the old iron-roof construction has been retained.

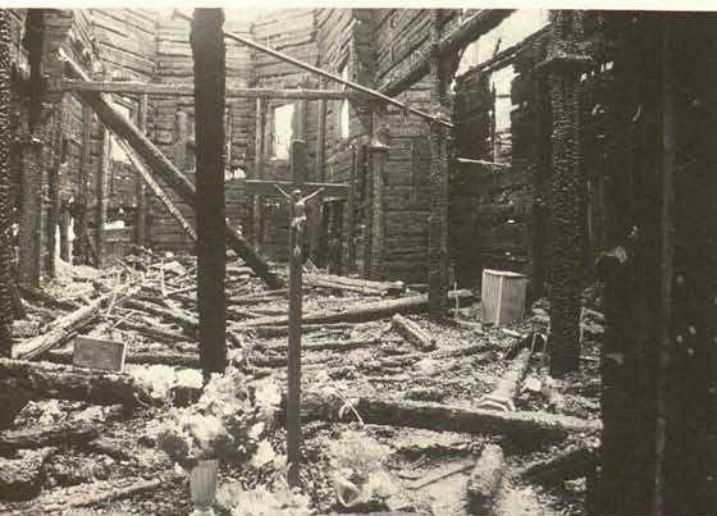
It must be said, however, that despite considerable progress in the revitalisation of historical objects and even complexes of substantial industrial heritage value, many sites still await their chance for re-use. Historical post-industrial sites or abandoned local railway lines could become important components of sustainable regional and local development programmes. Because the scale of the problem exceeds the capabilities of institutions established for the preservation of industrial heritage, the issue should be included in regional development programmes.

Industry in Poland must be totally restructured in order to function correctly in market economy conditions and fulfil contemporary quality standards – while at the same time preserving employment. State budget participation, not only in the industrial but also in the cultural sector, has fallen to extremely low levels. Efforts are concentrating primarily on the economic development necessary to make up for many years of stagnation.

It is possible to indicate several categories of objects that seem especially threatened. These include industrial objects where production has completely ceased and which have been deserted during recent years. In such cases, the preservation of the object requires immediate adaptation for useful temporary functions, which will assure the financial means for object maintenance.

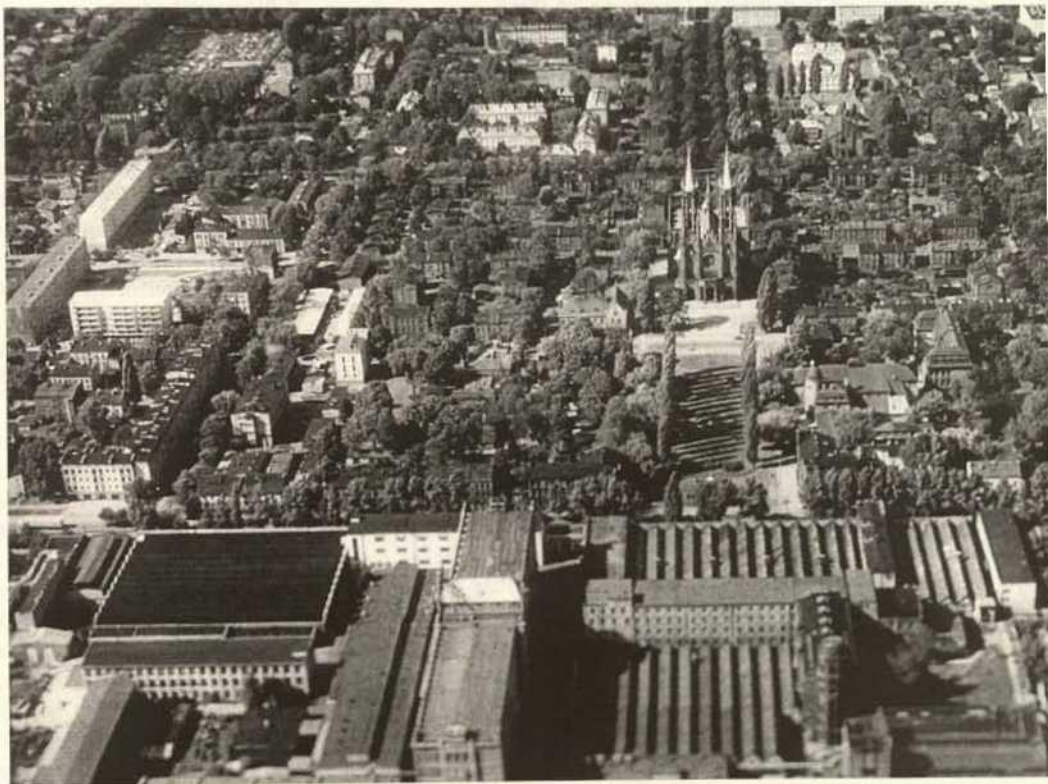


Among the principal dangers mentioned in last year's report (see *Heritage at Risk Report 2000*, p. 155) is fire hazard threatening wooden buildings. A sad example is the recently burnt down wooden church of St Anne (17th century) in Długa Koscielna (Halinów); here the state before and after the fire.

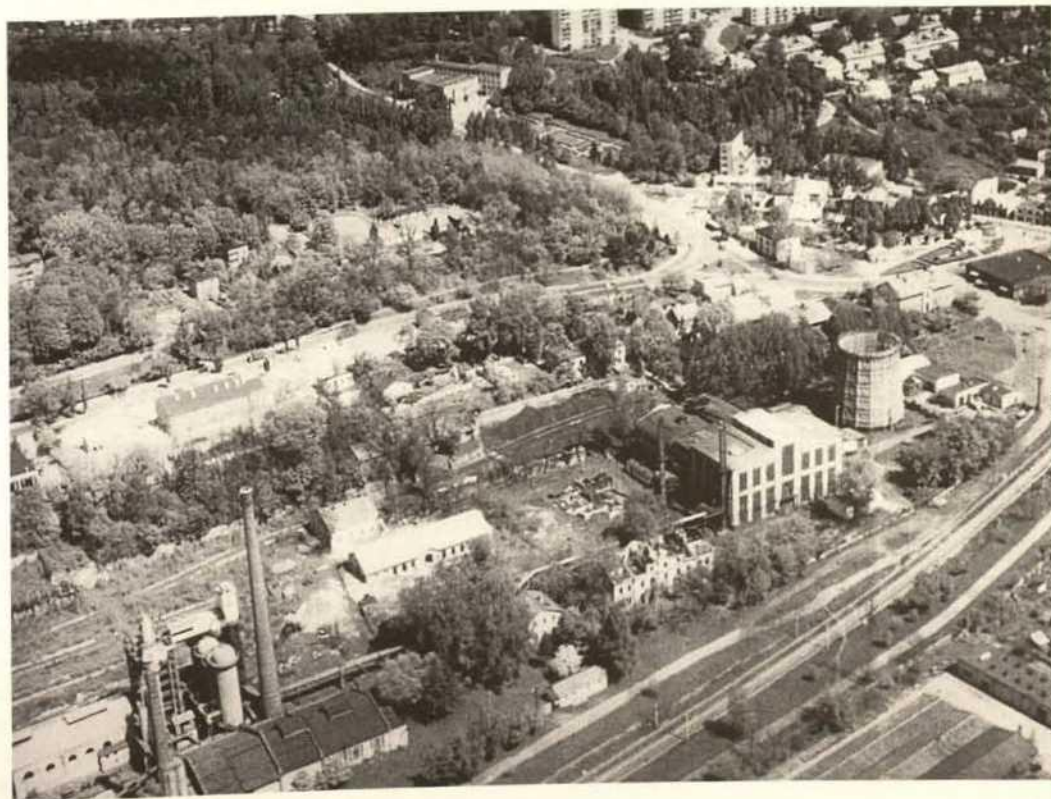


ROMANIA

The Zyrardów industrial and residential settlement is one of the largest flax mills in Europe in the 19th century. The bankrupt enterprise was divided among different owners, thus lowering the value of the complex as a closed compositional and spatial entity.



Zyrardów, listed industrial and residential settlement, one of the biggest flax mills in Europe in the 19th century. The bankrupt enterprise was divided among different owners, thus lowering the value of the complex as a closed compositional and spatial entity.



Starachowice, listed blast furnace works and industrial settlement in a region of 2000 years of mining tradition. Production ended when the firm was closed in 1968. The huge permanent palaeontological exhibition will be in the empty casting hall. Long-term absence of maintenance accelerates the devastation of the objects.

Examples of Industrial Heritage at Risk

The blast furnace complex in Starachowice is a good example of the situation outlined above. The Starachowice blast-furnace works and industrial settlements are located in a region with mining-foundry traditions that date back to the beginning of the Christian era (earth smelting) and lasted without a break up to the 19th century. It is a very early example of mechanised metallurgy.

Old technological installations are prone to corrosion. Stopping or even slowing this process is extremely expensive. The technological problems associated with the maintenance of the blast furnace buildings, damaged by years of exposure to high temperatures, remain unsolved. At the present, the old factory halls are the site of an exposition of geological specimens unearthed during construction works. The presence of this geological museum, although unrelated to industrial heritage, assures that the buildings are properly maintained. The creation of a museum of the Starachowice blast furnace complex is planned in the future, based on the existing exposition facilities.

Another example of this problem is the old bridge over the Vistula River, located in the town of Tczew (Dirschau). The Tczew-Bridge, built between 1851 and 1857, is composed of six spans of about 130 metres each. They were connected by twos to continuous beams, a very innovative construction method in those early times. Today, three of the original spans of the old bridge still exist, along with segments added at a later date. They form a unique and important monument of the European history of structural engineering.

At present, the old 830-metre long bridge is only used by a small amount of local traffic. The local authorities that administer this heritage object are finding it increasingly difficult to finance its maintenance, due to the very high conservation costs of the huge object. A bridge is an object designed with a very particular purpose in mind and it is impossible to find alternative functions. An important question arises: how can we effectively protect and conserve technical heritage when the financial means provided by the national budget are so low?

A New Initiative

The Foundation of the Open Museum of Technology and the Polish Committee TICCIH (The International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage) are beginning a campaign under the name 'Europe over rivers – integration – heritage of the commonwealth'. It includes the cruise of the old steam-engine tugboat 'Nadbór' from Wrocław to Rotterdam via the Oder, Elbe and Rhine rivers and the canals of Germany and Holland, planned in May and June of the year 2002. It would promote industrial and technical heritage in Central Europe in relation to industrial-tourism. During the cruise, consideration would be given to what role the protection of such heritage can play in the creation of new bonds in the United Europe.

The Polish initiative has met with the interest of local authorities, NGOs and people connected with sailing in Germany and Holland. During the cruise a number of performances (fests, multi-media presentations, seminars, panel discussions, press conferences, shanty music concerts, exhibitions etc.) will be held. The events will take place in the harbours of places such as Wrocław, Berlin, Dorsten, Nijmegen, Arnhem, Rotterdam and Gorinchem.

On a wider scale, much could be undertaken without financial resources. In Poland several technical associations, local hobby groups and foundations have achieved great successes. Support and encouragement are essential for these groups. It is necessary to break the established approach and monopoly of large State and private companies. With this aim, it is extremely important for the future to popularise possible solutions and increase the activity of interest groups. A start would be to undertake to distribute information on the activities of similar groups in other countries.

Poland still lacks an unambiguous legal framework and institutional conceptions for solving the problem of how industrial heritage conservation should be carried out. We sincerely hope that the proposed activities will be our contribution to the preservation of our heritage for the future.

Polish Committee TICCIH
(The International Committee for the Conservation of the
Industrial Heritage)