Urban planning in post war Poland
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Aerial View of Warsaw
What is urban planning?

- Encyclopedia Britannica
  - Urban planning, design and regulation of the uses of space that focus on the physical form, economic functions, and social impacts of the urban environment and on the location of different activities within it.
  - Urban planning is a function of the government and or private corporations that exists in virtually every modern country.
Thesis

- Post war urban planning in Polish cities helped strengthen positive outlook on the new socialist government of the Soviets initially. But this system was flawed, and failed in the end because of a disconnect between the levels of society.
  - 4 levels were national, regional, provincial, and local
Think about this

- During our presentation here are couple questions to think about.
- How was urban planning different then from how it is today?
- Did the socialist ideas of the Soviets help or hinder the progress of Poland?
- Is the idea of national progress more important than the rights of individuals, or was there a greater good accomplished from this urban planning.
Goals of post-war urban planning

❖ Originally to raise living standards of working classes to pre-war standards
   ➢ When this was achieved, goal was to industrialize Poland to resemble Soviet style plans of the time

❖ Three Year Plan
   ➢ Introduced in 1947

❖ Six Year Plan
   ➢ Plan introduced in 1950 that pushed hard for industrialization, bigger and more central urban districts as opposed to more rural life of Poland beforehand
Steps taken to achieve these goals

❖ Focusing on concentrated urban areas as opposed to separated rural areas in order to increase productivity

❖ Trying to make sure urban communities were more or less equal so as to lessen the discrimination felt
  ➢ Further attempt to push the people from different backgrounds after the war together to work better as a unit

❖ Restored destroyed monuments as part of rebuilding efforts in order to attempt to gain favor with the Polish
  ➢ Rebuilds such as the Royal Castle were successful with this, while others were less so
Setting the Example

- Towards the end of the war Warsaw was completely leveled to the ground.
- The Soviets liberated the Poles and began to rebuild the city.
- The first building was The Palace of Culture and Science in the name of Joseph Stalin
- aka “Stalin’s Gift”
- 3500 workers and horrible living conditions
Nowa Huta
Nowa Huta

- 1 of 2 Socialist cities built
- Home to 100,000 workers
- Called the “Hidden Fortress”
- Combined the Renaissance elegance native to Poland with the grand, overwhelming scale typical of Soviet projects.
- Largest blast furnace in Europe located here
Why It Failed

❖ Lot of moving parts that ultimately led to inefficiency
❖ The way cities were supposed to function in the eyes of socialism
❖ Constant shortages going on
   ➢ Demand usurping supply
❖ Wrong priorities
Krakow as an example

● Plan drafted in 1939, was the plan until 1949, in which the central gov. decided to add the construction of the Lenin Steel Works and Nowa Huta to the plan
  ○ As plans neared completion in 1958, city of Krakow composed new plan. City’s plan was made obsolete by new plan from central authorities to triple the size of the steel works. Both of these plans went against the plan of the Steel works, which had announced they would level off with hiring
    ■ In 1967, Krakow announced a new plan, which was immediately made irrelevant by plan from central gov. to further expand Lenin Steel Works again
  ● In 1977, Krakow announced yet another plan, which the central gov. actually liked this time
    ○ Funds could not be made for this new plan however, and thus it wasn’t completed
Conclusion

Soviet government overestimated how much good industrialization and urbanization would do for Poland and in doing so, did not take into account many other important factors:

- How many resources it would take to convert a war-torn country to heavy industrialization
  - If the benefits would outweigh the costs
- Loss of agriculture from switching so heavily to industrialization
- Unhappiness of rural Poles who did not want to move
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