

***D**eardest Token for the Posterity...*

History of the Parliamentary Complex at Wiejska Street

Warsaw 2022



Door to the plenary hall. Above the door, painting by Michał Boruciński 'Poland' ('Adoration of the Kings')
05.1926. National Digital Archives

In the new building that is definitely going to be much more comfortable and impressive, outstanding acts may be created; it will definitely bear witness to immortal moments. However, the one which the Sejm is using now, albeit modest and uncomfortable, will remain the dearest token for the posterity as a place where the rebirth and the unification of the Republic of Poland took place.

K. Tołłoczko, *Gmach Sejmu Ustawodawczego*, 'Roboty Publiczne' 1919, vol. 2, p. 41.

Up until early 20th century, the Polish Sejm did not have its own permanent seat. During the First Polish Republic, the Sejm sessions were held in large-size buildings with representative functions (among others, royal castles) and sessions during which the king was elected were organised on election fields (among others in Kamionek and Wola in Warsaw). The Sejm sessions were held in: Piotrków, Cracow, Toruń, Bydgoszcz, Radom, Sandomierz, Lublin, Parczewo, Grodno and Warsaw. Since 1919, the seat of the Polish parliament has been located at Wiejska Street in the centre of the capital.

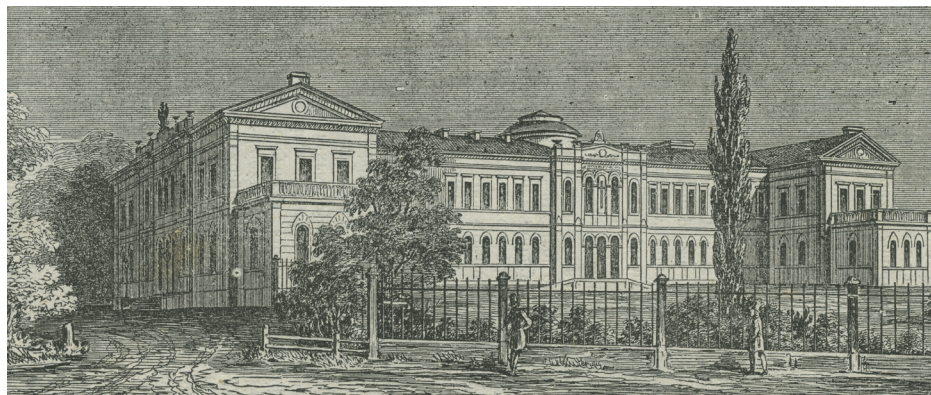
The present-day Sejm complex resembles a small town. It comprises, among others: 19th century building from the times of the Alexander and Mary Institute, buildings designed in the inter-war period by Kazimierz Skórewicz, buildings from the post-war period designed by Bohdan Pniewski; the New Deputies' House – the work of Małgorzata Handzelewicz-Waclavek from the second half of the 20th century and the 21st century projects of Bolesław Stelmach. Two buildings of the Sejm Chancellery are located outside of the complex at Wiejska Street – on Ludna 4a Street and Zagórna 3 Street.



Nobility Institute

The history of development of the present-day parliamentary complex began in the mid 19th century. In 1851, construction of a seven-grade educational facility for youth – the Nobility Institute – was started. The architect Antoni Sulimowski designed a building in the shape of a letter ‘T’, thus commemorating the name ‘Tivoli’ (in the middle of the 19th century, it was a garden at Wiejska Street, stretching down to Rozbrat Street). Sulimowski was assisted by Bolesław Podczaszyński and Karol Martin; the chief constructor was Józef Orłowski, succeeded by Teofil Schuller. The building with a classicist form had two storeys. The ground floor housed the administrative office, seven classrooms, two recreation rooms, a museum and a laboratory. On the first floor, there was the headmistress’ apartment, two dormitories for pupils, two chapels – a Catholic and an Orthodox one (designed by Podczaszyński); a room for music and specialist subjects and a tower with a small astronomical observatory, also used as a paint room. The wing was assigned for the refectory, and it was also used during the school ceremonies as the assembly room. It seated over 200 people. Behind the refectory – where the sessions of the future Sejm were held – a smaller building was located with a kitchen, bathrooms and an infirmary. There were stables and wood sheds in the courtyard.

Ceremonious opening of the building, combined with inauguration of the school year took place on 15 September 1853. The teaching staff of the Institute comprised brilliant pedagogues, among them physicist Stanisław Przysański, philologist Augustyn Szmurło, logician Adolf Kudasiewicz and linguist Feliks Źochowski. Drawing and painting was taught by Filip Romanowski and Józef Polkowski, while music by Władysław Wiślicki. Adam Mieczyski gave lectures on agriculture.



Building of the Nobility Institute at Wiejska Street. 'Józef Unger's Warsaw Popular Science Calendar For Ordinary Year 1854', Warsaw 1853. Mazovian Digital Library

Alexander and Mary Institute

Pursuant to the act of 20 May 1862 on public education in the Kingdom of Poland, the Alexander Institute from Puławy was merged with the Mary Institute in Warsaw (located at Miodowa Street). In this way, the Alexander and Mary Institute for Young Ladies was set up; its seat was located in the building of the former Nobility Institute. Minor renovations of the building were made at that time. Under the supervision of Władysław Kosmowski, the infirmary was extended.

In the first years, the following persons worked in the Institute: Narcyza Żmichowska, Ignacy Boczyliński and Wojciech Grochowski. The majority of the pupils were daughters of Russian officers and officials. Girls from the Polish gentry and intelligentsia families were also encouraged to study there. Soon, the facility became a tool of russification. As of 1867, the Institute remained under the care of Empress Maria Alexandrovna and was directly supervised by the imperial chancellery. Its rank was highlighted by visits of dignitaries, including Alexander II.

The institute wound up its operation after the evacuation of Russians in 1915. The Germans organised a Blood Test Institute here – a military infectious disease hospital.



Oldest preserved photograph of the building of the Alexander and Mary Institute for the Education of Girls, ca. 1865, view from the side of Wiejska Street. Photo: Konrad Brandel. National Museum in Warsaw



Inauguration of the Legislative Sejm, 10.02.1919. Sejm Library

Reconstruction

The proposal for temporary adaptation of the Alexander and Mary Institute for Young Ladies for the needs of the Sejm was probably put forward by the engineer Franiszek Lilpop. It was one of the few facilities in the capital that had a room with sizes allowing for the organisation of plenary sessions and numerous smaller premises needed for sittings of committees and parliamentary clubs. On 22 November 1918, the Council of Ministers decided to entrust quick adaptation of the facility to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. A formal take-over of the building from the military authorities took place on 1 December 1918.

The adaptation of the post-institute building for the needs of the Sejm started on 20 December 1918. Over 300 workers were hired. The budget of the project was 1 million Polish marks. The managers of the work were: director – architect Kazimierz Tolłoczko, cooperation – engineer Gustaw Trzeciński, head of the construction department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs; architect Romuald Miller and gardener planner Tadeusz Szanior. On 10 February 1919, the Legislative Sejm of the Second Polish Republic met at its first sitting in the building.

Plenary Hall

The plenary hall of the Sejm was arranged in the largest room of the Alexander and Mary Institute – the former refectory. The presidium section was raised and the marshal's chair was positioned centrally. The rostrum was placed in front of it. On both sides, places for the members of the government were located. The Latin sentence: 'SALVS REIPUBLICAE SVPREMA LEX' ('welfare of the Polish Republic the highest law') was placed on the wall above the apse. On the opposite side of the room, a painting titled 'Poland' ('Adoration of The Kings') by Michał Boruciński was placed above the entrance door. The presidium section was separated from the deputy section by stenographers' stands. There were twenty eight rows with twenty chairs in each row in the hall. In the balcony, space was designated for the diplomatic corps, the press and the audience, yet due to security reasons, usually 200 entrance cards were issued.

WNIOSEK

posłów OSIECKIEGO, MORACZEWSKIEGO, MAJA, BOJKI, NOWICKIEGO, ŚLIWIŃSKIEGO i tow, w sprawie dodatkowych budowli do istniejącego gmachu Sejmu.

WYSOKI SEJM raczy uchwalić:

Zanim będzie wzniesiony nowy gmach sejmowy, jako dzieło sztuki i pomnik kultury narodowej, okazuje się konieczna potrzeba budowy dodatkowego skrzydła od strony południowej na pomieszczenie sali amfiteatralnej, pawilonu dla marszałka i domu dla posłów, Sejm upoważnia przeto prezydium do natychmiastowego przystąpienia do tych budowli i wotuje na bieżący okres budżetowy kwotę 5 milionów marek.

Warszawa, dn. 2 sierpnia 1919 r.

Wnioskodawcy:

Osiecki, Moraczewski, Maj, Bojko, Nowicki, Śliwiński.

Tabor, Malupa, Bagiński, Smola, Skrzypek, Kotnis, Koźlicki, Rataj, Bryl, Stapiński, Matusz, Madej, Duro, Niedziałkowski, Szczerkowski, Misiotek, Matakiewicz, Średniawski, Putek, Sottyk, Bardel, Kielak.

Senate's Plenary Hall

The adaptation of the Alexander and Mary Institute for the needs of the Sejm was, in its intention, a temporary solution. The adoption of the March Constitution in 1921 which created two chambers of the parliament called for reconstruction of the complex and separation of two halls for the sessions of the parliament.

After the elections in 1922, the Sejm and Senate met interchangeably. The marshal of the Senate and the Senate officials had a building from the end of the 19th century (today, G Building) at their disposal. In 1924, a decision was made to hand over the former refectory of the Alexander and Mary Institute to the Senate. In 1928, the Supervisory Committee for the Senate Building Redevelopment was set up, headed by the marshal of the Higher Chamber. The construction work, carried out between June and November 1928, was coordinated by the architect Stanisław Miecznikowski.

The redevelopment resulted from the necessity of shortening the room on account of the number of senators. The subsequent rows of chairs (eight in total) were arranged in a way that each of them was located slightly higher. The semi-circular niche for the marshal and the government benches was preserved. Furniture was replaced with lighter items made of birch wood. The semi-circular rostrum was replaced with a rectangular one. The reinforced concrete columns were bricked and provided with Doric features. Furthermore, the system of additional lights was changed. The room became more receptive and its acoustic properties were also improved. The first session of the Senate in the redeveloped room was held on 10 November 1928.

Supervisory Committee for Extension of the Sejm Building

On 2 August 1919 – following a motion signed by a group of several dozen deputies – the Sejm decided: ‘Before a new building of the Sejm is erected, as a work of art and a monument of national culture, it is currently necessary to build an additional wing on the southern side, intended for the amphitheatre room, a pavilion for the marshal

and a house for the deputies. Hence, the Sejm authorises the presidium to immediately commence such construction and votes to assign the amount of 5 million marks for the current budget period.'

In 1919, upon the initiative of deputy Hipolit Śliwiński, a closed competition was organised for the extension of the parliamentary complex. Architects from three cities (Warsaw, Cracow and Poznań) were invited to take part in it. They included: Czesław Przybylski, Marian Lalewicz, Adam Ballenstedt, Stanisław Cybichowski, Roger Sławski, Ludwik Wojtyczko, Kazimierz Wyczyński and Jan Zawiejski. Work on the designs was stopped by the outbreak of the Polish-Muscovite War.

In 1922, the competition was resumed. The jury decided to choose the design of Przybylski, where construction of a new monumental building with an amphitheatre-type plenary hall was planned.

The deputies' motion for extension of the Sejm building was acted on in 1925. In that year, the Supervisory Committee for Extension of the Sejm Building was set up, headed by Deputy Marshal Jędrzej Moraczewski (and subsequently by Marshal Maciej Rataj). It was composed of nine deputies (Adam Chądzyński, Nikodem Hryckiewicz, Fabian Jeremicz, Jakub Karau, Władysław Kosydarski, Hipolit Śliwiński and Paweł Wasyńczuk) and two senators (Joachim Hempel and Moses Körner). The executive committee included: head of the Finance and Economic Department of the Office of Sejm and Senate, Leonard Elżanowski, director of the Office of Sejm and Senate, Jerzy Pomykański and architect Kazimierz Skórewicz – after WWI the Head of State Buildings and the curator of the Royal Castle in Warsaw.

The parliamentary representation was multi-party. The members of the Committee had extensive construction and building experience. Chądzyński was a graduate of the Machine Construction Faculty at the Technical University in Prague. During WWI, Hryckiewicz worked in a construction company in Petersburg and was a deputy head of the Black Sea railway construction in Sochi. Jeremicz was an electric technician, while Kosydarski a road and bridge engineer. Śliwiński – the chief promoter of the

construction of the new seat, the deputy rapporteur of the entire project – studied civil construction at the Technical University of Lviv. Hempel worked as the director of hard coal mine of the French and Italian Society of Dąbrowa Coal Mines in Sosnowiec and steelworks in Czeladź, was an owner of quarries and lime kilns near Kielce. Before the war, Körner was the manager of work at the Siedlce-Bołogoje railway; he also supervised the extension of the tram network in Warsaw and served as the director of the timber processing plant in Biała Podlaska. The professional experiences of these deputies guaranteed effective supervision over the performance of the redevelopment project.

Extension of Sejm Complex

The author of the design for extension of the parliamentary complex was the architect Kazimierz Skórewicz. The work on the organisation of the Sejm space took three years. The basic assumption of the programme was the use of Polish materials: for example, the finishing of the plenary hall and the hall in the deputies' house was done with the 'Sitkówka' and 'Szewce' marble from Kielce. The majority of the brick and reinforced concrete work was done by a company called Tor; plaster and stucco work



Parliamentary complex after reconstruction, after 1928. Sejm Library

by Witold Krassowski i S-ka Inż.; main entrance gates, balustrades for staircases and window bars were supplied by Młot and H. Zieleniecki, while construction ferrules by Fabryka Okuć Budowlanych i Odlewni Metali K. Dobrowolski i F. Huskowski.

The Supervisory Committee for Extension of the Sejm Building tried to make sure that the second term parliament would inaugurate its work in the new premises. At the end of winter 1928, the finishing work was done in two shifts, until the very last moment.

The structural foundation of the new buildings comprised a reinforced concrete shell filled with hollow bricks. The amphitheatre-shaped Sejm plenary hall was built next to the former school building. The wing with the old plenary hall was handed over to the Senate. A four-storey deputies' house was constructed. It had approx. 160 rooms, several premises for committees, a library and service facilities (among others, a restaurant). The hotel was connected with the semi-rotunda by a one-storey connector intended for a smoking room. The finishing of the interiors in the hotel lasted until 1935. The main entrance to the deputies' house – which survived WWII – is located on the side of the southern courtyard. The lower section of the staircase features marble sculptures of Zofia Trzcińska-Kamieńska – female allegories of *Wisdom, Peace, Justice, Fame* and *Science*.

New Plenary Hall

The plenary hall of the Sejm which – in line with Skórewicz's design was also used for the sessions of the National Assembly – had the shape of a semi-rotunda with a balcony for the audience and lobbies. It was topped with a coffer-type ceiling, glazed in the middle. A row of monumental columns surrounding the interior supported the ceiling. Behind the columns was a balcony for the audience – the right box was intended for the president, the left one for the journalists. The presidential box was decorated with a silver balustrade with the emblem of the Republic of Poland and crimson drapery.

The style of the plenary hall referenced an ancient amphitheatre. The presidium



New plenary hall of the Sejm, 1929, photo: Henryk Poddębski. Museum of Warsaw

section was located centrally. Behind it were three entrances for the marshal, ministers and under-secretaries of state. In front of the marshal's seat was the rostrum and next to it, stands for stenographers. The deputies' chairs were made of light oak and lined with dark green leather (in the Senate room, cherry colour was used). They were designed by Jerzy Siennicki. On the ground floor, the hall was surrounded by lobbies with nine doors, positioned symmetrically, leading inside.

On the outside, the building was surrounded by half-columns. Along its upper section was a frieze made between 1927 and 1928 by Jan Szczepkowski and Jan Biernacki. It featured bas reliefs in national style: *the Right and the Left Wing (Creative Thought)*, *Art, Civil Defence Training (Sport)*, *Ploughing, Harvest, Industry (Handicraft)*, *Liberation* (Szczepkowski's works); *Literary Works, Science, Justice, Legions – 1914, Navy, Trade and Handicraft* (Biernacki's works). The inauguration of the new plenary hall took place on 27 March 1928.

Interior Design in Sejm Buildings

At the beginning of 1929, the Sejm marshal announced a contest for decorating three wall panels on the side of the presidium in the plenary hall. The deadline for the submission of works was set for September. By assumption, these were meant to be large-format works (the panels had the following sizes: central one: 14 x 4.65 m, side ones: 4.5 x 4.65 m). The jury of the open competition included: Marshal of the Sejm, Ignacy Daszyński; director of the Department of Art Wojciech Jastrzębowski; professors of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw – Władysław Skoczylas, Kazimierz Skórewicz and Fryderyk Pautsch; director of the Sejm Office, Henryk Pomorski.

Twenty-eight painters took part in the competition, including: Józef Mehoffer, Kazimierz Sichulski, Bronisław Bartel, Władysław Roguski, Tadeusz Pruszkowski, Ludomir Slendziński, Stanisław Batowski Kaczor, Zdzisław Eichler, Stanisław Gajewski, Konstanty Górski, Wlastimil Hofman, Stanisław Poraj Pstrokoński, Waclaw Piotrowski, Jan Wydra and Zofia Stryjeńska. Twelve projects were qualified for the second stage.

The competition exhibition was arranged at the end of September 1929 in the rooms

of the Polish Art Club, located in the 'Polonia' Hotel in Warsaw. The ex aequo competition winners were Slendziński (in the central part of the triptych, he presented the session of the Roman senate, in the side panels, the allegories of Cracow and Vilnius) and Mehoffer (a proposal of an Art Nouveau landscape with an allegory of Polonia and presentations of the natural elements). The works chosen by the jury did not enjoy favourable critical assessment. Eventually, work on the paintings was not commenced.

In other Sejm rooms, old art (among others: '3rd of May Constitution' by Jan Matejko, 'All Saints' Day at the Wawel' by Wincenty Wodzinowski) was accompanied by modern artworks (among others: 'Seasons of the Year' by Zofia Stryjeńska; 'Poland' by



Stanisław Batowski Kaczor, 'Dawn' (left wing of the 'Triumphant Polonia' triptych), 1929
Sejm Library

Michał Boruciński, landscapes of Żułowo (birthplace of Marshal Piłsudski) by Zenon Kononowicz). The lobby featured sculptures presenting Maciej Rataj and Ignacy Daszyński, 'Polonia' by Hanna Nałkowska-Bickowa and a plaque commemorating the tragically deceased Gabriel Narutowicz.

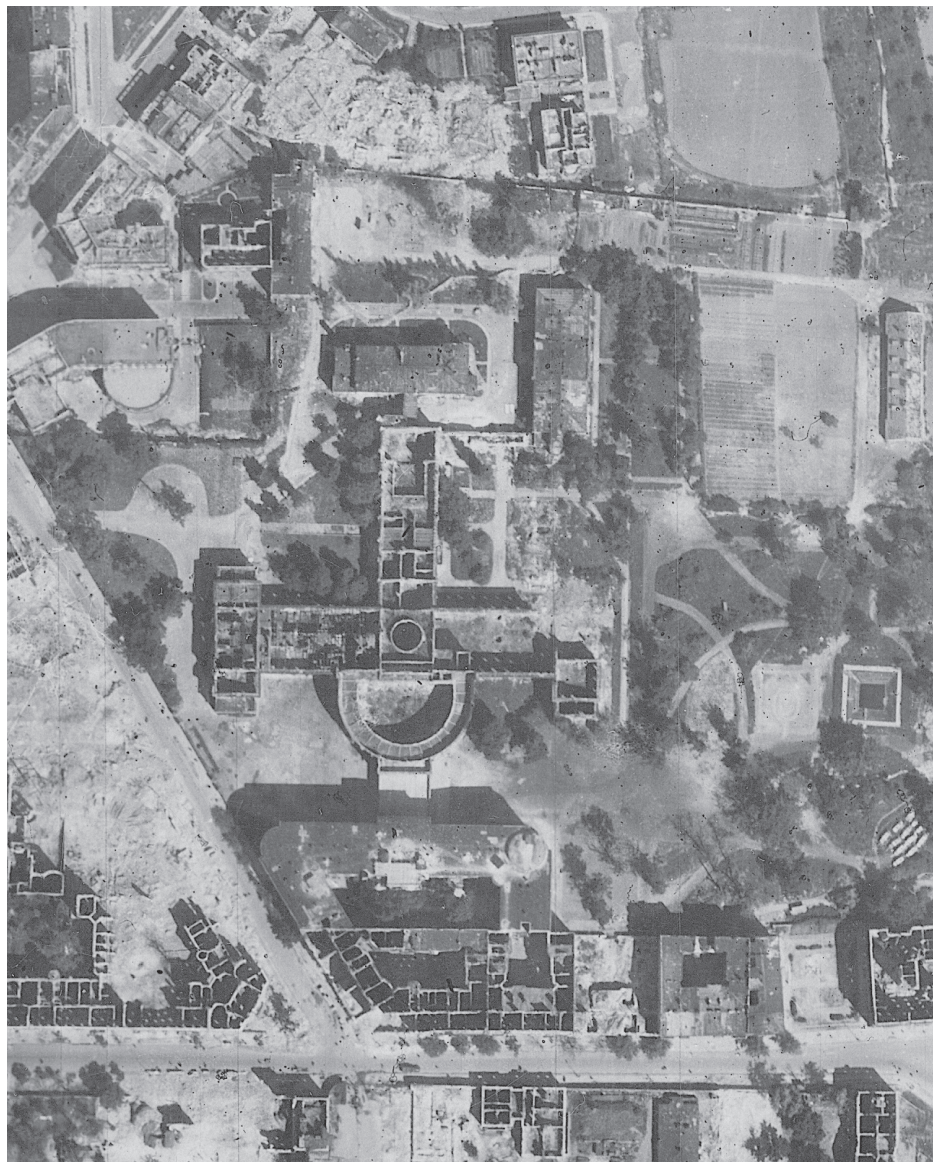
Parliamentary Complex During WWII

The parliamentary buildings were damaged as a result of artillery shelling on 17 September 1939. In particular, the plenary hall was badly damaged – the roof collapsed inside. Only the walls and the solid stone columns in the balcony survived. The marble lining was also destroyed. Damage to other buildings (the Sejm hotel and a part of the former Mary Institute) was minor and these premises were used by the Germans.

During the Nazi occupation, the Sejm was in direct vicinity of the so-called police district, where the pivotal element was the building of the Ordnungspolizei in the Szuch Alley. The Polish population was removed from the entire district, the axis of which was Ujazdowskie Alley and Belwederska Street. This area was intended as the place of residence for German officials, officers and other employees of the occupier. The Sejm buildings were transformed into barracks for several battalions of the Schutzpolizei, i.e. the special military units forming a part of the Ordnungspolizei. The 301st battalion of SS-Schutzpolizei stationed here first, and then the 6th and the 17th SS battalion.

In November and December 1939, the Sejm gardens became the place of the first mass murders of the Polish population. This area was chosen as the venue of execution on account of its distance from the residential buildings and the fact that police units were stationed there. Executions took place primarily in the place where the present-day Senate buildings are located. The tragic events from eighty years ago are commemorated by an obelisk located in the Park of Marshal Edward Rydz-Śmigły.

During the Warsaw Rising, various Home Army units, primarily belonging to the 'Siekiera' group, as well as the volunteer 'Miłosz' battalion, comprising volunteers not recruited on 1 August, fought in the areas adjoining the Sejm premises.



Aerial photograph documenting the condition of buildings in the area of streets: Wiejska, Pius XI (today Piękna) and Górnośląska, 1945. State Archive in Warsaw

Reconstruction of the Plenary Hall

Only the deputies' hotel and the 19th century auxiliary pavilions after the Alexander and Mary Institute, accommodating the offices of the Sejm and the Senate, survived the war. The plenary hall was completely destroyed; its reconstruction, referencing the pre-war design of Skórewicz, lasted nine months. It was only on 4 February 1947 that the first post-war sitting of the Legislative Sejm took place.

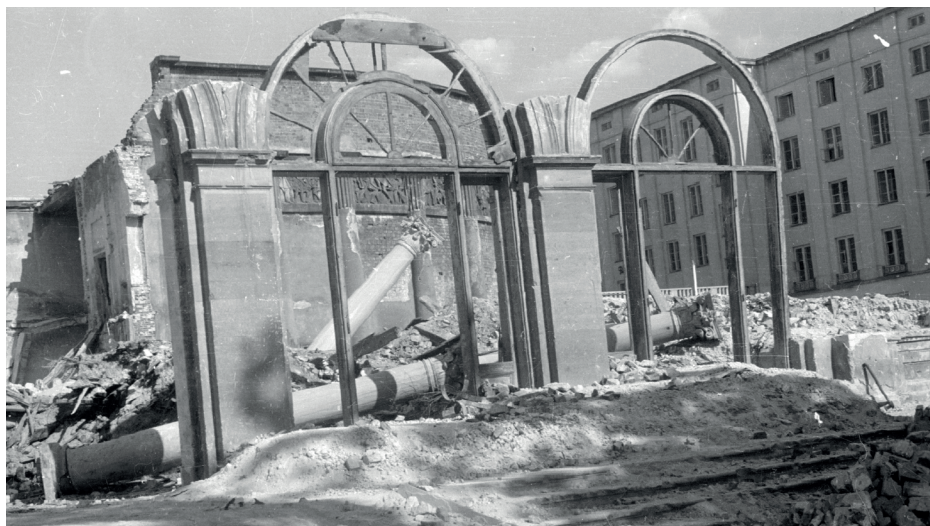
The frieze surrounding the plenary hall at the top survived partially. Biernacki's bas reliefs were destroyed – they were reconstructed by Szczepkowski.

The acoustics of the plenary hall was improved by applying flouted glass surfaces in the plafond structure. The marble lining of the walls was also abandoned – the stone was replaced with fabric. The presidium table, the balustrades of the government benches and the rostrum, similarly to the inter-war period, were decorated with bas reliefs by Aleksander Żurkowski. The presentation of *Historiography* was centrally located on the rostrum, making references to the prototype from the Second Polish Republic. The surfaces of the balustrade, the government benches and the presidium table were decorated with the personifications of: *Justice, Industry, Agriculture, Fine Arts, Science, Construction, Harvest, Army, Fishing, Forestry, Technical Sciences* and *Visual Arts* and eagles with the coats of arms of Łódź, Legnica, Jelenia Góra, Warsaw, Gniezno, Cracow, Wrocław and Poznań.

New Sejm Complex

Simultaneously, work started on the design of new buildings. One of the first solutions was proposed by Maciej Nowicki. The architect, after the war associated with the Capital Reconstruction Office, designed the building of the Sejm on the Vistula embankment, east of the inter-war location. He created an elevated perspective of the city with a widely open amphitheatre and new parliament buildings and high risers of Śródmieście looming in the background. Nowicki had a vision of a metropolitan centre of the capital with monumental buildings on the bank of the Vistula (next to the National Museum, which he wanted to cover with four cupolas).

The main facility was going to be the new building of the Sejm with a flat cupola with a structure resembling a bicycle wheel. The interior of the hall on the layout of a circle with a diameter of 120 m was divided by radially positioned corridors. The architect assumed reconstruction of the damaged plenary hall, designed just two decades earlier by Skórewicz and combining it with the deputies' hotel that survived the war. The designs that were not implemented also feature an elongated building east of the plenary hall. Nowicki suggested that the buildings of both chambers of the parliament be separated by gardens. However, the authorities were not fond of this concept.



Disassembly of the ruins of the former Alexander and Mary Institute. Damaged plenary hall and deputies' hotel visible in the photo, 1945-1946. National Digital Archives

The request to design the Sejm complex was eventually given to Bohdan Pniewski, who was one of Kazimierz Skórewicz's students. His plan was approved by the Ministry of Reconstruction on 23 May 1949. The construction lasted three years. An agency with several dozen employees was set up to handle the task. The managerial functions were held by: Ludwik Borawski, Waław Borawski, Leszek Kołacz and Kazimierz Piechotka. The structure of the building was prepared by Zbigniew Wasiutyński.

Pniewski's concept corresponded to the assumption adopted by the Capital Reconstruction Office about amassing public utility buildings on the meridian axis, along Powiśle, connected with Łazienki, Ujazdowski Park and the Botanical Garden. Pniewski's attention focused on creation of a complex of low pavilions open to the north. The main block was added latitudinally and adjoined the plenary hall; the side block was located in parallel to the line of the bank (the Sejm Library was going to be located there). The buildings were connected with arcades, internal courtyards and gardens surrounding the complex, without any fence.

The architect made use of reinforced concrete structures filled with bricks, lined with light limestone from Siedlec near Złoty Potok (the lining of the façade was commenced only at the end of July 1952 and lasted for over a year). Between the windows and under them, Pniewski introduced rectangular, smooth panels. The main entrance, above which a decorative bas relief with flora and fauna motifs sculpted by Jan Szczepkowski was placed, is located in the pavilion adjoining the plenary hall.

The main hall with a double staircase resembles the vestibule of the Parisian Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. The interiors of the building were ascetic thanks to the use of white and grey stone for decorations (white Carrara, grey Ślawniowice marbles and black Dębnik limestone assembled by a team of stone workers of Edward Jagodziński), walls and ceilings painted in white and additional illumination of the rooms provided by concealed lights and skylights. The ceilings on the upper floor of the main hall were supported by fluted columns. The balustrade was made of wrought iron by Henryk Grunwald. It is decorated with bas reliefs, while the railing has been sculpted like a snake – the symbol of wisdom and immortality.

The second largest room after the plenary hall is the Column Hall (Kazimierz Pużak Hall). Twenty columns support the ceiling. The floor is decorated by colourful rosettes – the background for the circular compositions is the black Dębnik limestone, the strips designating the direction of the columns are grey (dark Ślawniowice marble) with a white meandering pattern on them (Carrara marble). The rosettes also feature the red Hungarian limestone Tardosz, the Kielce Szewce and the Silesian Green Marianna marbles. The high, crystal candelabra attract attention in the hall. Pniewski planned to hang multi-colour



38-metre tower with a clock at the top intended for the Sejm Archive and designed by Bohdan Pniowski. 'Stolica' No. 34 (93), 22.08.1949.

tapestries on the walls, but it was never done. The building was opened on 22 July 1952, i.e. the date of adoption of the constitution of People's Republic of Poland.

The largest of the Sejm corridors is positioned latitudinally: it begins at the eastern wall of the plenary hall, next to the entrance to the Sejm gallery. It is decorated by twenty columns designed by Pniewski. On the sides of the corridor, there are representative rooms which are primarily used by the Sejm committees.

Pniewski, when designing the parliamentary complex, drew inspiration from Venice. The spatial layout made reference to the Square of St. Mark. The architect planned to set up a campanile and he also wished to add a second wing enclosing the square on the side of Wiejska Street. Pniewski also insisted on the installation of a loggia in the centre of the northern pavilion, which the politicians could use to speak to the people assembled in front of the Sejm. However, these concepts have not been implemented.



Parliamentary complex after extension according to the design by Bohdan Pniewski, 1960s.
Sejm Library

Redevelopment in the Second Half of the 20th Century

In the 1960s, several minor changes were introduced in the parliamentary complex. The pre-war town-house located between the deputies' hotel and the town-houses at Górnośląska Street was demolished. In the next decade, the structure of the roof of 1947 was replaced. In the plenary hall, the new upholstery was installed and new floor lining, along with new electric lights and electro-acoustic apparatus and equipment for translators. The air-conditioning system was modernised. A detailed inventory of the fire-suppression system was carried out.

The pre-war deputies' house became too small. In 1973, a competition was announced for a new building. The performance of the design of Małgorzata Handzelewicz-Waławek, in cooperation with Andrzej Kaliszewski, lasted until 1989. At that time, some of the post-institute buildings were demolished (only Building G was left).

The new deputies' hotel encloses the area of the parliamentary complex on the north-western side. On the side of the Vistula embankment, it has three residential storeys, and on the other side – six. The façades are covered with dark grey lining made of copper sheet with an embossed pattern, making reference to Renaissance and Mannerist portals. Parts of the building were lined with white limestone, analogously to Pniewski's design. The main entrance, in the trapezoidal niche, with pillars lined with Strzegom granite, is located on the side of Senacka Street. The main hall is decorated with a copper ceiling.

Changes After 1989

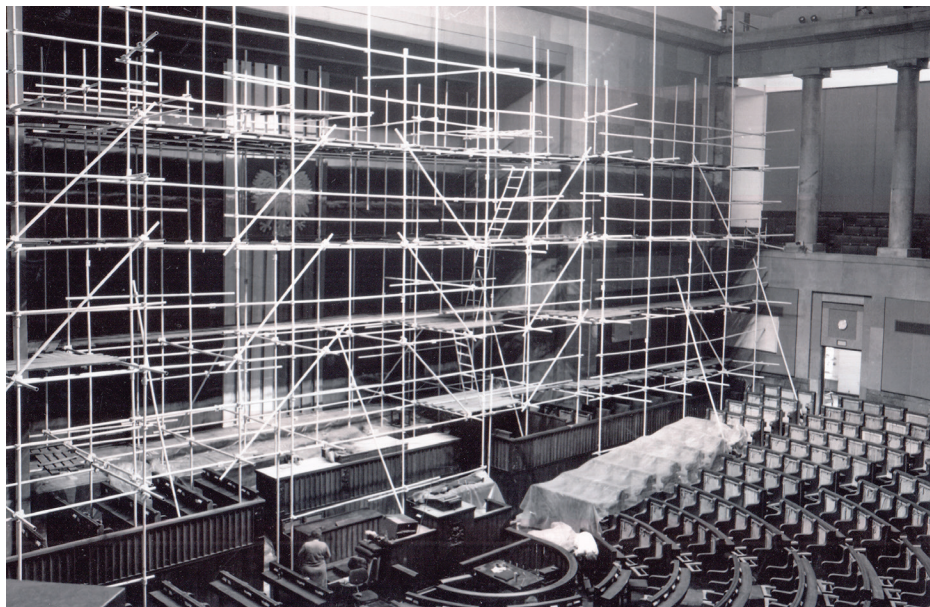
The democratic system transformation called for changes in the management of the complex at Wiejska Street. The symbolic change was adding the crown to the White Eagle decorating the presidium wall in the Sejm plenary hall (1990) and hanging a cross there (1997).

Finding the place for the re-instated Senate became the priority – similarly to the situation after the adoption of the March Constitution. Initially, the Higher Chamber

met interchangeably with the Lower Chamber in the plenary hall and subsequently in the Column Hall. Eventually, Building A was chosen as the place for sessions of the Senate [according to Pniewski's design, this was going to be the location of the Sejm Library; in the final years of the Polish People's Republic, it housed the Archives of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (KC PZPR)].

The renovation of the room for the Senate needs was carried out between 1990 and 1991. In line with the design of Andrzej Kaliszewski who cooperated with Barbara Kaliszewska and Bogdan Napieralski, three post-library rooms were merged. The shape of the room resembled an amphitheatre. The presidium part is located in the eastern section.

In the 1990s, the communication among the Sejm buildings was improved by adding an underground passage between Buildings G and C-D. Additional office premises were arranged in the building at the convergence of Frascati and Wiejska Streets (Building P).



Renovation of the plenary hall of the Sejm, 1993, photo: Henryk Rosiak. Sejm Library

The new deputies' house was also extended by a north-eastern wing added to it. The post-institute building (today, Building G), which was managed by the Chancellery of the State Council, was handed over to the Sejm Chancellery to be used by the Sejm committees.

New Century

In 2000, the Sejm Chancellery and the Association of Polish Architects announced a national competition for extension of the Sejm (a building of the Sejm Library, a building of the Sejm Committees – both at Wiejska Street, and an administrative building located at Na Skarpie Alley). Among seventy-eight designs, the jury selected the work of Bolesław Stelmach and Biuro Architektoniczne Stelmach i Partnerzy, yet it has not been fully implemented.

Between 2007 and 2010, the Mailing Division (Building N) located in the northern part of the Sejm complex was built in direct vicinity of the Park of Marshal Edward Rydz-Śmigły. The majority of its utility premises are underground (among others, correspondence sorting room, warehouses and garages).

In 2010, the plenary hall was aligned to the requirements of fire protection, among others by replacing the wall lining. The gilded elements of the national emblem located above the presidium table were refreshed. In 2011, the complex of parliamentary buildings was adjusted to the needs of persons with special motor requirements.

In 2015, Building S was added to the deputies' house on the southern side; it houses the Visitors' Centre. At the same time, a new underground passage was made between the hotel and the plenary hall and the old underground passage was renovated.

In 2016, bas reliefs made in the modern times according to the pre-war design of Józef Gosławski were placed on the 1st floor of the façade of Building D.

Between 2017 and 2019, a general overhaul of the three-storied real property procured from the State Treasury was made, located at Ludna 4a Street. A part of its façade is lined with brick in natural colour, which references the pre-war development



Construction of the building of the Sejm committees (Building U), 11.03.2017, photo: Jerzy Woźniak.
Sejm Library



General overhaul of Building T at Ludna 4a Street, 04.02.2018. Sejm Library

in Powiśle. Building T houses the offices and the warehouses of the Sejm Chancellery, among them the Reading Room of the Social History Collections of the Sejm Library.

In December 2018, the building of Sejm Committees (Building U) was commissioned. The building, designed by Stelmach, has six above-ground storeys; five of them accommodate conference rooms; additionally, two largest rooms for the work of the committees are located on the -1 level. The building was connected by an underground passage with the rest of the Sejm complex. Building G, remembering the times of the Alexander and Mary Institute, where the committees met, underwent a major overhaul between 2019 and 2021. In front of the building, busts of marshals of the parliament from the times of the Four Year Sejm are displayed.

Numerous memorial sites are located in the parliamentary complex. In the main hall of Building C-D, four marshal staffs are presented, as well as a cross made on the 1050th anniversary of Mieszko I's baptism. The Sejm is decorated with plaques commemorating parliamentarians – victims of WWII, parliamentarians who died during the Smoleńsk catastrophe, St. John Paul II, President Lech Kaczyński and Sejm Marshal Maciej Płażyński.

In the corridor by the offices of deputy marshals (with interiors decorated with paintings of Józef Rapacki) a gallery of portraits of Sejm marshals from the period of the Second Polish Republic was organised.

The representative premises have their patrons. One of the largest rooms in the parliamentary complex is called the 'Chamber of Constitution of May 3'. The patrons of others are politicians of merit, among others marshals: Ignacy Daszyński, Maciej Rataj, Wojciech Trąpczyński and Wiesław Chrzanowski. The interior features portraits, sculptures and diverse tokens related to these persons.

In the recent years, Jan Olszewski and Olga Krzyżanowska were honoured in this way – they are the patrons of the conference rooms in Building U.

Exhibition

The exhibition titled ‘Dearest Token for the Posterity’ prepared by the Museum Division of the Sejm Library. Honorary patronage over the exhibition is held by the Sejm Marshal Elżbieta Witek.

Authors of exhibition scenario: Ewa Koralewska, Łukasz Kubacki, Błażej Popławski, conceptual consultants: Jarosław Kotowicz, Wojciech Kulisiewicz, Michał Wasiak and Jan Węgrzyn. The graphic design was prepared by Łukasz Kubacki.

The exhibition presents the history of the parliamentary complex from the times of the 19th century Nobility Institute to the present. It shows the transformations of architecture, reconstruction and redevelopment of the buildings, also presenting the projects that have not been implemented. Competitions for reconstruction of the complex and interior design were shown. Persons of chief architects and artists who worked in the Sejm complex are highlighted, among them: Kazimierz Tołłoczko, Kazimierz Skórewicz, Maciej Nowicki, Bohdan Pniewski, Jan Szczepkowski, Jan Antoni Biernacki, Aleksander Żurawski, Zofia Trzcińska-Kamińska, Małgorzata Handzelewicz-Wacławek and Bolesław Stelmach.

The items presented at the exhibitions form a part of the following collections: Agencja FORUM, Archive of New Records, State Archives in Warsaw, Senate Archives, National Library, Sejm Library, National Film Archive – Audio-Visual Institute, Fotopolska, Witold Pilecki Institute of Solidarity and Valour, Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Science, Mazovian Digital Library, Museum of Architecture in Wrocław, National Museum in Cracow, National Museum in Warsaw, Warsaw Rising Museum, Museum of Warsaw, National Digital Archives, North Carolina State University, Polish Press Agency, the Royal Castle in Warsaw.

Large-format prints were supplemented with artefacts presented in cabinets and documents from the collections of the Museum Division of the Sejm Library.