



## National Museums in Poland

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### Summary

The patterns that museums in Poland, and other European countries, developed bear many similarities, however, in Poland's case, the main determining factor appears to be the political situation in Eastern Europe. The author shall present the history of museum evolution, in relation to nation-state-generative processes, using a four-stage periodic division: the Partitions (1795-1918), restored independence (1918-1939), *real-socializmus* (1945-1989), and the new democracy (1989-2010).

The first initiatives in favour of creating museums appeared in the first period, following the annexation of Polish territories by Russia, Prussia, and Austria, and were predominantly of grassroots character. The driving force behind them consisted mainly of private collectors or associations thereof. The first museum conceived as 'national' in the sense of public, and full accessibility (not in the sense of state ownership), was instituted in Krakow by the local municipal authorities, as the National Museum in Krakow. It was the first case in a mass of private collections and museums that had hitherto dominated the landscape.

The second period – of regained national independence – spanning the time between the two world wars, was marked mostly by the influence exerted by newly-founded, central state agencies, aiming at steering museums towards a more nationalistic path: propagating petrifying the 'Polish spirit' in Polish territories which continued to be inhabited by a multitude of diverse nationalities. A means to this aim was, among others, the promotion of the marginal University Museum in the capital, to the status of National Museum, a testimony to the continuity of Polish national consciousness and culture within what was an otherwise multicultural society.

Increased authority of the state over cultural institutions marked the third period of *Realsozialismus*; e.g. museums, which were subjected to near-complete nationalization. Polish national history underwent a thorough retelling, accents were redistributed, and the past was subjected to reinterpretation in light of the present. In accordance with the Marxist historic-philosophical doctrine, socialism was presented as the final stage in the development of mankind, and the idea of the nation-state – otherwise rejected by mainstream ideologists – was adapted to further the policy of complete assimilation of post-German lands into the People's Republic of Poland, following their post-war annexation. The main role in this process was assigned to museums that demonstrated the continued presence of Poles in the above-mentioned territories. Those were often small German museums, renamed as national museums not owing to the quality of their collections, but to the political role they were to play henceforth – not only to prove that the region they represented was by nature Polish, but also to declare that polonization was a *fait accompli*, and *de facto* irreversible.

In recent years, which belong to the latest period of the new democracy in Poland, the state has gradually released museums from this strict ideological control, and the institutions, while

returning to private ownership or handed over to local authorities, were allowed to redefine their purpose, and pursue a line of work more adjusted to regional interests. The vision of central policy and national dogmatism has since all but faded away.

In 2005, the Polish government, inspired by the general policy of the European Union in the first years of the twenty-first century, decided to establish the state-owned Museum of Polish History, with neither seat nor collection of its own.

## Summary table, Poland

Name	Inaugurated	Initiated	Actors	Ownership	Type	Values	Temporal reach	Style Location
Museum of Fine Arts (1862-1916) then National Museum in Warsaw	1862	1862	Tsar of Russia, local government	State (- 1921), municipal (1921-1945), then state.	Art (international and Polish painting) and Sculpture	Up to 1916 territorial representation, then national values dominate.	Antiquity to Contemporary period.	Without fixed location (- 1921) in existing building (1921 - 1938), then in purposely deigned modernist 'neo-classical' building. Solitary position in Warsaw.
National Museum in Krakow	1879	1875	Mayor and the Municipal Council.	Municipal up to 1945, then state owned.	Historical and Art	Territorial representation dominates (1879-1918), national claims included since 1918	Mainly since 19 <sup>th</sup> to 21 <sup>th</sup> century, ex. collections of decorative arts since Middle-Ages,	In existing building (1879-1970), then in purposely designed 'neo-classical' modernist building. Solitary position in Krakow.
Museum of the Region of Wielkopolska (1919-1950); then National Museum in Poznan	1919	1910	Municipal Council	Regional up to 1951, then state	Art (international and Polish painting)	Territorial representation dominates, national values included since 1951.	Universal Museum – collections of art from Antiquity to Contemporary	Up to 1955 in existing museum purpose building (of Prussian origin), then in 'neo-classical' neo-renaissance building. Solitary position in Poznan.

## Introduction

In fact, from the ideological beginnings of museums, their main function in Polish territory was to demonstrate the national identity of the community that called them to existence. Through a synthetic narrative, woven of a series of art and craft objects, historical memorabilia, as well as collections of archaeological and ethnographic finds, museums have always mirrored the origin and identity of the collective, exhibited selected traits which, in the collectivity's members' opinion, make them stand out from among neighbouring groups (Madajczyk, Berlińska 2008: 31).

The continuity of the Polish state was broken in 1795, with the final partitioning of the territories of the Polish *Rzeczpospolita* by Austria, Prussia and Russia after years of coordinated policy of weakening the Polish monarchy. For 123 years, until 1918, the territories of pre-partition Poland were deprived of any continuous organizational structure, which could have been recognized internationally as a carrier of Polish statehood. In 1918, this state came to an abrupt halt, with the re-emergence of the state of Poland on the international map. In the period of the Partitions, the first museums appeared – both on Polish lands under Russian, Prussian and Austrian rule, as well as abroad. Members of the Polish populace of the partitioning powers usually founded the former and the latter – by Polish émigrés. These museums were founded both publicly and privately, and their main goal was to gather and collect memorabilia from the times of Polish independent statehood (Przeworska 1936: 4). Most commonly, museal initiatives were undertaken by members of the aristocracy or landed gentry. These well-educated elite cultivated and enlarged their familial inheritance. Another group behind the drive to found museums was the intelligentsia, organized in societies devoted to social issues and learning (Mansfeld, 2000: 6). They were usually male inhabitants of such major cities as Lvov, Krakow (Austrian partition), Vilnius, Warsaw (Russian partition) or Poznań (Prussian partition).

In modern Poland, the term 'national museum' is a recognised name, applied in its direct sense to specific, not-related institutions, functioning in several cities of Poland: the capital Warsaw (The National Museum in Warsaw), Krakow (The National Museum in Krakow), Poznań (The National Museum in Poznań), as well as in Szczecin, Wrocław, Gdańsk and Kielce. National museums in Poland are not akin to national museums in many other European countries and the United States of America, where the name 'national museum' is applied to institutions whose subject of exhibition is the history of the local national group. Polish national museums, which currently number nine would thus, in many foreign terminological systems, qualify as galleries – both as a result of the nature of the exhibition (mostly works of arts and crafts), as well as the type of narration applied, which concentrates mainly on the history of art. Before being named national, museums have built collections of different type: objects of art, history or objects of technology.

Indirectly, the term 'national museum' implies 'state museum'. The category of 'state museums' evolved in socialist Poland after 1945. When this period began, the majority of museums underwent a process of nationalization and was under state control. In following epoch of new democracy after 1989, museums went back under the control of local communities in a process of so-called reprivatisation. As of today, only a few of Poland's national museums still belong to the pool of institutions financed and centrally supervised by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. Other national museums lost importance after the socialist system had

collapsed. In 1998, the then-Ministry of Culture selected, from the nine national museums, those that, because of the nationwide scope of their curriculum, should remain under the direct central supervision of the state. This new list included: (1) the National Museum in Krakow - founded 1879, (2) the National Museum in Warsaw - from 1916 (beforehand the Museum of the Fine Arts - founded 1862), (3) the National Museum in Poznań - from 1950 (beforehand the Museum of Wielkopolska from 1919, the Kaiser Friedrich Museum from 1904 and the Poznań Provincial Museum founded 1893).

The following national museums, in light of the decision of the Minister of Culture in 1998, lost their status and nationwide role, which were thus transferred to be forthwith administered and funded by regional governments: (1) the National Museum in Szczecin - from 1970 (beforehand the Szczecin Municipal Museum - from 1945, the Museum of the City of Stettin - founded 1878), (2) the National Museum in Wrocław - from 1970 (beforehand: the Silesian Museum - from 1950, the State Museum in Wrocław - from 1948, the Silesian Museum of the Visual Arts - founded 1880), (3) the National Museum in Gdańsk - from 1972 (beforehand: the Pomeranian Museum - from 1945, the Danzig Municipal Museum - founded 1870), (4) the National Museum in Kielce - from 1975 (beforehand the Świętokrzyskie Museum - from 1975, the Museum of the PTTK (Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society) - founded 1908), (5) the National Museum of Agriculture and Agricultural-Food Industry in Szreniawa - from 1975 (previously: Museum of Agriculture and Industry - founded 1964), (6) the National Museum of the District of Przemyśl - from 1984 (previously the Museum of the District of Przemyśl - from 1963, the National Museum of the District of Przemyśl – 1921 and finally, the Museum of the Society of Friends of Learning - founded 1909).

What is the source of these shifts on the lists of national museums – realizing the state's policies, and representatives of the nation? In this article, I shall frame and map some of these institutions to answer this question. I shall also try to present the processes through which the national museums in Poland acquired their current shape, and to describe the strategy with which the governments utilized these museums to shape or transform the national identity of Poland's society. To illustrate those changes, I shall present, in detail, the history of three museums – in today's foremost Polish national museums in Krakow, Warsaw and Poznań, but previously operating under other titles. These three were chosen for the governmental tools used in different epochs to support policies of building and strengthening national identity. In order to complete the picture, I shall also comment briefly on museums that nowadays are publicly-owned but also exhibit the afore-mentioned attempt to influence the Poles' national consciousness.

## **National museums and cultural policy in Poland**

The process of the establishment of museums in Poland was running slightly behind similar processes going on in Europe. The first reason for this lag was the lack of centralized public structures that could have supported such initiatives. While governments abroad adopted a top-down approach to the development of publicly available art collections, in the territories of the former State of Poland, museums were created and developed from the bottom up. The initiative belonged to and was sustained by various communal societies – most of all, by societies devoted to learning. The lack of state patronage resulted in an inferior quality of collections: if private assemblages were often of world class, the ones belonging to societies of learning gathered not

only objects of established quality, but also things whose value was purely sentimental. Furthermore, they often included objects discovered by amateur researchers, as well as memorabilia gifted by various members of the general community – of equally variable value.

Moreover, differences in the evolution of museums, in comparison to other parts of Europe were partly due to constraints, to which the Polish society was subject on the part of the partition powers. In 1935, almost 20 years after Poland regained independence, at the inaugural session of the State Council of Museums, Jadwiga Przeworska, relating her speech to the past, addressed these differences in the following words:

The three partitions of Poland, each ruled by a substantially different partitioner, offered different possibilities of, and different obstacles to establishing museums. For instance, the Austrians, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, tolerated communal initiatives for founding museums under the patronage of town and city authorities, or even, succumbing to political pressure and haggling, were supportive of such actions. The Germans, on the other hand, desiring ever to propagate their so-called Germanic culture, founded multiple provincial branches of Prussian museums, and endeavoured to stem all Polish initiative at its source. Nevertheless, here and there, communities remained active. The situation in the former Russian partition was also distinct: there, the entirety of cultural and artistic developments rested squarely and the shoulders of the Polish population which, grouped in associations of ideological and intellectual interest, bore the burden of maintaining museums until the regaining of Independence. Strong was also the ideological drive behind such initiatives among the émigrés, where such large collections as the ones in Rapperswil, Batignolles, and in the Polish Library in Paris, as well as private ones, came to be [...]. (Przeworska, 1936: 4)

The difference in the development of the Museum of Fine Arts (later: the National Museum in Warsaw), and the National Museum in Krakow, established, respectively, in 1862 and 1879, can best be illustrated by the differing stances the partition authorities took towards the very driving forces behind them. The idea of the museum in Krakow, the capital of the Austrian Partition where the Polish populace had enjoyed relative freedom in self-administration, met with no resistance from the Austrians. The project, first presented in 1871 by the President of Krakow, Józef Dietl, came to unobstructed fruition several years later. The National Museum was opened in the heart of the city, in a building located on the Old Market Square, and, in line with the President's reasoning, was geared to testifying to Krakow's glorious past, based on a comprehensive collection of artistic, historical and ethnographic objects.

Is it very difficult to know today exactly what meaning is attached to the word 'national' in the title National Museum? On the one hand, it seems improbable that the Austrians were unaware that the establishment of a Polish National Museum would kindle separatist tendencies among the local population. On the other, the term 'national' may not have implied a nation as a commonwealth of all Poles (Mansfeld, 2000: 24). It might be that, in 1879, the term was more or less equivalent to 'public'. In nineteenth century sociology, the noun 'nation' was a neutral term, and was often used to describe an intermediate stage between family and humanity (Kurczewska, 2000: 7). 'National' meant public, accessible to all, which in Krakow acquires additional relevance as a term distinguishing the newly-founded museum from the private museum of the aristocratic Czartoryski family, which was organized and opened to the public in 1868. One can also assume that economical factors played a significant role in the Municipal Council's decision to name the

new institution a 'national museum'. Thanks to the 'national' argument, the Council maintained the legal right to apply for subsidies to the Galician Provincial Parliament as the controlling body of the part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire inhabited, among others, by Poles.

Another extreme example of an institution's functioning under foreign administration can be seen in the Museum of Fine Arts in Warsaw. It had been established in 1862, at the suggestion of Polish officials in the municipal administration, and had received the approval of both the Tsar himself, as well as of other representatives of the Russian administrative apparatus. Formally, the museum was associated with the first Varsovian university-level school, the Main School, being concurrently established, on the basis of the same legislation. The collection consisted predominantly of art works representative of European schools of art, and the museum's main objective was to provide students of art departments with examples of how to develop their own workshop.

In contrast to the museum's fate after the restoration of Poland's national independence in 1918, which was to elevate this small metropolitan museum to the rank of a central monument to the nation's history and pride, the Museum of Fine Arts experienced enormous problems regarding housing and consequent exhibit activity. This was due to the policy of local Russian authorities, reluctant to have a permanent salon in Warsaw that could be used by members of the Polish elite to further national, *i.e.* anti-Russian policies and propaganda. Regardless of how one defines the adjective "national", the modern interpretation of the original name of the National Museum in Krakow, was that it strove to represent the nation as a whole, in spite of a lack of a unified national statehood. It is often called to mind, that the museum's first employees regarded their institution as responsible for the representation of Polish art and culture, fulfilling this role also in the place of the other partitions, where such activity was subject to harsher restrictions.

By contrast, in modern memory, the history of the Museum of Fine Arts does not carry the same national tone. Rather, it testifies to the administrative obstacles a cultural institution must overcome in order to fulfil its undeniably ample potential to influence social awareness and to propagate separatist ideas.

This collective memory of both the National Museum in Krakow, and the Museum of Fine Arts in Warsaw, was subsequently distorted after the restitution of the independent Polish state, who's policy it was to present the period of partitions as a time when the nation persisted despite the absence of a state. This point of view has, however, been disproved by analysis of available data on both institutions' early years. In the case of the museum in Krakow, it has been demonstrated that throughout the partitions no donations were made from persons outside the Austrian Partition. Also, the Museum had no defined policy regarding the acquisition of objects representing the entirety of Poland's former territory. In light of these facts, there seems to be no base to claim that this museum was a truly national institution. As for the Museum of Fine Arts, its activity came to an end in its fifth year of existence when it was closed down and remained so until 1921. It seems appropriate to state that its role was marginal, and, therefore, its national character – dubious.

When, therefore, and in what circumstances did the conviction of the national character of the National Museum in Krakow, and the Warsaw Museum of Fine Arts come to be? As the author has stated previously, the obvious culprit seems to be that the new Polish state decided, as a

matter of policy, to reintegrate the collective memory of the three disparate partitions of the old Commonwealth, and reinterpret the history of Polish nationhood during the partitions in the light of recent unification. From the perspective of national liberation in 1918, the 123 years of partitioning were, henceforth, to be seen as a period belonging to a nation without a state. Threads concerning the differentiation of particular regions under different occupation (*i.e.* pertaining to the possibility of establishing museums), disappeared from the mainstream focus. After regaining independence, the common denominator for the interpretation of the Partitions in the Interwar Period was that it was a consistent march of the tripartite Polish nation towards independence from the three enemy powers.

After Poland regained independence in 1918, the first structural concepts of museums in the country drafted by the newly established Ministry of Culture and Art acknowledged the special significance of the name: National Museum. It was meant to be associated with Polish Nationhood – the owner and landlord of Polish territory, an idea experienced and shared between the nation's members. Following European philosophical trends that explored and developed theories of the nation-state; the nation, the owner of the territory, was the recipient of the power of judgement over the fate of alien ethnic groups on its territory (Madajczyk, Berlińska, 2002: 31). The National Museum was to be a monument to the Nation – a monument to the proprietor in a multi-ethnic country.

Even though the newly created state did not, initially, nationalize museums – not even the biggest ones – and would not nationalize museums until the end of World War II, in the following years the concept was repeatedly put forward, of one, largest, central national museum in the capital city – as a symbol and calling card of the Polish nation's culture (Siciński, Dąbrowski, Gmurek, 1998: 20). After the Russians evacuated Warsaw, the title of national museum in Warsaw was awarded to the Museum of the Fine Arts. Although the aforementioned legal projects did not come to full fruition (in practice, no effort was made to deprive the National Museum in Krakow of the title 'National'), this new central museum, in line with the projected Museums Act, was accorded the following goal: *to illustrate the development of Polish nature and culture above all, and, as means allow – the rest of the Universe.*

The choice of the former Museum of Fine Arts (est. 1862) for a central national museum can be considered precocious. In terms of potential, it was even less capable of comprehensively representing Polish culture and history than its sister institution in Krakow. It seems not an overstatement to write that its newly defined rank as Poland's leading museum was not granted, but forced upon the institution by the purely political will and demand, as expressed by the President of the City of Warsaw in 1938, at the inauguration of the new museum building (the first building actually belonging to the institution):

The National Museum must develop further [...] as a treasure trove of the past, as a research institute and educational establishment. Within a cadre of the art and culture of all nations, which the Museum must create, Polish art and culture is and must be in the future the main accent. [...] The National Museum in the Capital City should testify (both home and abroad) to a continuum in the development of Polish culture of the ten centuries of its existence, and illustrate the cultural history of the entire Polish nation [...]. (Masłowska, 2002: 36)



The formation of a common national identity and national memory of the four former partitions' societies, was brutally interrupted after twenty years in 1939, one year after the new Warsaw National Museum's building was opened. The unexpected outbreak of World War II and the prompt rout in the defensive campaign in 1939, led to the reoccupation of Polish territory by the Germans, former partitioners. The subsequent entry of Soviet armies into the easternmost provinces of Poland has inspired many historians to think of this period in Poland's history as a Second Partitioning.

The museums' situation became very difficult. In barely two months the country had come under German and Russian occupation. The employees' best efforts at evacuation of collections proved ultimately futile, albeit individual pieces of art, especially valuable from a patriotic perspective (such as Jan Matejko's canvasses, picturing the most important events in the history of Poland (Jagodzińska, 2010: 57)), were successfully hidden, and the majority of them survived the war. Nevertheless, the balance remains negative, with the vast majority of objects carried off by the invading armies as spoils of war (Jarocki, 1981).

In the wake of the post-war peace conferences, the territory of Poland was largely diminished, and moved westwards. The former eastern lands were awarded to the Socialist Republics of the Ukraine, Byelorussia, and Lithuania. Poland's new western boundaries now encompassed provinces inhabited by Germans before the war. The conflict had caused Poland to lose nearly half of its territory, and the geographical shifts meant that many museums, including some of supra-regional importance (such as the ones in Lvov and Vilnius), were irreparably lost. They suffered various fates: some were destroyed, and their collections dispersed, on the other hand, the ones that survived were often taken over and renamed by the new host nations. After the war, there was an ongoing dispute between Polish and Ukrainian and Lithuanian authorities (and Stalin, as the superior of all Soviet Republics), as to how these collections were to be divided. Some especially valuable parts of the former Polish museums' property in Lvov and Vilnius were recovered, and transferred to former German museums on former German lands, as cornerstones of their future collections. For instance, the collection of the Museum in Wrocław (Jarocki, 1981: 327) 'was based solidly on surviving objects of the local pre-war collection, and part of the Lvovian collections. The latter were supplemented by objects from private assemblages'. In all, in the years 1945-1953 Poland received 98 railway wagons and over 120 truckloads of museum objects mainly (but not always) listed on Polish museums' registries recovered from stashes in Austria, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Germany and from Silesia.

In the entire history of Poland there was no other such massive intervention into national identity as the polonization of the so-called Recovered Territories. There, the reorganization of museums proceeded concurrently to, if not preceded the general polonization of lands taken from Germany. It was an equally brutal intrusion into the life of both the native, and the 'repatriated' population from Eastern Poland. The National Museums in Gdańsk, Szczecin and Wrocław, all of which were mentioned in the introduction were originally German museums of different types, which under post-World-War-II Polish rule, were transformed into Polish institutions. A prime example of this symbolic takeover of the neighbouring community's heritage, and of the construction thereupon of a collection narrative along the lines of the new landlords' ideas, is the history of the Museum of Wielkopolska. Two years after the regaining of independence, that is in 1921, the central museum of Poznań, the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, was

polonized and renamed the Museum of Wielkopolska. The case study below presents detailed description of the museum.

In 1950, the communist authorities decided to once again replace the name of the Museum of Wielkopolska, which had been readopted after the war, with “the National Museum in Poznań”, thus including it on the list of central museums in Poland. By such a move, the cohesion of the former Prussian, Austrian and Russian partitions received further emphasis, and a group of superior museums that performed a supervisory function at the regional level, was finally established – the structure and hierarchy of museums was adapted to the state executive apparatus. In compliance with divisions introduced in the early 1950s, apart from the network of national museums, central museums in the fields of history, archaeology and ethnography, as well as the central army museum were designated. Appropriately, specialized museums at the provincial, regional and district levels were either under their direct (as branches) or indirect tutelage; in the latter case, employees of the central institutions acted as supervisors. Such a lucid structure allowed the government apparatus to effortlessly control museums of all levels.

In the years of socialism, the vast majority of Polish museums underwent nationalization – they were taken away from communities, foundations and private persons, and were placed under the supervision of the Central Administration of Museums. The National Museum in Warsaw had been already nationalized in 1945 and had received the title of a Central Museum Institution. The next step was to establish the structure of direct state control over museums’ actions. This initiative was born at the central level, in the offices of the government and in the Ministry of Culture and Art. Thence, it was delegated to ‘the local level’, i.e. to central museums to implement. Departments of culture and art of provincial Party Committees commissioned subsequent variations on this original idea for an exhibition while from district museums, the work of regional museums was ordered by regional authorities. At the same time central museums coordinated the content and technical aspect of these exhibitions. Nevertheless, the actual degree to which these socialist ideological campaigns were efficient is very difficult to estimate. A report from the Ministry of Culture and Art from 1953, presenting the implementation of campaigns in cultural institutions in the Recovered Territories, whose aim was to emphasize the Polish-ness of those lands, states as follows: *In the CZM [Central Administration of Museums – K.M.] instructions*

[...] the task of emphasizing and conserving in the public consciousness of the Polish character of the Recovered Territories, found its best expression in actions carried out by museums in nearly all centres of regions, where an autochthonic problem remains. These tactical instructions were verbal in form for the first half year, and were given to museums alongside close scrutiny of their local activities.

13 museums in the formerly German territories took part in this campaign: at the Museum in Koszalin an exhibition was opened, historical in nature, and imbued with reality – promoting the notion of the Polish character of Szczecin; in the Museum of Upper Silesia in Bytom, another exhibition, entitled ‘Polish Word in Silesia in Past Times’ was made accessible to the public. Also, lectures were organized, accentuating Polish strands in the history of former German towns and regions. Examples of these lecture include: ‘A Tour of the Relics of Piast Dynasty Wrocław’, ‘The Relics and Past of Piast Dynasty Brzeg’, ‘The History and Relics of Piast Dynasty Nysa’, or ‘The

Life of Slavs of Old Silesia'. In order to amplify the feeling of Polish identity of,, until recently, German territories, historical elements, such as the Piast dynasty from the Middle-Ages, were routinely invoked, and a negative image of the average German was emphasized, above all by accentuating local Nazi activity. In areas where no evidence of Polish character, whether in literature or otherwise, could be found, exhibitions such as 'Silesia in Polish print' were instrumental. This so-called polonization of the Recovered Lands was carried out by contrasting Polish national culture against German culture, with the latter as point of reference.

Thanks to this functional system of centralized, planned organization, as well as discipline proper to those first years of communism in Poland, the authorities had the full power to decide on the scope and context in which historical knowledge would be presented. History in museums was completely subjugated to the present. In a central institution, dedicated to the history of the city of Warsaw and of Poland generally, classical periodical divisions were rejected in favour of the stages of class struggle. In effect, the post-war government could be legitimized as an element of a self-fulfilling prophecy, in line with the Marxist-Leninist theory of social evolution. Exhibitions were developed along the pellucid divisions of yesterday vs. today, old vs. new/modern (Centkowski 1980: 16-24), and bad vs. good. Entirely new museums of the revolutionary movement were created for the instruction of the working class, and to document the latter's position in society.

A major practical obstacle on the road to full implementation of the new authority's guidelines was the personnel of museums, largely recruited from people educated before the war, and predominantly loath to sympathize with the enforced reinterpretation of the collections they had long taken care of. In the early 1950s, the number of educational departments at museums increased significantly. This was the effect of a radical change in the approach to museums' functions. These new departments were established in order to familiarize society with the collections: they organized special lessons for schools, compulsory courses for various kinds of workers or army personnel. One of the merits of this approach was a steady rise in the number of museum visitors, of which children and youth comprised over 70 per cent (Centkowski, 1980: 17). The overarching goal was to introduce undervalued layers of society to mainstream socialist culture.

From 1945, the chief supervisory body for museums and other cultural institutions was the Main Office of Control of Press, Publications and Shows (pl: *Główny Urząd Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji i Widowisk*, referred to also by the name of Censorship Office), and even if one takes into account deteriorating discipline in the formation and implementation of ideological guidelines at all levels of government, one should concede that this central censorial institution exercised its prerogatives efficiently until the very end, identifying and monitoring subjects and themes liable to censorship. Subjects excluded from museum exhibitions throughout the period of socialism in Poland included: the Kresy (lands lost to Ukraine, Byelorussia and Lithuania) (Legutko, 2008: 12), Polish-Russian and Polish-Soviet Wars (especially the 1920 Battle of Warsaw), the actions of the Red Army in Poland in the years 1939 and 1944/45, and the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. Among Polish national heroes, the most 'persecuted' was no doubt Józef Piłsudski, as well as military and paramilitary formations of freedom fighters during the World Wars, including both the Polish Legions of World War I, as well as the Home Army of World War II. Every exhibition had to have the acceptance of a certified censor. Before it was opened

to the public, an employee of the Censorship Office would tour the gallery and decide which objects were to be removed and what inscriptions were to be changed. In effect, for instance, in portraying the history of Nazi concentration camps, the fact was routinely omitted that they remained fully functional and, often, functioned, even after liberation by the Red Army: this time, however, as Soviet camps for Polish and German detainees.

On the one hand, there was incessant propaganda, striving to demonstrate the ‘eternally’ Polish character of lands taken from the Germans, to testify to Polish-Soviet friendship and weaving a vision of dreams’ fulfilment by starting on the road to socialism. On the other, there was censorial silence on Poland in the Interwar Period, the Kresy and in Stalinist crimes committed both during (the Katyn massacre) and after the War. This sort of historical memory engineering has caused some historians and sociologists to refer to the Polish society as a ‘community of oblivion’. The Polish governing elite of the time of socialism is often accused of resisting the resurgence and formation of locality-based historical memory, especially of national minorities. Under communism, historical memory was to be one and only – that of the State, and those who did not feel well with it did not deserve the name of Poles, and could even be prosecuted for plotting to topple the regime.

The awarding of the national museum title to the Museum of Wielkopolska in Poznań was also a symbolic gesture. It was to emphasize that Western Poland now definitely belonged to the unified Polish nation. Further strong gestures of the same gist were performed in the 1970s: in order to bolster the national feeling among Polish inhabitants of previously German territories, the network of national museums was enlarged, to include the Municipal Museum in Szczecin (1970), the Silesian Museum (1970), as well as the Pomeranian Museum (1972). Preceding the war, these museums had been active along pretty much the same lines as the current National Museum in Poznań, with the core of their collections gathered during German ownership and, being the fruit of extensive collaboration between German societies of learning with the Prussian government, the vast majority of narrative being oriented towards enhancing German national cohesion. Certainly, the reason for including these institutions on the list of national museums, was not the quality of their collections, which was substantially inferior if, for example, compared with the National Museum in Warsaw, which had been particularly ‘enriched’ in 1945-1956, that is during the so-called action of reclaim. Neither were these museums’ traditions, which were unimpressive by, for instance, the standards of the National Museum in Krakow. Indeed, these formerly German museums were now to become symbols to the indigenous and the repatriated populations, as well as to tourists, that the Pomeranian Museum in Gdańsk, the capital of Pomerania, is now a Polish national museum, that the Silesian Museum in Wrocław, the capital of Silesia, is now a Polish national museum. Can there be a stronger declaration of a region’s cultural identity than the establishment of a national museum in its capital city? The heritage of communism, exposed elsewhere after 1989, remained present in museums despite attempts at their de-communization. It was present, for instance, in decisions to close down those of them which were the most closely bound to communist ideology, and in personal changes on managerial positions. Since 1989, nineteen museums have either been closed or had their name and goals changed out of ideological reasons. Among them were, above all, museums of Lenin, of Revolutionary Movement History, as well as some museums affiliated to certain centres of industry. Propagandist museums in Warsaw – both buildings and collections – were merged into

the Museum of Independence, as a yet another example in the history of Polish museums, of how loose a connection there was between the collection, on the one side, and the name and profile on the other. Also national museums on formerly German lands were 'demoted' to regional museum status; this applies to national museums in Szczecin, Gdańsk and Wrocław. Political transformation at this gave out ripples, riding which museums' employees rapidly started to complement their institutions' collections along unto now missing themes. Temporary exhibitions sprouted abundantly, which had had not a chance of appearing previously. The new times' enthusiasm had transformed museums into places of historical demystification. An ample stream of new artefacts flowed in from home as well as from abroad. It was comparable in largesse to the donation action of 1918 onwards, and it testified, among others, to active national identification by émigrés – museums had again become places of their remembrance.

On October 25<sup>th</sup> 1991, the Act on The Organizing and Conducting of Cultural Activities was passed by parliament. Finally, after many years, the act of 1962 had been amended. In the sphere of museums, this new law curbed the centralist competences of the Minister of Culture and Art. The entry was erased, regarding the superior role of the Ministry in delineating the activities and development of museums along government museum policy lines. Museums received legal existence, which rendered them independent of central agency officials.

In the years of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic of Poland, museums have once again become a domain of regions. The Ministry of Culture and Art, one of whose goals has been to prepare institutions under its supervision for function under new administrative circumstances, has strived to preserve the largest number of museums under its direct patronage, in order to protect them, and itself from the general shift to free market economy. Proposals were made to keep several dozen museums under central administration, while the rest would be transferred to local authorities.

The main difficulty in drawing up a list of museums to be financed by the state lay in the basic impossibility of arranging museums' collections according to their material and cultural value. After a period of clear vision and symbolic and factual instrumentality in the system of socialism, national museums after this system collapsed, in the face of a lack of guidelines, and ceased to perform their previous role. Even though the Ministry of Culture acknowledged the state's responsibility as patron of museums concerned with nationwide topics, its projects were successfully blocked by Parliament. Only fifteen, instead of the proposed twenty-seven museums were allowed to remain under central administration (fourteen of these remained under care of the Ministry of Culture, one – under the patronage of the Ministry of Defence). Apart from that, it was justly observed that transferring museums of nationwide research interest to provinces and regions could engender the new patrons' decisions, favouring an abandonment of research not pertaining to the region of location. A major counterargument to this was the approach adopted by the authors of the administrative reform, expressed most clearly in the declaration, that in order to facilitate a profound integration of local communities and increase their active engagement in cultural life, the largest number of cultural institutions possible, among them museums, should be transferred to the local levels (Rottermund, 2001: 136).

The national museums, in spite of a higher degree of public funding, as compared to locally run institutions, had considerable difficulty in determining their target group. Lacking such an important element in the vision of their own activity, they often turned to a solution that always gives instant effects: to imitating western models. Aspirations of the national museums'

managements ran in the direction of equalling the popularity of the biggest museums of Western Europe – the Louvre in France, the Prado in Spain, the Vatican Museums in Italy, or the British Museum in England. Ever more exhibitions were organized with the thought of following the footsteps of great Western European and American art events by displaying masterpieces signed by artists of world renown.

Some critics claim that, after the downfall of communism, national museums had no capacity for changing themselves, being crushed by the weight of their own past, in the form of object ownership disputes and the issue of having been a tool of socialist propaganda. Indeed, since 1918, national museums were truly instrumental in the implementation of state identity policies. Nevertheless, for the 20 years since communism's downfall, no discussion – neither in museum nor in political circles – on new, modern goals for the national museums in Warsaw, Krakow and Poznań has been initiated. Why? - First of all, the so-called state cultural policy planning strategy evokes too strong an association with the long-lasting, manipulative intervention into museums' workings in the post-war period, hence resentment and lack of approval on the part of museum employees and politicians alike.

In recent years the need for constructing a clear history of Polish community has been expressed anew. A major stimulus to reconsider Polish national identity was Poland's entry into the European Union. Starting in 2004, various projects for state policy touching in depth on this matter have appeared for the first time since the process of the country's democratization was completed. Strongly promoted by the then-ruling right-wing party, slogans about the necessity of relating the history of the Polish people made there into public debate and soon found embodiment in the establishment of the Polish History Museum. This museum, due to be erected in the centre of Warsaw, is the first Polish public museum dedicated to national history. It has also, from the start, been the subject of controversy concerning its impartiality and the possibility of reaching a consensus on how the history of Poland should be viewed. The museum is operating, but it is hard to assess its influence on public life, as it is operating without objects and without a museum-devoted building.

In the case of Poland, the traditions of country museums have continued for two centuries. During the partitions, non-governmental societies, and consecutive governments after independence have strived to shape, cement and change the Poles' national identity by the means of museums - especially of those named national for political reasons over the time and described in this paper. Shall we ask about the results of these efforts? From Eva Lipnicka's 'The Xenophobe's guide to the Poles' we can learn that "the Poles has the misfortune to be sandwiched between Germans and Russians and for once are turning it to their advantage, by becoming the middleman between them" (Lipnicka, 1997: 7). This sentence stresses, in a humoristic way, continuing efforts of the state to shape and strengthen Polish national identity. In effect, Poles became 'middlemen' again.

## **Case studies in chronological order**

### **The National Museum in Warsaw**

Arguably, the choice of the Museum of the Fine Arts, founded 1862, for the central establishment, was made somewhat prematurely. It was even less representational of the nation

as a whole, than the Krakow National Museum. The Warsaw University had founded it in 1862 as the Museum of the Fine Arts. In the wider context of its foundation, one chief factor had come into play: a comprehensive reform of the education system, carried out by the tsarist-backed Government Commission for Religious Affairs and Public Enlightenment. This reform encompassed, among others, the creation of the Main School in Warsaw (later, the University of Warsaw), and the reorganization of the Library and School of the Fine Arts. The reformers assumed that the museum would educate students in aesthetics, and nourish their love of beauty (Masłowska, 2002: 10). The first objects were acquired at the bidding of the Government Commission, which commissioned the museum's director to purchase canvasses from foreign painting schools, at an antique auction in Cologne. At the museum, Polish art was absent, and one should presume that this was precisely the aim of the Russian authorities, seeking to prevent any risk of furthering separatist tendencies in the Polish community.

Furthermore, the Commission sent the director visiting important museums elsewhere, "to observe diverse systems and layouts, and all this in order to design such ones [...] that could be applied at the Museum, in line with the Education Act" (Masłowska, 2002: 11). The exhibition was opened to the public in 1865. Admittance was free of charge. In this first public gallery in Warsaw, exhibitions were developed along didactic lines: chronological order was followed, with strict divisions into art schools and communities; solely foreign art was on display. The didactic rationale also found its expression in the presence of copies of famous works of art that the museum did not possess.

The Museum of the Fine Arts lost its temporary residence after just five years of activity, and for the next thirty years, until the end of the nineteenth century, it would have no permanent gallery, and its collection was stored in warehouses. In 1898, the tsarist authorities decided to transfer the ownership of the collection to the municipal government, on the condition that the latter would build a permanent residence for the museum. Starting in 1900, parts of this collection were exhibited periodically in temporary exposition halls.

As we see, in comparison with the National Museum in Krakow, the totality of the Museum of the Fine Arts looks even more modest. Nevertheless, in 1916 the name of the museum was changed to 'National Museum in Warsaw'. This renaming was done on a wave of anticipative joy at the perspective of regaining independence, even though the collection was inaccessible to the public at the time. The first exposition under the museum's new name took place in an entirely revamped ambiance in 1919. Notably, this time works of art representing foreign schools were completely absent. The halls were filled with historical objects of Polish art, donated by the community or loaned by private collectors, expressly to the National Museum in Warsaw. This push of Polish art to the fore was initiated and emphasized by the employees themselves. Numerous Poles visited the exhibition from border regions where plebiscites on state adhesion were soon to be held (Mansfeld, 2000: 16). The display was arranged carefully so that it would reflect Polish art and Polish culture in the most glorious light, and through this – fulfil its task of convincing the public of the admirable tradition of the Polish State, reflecting, in turn, its past might. Implicit was the idea of building up claims to territories whose fate was soon to be decided by plebiscite. The newly founded Ministry of Art and Culture explicitly supported this in the following words:

Without chauvinism, albeit with appropriate understanding that this is our sole weapon against germanization, russification, and generally – de-polonization, we must, with full consciousness strive not only to use the Polish tongue in speech, but also think Polish, think in our distinct categories, have Polish taste, possess industrial production with a Polish look and feel, our own architecture, our own and distinct art. [...] We must, from the centuries-long cultural work, draw conclusions on what the essence of our taste is, wherein the essence and feeling of style. (Siciński, Dąbrowski, Gmurek, 2002: 48)

The newly named National Museum (formerly the Museum of the Fine Arts, whose role was mainly one of storage) began to organize temporary exhibitions, aimed at integrating the society along the lines of national history. The usual pretexts for an exhibition of this sort were all sorts of national anniversaries, especially those of military events from the partitions' period. Thus, the overall character of exhibitions in the 1920s and 1930s was predominantly patriotic. In the 1920s, for instance, subjects of temporary exhibitions included, among others: the fate of Poles in the Napoleonic Wars (on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Napoleon Bonaparte), heroes of the January Uprising, the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the November Uprising, king Jan III Sobieski – on the anniversary of the 1683 Battle of Vienna, and king Stefan Batory. The authors of these consecutive exhibitions sought to remind the Polish society of the role of the great battles fought by the First Republic of Poland and subsequent national uprisings in the nineteenth century, and thereby, to convince the people that it had regained independence by taking on itself an active role on the scene of history, by military action and armed uprising of the masses.

The programmes of both the National Museum in Warsaw, as well as the Polish Army Museum, seem to fulfil the requirement, stipulated by the newly-funded Ministry of Art and Culture in its first year of existence (Siciński, Dąbrowski, Gmurek, 1998: 21):

The Polish State has grown, and it must integrate Poles from all sides. It has occupied provinces of Belarus', Rus', is to expand into Masuria, Silesia, and Spiš. To hold these provinces at the tip of the bayonet or the butt of a gun is impracticable in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Our Fatherland cannot be united by force – one has to look to other ways, and that way lies only in our culture. If we ingrain it without violence, we can unite and cement the State, and, through our culture, prevail upon others to give us our due respect. (Siciński, Dąbrowski, Gmurek, 1998: 48)

The permanent exposition was opened in 1921. Twenty years had passed since the collection had past under the tutelage of the municipal government, but still there was no specific residence that the Municipal Council had undertaken to construct for the museum. In 1924, the Council passed a resolution on the erection of a new building, and in 1927 the architectonic plans were approved and construction started (Jarocki, 1981: 138). In 1936 Dr Stanisław Lorentz, an art historian and conservator, was appointed the Museum's director. He replaced Bronisław Gembarzewski, who was a painter. In the days following the opening of the Museum's new building, the President of Warsaw declared:

The National Museum must develop further [...] as a treasure trove of the past, as a research institute and educational establishment. Within a cadre of the art and culture of all nations, which the Museum must create, Polish art and culture is and must be in the future the main accent. [...] The National Museum in the Capital City should testify (both home and abroad)



to a continuum in the development of Polish culture of the ten centuries of its existence, and illustrate the cultural history of the entire Polish nation [...]. (Masłowska, 2002: 36)

After the Second World War, the National Museum in Warsaw was truly instrumental in the implementation of communist identity policies, taking upon it a role that should be followed by other museums. With a mission as the central museum institution in Poland, the National Museum in Warsaw has acquired collections and objects from all over the country. The way objects found their place in the museum was often not appropriate. The objects were on loan to the museum and they were never returned. The official reason for building collections through breaking the law was that the National Museum in Warsaw was the main host institution, and for many years, the only one where state ceremonies and visits took place.

In the time of the new democracy, for the twenty years since communism's downfall, no discussion – neither in museum nor in political circles – on new, modern goals for the National Museum in Warsaw have been initiated. A new clear view was expressed recently by prof. Piotr Piotrowski, director of the National Museum in Warsaw (2010-2011), in an attempt at re-evaluation of the adjective 'national' in his 'Outline for a Programme of the National Museum in Warsaw'

20 years after the downfall of communism and in the age of globalization, the word "national" itself changes its meaning. The "commonwealth of imagination" is nowadays something else than 150, 100, or 70 years ago; it has also changed since 20 years ago: the Old Continent, as part of the World as a whole, as well as our own part of it, is heading in the direction of a "cosmopolitan Europe". This country and city follows suit. Our Museum must prove itself up to this challenge and set out on the realization of a new mission, in a changing reality.

A special kind of paradox may lie in the fact that at the time when a new, open society is being built in Poland at the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Museum must return to its European roots – to supporting processes of democracy. Since democracy itself is comprehended in a completely different way than 200 years ago, the programme of the Museum must take these changes into account as well. There is, of course, no time or place to touch on these changes further here, however, I must emphasize their most important threads, which include the recognition of a substantial diversity in societal structures, the recognition of minority rights in social policy, as well as negotiation of positions not on the basis of tolerance (hierarchy), but in observance of the equivalence (equality) of opinions both of majority and minority, and the recognition of the international or, more specifically, cosmopolitan dimension of culture.

We perceive the Museum's mission in the perspective sketched above. Its role should be active, and imply the awakening to an understanding of the new world's complexity, and the recognition of the importance of memory and of the past in the process of building a new society – a society transnational (cosmopolitan) and internally complex.[...]  
(Piotrowski 2010:2)

The director resigned after the Board of Trustees did not accept Piotrowski's strategic plan.

## The National Museum in Krakow

The first National Museum on Polish land was created in the Austrian partition, in the form of a municipal museum. The National Museum in Krakow was founded in 1879, by a resolution of the municipal council of the City of Krakow. Reportedly, the artist painter Henryk Siemiradzki, who publicly presented the mayor with one of his canvasses, gave the incentive. It seems, however, that the groundwork had been laid by a document, dated to 1871, published by the mayor of Krakow, Józef Dietl, under the title 'A project for Ordering the City'

As guardians of precious treasures of the past, it is not enough for us to preserve what our ancestors have bequeathed to us, but we must incessantly replenish and enrich those treasures, so that, in later generations the memory does not perish of what Krakow once was, and should ever be: a hearth of love for the Fatherland, of noble memories of the past, and of unshakeable faith in a better future for the nation. [...] It befits the restored interior of the Sukiennice to open therein a gallery of Polish kings, heroes, scholars and artists. It is there that historical canvasses, immortalizing great national events, there – ethnographic collections, there – the shape of past Polish armies, all should adorn a hall of a veritable National Museum stature.

The museum was founded 8 years later, and in its goal, as stated in the charter, was to *represent, in the collected exhibits, the state of art and culture in Poland in its historical and current developments*. Thus, in its first years of activity, the museum slowly enlarged its collection, owing mainly to donations and, to a lesser degree, to acquisitions from antiquaries abroad, of objects originating from Polish lands. The number of objects in the National Museum was: in 1879 (the year of foundation) – 56 objects, in 1883 (the year of the first public thematic exposition, entitled "On the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Vienna" - 76 objects, in 1900 (the year of the ascension of an academic and specialist to the post of director) – 10364 objects, in 1909 – 250,000 objects. In order to fulfil the statutory goal of representation, by way of objects from the collection, the state of art and culture in Poland, casts and replicas regularly supplemented the gallery.

However, in spite of a favourable location on the Town Square in the centre of the city, the museum did not, initially, spike interest in the townspeople. According to optimistic accounts, 5415 persons visited the museum in 1889, 10,661 visited in 1898 and 49,102 persons visited in 1908. As the foremost reason for this state of affairs, one should mention the institution's financial situation that, in the first years, was calamitous enough not to permit any prospect for further development. In 1900, an academic and lecturer in art history replaced an artist as director of the museum. The new director promptly proceeded to compile the institution's new charter, which was then presented to the Municipal Council for approval. For the first time in history, the museum defined in detail the scope of its collection:

all relics of any form or purpose, pertaining to life and cultural developments in the past, and giving thereof direct or indirect evidence, are included in the scope of the Museum's interest. To the collection belong also excavations, prehistoric or other, relics of folk lore, and all objects testifying to the cultural evolution of the people (Mansfeld 2000: 26). Personal memorabilia of persons of merit, or linked to important historical events, should belong to a separate department.

In a short period of time, the National Museum in Krakow acquired rich collections. After 1918, with more than 300,000 objects, the museum asked the citizens of Kraków for financial support in its plan for building a new museum site. In 1934, construction work began, but a few years later, was interrupted by the World War. The new building was finished after the war in the late seventies. In the period of socialism, the main duty for the National Museum in Kraków was as the central museum for the region of Małopolska. After 1989, during the time of the new democracy, the museum was still overlooking the local museums in the region, but in a more informal way.

### **The National Museum in Poznan**

In the entire history of Poland, there has never been such a massive intervention into national identity as the polonization of the so-called Recovered Territories. There, the reorganization of museums proceeded concurrently to, if not preceded the general polonization of lands taken from Germany. It was an equally brutal intrusion into the life of both the native, and the 'repatriated' population from Eastern Poland. The National Museums in Gdańsk, Szczecin and Wrocław, all of which were mentioned in the introduction, and to which we shall soon return, were originally German museums, which under post-World-War-II Polish rule, were transformed into Polish institutions. A prime example of this symbolic takeover of the neighbouring community's heritage, and of the construction thereupon of a collection narrative along the lines of the new landlords' ideas, is the history of the Museum of Wielkopolska. Two years after the regaining of independence in 1921, the central museum of Poznań, the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, was polonized and renamed the Museum of Wielkopolska.

The history of the two collections, which were ultimately merged in the Museum of Wielkopolska (from 1950 – the National Museum in Poznań), dates to the period of partitions and was part of the tense rivalry between Polish and German intelligentsia. Representatives of the former established, in the 1850s, the Society of Friends of Learning, the goals of which encompassed the creation of a library and collection of relics from the region's history. Also, the collection of Polish painting systematically grew, thanks only to the generosity of particular members of the Society. The aim of the first exposition in 1871 was to 'present the historical evolution of Polish painting from the times of Stanisław August, to today's flowering of our art' (Detloff, 1928: 3). The first permanent public exhibition was opened in 1910. At the same time, German societies of learning and archaeology also sought to organize exhibitions of their own objects. In 1888 collections of several societies were gathered in one joint exhibition for the first time. This event triggered calls for the establishment of a museum in Poznań. The German authorities listened these voices and, in 1884, the Provincial Museum in Poznań was opened to the public. In the following years, in line with the central guidelines of the Prussian government, which saw the promotion of German art as a means to neutralize ethnic tensions and conflicts in the eastern provinces, efforts were undertaken to construct a wholly new museum in Poznań. This establishment, inaugurated in 1904, received the name of Kaiser Friedrich Museum, after the reigning monarch of Prussia, the emperor Friedrich III. Its collection consisted solely of artefacts of German origin (Detloff, 1924: 4), and, as the sole of the above-mentioned museums, it received, along with its name, a clear ideological background, albeit of German provenance. Mosaics with likenesses of German painters adorned the building, and the allegorical

representations of Art and Industry wore German folk dress. Inside, prominent were statues of Prussian emperors who had annexed Wielkopolska and South Prussia. Apart from this, the Kaiser Friedrich Museum was the only one to receive permanent dependable financing, which permitted not only exhibitive and research activity, but also allowed for ample new acquisitions to the collection. In 1919, following a successful Polish insurrection and the city's abandonment by the Prussian administration, the German personnel of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum was replaced by Poles, who instantly proceeded to polonize the institution. Firstly, the legend and inscriptions were translated from German and objects considered potentially hurtful to the Polish public were removed. Also the name was changed to 'the Museum of Wielkopolska' which, in any case, did not prove durable, since, at reoccupation by Germans in 1939, the previous one was duly reinstated. Further polonization consisted of developing exhibitions of Polish objects. However, because the museum did not possess Polish artworks, and the Greerman staff concentrated on collecting above all (if not solely) German objects, the museum sought to obtain Polish exhibits through contacting indigenous societies, including the Society of Friend of Learning. Regrettably, due to opposition on the part of 'traditionalists' within the Society (Detloff, 1928: 7), the offer the two collections' merger was rejected.

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