In this paper, I intend to consider the debate concerning one of the direst problems of Warsaw residents in the second half of the 19th century – the standard and prices of rental accommodation. This debate involved broadly understood housing-related civilisation changes and urban economy, and for obvious reasons was not restricted to Polish lands only. Throughout Europe, under conditions of immense demographic urban development in the 19th century, those in charge of the largest cities were incapable of managing problems arising from the low standard of flats on the one hand, and from the high rental price-to-earnings ratio on the other. The issue itself was multifaceted, tying in closely with social and economic circumstances, while options to resolve it hinged on other macro-economic matters. In the Kingdom of Poland, it chiefly affected less affluent communities: craftsmen and industry labourers and impoverished intelligentsia, who could not afford to finance


2 Publicists rarely referred to intelligentsia as such; “workers” and (earlier) “craftsmen” were the terms used. “Lower rank clerks” were occasionally mentioned in debates concerning family budgets.
all of their needs or healthy living quarters. The more prosperous remained
unaffected, as did beggars who could not afford any accommodation at all and
whose concerns had to do with the construction of shelters and poorhouses,
not discussed herein. Nonetheless, this is not to say that housing-related prob-
lems did not concern Warsaw’s other social strata: they were most certainly
concerned by the rather tedious rental system, or rather by the frequent
changes and removals, by periods of excessive rent increases, and by other
discomforts associated with residing in a large city, such as street and yard
noise. Furthermore, the housing issue tied in with faulty interior arrange-
ments, where the show and décor factor clashed with the hygienic require-
ments that emerged at the time.

I will highlight selected aspects, such as housing construction standards
and flat rental rates, only briefly discussing hygiene issues which deserve
separate discussion. The article will describe the housing issue as seen by
publicists, mainly press columnists.

This paper is based on press articles from the period. Newspapers coming
out in the Kingdom of Poland (Warsaw, mostly) offered a credible description
of contemporary discourse, referencing vital pieces published by other per-
iodicals and dailies (not included in my inquiry in this paper), and quoting
from public presentations and proposals, which, often as not, remain the only
source of data available today. For obvious reasons, the selection of press ti-
tles had to be limited, and is thus subjective. I have focused on the most well-
known and influential periodicals whose editors represented the interests
of residents and of the local economy rather than narrow political agendas.
My selection includes Tygodnik Ilustrowany and Klęsy (the city chronicle col-
umns and topical articles). I have also drawn on conservative titles (Kronika
Rodzinna and Opiekun Domowy), positivist periodicals (Przegląd Tygodniowy
and Niwa; while the latter underwent a number of editorial staff changes and
ideological transformations, I extended the inquiry to its entirety), and Głos
– the socially involved key periodical of the younger generation. Moreover,
I searched the specialist press, such as Przegląd Techniczny, Inżynieria i Bu-
downictwo, Zdrowie, and Ekonomista. Additionally, my search comprised
related monographs (mostly brochures), some of which were discussed in
the press. The content was produced by assorted specialists and activists
involved in the city’s social issues, physicians, lawyers, journalists, sociolo-
gists, and architects (i.a. Adolf Suligowski, Ludwik Krzywicki, Józef Polak,
Józef Tchórznicki, Adam Wiślicki, Jan Heurich, Aleksander Makowiecki).
I omitted pre-1905 periodicals of strict party origin, chiefly associated with
the Polish Socialist Party and the national democrats.

When discussing the housing debate, I had no intention of disregarding the
overall urban situation, while not aspiring to describe it in detail. Including de-
scriptions of the prevailing conditions (i.e. developments on the Warsaw hous-

3 For more information, cf. my monograph: A. Łupienko, Kamienice czynszowe Warszawy 1864–1914,
(Tenement Houses of Warsaw 1864-1914), Warsaw 2015.
ing market) in a piece on publicism (i.e. the entirety of what people wrote and thought) is no misunderstanding. It partially authenticates the sense behind the proposals voiced in newspapers, brochures, and public interventions, and gives a better understanding of topics discussed in the press – descriptions of the debate and of realities will thus interlock, the former obviously dominant.

Hopefully, I have in effect managed to outline a relatively complete picture of the public debate on housing issues during the period between the January Uprising (1863-4) and 1905. The outbreak of the revolution which yielded some measure of freedom is the final milestone. The said freedom made possible the forming of associations; while altering construction market circumstances, they brought no major change. Importantly, to me, however, the press scene underwent a transformation. Newspapers became political, some titles disappeared, while others, however ephemeral, appeared, with considerable impact on the overall picture of the debate in question. The purpose of the discourse contained herein was to showcase one of the many debates which could well be referred to as urban, debate dynamics included. The steadily growing cities in Polish lands, such as Warsaw, Łódź, Lwow, Krakow and Poznań, began to suffer from an ever-expanding array of problems, solutions to which were exceedingly difficult to institute or required compromise. Some “actors” of the debate were by no means ready to accept compromise solutions for reasons of politics, ambition, or ideology. The topic of Warsaw’s sewage system described in numerous publications, e.g. in a work by Włodzimierz Pessel, remains the best example of a debate referenced in academic publications.

While some literature on housing concerns of the period is available today, it chiefly comprises works by housing reformers who approached the phenomenon instrumentally. This is true of works penned during the 1918-1939 period, with Konstanty Krzeczkowski as the leading publicist and social activist. The post-war monograph by Jerzy Cegielski is much more valuable in its impartiality, remaining a key reference to this. I must also mention works on changes in housing construction in Warsaw during the period in question, including the design of living quarters for the working class as described by Jadwiga Roguska.

5 E.g. K. Krzeczkowski, Kwestia mieszkaniowa w miastach polskich (The Housing Issue in Polish Cities), Warsaw 1939.
6 J. Cegielski, Stosunki mieszkaniowe w Warszawie w latach 1864–1964 (Housing Relations in Warsaw in the Years 1864-1964), Warsaw 1968.
The 1860s

The debate concerning housing issues in Polish lands was heavily influenced by similar debates in western Europe, mainly in Germany (before unification and after 1871), by the sound housing paradigm of Great Britain, France and Germany, as well as i.a. the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands, and Belgium. While the German discourse emerged alongside English and French developments (in the 1840s), two decades passed before actual steps were taken. One of the fundamental premises underlying housing reform in these countries was that legislative or interventionist action on the part of the state was not sufficient, and that the problem itself could only be resolved via duly inspired and supported construction efforts by private individuals.\(^8\) The greatest accomplishment of early activists and theorists, such as Victor A. Huber, was the recognition that masses of people arriving in cities to seek employment in poorly paid positions and residing in crowded, low-quality quarters did not have the capacity to resolve their own problems, and that charity as defined in days past would not be adequate.

The Polish press had already been discussing the subject of building homes for workers in the first half of the century, as evidenced by an anonymous translation of a French article on the housing problems of labourers in France printed by Biblioteka Warszawska in 1849. In his comments, a Polish publicist admitted that the Powiśle and Old Town districts of Warsaw could also use inexpensive housing to protect workers against moral decadence and premature death.\(^9\)

The exacerbation of Warsaw’s housing issues is witnessed in the 1858 decision of the Administrative Council of the Kingdom of Poland, allowing construction of residential lofts and of formerly banned wooden housing in the city’s suburbs to ease the shortage of living quarters.\(^10\) The same year saw the first concept of a joint-stock company charged with the task of constructing housing for workers. Given the shortage of statistical data concerning residential quarters during the period, the degree of overcrowding is difficult to determine. It has been confirmed that in the wake of 1864, post-Uprising political oppression by Russian officials was a major negative factor, bringing an end to the system of constructing new living quarters carrying moderate rent. Primarily, payments from the so-called urban endowment fund (a source of public loans to the housing construction sector) were stopped in 1868.\(^11\)

Moreover, Warsaw had no local government, even under Russia’s 1870 local government reform,\(^12\) with the best part of city

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\(^8\) N. Bullock, J. Read, The Movement..., pp. 8–9.
\(^10\) J. Cegielski, Stosunki mieszkaniowe..., pp. 32–33.
\(^12\) This was a general trend in the policy of tsarist Russia, which restricted experiments in democracy to Russia alone and refrained from applying them in peripheral territories, cf. T. Weeks, Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia. Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863–1914, DeKalb 1996, pp. 132–133, 153.
investments requiring the approval of Saint Petersburg. All this occurred during a period of unprecedented urban growth (also in Warsaw), the majority of incomers comprising non-affluent or simply destitute residents of small towns and villages. House owners were troubled as well, suffering of a shortage of favourable credit instruments (high-interest private loans could by no means be recognised as favourable) – as a result, the volume of new housing plummeted in the late 1860s. Yet a successful effort was made to establish a dedicated institution aiding house owners; mirroring solutions supporting landowners, the Warsaw Credit Society (Towarzystwo Kredytowe m. Warszawy, TKM)\textsuperscript{13} issued loans pledged by already developed tenement houses. The purpose of the Society’s operations was to improve the financial circumstances of property owners.

Press readers were kept informed of the analogous situation in western countries by translations of foreign publications, for example of a booklet by August Lette, German activist and member of an organisation working to prevent the impoverishment of the working classes\textsuperscript{14} (Central Verein für das Wohl der arbeitenden Klassen), printed under the auspices of Przegląd Tygodniowy,\textsuperscript{15} a positivist periodical established in 1866. In his monograph entitled Kwestya mieszkani (The Issue of Living Quarters), the author described actions taken in support of housing by such German theorists and activists as the aforementioned Huber,\textsuperscript{16} Ludolf Parisius, and Carl Brämer, as well as their concepts of a building society charged with the task of constructing inexpensive housing for the non-affluent. He also discussed relevant English solutions.\textsuperscript{17} This trope will reappear throughout the Warsaw debate. In terms of visual concepts for such housing, Lette was impressed by the economic design of small workers’ houses (such as those in Saltaire, England, or Mulhouse, France), whose residents – after years of residence and paying rent, depreciation fund contributions included – became home owners. He highlighted samples of such housing shown at world exhibitions. Workers aside, the author was also interested in rural craftsmen. While primarily describing the circumstances of workers\textsuperscript{18} and suggestions of solutions to that group’s housing issues, Lette failed, however, to comment on the situation in large cities, where land prices were high and options of building small homes for the working class limited. His attitude coincided with a trend represented by German reformers of the period, hugely impressed by the example of the famous mid-19th-century workers’ houses in Mulhouse.

\textsuperscript{13} Debates concerning the need for such a society had been in progress since the 1840s, cf. A. Łupienko, Kamienice..., p. 117.
\textsuperscript{14} On the organisation: N. Bullock, J. Read, The Movement..., apcit., p. 29 and ff.
\textsuperscript{15} A. Lette, Kwestya mieszkani, Warsaw 1868.
\textsuperscript{16} This concerns his pioneering articles: “Die Wohnungsfrage: die Noth” and “Die Wohnungsfrage: die Hülfe”, printed by Concordia in 1861. N. Bullock, J. Read, The Movement..., pp. 41-42. Huber was a conservative opponent of the liberal (“Manchester”) approach to the misfortune of the working classes, the said approach being represented i.a. by Julius Faucher.
\textsuperscript{17} A. Lette, Kwestya mieszkani..., p. 8.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 6.
The Galician activist Kazimierz Langie did not mention the issue of big city housing either when penning his 1865 brochure in Polish lands. He believed that Polish wealth lay in agriculture, while life in the social melting pot of large cities was disadvantageous to morality. Referring to multi-storey barracks-style housing made popular by western societies as “unhygienic”, he failed to elaborate on the subject, focusing on rural area solutions. Interestingly, he declared that for reasons of their very character, Poles are unfit to inhabit multi-family housing.

The press reported on the shortage of living quarters affordable to Warsaw’s less prosperous residents; cases of handing houses, their plasterwork still wet, over to future residents to speed up the investment process (the subject reappears throughout the period in question) were mentioned constantly. This was when the phrase “pit-shaped tenement house yard” was coined, albeit originally to describe the structure of tenements in the Old Town. Somewhat prematurely, the issue of exceedingly slow expansion of the city boundaries was mentioned. Rent was considered high – worse still, it remained high in locations distant from the city centre, and was unashamedly referred to as extortionists’ charge. The conservative periodical Opiekun Domowy reported on the poor living conditions of craftsmen – again, chiefly in the Old Town area – which was significantly more accurate than writing of the workers’ community, which was still rather low in numbers in Warsaw at the time.

Przegląd Tygodniowy and its editor-in-chief Adam Wiślicki focused on the housing issue as of the first day of the periodical’s existence. In his 1866 piece Podwyższenie komornego (The Rent Goes Up), the publicist talks of Warsaw’s housing issue in reference to Paris, where the matter had reached a grander scale altogether. The piece also echoes the Polish debate along with the proposals to resolve the problem by introducing a new house owners’ tax, which (according to the journalist) would definitely result in residents having to shoulder the burden by paying higher rent. Wiślicki invites broader discussion in an appeal to launch a new housing development campaign with a purpose similar to that pursued in Paris, whose authorities supported the idea of a permanent and visible pool of unrented vacant flats (25,000). The surplus was to be conducive to more intense market competition, and thus to the prevention of high rental fees – a concept also appealed for in Germany by Huber in 1861.

19 K. Langie, O związku budownictwa z ekonomią społeczną i obecnem jego zadaniu u nas (On Relations between Construction and Social Economy and its Current Local Purpose), brochure, 1865, pp. 32–33.
20 "Miejskie Pokłosie" (Urban Legacy), Kłosy, 3 (15) November 1865, year 1, No. 20, p. 238.
21 Ibid.
22 "Miejskie Pokłosie", Kłosy, 18 (30) April 1868, year 6, No. 148, p. 244.
23 "Domy dla rzemieślników (Houses for Craftsmen)", Opiekun Domowy, 5 April 1865, year 1, No. 14, p. 110.
24 Cf. e.g. another article by Wiślicki, "Jak my będziemy mieszkać za lat dwadzieścia [How Will We Live in Twenty Years]", Przegląd Tygodniowy, 1867, year 2, No. 4, pp. 25–26.
25 "Podwyższenie komornego", Przegląd Tygodniowy, 22 (10) April 1866, year 1, No. 16, pp. 121-122.
The 1870s

The early 1870s were a period of exacerbated housing problems, resulting in an outpour of related press articles. High rental rates triggered criticism, often as not ill-conceived and hasty, with no sound recognition of the underlying causes. A piece printed in Przegląd Tygodniowy quoted the ill will of house owners referred to as kamienicznicy [from the Polish for “tenement house” – “kamienica” – trans.] as the main reason for high rent. The readers’ attention was drawn to a speculation bubble of sorts, a phenomenon born in the 1850s, involving a consensus among the said kamienicznicy to preserve the high (and rising) rental prices. The said bubble allowed house owners to live above their means.26 The periodical Kłosy went as far as to suggest a campaign to force tenement house owners to lower rents by holding a strike, involving tenant solidarity in a refusal to pay rent (“non-payment” as opposed to “non-labour”, a term used to describe striking in the industry).27

The problem was an insufficient volume of new housing on the market, despite the existence of the TKM and its accomplishments in supporting new tenement house owners in terms of finance and housing standards (resulting in greater property value) alike, as duly noted by the press.28 The circumstances were explained by high rent charged for all homes (why build new housing if it will not yield more income than old stock?). While it goes without saying that the argument was valid, the situation had actually arisen from equity-owners’ reluctance to invest in housing construction – they had better opportunities in other fields of the economy. This was proven by the fact that housing began attracting big money again in the wake of the 1873 stock market crash, which yielded an abundance of new urban dwellings.29

The initiative of establishing a dedicated building society had been tabled before. Numerous and hopeful press references show how important that well-known idea was.30 Joint-stock company statutes were approved in 1873, albeit criticised for their authors’ excessive concern for appropriately high dividends and payments to the management.31 Architect and publicist Aleksander Makowiecki went further in his critique. As the institution was to be a joint-stock company with unquestioned profits as its goal (however limited against private investors’ yields), Makowiecki described the building society in terms of just another player on the capitalist housing market. Efforts to manage the institution were to be complex as well as resource-consuming, its officials less effective than private investors for reasons of its very nature. As

29 A. Łupienko, Kamienice…, p. 139.
31 "Towarzystwo budowlane” (The Building Society), Przegląd Tygodniowy, 8 (20) July 1873, year 8, No. 29, pp. 224–227.
a result, the cost of flats developed by the society was to be only slightly lower than the going market rate. This is how the author described the economic aspect of the entity’s operations:

How can one consider any reduction in rent when building homes remains expensive, whether handled by a private businessman or by the Society. Land plots are dear, and once construction picks up, they will be dearer still; labour is expensive and insufficient, and once workloads grow, so will the shortage, resulting in higher cost; all construction materials – the brick, the wood, the steel – have all become exceedingly pricey in recent times, and prices shall continue rising as order books fill up. Most importantly, money is high-priced here. The city’s credit society charges 7½%, private capitalists – 7% to 9%, which means one has to pay an average of 8% for sums borrowed to buy or build houses; no wonder that house owners have to try and collect similar interest on their property.32

Makowiecki’s hypotheses were never proven – at the end of the day, the society was never established.

A Kłosy journalist described the mechanism of new housing construction and the visual aspect of new homes in late 1872, in the piece O rozdrobnieniu własności nieruchomości w Warszawie33 (On the Fragmentation of Immobile Property in Warsaw). The author mainly complained of the high (harmful, even) cost of construction loans. Constructors had to accept the worst, highest-interest loans (offered, as duly noted, by Jews) which brought their profit down considerably, the need to repay loans resulting in a need to sell houses. Constructors were thus “debt owners” rather than house owners. The landlord and his tenants were united in a vicious circle of constant rent increases (resulting from the need to repay loan equity and repeated house reselling) on the one hand, and excessive and negligent use of premises (resulting in premature wear and tear) on the other. Furthermore, the publicist points to the shortage of living quarters in the city, not to mention reductions in housing stock volume caused by such projects as demolition required by the Citadel esplanade; he also writes of construction market apathy. Buczyński mentions new initiatives to construct houses for the working class in the Powiśle district in the 1860s, and of the subsequent Pańska Street project,34 neither of which resulting in any change to the housing stock market for reason of the minuscule total volume of flats built. The issue of living quarters for the working class was described in terms of numerous forms of worker exploitation by capitalists, its resolution seen as necessary protection. The author suggested that the state build cheap flats for clerks or support investors, with

34 On construction for the working classes throughout the period under discussion, cf. J. Roguska, Architektura i budownictwo...
banks providing credit assistance and wealthy house owners reducing rent charges. Nonetheless, he concludes that all these initiatives might prove insufficient in terms of altering market circumstances – and that Warsaw would ultimately require a mass campaign of tenement house tenants associating to form joint-stock companies, their equity used to enfranchise residents in line with the reforms appealed for in the German debate of the late 1860s.\textsuperscript{35} What kind of houses should be built? Evidently impressed by small English terraced housing, the author opposes giant tenement houses for several hundred tenants (which began appearing in Warsaw) in favour of small buildings with no more than one family per storey. A similar trend was dominant in Germany through to the 1890s; multi-family tenement housing was considered no more than a \textit{malum necessarium}.\textsuperscript{36} The aforementioned small houses could even be erected in city centres, as:

> No great European city has as much space as Warsaw, even in its very heart, space developed poorly or not at all; even if developed, edifices are surrounded with empty space in abundance, evidently to afford more freedom in distributing waste; further, single-storey or double-storey housing facades remain hugely popular, also in city centres.\textsuperscript{37}

In summary: the author of this significant article – albeit a realist in assessing Warsaw’s housing reform – proved to be amazingly optimistic in terms of alternative urban development plans. He failed to notice that the city had no major capitalists concerned with public interest, whereas masses of tenants were too destitute to associate in companies capable of tackling the housing crisis.

As already mentioned, the crisis was somewhat alleviated by the financial crash in Europe, although publications on Germany point to another factor: the milder pull of cities in terms of attracting newcomers, and thus a lower birth rate, in Berlin for example.\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Kronika Rodzinna} reported on the post-1873 rise of the building movement, albeit many continued to claim that housing construction productivity was on the slump.\textsuperscript{39} The \textit{kamienicznicy} were also referred to in more favourable terms, their financial problems discussed by the press:

> [W]e sometimes refuse […] to consider, for example, that not every kamienicznik is a millionaire, that the income he collects on his premises is all he has to support his family, and that often as not the house itself carries debt that can only

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p. 81.
\textsuperscript{38} N. Bullock, J. Read, \textit{The Movement…}, p. 55.
be repaid from income on property. So, should my esteemed colleagues refrain from making regular payments, or – a phenomenon increasingly more frequent – decide not to pay at all, thus taking advantage of judiciary slowness typical in related landlord-tenant cases, the tenant will grow no richer while the owner will have hell to pay.\textsuperscript{40}

High rents were explained with high land prices in the city centre and poor suburban development – people chose crowded central conditions over areas with inadequate public transportation or no running water\textsuperscript{41} etc. Yet construction market speculation was a factor as well, as mentioned by the afore-quoted articles. Finally, a new and important aspect came into play, as duly noted by the press: improved living quarters hygiene allowed for the construction of smaller premises, yet according to the high standard of large flats of previous decades.\textsuperscript{42}

That was not the first instance of the matter of hygiene arising: urban health had previously been described by Karol Gregorowicz,\textsuperscript{43} for example – but this was the first decade when the press began to elaborate on the issue in the context of housing. In 1879, the Citizens’ Sanitary Subcommittee was finally established in Warsaw under the auspices of her president to safeguard the city’s sanitary condition;\textsuperscript{44} yet the Warsaw Hygienic Society was not formed until 1898. A full description of the hygiene movement would go beyond the planned framework of this paper. I mention it here for a simple reason: as of that decade, hygiene became permanently linked to economic considerations, the issue of building proper living quarters for workers arising also from health matters (the health of workers as well as that of the entire city\textsuperscript{45}). The echo of the movement and of the results of the first Warsaw census of 1868 can be heard in a public intervention by architect Jan Heurich senior on workers’ housing, published in 1873.\textsuperscript{46} Heurich’s review spanned details of social housing in England (workers’ housing with strict tenant rules), France (so-called cités ouvrières, such as the famous one in Mulhouse), and Germany (building societies constructing homes tenant-owned in due course). Having discussed Polish programmes since the times of Staszic, the author concluded that given the lack of typical working class districts in Warsaw, houses catering to such communities could be developed at the rear of tenement house plots. An interesting and original idea, it was also seemingly realistic, as nu-

\textsuperscript{40} "Miejskie pokłosie", Kłosy, 21 April [3 May] 1877, year 24, No. 618, p. 283.
\textsuperscript{41} The large-scale campaign to construct a sewage and water pipeline system for Warsaw was a thing of the next decade only.
\textsuperscript{43} K. Gregorowicz, Warszawa pod względem topograficznym, hygienicznym i geologicznym (Warsaw – Its Topography, Hygiene, and Geology), Warsaw 1862.
\textsuperscript{44} M. Demel, Pedagogiczne aspekty warszawskiego ruchu higienicznego (1864-1914) (Pedagogic Aspects of Warsaw’s Hygienic Movement, 1864-1914), Wrocław 1964, p. 48.
\textsuperscript{45} The issue was discussed by Richard Dennis in the Anglo-Saxon context. Cities in modernity..., p. 39 and ff.
\textsuperscript{46} J. Heurich, Jak robotnicy u nas mieszkają, a jak mieszkać mogą i powinni (How Workers Live in Warsaw, and How They Could and Should Live), Warsaw 1873.
numerous plots of land had not been fully developed at the time, their backyards filled with gardens. Importantly, the author was realistic in pointing out that the impoverished tenants of such houses could not afford to make depreciation fund payments. He was critical of developing suburban areas; Warsaw’s industry was too weak and too central (the Powiśle district being its original main site) to allow such solutions. Typically for the period, the whole intervention was based on detailed construction cost estimates, and on rent calculation in consideration of actual working family budgets.

The issue of constructing housing for workers was debated until the end of the decade. In Ateneum, for example, Bolesław Prus pointed to the poor hygienic standard of such housing, and to the need to expand city borders and develop a network of cheap commuter trains. New construction technologies were discussed as well. In his 1876 brochure, Eustachy Petion presented a cost estimate for constructing inexpensive housing with the use of gravel (concrete) and earth-and-lime walls, and bricks formed with no cement, technologies he had been exposed to in France. Concepts of developing cheap housing for single women had also been raised in response to one of Warsaw’s many urgent and typical problems after the January Uprising.

While the market situation improved, problems were not ultimately resolved. The press continuously reported cases of partitioning off tiny living quarters in attics for destitute tenants and of rent increases. Aleksander Makowiecki made a direct suggestion: let the more affluent rent smaller premises – with no separate representative rooms to receive guests, for example – an argument later repeated in the hygiene-related discourse. The said suggestion arose from another issue: the shortage of more limited tenement house space that could be occupied by poorer families.

It was further proposed that the Parisian solution to housing prices be grafted onto Warsaw soil. A statistical office was to be formed to notify the magistrate of i.a. the number of vacant flats, and of any cases of their share dropping below 5%; the TKM would offer cheap loans for the purposes of new housing construction; increased competition would allow moderate rent rates. The fact that this marvellous idea never saw daylight was proven by an article penned by statistician Witold Załęski many years later, wherein the author complained of the constant inability to obtain statistics on houses

47 A. Łupienko, Kamienice..., p. 169 and ff.
49 E. Petion, O budowie tanich pomieszań [On Building Inexpensive Housing], Lwow 1876.
52 A. Makowiecki, "Drożysza mieszań" [The Dearness of Flats], Tygodnik Ilustrowany, 27 April (9 May) 1874, vol. 13, series 2, No. 332, p. 298.
54 "Kiedy będziemy mieli tanie mieszkania" [When Will We Have Inexpensive Flats], Przegląd Tygodniowy, 28 September (10 October) 1875, year 10, No. 41, pp. 481–482.
erected and demolished or on vacant flats from the magistrate or the Governorate Government.\textsuperscript{55}

\textit{Ekonomista} afforded a slightly different take on the issue, one of its editors claiming that high rents were a direct derivative of Warsaw tenants’ increasing appetite for large flats, and of currency depreciation i.a. in the wake of the 1877-1878 Russian-Turkish conflict.\textsuperscript{56} In a series of articles in the same periodical, Antoni August Eger offered a more detailed description of the link between rental rates and the demand for and quality of money on the market over the course of past centuries.\textsuperscript{57}

**The 1880s**

Housing market moods proceeded to calm down – as proven by less press interest in the subject in the 1880s. Hygiene had become a much more relevant issue following the groundswell of Robert Koch’s revolutionary discoveries and related writings by Witold Załęski in Warsaw, who had already described the results of the aforementioned 1868 Warsaw census in the \textit{Ekonomista} in the previous decade.\textsuperscript{58} Such censuses became a vital tool for housing movement theorists and activists, originally in Great Britain and later in Germany. In 1861, the pioneer project of the \textit{Berliner Volkszählung} was completed in Berlin, comprising living quarters-related data. In 1882, a similar survey study was held in Warsaw to analyse population and buildings; upon publication, findings revealed the massive share of tiny and small flats in the city’s overall housing stock structure.\textsuperscript{59}

The idea of constructing jointly-owned multi-family tenement housing was a subject constantly reappearing in the press of the period. The fundamental rule would be for individual families to hold ownership titles to individual flats. The concept itself – contemporarily self-evident – was an impossibility at the time, as the mortgage structure did not provide for ownership titles to individual units, but rather for (individual or joint) ownership of the entire plot and property.\textsuperscript{60} Nonetheless, attempts to create new ownership organisational structures were made – as in the case of a tenement house located in Marszałkowska Street.\textsuperscript{61} Yet again, England proved to be a role model with its

\begin{itemize}
\item W. Załęski, “Sprawa mieszkaniowa w większych miastach” (The Housing Issue in Larger Cities), \textit{Przegląd Techniczny}, 11 February 1904, No. 6, pp. 73–75.
\item J.R. Wiland, “Środek ekonomiczny do obniżenia cen najmu mieszkań w Warszawie” (Economic Measure to Reduce Housing Rental Rates in Warsaw), \textit{Ekonomista}, 24 April (6 May) 1879, year 2, No. 18, pp. 6–7.
\item A.A. Eger, “Kwestia drożyszy mieszkań” (The Issue of the Dearness of Flats), \textit{Ekonomista}, 1 (13) May 1879, year 2, No. 19, pp. 2–4 and 8 (20) May 1879, year 2, No. 20, pp. 1–4 and 15 (27) May 1879, year 2, No. 21, pp. 1–3 and 22 May (3 June) 1879, year 2, No. 22, pp. 1–3.
\item \textit{Rezultaty spisu jednodniowego ludności miasta Warszawy 1882 r.} (Results of the One-Day Census for the City of Warsaw), part 1, Warsaw 1883 and part 2, Warsaw 1884.
\item A. Łupienko, \textit{Kamienice...}, p. 130.
\item “Miejskie pokłosie”, \textit{Kłosy}, 30 June (12 July) 1883, year 37, No. 941, p. 30; cf. also “Miejskie pokłosie”, \textit{Kłosy}, 3 (15) January 1885, vol. 40, No. 1020, p. 47.
\end{itemize}
solutions of families frequently holding ownership titles to living quarters – albeit terraced housing made such developments much easier.

The periodical *Inżynieria i Budownictwo* printed an important article in 1881: *O nabywaniu i budowaniu domów* (On Purchasing and Constructing Houses). It described the backstage of developing urban housing: different construction formats were discussed, including occasionally difficult entrepreneur-constructor relations; the vital aspect of constructing houses to the sole purpose of selling at a profit was showcased. The author claimed that hidden construction defects arising from excessively cheap solutions enabled fraudulent investors to generate extra profit, as proven by subsequent final property profitability estimates developed by new owners of such faulty buildings. The issue would resurface with a vengeance more than ten years later.

Information about a housing stock surplus began cropping up by the mid-1880s. Massive equity pouring into the housing market after 1873 resulted in an overproduction of living quarters. The development could have contributed to the solution of many an issue described herein (*Prawda* reported on a hiatus in rent increases), were it not for the fact that said overproduction only affected larger flats located in the front of tenement houses. There was a continuous shortage of small flats, their overpowering majority share notwithstanding, which is why the situation did not result in any real rent reduction. Nonetheless, the kamienicznicy were still defended, not least because they had to face another challenge: the obligation to connect all properties owned at own cost to the sewage system under development, not to mention the plague of notoriously non-paying tenants, who were very difficult to evict. No wonder that there were plans to form an association for the sole purpose of obtaining insurance against insolvent tenants.

An article by architect Jan Hinz, who, upon comparing Warsaw’s and Vienna’s house plans, concluded that simpler forms may result in beauty as well as lower construction costs, became a breath of fresh air in the process of rationalising housing investment profitability. One year later, the same author began promoting the construction of single-family housing for factory workers (referred to as craftsmen) in *Przegląd Techniczny*. Having compared housing plans developed in a number of countries, he concluded that domestic factory owners would show greater

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63 A.C., "Budżet Warszawy" (*The Budget of Warsaw*), *Prawda*, 11 November (30 October) 1882, year 2, No. 45, p. 532.
65 *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, 10 (22) August 1885, vol. 6, series 4, No. 13, p. 119.
interest in single- rather than multi-storey housing (as opposed to their western counterparts), as prices in the Kingdom of Poland were lower. This proved that Hinz in all probability underestimated the scale of Warsaw’s housing issue.  

The end of the decade brought reports of a public lecture by lawyer Adolf Suligowski, later published as a book titled Kwestia mieszkań (The Housing Issue). The author, a lawyer and city activist, described Warsaw’s sanitary conditions in his important work, pointing to unoccupied urban space development and to tall tenement house walls. He centred his discourse on the issue of overcrowded flats, highlighted with such clarity for the first time (a sensitive topic in the narrative of western debates since their start), and supported his conclusions with the findings of the 1882 housing census. The publication proved that hygiene concepts were close to Suligowski’s heart. In an attempt to estimate the share of people living in poor conditions, he found it to be a high two-thirds, describing over 17% of flats as absolutely unhealthy (the latter mainly basement and attic living quarters inhabited by one-sixth of all Varsavians). Data concerning lighting in living quarters proved shocking as well in terms of the share of flats affected by unhealthy lighting conditions. The author proceeded to discuss rent, which turned out to be exceeding (in absolute numbers) that charged in Paris or London (which must have been absurd), and the effect of the lack of any housing policy in Warsaw. As a result of rental rates, single room flats formed the vast majority of overall housing stock in 1882 (nearly one-half, similarly to the 1868 census results). Poor living standards hinted at more than a social or economic problem; Suligowski and hygiene experts believed it to be a health issue as well, as shown by mortality statistics quoted for a variety of cities and social strata (chiefly describing Western Europe, for the obvious reason of its profusion of related statistics). The local population’s health condition affected the economy as well, another correlation pointed out by the author. The moral standards of a population deprived of acceptable living dwellings were another topic described. The destitution of small flats coincided with a waste of space in the apartments of affluent city dwellers, in particular in the aforementioned huge and redundant living rooms designed in sunny spaces to the detriment of cramped and dark bedrooms – an undesirable trend health-wise.

The author blamed the status quo on the rapid influx of new residents into Warsaw, and on landlords taking advantage of this situation to raise rent. Furthermore – in an evident echo of the afore-quoted Ekonomista – he saw

72 A. Suligowski, Kwestia mieszkań, Warsaw 1889.
73 Ibid., p. 19.
74 Ibid., p. 24.
75 Ibid., pp. 35–37.
76 Ibid., pp. 38–42.
77 Ibid., pp. 44–46.
78 Ibid., pp. 51–57.
currency depreciation and speculation as contributing factors. The shortage of smaller flats on the market and their lamentable condition were further causes. The author believed that these issues could be resolved – not by offering aid to the poor, which would only serve to increase rent for demand-related reasons – but by boosting market competition through the construction of a considerable volume of decent-quality moderately priced housing, and by improving the standard of existing small flats (instead of shutting them down, as recommended in the wake of each wave of Warsaw’s housing stock inspection). He further believed that action should be taken to educate the population and raise their hygiene-related awareness, and to improve the city’s sanitary standards. In summary, it is apparent that the author did not offer a new diagnosis of the underlying causes of Warsaw’s issues, nor did he table new solutions. His role was one of showcasing the main housing quandaries in a manner both vivid and explicit, and of disseminating relevant knowledge. Additionally, the booklet remains a valid testimony of the state of the city under conditions of swift development. The author was correct in forecasting the direction the said development would take, turning recipients’ attention to the consequences of constructing pit-shaped tenement house yards.

The 1890s

Early articles from the 1890s echo Suligowski’s book which i.a. emphasised the issue of working class habits in terms of letting and using living quarters. The city’s spatial development and the expansion of its horsecar network resulted in renewed appeals to develop workers’ housing in the suburbs, an option somewhat unrealistic in earlier times. Yet the 1890s saw the emergence of a new problem – since 1883, a ring of forts enclosing the city had been under construction; their esplanade precluded any development beyond the former Lubomirski Ramparts despite a successful slight expansion of city boundaries in 1889.

In the late 1880s, a new debate venue was created. In 1888, the Warsaw Chapter of the Society to Support Russian Industry and Trade developed a Technical Section, whose members (engineers specialising in a variety of fields, construction included) submitted innovative proposals during discussions and lectures at the Museum of Industry and Agriculture on Krakowskie Przedmieście Street.

In 1891, a sanitary questionnaire study of Warsaw flats was conducted, its findings published in *Zdrowie*, which encouraged a round of hygiene debates in the city. Even before the study, *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* prophesied the discovery of unhealthy living quarters even in tenements occupied by the affluent, sitting in the shadow of ever-higher outbuilding walls (a problem formerly recognised by Suligowski). Once the findings were published, the overcrowding of Warsaw’s tenement houses was revealed (alongside their considerable size: an average of 100 tenants per house). Concurrently, a steady drop in construction activities over a number of years — related to the aforementioned overproduction — was reported as well.

Furthermore, the decade brought reflections on the millions of roubles in annual rent payment and overpayment (when compared with other cities), yielding a revival of the concept of housing with multiple owners of individual flats. Yet this time, the advantages of the former flat renting system were showcased: tenants could move once their financial and income-related conditions changed. Another solution to the high rent charged for small premises involved the idea of dividing larger flats into smaller units already at the design stage, later abandoned because routine housing stock design made this impossible. Suburban development was constantly seen as a solution as well:

Warsaw needs homes, as many as possible! Once the city encircles her vast outskirt areas, today used by palant [distant cousin to baseball — trans.] players or (if weed-infested) by Jewish goats seeking pasture, and once trams connect distant districts to the city centre, thus bringing them closer — the housing issue will resolve itself.

In 1896, the periodical *Głos* offered comments on the housing issue, quoting findings of the 1891 census, a public intervention by architect Bronisław Brochwicz-Rogóyski, and an article by Józef Tchorzniicki and Rajmund Wojnicz concerning an enormous barracks-style tenement house they had analysed. The *Głos* publicist began by deliberating on the Slavic race with its apparent inbred
inclination to crowd in homes and abodes (urban barrack-style tenement houses and rural labourer quarters were quoted as cases in point).\textsuperscript{90} Conclusions offered by referenced publications and appealing for the construction of small English-style privately owned houses were questioned for customs-related reasons arising from the aforementioned description of Slavs, a factor the author used to explain the lack of villas in Warsaw’s peripheries, in negligence of the obvious cause: the fort esplanade surrounding the city. The fact that the smallest premises of the poorest standard were the most expensive ones in terms of charges per square metre was also showcased as a solution most profitable to house owners. The latter major discovery by Tchorznicki and Wojnicz became a standard component of the 1890s discourse.

The family budget-to-rent ratio was another key trope, constantly resurfacing over many years. The one-to-six ratio (rent not exceeding one-sixth of the family’s budget) was considered healthy – and difficult to achieve, given the usury trends in the construction industry.\textsuperscript{91} The omnipresent propensity of working class families to take in sub-letters was another factor, and another permanent feature of the housing discourse.\textsuperscript{92} Advice offered by hygiene-obsessed activists in terms of furnishing and using living quarters was criticised as well; in emulation of earlier times, it was constantly pointed out that the shape of flats was a direct result of general tenement house design trends – a factor tenants had no control over.\textsuperscript{93}

The 1890s brought another dynamic influx into Warsaw (her population growing by over 200,000 – from 455,000 to 686,000,\textsuperscript{94} the whole decade proving the most vigorous ever), followed by a boom on the new tenement house market. In 1896, a new “revelation” was unmasked: the speculation mechanism in the construction industry, much more developed than in the 1870s. Władysław Koleżak wrote related articles in Niwa, later published as a single brochure titled Lichwa w budownictwie (Usury in the Construction Industry).\textsuperscript{95} Having mentioned the brochure elsewhere,\textsuperscript{96} I will not dwell on the details here. According to the brochure, the investor employed a construction foreman, making him financially dependent. Construction works were to proceed in violation of the construction law in an effort to cut costs, whereas the finished, poorly built (while heavily ornamented and well-insured) house was swiftly sold as a top-quality product. The transaction was preceded by a high-

\textsuperscript{90} Z[ygmunt] Was[ilewski], “Mieszkania dla robotników” (Housing for Workers), Głos, 29 February (17 March) 1896, year 11, vol. 1, No. 9, pp. 209–210.
\textsuperscript{91} E. Dutlinger, “Kwestia mieszkań” (The Housing Stock Issue), Przegląd Tygodniowy, 7 (19) June 1897, year 32, No. 25, pp. 293–294.
\textsuperscript{92} Cf. e.g. Stanisław Koszutski, “Mieszkania dla robotników” (Housing for Workers), Głos, 18 (30) April 1898, year 13, No. 18, pp. 422–425.
\textsuperscript{93} “Budowniczowie a lokatorzy” (Constructors vs. Tenants), Przegląd Tygodniowy, 9 (21) November 1896, year 31, No. 47, pp. 525–526.
\textsuperscript{94} M. Nietyksza, Ludność Warszawy na przełomie XIX i XX wieku (Warsaw’s Population at the Turn of the 19th Century), Warsaw 1971, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{95} W. Koleżak, Lichwa w budownictwie, Warsaw 1896.
\textsuperscript{96} A. Łupienko, Kamienice..., pp. 141–142.
value TKM loan taken out against the property’s mortgage register to finance further construction projects of the same variety. Another (1897) publication ominously titled *Domy się walą* (Houses Are Collapsing)\(^97\) described further details of the procedure. Another feature highlighted cases of premature and accelerated tenement house handover to tenants.\(^98\) Sometime later, an article charged constructors themselves with some of the blame for unfortunate developments (for handling an excessively high number of simultaneous construction projects while having the capacity to make things better). That, however, was an isolated opinion.\(^99\) It goes without saying that the afore-quoted publication offered a credible picture of investor practices – similar conclusions were described in a German textbook by Rudolf Eberstadt, printed over ten years later.\(^100\)

Such publications only served to strengthen arguments in favour of building homes for the working class. The Société des Habitations à Bon Marché established in the late 1880s in France proved a key inspiration. The institution was long-term in nature: while not engaging in the process of housing construction, it offered assistance to private initiatives, such as building societies raising inexpensive flats, with working class tenants offered ownership titles after a mere fifteen years or so. Furthermore and importantly, the Société promoted the concept in the press. The author of the related article also highlighted state legislation conducive to such initiatives.\(^101\) On another occasion, economist Stanisław Koszutski reviewed French, English, American and German solutions, classifying them by workers’ housing construction model (multi- or single-family accommodation).\(^102\)

By no means did authors stop at describing favourable foreign examples – Polish solutions were offered as well. Niwa proposed suburban housing districts for railroad workers, tenants purchasing life insurance as part of the deal. Rent payments were credited to a depreciation fund; in case of a tenant’s death, the insurance sum was used to purchase the flat from the building society, its former formal owner. This is how rent was used to buy flats. As the author himself was quick to admit, the solution was viable for a single reason: houses could be built in suburban areas, their tenants of fair finan-

102 S. Koszutski, "Mieszkania dla robotników", *Głos*, 23 February 1898, year 13, No. 17, pp. 399–401 and *Głos*, 18 [30] April 1898, year 13, No. 18, pp. 422–425. For further information on such solutions, cf. also "Stowarzyszenia budowlane w Niemczech" (Building Societies in Germany), *Przegląd Techniczny*, 14 April 1910, vol. 48, No. 15, p. 196. These comprised two kinds of societies: those building multi-family housing and letting flats for low rent, and those building single-family houses to sell units. While there were only two such societies in 1870, their number skyrocketed to 950 by 1908.
cial standing.\textsuperscript{103} Another proposal comprised hygienic solutions for blocks of flats intended for working class occupancy. Related criticism involved (among others) the detrimental health impact of dark and dirty hallways – which is why open galleries connecting individual flats and staircases were suggested as a design solution.\textsuperscript{104} While popular in numerous Central European cities, such as Vienna, Budapest, and Lwow, the design was not readily acceptable in Warsaw for reasons of its climate.

Yet it was becoming increasingly obvious that the issue could not be resolved under capitalist conditions,\textsuperscript{105} not to mention the authorities’ reluctance to offer any assistance – the latter not described explicitly for censorship reasons. Hence, the buyout and construction of inexpensive housing by the city itself were suggested (following the well-known rule of nationalisation formerly applied with regard to the postal service and selected railways), albeit everybody knew that the suggestion was rather utopian under Russian rule. This is why analyses of the economic aspects of the issue were of key importance. Most publicists understood that only a massive change to the market sparked by the co-operation of large institutions could bring about any improvements. The unfortunate fate of many workers’ housing initiatives (such as those of the Powiśle district or Pańska Street) was common knowledge: after a few years, they fell into the hands of private kamieniczni, sharing the fate of other tenement houses.\textsuperscript{106} This is precisely why Stanisław Koszutski remained sceptical with regard to the most famous initiative of the late 19th century – the Wawelberg Foundation workers’ homes (a drop in the ocean) that Bolesław Prus, among others, had been so enthusiastic about.\textsuperscript{107} This is also why suggestions of developing a building society were tabled – a society with several million roubles in equity, and the capacity to purchase plots of land at auction and to build houses with the use of its own materials (from its own brickyards, for example)\textsuperscript{108}.

The Early 20th Century

The early 20th century brought the first conclusions of the Wawelberg Foundation housing project. The economic model, the high construction cost, and the excess services and auxiliary facilities (such as laundries) were all criticised, as were the considerable distance from the city (Górczewská Street) and exceedingly strict tenant rules.\textsuperscript{109} The project was contrasted with housing

\textsuperscript{103} H. Michalski, “Domy własne” (Own Housing), Niwa, 16 (28) September 1895, year 24, No. 24, p. 486.
\textsuperscript{104} “Mieszkania dla ubogich” (Flats for the Poor), Przegląd Tygodniowy, 27 April [9 May] 1896, year 31, No. 19, pp. 221-222.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{106} S. Koszutski, “Mieszkania dla robotników”, Głos, 18 (30) April 1898, year 13, No. 18, pp. 422-425.
\textsuperscript{109} Leon W., “Tanie mieszkania” (Cheap Housing), Głos, 15 (28) April 1900, year 15, No. 17, pp. 257-258.
initiatives in Germany, boasting ever-increasing momentum. The German
top-down concept for the development of building societies was abandoned
in favour of bottom-up construction co-operatives, whose number reached
a high 60 by 1899. Their mass nature had a positive impact on competition
on the open market. Notably, such a policy was made possible by the gradual
victory of the post-1886 idea of state interventionism in the housing sector, i.e.
in accordance with the version of interventionism suggested to the Germans
by Chancellor Bismarck in the field of social insurance. Building societies
were supported with inexpensive credits issued by increasingly numerous
mortgage banks; Frankfurt am Main, well and modernly managed by mayor
Johannes Miquel, contributed as a role model too.

With regard to conditions in Warsaw, publications continued along the
lines of unhygienic living quarters occupied by working class families, and
related realities revealed by subsequent inspections by the city’s agencies and
institutions. Rent was a constant complaint, giving rise to new dreams of
a building society that would solve all problems. Reflections on rent going to
waste were offered: after 30 years, a tenant could have well covered the cost of
a flat in rent payments, while the sum could have allegedly been used for the
purposes of purchasing a worker’s own housing unit, provided that a bank or
economic-and-funding society had lent a helping hand. In 1904, accounting
theorist Henryk Chankowski went as far as to publish a construction design
for shared ownership housing, plans, cost estimates and depreciation tables
included. The well-known social activist Ludwik Krzywicki described a project,
which was by no means a revelation, in Ekonomista, writing that the city
should assume the role of the landowner and builder of housing stock for
workers. The concept could not have been voiced at a better time: in Ger-
many, municipalities began buying out land in cities to improve housing
policy by i.a. leasing out (rather than selling) land to construction industry
investors. As in previous times, the excessive and growing number of sto-
reys were criticised as unhealthy and uncomfortable (lifts were a new and
infrequent development). Yet true skyscrapers were yet to make an appear-
ance in the final pre-war decade.

The speculation bubble on the housing market disappeared. Ever since the

110 “Kwestia mieszkań” (The Housing Stock Issue), Niwa, 6 (19) October 1901, year 29, No. 42, p. 660.
112 E.g. a series of articles titled Jak żyje uboga ludność Warszawy [How Warsaw’s Impoverished Population Lives], Głos, 10 February (29 January) 1900, year 15, No. 6, pp. 87–89 and 12 (24) February 1900, year
114 “O dach nad głową” (For a Roof Above Their Heads), Niwa, 4 (17) January 1903, year 31, No. 3, p. 36.
115 Henryk Chankowski, Domy udziałowe: przewodnik dla osób chcących mieć mieszkanie własne (Joint
Ownership Houses: Guidebook for Those Interested in Owning a Flat), Warsaw [1904].
116 K.R.Z. [Ludwik Krzywicki], “Kwestia mieszkań” (The Housing Issue), Ekonomista, 8 (21) December 1900,
year 1, No. 38, pp. 311–313.
118 “W sprawie wysokości domów w miastach” [On the Height of Buildings in Cities], Przegląd Techniczny, 27
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early 1890s, the press had been reporting on vacant units in different parts of the city.\footnote{“Z tygodnia na tydzień”, Tygodnik Ilustrowany, 25 July (6 August) 1898, No. 32, p. 619 and Tygodnik Ilustrowany, 5 (18) August 1900, No. 33, p. 640. According to 1891 statistics, Warsaw had a 2.3% share of vacant premises, cf. Witold Załęski, “Sprawa mieszkaniowa w większych miastach”, Przegląd Techniczny, 10 March 1904, vol. 42, No. 10, p. 140.} The early 20th century was actually a period when the growth rates of new housing dropped in the wake of another economic crisis.

In closing, I wish to quote the conclusions of an amazingly pessimistic article published in Przegląd Tygodniowy. Its author declared that despite the many and varied forms of struggle for decent and relatively inexpensive workers’ housing in Western Europe, the situation remained unchanged. Theories of the industry moving out of the city to rural areas had failed. The issue of high rental rates in Germany and France had not been resolved; tenants remained helpless when faced with the sheer power of tenement house owners, monopolists largely unthreatened by building society initiatives. Moving to a new flat was never a solution: in other words, as the author saw it, neither building societies nor (and even more so) philanthropy could in any way bring about a miracle.\footnote{Kwestia mieszkaniowa, Przegląd Tygodniowy, 6 (19) May 1900, year 35, No. 20, pp. 193–195.} The aforementioned failure of the housing movement was particularly painful in the case of Warsaw. The article also mentioned the recent British garden city initiative; yet Ebenezer Howard’s famous initiative was in essence a form of surrender in terms of resolving the housing issue in large cities. It was a form of escapism leading to the creation of new, healthier and cheaper urban-rural townships, away from the centres of overcrowded cities.

Warsaw was one such city on the eve of World War I. Some of her tenement houses were seven storeys tall, plots of land developed all the way to the city borders, not far from the city centre and clearly in line with the fort esplanade. In 1909, an attempt was made to describe the city and its tenement houses in clear emulation of Howard and his ideas:

[...] Warsaw is an exception among all European cities; it has no aesthetic, healthy district with pretty trees reaching beyond the stone circle of her centre. Warsaw’s banal barracks-style tenement houses, packed into a uniform mass and overcrowded to the point of resembling small towns, are increasingly tiresome, and make us yearn for forms lighter and more in line with the requirements of pure beauty that we have such a shortage of within the concrete body of the city. Yielding to the services of speculative business people and to the main purpose of a possibly profitable use of space, Warsaw architecture has ceased being an art form.\footnote{Tygodnik Ilustrowany, 9 October 1909, No. 41, p. 840.}

Conclusions

The housing issue remained unresolved in Warsaw throughout the period under consideration, the idea of creating new and green suburban areas...
a mere attempt at avoiding the problem. Admittedly, however, the attempt itself was not as unrealistic as it may sound: in 1911, the tedious building restrictions on the Citadel esplanade were lifted. Fresh hopes for new and rational housing architecture development can be seen in the 1911 brochure by architect Józef Holewiński, titled Przyszły rozwój Warszawy (The Future Development of Warsaw).\(^\text{122}\) Symptoms of a housing issue left unresolved manifested themselves in certain events of the 1905 revolution. The period of spontaneous action against the partitioning authorities also precipitated a tenant–landlord economic conflict. In the summer of 1905, the Polish Socialist Party appealed to tenement house owners for a 20% rent reduction. In some cases, tenants themselves ensured compliance, occasionally with the use of force.\(^\text{123}\) Such violence against kamienicznicy was repeatedly reported by residents of various city districts where tenants engaged in direct disputes with their landlords.

The debate concerning Warsaw’s housing issue continued throughout the period under consideration. While similar tropes kept resurfacing, occasional new ones appeared as well, sparked by subsequent housing stock questionnaire studies (in 1868, 1882, 1891), and by consequent topical writings by assorted activists. Hygiene proved to be a subject of importance – furthermore, a growing number of people became aware of how unfavourable the shape of mature tenement houses was, their dark yards surrounded by tall outbuilding walls.\(^\text{124}\) Moreover, the concept of single-family workers’ houses developed on separate, centrally located plots of land was finally abandoned in the 1890s and replaced by the idea of hygienic blocks of workers’ flats whose existence had to be accepted.

It was clear that the Russian state and the state-controlled magistrate could not be counted on – housing issue resolution projects based on official support were few. Yet without state support, the problem remained practically insoluble, as proven by failure upon failure to form building societies. Press proposals and status quo evaluations reveal chaos. Some believed the concept of developing suburban working class housing estates to be realistic as well as necessary – others saw it as utopian. According to some, prices for centrally located plots of land were ridiculously low, while others thought them unreasonably high. This is why the role of economists basing their proposals on accurate and detailed budgets, and of urban specialists – such as Adolf Sugligowski – was so crucial.\(^\text{125}\)

Russia took no extensive action towards systemic improvement of urban housing conditions. There was no question of emulating the state legislation of Great Britain or France (such as the famous 1894 loi Siegfried introducing

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125 J. Cegielski, Stosunki mieszkaniowe..., pp. 39 and ff.
tax breaks for low rent housing constructors), or similar efforts attempted by Germany. Therein lay the greatest difference between the Kingdom of Poland and Western Europe. Warsaw could not count on any modern approach to the matter, even under mayor Sokrates Starynkiewicz, who channelled all his power and influence into another issue of fundamental importance to the city’s general health – the water and sewage system. Worker aid programmes were restricted to one-off private initiatives, whereas the city itself held a mere few percent of Warsaw’s property – while in pre-1914 Germany, the campaign to buy out land for cheap housing purposes resulted in municipal land ownership exceeding 30%. Furthermore, the issue of the systemic ineffectiveness of self-lease came into play: in the wake of the 1905 revolution in particular, the system saw blue-collar workers as deadly enemies rather than victims of capitalism.

Censorship was an issue as well, precluding the option of filing complaints arising from the authorities’ failure to co-operate on a larger scale. It was obviously unadvisable to write about forts surrounding the city or the esplanade which made it impossible to build housing estates for the working class in the immediate vicinity of Warsaw’s 19th-century borders. Hence the much more frequent inclination to blame the problem on concealed kamienicznik conspiracies, or on inherent features of the Slavic race – which augmented the impression of helplessness and naïveté apparently displayed by numerous (though not all) authors of the aforementioned publicist pieces.

A shortage of statistical data was another problem in the (paper) planning of housing policies, as highlighted by Witold Załęski. Throughout the entire period under consideration, only three censuses that can reasonably be referred to as housing-oriented were held.

Credibility demands that another comment be added: the aforementioned programmes developed in Western Europe and publicised in the Warsaw press had not resolved housing stock problems either – yet they served as a major source of knowledge, making it easier to handle such issues in later times. Post-1918 independent Warsaw had to design her state and municipal programmes practically from scratch, despite the presence of numerous experts in the field who had developed their experience (albeit merely sadly theoretical) in the intense public press debate in partitioned Poland.

The Warsaw Housing Issue in Public Debate – summary

The article presents public debates on the issue of housing in Warsaw in the second half of the 19th century (before the Revolution of 1905) as conducted in the press and in published monographs. The main issue was to provide housing to the neediest social groups, i.e. labourers, artisans, and impover-

ished members of the intelligentsia. The article highlights major proposals as well as opinions on issues such as the establishment of a building society, construction housing for the working class (and, specifically, whether in the form of single-family dwellings or tenements?), models drawn from cities in Western Europe, and finally the role of state and municipal institutions. The articles and brochures presented exhibit unwarranted optimism and prove the naiveté of some of their authors. There were, however, some more realistic projects. Poland’s status as a partitioned territory (which entailed the lack of a state and municipal housing policy) made it impossible to intervene in the capitalist housing market.

**Key words:** Housing issues, history of housing policy, history of Warsaw, Russian Partition, debates in press