

Postulates of the 1933 Athens Charter and the 1935 Vision of Toruń Urban Development

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The presence of the topic of Toruń at a conference focused on Gdynia may seem not fully justified. Toruń is not famous for particularly characteristic modernist buildings, which, however, have been noticed by scientists researching that period¹. Both cities are connected by the fact that they were located in the pre-war Pomeranian voivodship, the capital of which was Toruń, and by the person of Tadeusz Tołwiński, the co-author of the urban development plan of Kamienna Góra, and – what is more important – the father of contemporary urban development in Poland. He was also the leader of the group preparing a draft zoning plan for Warsaw, which was a project of Warsaw Architects' Association carried out in 1915-16. This project encompassed global urban issues, presented in multiple aspects: historical development, road network, and existing or planned green spaces. Noticing the specific characteristics of each individual part of the town, the authors considered it necessary to achieve "functional and spatial integration of all centres"². This functional plan the Architects' Association allowed the city to develop radially and to prevent concentric growth. Tadeusz Tołwiński, as the head of the City Building Department at the Faculty of Architecture of Warsaw University of Technology, was the MA dissertation advisor of Ignacy Tłoczek, who in turn was contracted by the then President of Toruń Antoni Bolt to prepare an urban development plan for the city. In 1930, this barely 28-year-old architect came to Toruń to fill the responsible post of the head of Technical Department within the Municipal Board; he worked on the plan in the years 1934-1935³. A detailed analysis of this plan, which was preserved in the Toruń branch of the State Archive, can lead to the conclusion that the author possessed the knowledge concerning the requirements of historical urban development, conforming to the rules enumerated in the 1933 Athens Charter. I do not intend to prove that Tłoczek was familiar with the postulates of this document as its contents were published only in 1942; I would like to point out to the unquestionable influence of Tadeusz Tołwiński, an architect and urban planner recognized in the world of

international modernist creators⁴, and a man who could and wanted to share his knowledge with his students.

The Athens Charter, an outcome of the 1933 international congress of modernist architects CIAM, taking place during a Marseilles-Athens cruise on the *Patris*, focused on analysing the city and its modern problems⁵. The Charter program reflected the most progressive – though often Utopian in those times – trends, striving to ensure a man's right to lead a rationally organized life in new civilizational conditions⁶. The contents of the Charter were divided into three parts. The first pointed out that a city, as a part of a region in its economic, social and political dimension, is subjected to the influence of its environment, formed by its geographical and topographical location, and of political and economic situation. Therefore, the reasons for city development are also subject to changes. The second part, after distinguishing the main functions fulfilled by a city (housing, recreation, work, transport), criticized the contemporary state of affairs and proposed the directions of corrective measures. Residential quarters should be located in the best areas with good insolation, and the line of building elevations should not be parallel to traffic arteries. Application of state-of-the-art technologies in construction of high-rise buildings would leave space for large green areas around them. Each residential zone should offer possibilities of recreation in the form of green areas equipped with facilities for all age groups of the inhabitants (parks, playgrounds, sports facilities, stadiums etc.), utilizing of course local natural resources. Ordering of the work function primarily involved separation of industrial zones with green belts; these zones should be adjacent to railroad and road network. The administration centre ought to have communication lines to all residential areas, industry and crafts. Tradesmen's workshops, due to their inextricable connection with urban life, should be located within the city. Transport solutions depended on the conclusions of studies on a city and regional traffic. Such research ought to determine destination of the roads and thus their classification (main traffic arteries, transit roads, residential roads, pedestrian only roads) and the maximum speed. Arterial roads should be isolated with strips of vegetation barriers.

The restoration conclusions of the 1931 Athens Charter were also reflected in the 1933 one, taking the form of a reminder that preservation of architectural monuments was obligatory unless it compromised sanitary conditions of the inhabitants. To conclude, for the creators of the Athens Charter man was the central concern and residence was

1. B. Chmielarska, *O niektórych budowlach publicznych międzywojennego Torunia*, [in:] "Zeszyty Architektury Polskiej", 1988, Vol. 5-6, pp.151-152; W. Romaniak, *Wybrane zagadnienia urbanistyki i architektury w województwie pomorskim w latach 1920-1939*, Warszawa 2005; B. Mansfeld, *Sztuka od XIX do początków XXI wieku*, [in:] A. Błażejewska, E. Pilecka, J. Tylicki (ed.) *Dzieje sztuki Torunia*, Toruń 2009, pp. 365-513, esp. ch. „Polska Odrodzona (1920-1939)”, pp. 404-432.

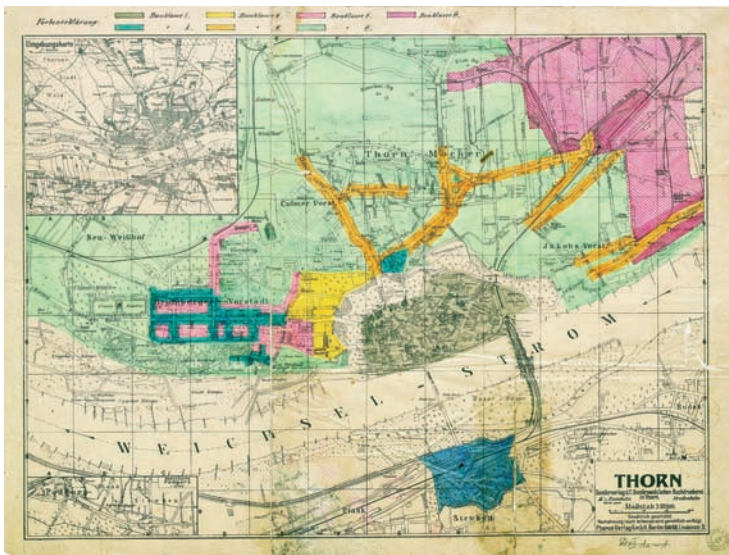
2. K.K. Pawłowski, *Początki polskiej nowoczesnej myśli urbanistycznej*, [in:] *Sztuka około 1900. Materiały Sesji Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki, Kraków, grudzień 1967*, Warszawa 1969, p. 88.

3. B. Mansfeld, *Ignacy Felicjan Tłoczek (1902-1982) architekt i urbanista*, [in:] J. Poklewski (ed.) *Artyści w dawnym Toruniu*, Warszawa – Poznań – Toruń 1985, pp. 183-187; por.: I. Tłoczek, *Toruń w latach 1930-1939. Wspomnienia urbanisty* [in:] "Rocznik Toruński", Vol. 5: 1971, pp. 141-161.

4. Tadeusz Tołwiński was a member of International Federation for Housing and Town Planning.

5. P. Biegański, *U źródeł architektury współczesnej*, Warszawa 1972, pp. 438-463.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 438.

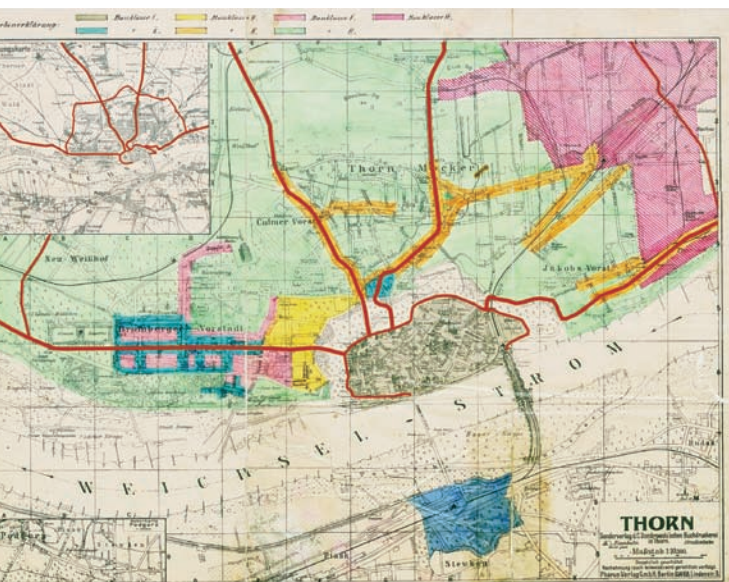


1. Map of Toruń ca. 1916 (State Archive Toruń). Prepared by the author

the starting point of all urban development decisions. They also pointed out that city planning should involve three dimensions, including height.

The recapitulation of main postulates of the Charter will be helpful in the analysis of Ignacy Tłoczek's urban development plan for Toruń. On the eve of the World War I the city had a dual image: on the one hand, it was an important Prussian border fortress; on the other, attempts were undertaken to modernize the town's structure (Fig. 1). Introduction of the railroad connected the city to Berlin, Wystruć (Istenburg), Warsaw, Bydgoszcz, Grudziądz and Malbork. A result of that modernization was a glamorous alley (Wąły) encircling the Old and New Town, and two important urban development concepts: Wilhelmstadt in the east and Bydgoskie Przedmieście two old routes (the streets Bydgoska and Mickiewiczza) were adapted and expanded by addition of perpendicularly intersecting streets (Konopnickiej, Klonowica and Sienkiewiczza). Next, streets parallel to Mickiewiczza St. were delineated: Krasińskiego St. and Słowackiego St. Wilhelmstadt Quarter, built on former fortress grounds, had a regular grid with centrally located Św. Katarzyny Square and the streets: Warszawska, Piastowska, Kazimierza Jagiellończyka and Poniatowskiego, where metropolitan-style tenement houses were built. In the eastern corner of the quarter, opposite the bridge, a railway station was built to service the right bank part of the city. However, a major part of the quarter was to be a garrison. At the turn of the

2. Map of Toruń ca. 1916 – road network: a thicker line marks exit roads; a thinner line – the streets around the Old Town and those encircling the city. Prepared by the author and Ewa Bożejewicz



20th century the community of Mokre was incorporated into the town; utilizing the existing roads and railroads leading to Grudziądz, the planners located there the northern railway (freight) station, industrial plants and modest housing estates. The street network was based on the main exit directions (Bydgoszcz, Chełmno, Grudziądz and Włocławek) and the roads encircling the city: Szosa Okrężna St. in the west turned into Polna St. in the north, Polna St. joined Wschodnia St. and the latter led to Lubicka St. (Fig. 2). The only railway and road bridge near James Fortification was complemented by a ferry located at the end of Łazienna St. A railway sidetrack ran along the Vistula to the lumber port. The heart of the city structure was Śródmieście, the city centre, with adjacent, radially arranged suburbs planned around exit traffic arteries also starting in the centre. Poor road connections between the suburbs did not facilitate growth of inter-quarter economic connections. There were no tradesmen's shops there, as Śródmieście fulfilled that need. The inner line of fortifications and garrisons, built after 1878 on the 17th century earthworks, was preventing unification of the suburbs with the centre⁷. Thus the garrison features of a fortress town were clearly dominant.

This was the situation faced by the leading visionary of the town of the future – mayor Antoni Bolt⁸. A lawyer by education, he became the mayor in 1924 and remained in office until 1936. His vision of development plan for the city could be summed up by a catchphrase: greatness of Toruń in greatness of Poland. The main aim was therefore integration of the city - the capital of Pomeranian voivodship – with the geopolitical structures of the region, in other words, the transformation of former garrison and bureaucratic town into a decision centre in economy, culture, science and education (Fig. 3). Since the beginning of his term, the mayor focused on improving road connections, both with the towns of the region and between the city quarters. The first step was demolition of the forts encircling the city centre and construction of the exit roads. In 1924 Chopina St. was built, three years later – Jagiellońska St., and between 1929 and 1934 – Lubicka St.⁹. Through thoughtful property policy, geared towards concentrating land ownership in the hands of the municipal board, Bolt created a communal land fund, which facilitated the realization of construction projects. As he noticed the huge potential of Toruń intellectual circles, gathered around the Scientific Society, the Baltic Institute, the Town Archive, the Town Library and the Town Museum, the mayor saw the necessity of founding a university. According to Tłoczek, Bolt was a godsend in those times. Tłoczek himself wrote in his commemorative piece on Bolt: "Before Bolt, people built houses in Toruń, yet they did not build the city. I can say without any exaggeration that he was the precursor of implementing the rules of modern urban planning..."¹⁰.

The economic principles that were the core of the urban development plan and were the outcome of research into the development pattern of Toruń and the city's role in the region, undertaken by Mayor Bolt at the beginning of his term at the office, could be summarized in several crucial points:

- a) continued development of local agricultural and food industry, served by Toruń railway node and the river port, and of different branches of industry: electric, chemical, heavy and ceramic;
- b) facilitating trade between local agriculture and industry and outside buyers and providers;
- c) development of the city as a provincial level centre;
- d) dynamics of development as a regional centre of science, education and culture;
- e) support of local gardening traditions and businesses that backed them¹¹.

7. I. Tłoczek, *Toruń w latach...*, op. cit., p.142.

8. I. Tłoczek, *Antoni Bolt – prezydent miasta Torunia w latach 1924-1936*. [in:] "Rocznik Toruński", vol. 13: 1978, pp. 73-90.

9. *Ibid.*, *Toruń w latach...* op. cit., p. 142.

10. *Ibid.*, *Antoni Bolt ...*, op. cit., p. 89.

11. I. Tłoczek, *Toruń w latach ...* op. cit., p. 153.

The demographic predictions used in formulating the plan, assumed the growth of population to 150 thousand inhabitants within the next 25 years (in 1936 Toruń had approximately 39 thousand inhabitants). The main premises for designing the city spatial structure included:

- a) utilization of the existing buildings in the centre, in Bydgoskie Przedmieście and partially in other areas;
- b) integration of the fragmented parts of the city;
- c) utilization of the existing road network and utility lines;
- d) protection of existing trees and their inclusion in construction plans;
- e) conduction of necessary amelioration systems to regulate hydrological conditions;
- f) respecting of beneficial ownership structure;
- g) establishing the city's connection with the Vistula river both as a waterway and recreation place;
- h) radical changes to the left-bank road network¹².

The priority task was integration of the quarters as each of them was supposed to keep its unique character and spatial features. The city centre, apart from housing function, was to become a hub of city services (administration, traders' offices, crafts, small businesses, social security, education in the pre-existing institutions, associations' houses, restaurants, hotels, shops, markets in both town squares, inland port etc.). As Tłoczek proved that the area of former fortifications with the remains of 17th century earthworks possesses unique historical and landscape value, he managed to protect it from being converted into a zone of detached houses. This strip of land became a part of the arrangement of green areas during the construction of Aleja 700-lecia Torunia¹³. At the edges of the post-fortification green belt encircling the Old Town were located institutions of regional importance (the voivodship government, country and powiat eldership, the management of Polish Railways, State Forests' Directorate, the Agricultural Bank, the theatre, the Museum of Pomeranian Land, courts and the Community Centre).

The remaining quarters formed three main complexes:

1. Bydgoskie Przedmieście and Bielany, destined for housing, with prognosed number of inhabitants 32.5 thousand for the former and 19.5 for the latter;
2. Chełmińskie Przedmieście with the western part of Mokre, destined for housing with prognosed number of inhabitants 60 thousand;
3. The eastern part of Mokre and Jakubskie Przedmieście, with industrial and residential function, with prognosed number of inhabitants 23 thousand for Mokre and 12 thousand for Jakubskie¹⁴.

12. *Ibid.*, p.154.
 13. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
 14. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

4. 1935 urban development plan for Toruń with residential areas. Prepared by the author and Ewa Bożejewicz



3. 1935 urban development plan for Toruń by Ignacy Tłoczek (State Archive Toruń). Prepared by the author

Each of the complexes had an exit traffic artery, a network of residential and inter-quarter roads and a community centre. The complexes were separated with green areas, designed to be wood parks, sports fields, recreation areas and gardening areas (Fig. 5). Each complex was to include schools, stadiums, churches and market halls. Residential buildings were planned according to the following pattern: rows of multistorey tenement houses along the main (exit) traffic arteries; further away the houses became more loosely spaced, separated with garden greenery (Fig. 4). The existing elevation lines along the streets were usually left as they were; however, yet the future buildings were most often planned as perpendicular to the street. The plan located industrial zones in the eastern and north-eastern part of the town due to prevalent western and south-western winds (Fig. 6). An additional benefit of this location was the preexisting railroad and road network, facilitating the functioning of the industrial quarter. A troublesome exception was the Polish-Belgian Chemical Plant (Polchem after WWII), which had been built in the west before the development plan for Toruń was created¹⁵.

The road network was based on routes parallel to the Vistula (Fig. 7). The first route, acting as the main city traffic artery, consisted of Mickiewicz St., Wały St. and Lubicka St.; the second, connecting the quarters, was formed by Bema St., Podgórna St., Kościuszki St. and Żółkiewskiego St. The plan included also a traffic-rerouting thoroughfare based on the already existing Okrężna St. The routes perpendicular to

15. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

5. 1935 urban development plan for Toruń with green and recreational areas. Prepared by the author and Ewa Bożejewicz





6. 1935 urban development plan for Toruń with industrial areas. Prepared by the author and Ewa Bożejewicz

the river included the main crossing along the axis of Aleja 700-lecia and two planned crossings on both ends of the town, demanded by national defense rationale (Tłoczek was not a supporter of this concept). The existing exit arteries, spreading radially from the city centre, together with the East-West routes formed the traffic network of the quarters.

An important part of the urban development plan was utilization of the Vistula riverbank¹⁶. Both Mayor Bolt and his successor Raszeja saw the perspective of economical profits in its development and modernization, and in future construction of a pier at Jakubskie Przedmieście. Toruń riverbank had a railroad sidetrack, branching off of the Miasto railway station. As it clashed with the historical city walls, there were plans to modernize it during the intended remodelling of the whole boulevard between the city park in the west and the railway bridge in the east. The sufficient width of the boulevard and its planned multi-level form would allow to introduce safe road traffic system and appropriate facilities for passenger river transport and shipment of package freight.

As the city architect, Ignacy Tłoczek actively participated in planning the ordering of the historical town centre for the celebration of the 700th anniversary of the city foundation¹⁷. The organizers also managed to involve the

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 151-152.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 146-150.

7. 1935 urban development plan for Toruń – road network; a thicker line marks exit roads; a thinner line – residential roads, streets connecting city quarters, and ringroads. Prepared by the author and Ewa Bożejewicz



house owner, supporting them financially if necessary. The bulk of work focused on the Old Townhall, historical houses, granaries and city walls. During construction work in Bankowy Square (Rapackiego Square today), a fragment of the walls and a moat was uncovered and displayed. Limited budget made it impossible to order a wide range of preservation work; due to this such places as the ruins of the old Teutonic Knights' castle, then under military jurisdiction, were included in restoration schedule no earlier than 1937. At the request of Chief Pomeranian Conservator Jerzy Chyczewski, Tłoczek formulated a plan including scientific research, a list of ordering, restoration and preservation tasks, and settling the matter of property deeds in the neighbourhood of the ruins. The outbreak of the war disrupted this work for many years.

Summary

Following in the footsteps of his teacher Tadeusz Tołwiński, Ignacy Tłoczek strove to fulfill in his plan the ideals of "humanistic care for another man and sensible economical calculation"¹⁸. As this analysis shows, Tłoczek's plan essentially included all postulates of Athens Charter. Space activities resulting from the role of Toruń as the capital of Pomeranian Voivodship are clearly visible. As regards housing, the planned development considered the most advantageous locations for residential areas. Building arrangement depended on their location – with growing distance from the main streets they became lower and more widely spaced. Newly constructed buildings usually were to be located perpendicularly to the main streets in order to reduce the inconvenience of traffic noise. In each quarter there ought to be the most necessary services (community centres, churches, schools and market halls). In the work category Tłoczek had to accept ill-advised location of the existing factories, but he planned the new ones in the eastern and north-eastern part of town, separated by a green belt. Recreation was provided by spacious green areas surrounding the city centre complex (including the already existing city park in Bydgoskie Przedmieście) and the wedges separating individual housing estates. Each complex was to have a stadium, playgrounds, sports fields etc. The greatest achievement of Tłoczek's plan was a logical road system, connecting the particular quarters with each other and with the centre. The most complete review of his plan was offered by the author himself, saying: "Few cities in Poland between the wars could afford such thorough reconstruction of the street system, integration of quarters, establishing a structure of green areas surrounding the unique old town complex, original concentration of community institutions, amelioration of housing crisis and the first renovation of old buildings since 1914"¹⁹.

The correctness of concepts included in Ignacy Tłoczek's plan was confirmed by the fact that many of them were included in post-war plans. One of the latest decisions is the realization of Tłoczek's plans of connecting Aleja 700-lecia (currently Jana Pawła II Alley) with Szosa Chełmińska St.; this will greatly improve the traffic outgoing towards the north. Harmonious symbiosis of Toruń's past with the vision of its future is an excellent test of the value of this urban development plan by Tłoczek, who was given a chance to cooperate creatively with the initiator of this whole enterprise, Mayor Antoni Bolt. First and foremost, however, this plan is a testimony to the high quality of Professor Tadeusz Tołwiński's urban planning school, whose trademark was humanistic care for another man and sensible economical calculation²⁰.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 160.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 160.