

7 Pewex

The two-storey building at 18 Odrońców Westerplatte Square was constructed around 1965 and belonged to the Voivodeship Internal Trade Enterprise. On the ground floor was a 'Pewex' shop, short for Internal Export Enterprise. It originally occupied premises at number 13 in Wadowice's market square. Pewex was a state-owned enterprise during the communist era, operating a chain of currency shops and kiosks. It was established in 1972 through the transformation of the foreign exchange shops of the PeKaO bank. It was one of the few places where luxury goods available in the West could be purchased. There were over 800 locations across Poland! To shop at Pewex, you needed to have dollars. If you didn't have any, you could purchase them from the kiosk next to the store. The shop offered products and goods that were unavailable anywhere else in the country, making shopping there a 'luxury'. You could buy things like clothing (including genuine jeans), watches, household appliances, and electronics (such as Walkmans and stereos), as well as toys (like LEGO bricks and Matchbox cars), perfumes, and cosmetics.



Photo: headquarters of MDH - Municipal Retail Trade, located at 18 Odrońców Westerplatte Square, from the collection of the Wadowice Town Museum



8 'Czartak' Restaurant

The Communal Cooperative began building the restaurant in Gorzeń Górny in 1967 and it was opened on 1 February 1970. The two-storey catering pavilion featured a restaurant, café, and bar, each with a separate entrance. Information about the construction work and the early days of the premises was regularly reported in the press. 'Gazeta Krakowska' (1970/no. 50) dubbed it 'the most beautiful restaurant in the Wadowice district'. In 1969, ceramic decorations by Bolesław Książek adorned the exterior and interior of the Gorzeń pavilion. A panorama of the Skawa Valley, painted by a Kraków-based artist Andrzej Dzięgielewski, graced the entire wall of the upstairs restaurant, opposite the entrance. Ceramic tiles were produced at the 'Kamionka' cooperative in Łysa Góra (near Tarnów), where one of Poland's most prominent ceramic artists, Bolesław Książek, was active. His works can be found in the National Museums in Kraków, Gdańsk, Wrocław, and Warszawa, as well as in many galleries and private collections worldwide. Among his accomplishments, in addition to the 'Czartak' Restaurant building, his architectural ceramics can be admired at the Bagatela Theatre and the 'Kijów' Cinema, and the lower station of the PKL Góra Parkowa funicular railway in Krynica-Zdrój, among other places.



Photo: 'Czartak' Restaurant - Gorzeń Górny, Archives of the Municipal Office in Wadowice



- 1. Market Square (Pl. Jana Pawła II)
- 2. Former Bus Station (Pl. Kościuszki)
- 3. Former Agricultural Department Store (ul. H. Sienkiewicza 5)
- 4. PSS 'Społem' or the Powszechna Spółdzielnia Spożywców (Al. MB Fatimskiej 3)
- 5. Former Cinema "Szarotka" (ul. Lwowska 14)
- 6. Housing Cooperative in Wadowice (M. Kopernika 10)
- 7. Pewex (Pl. Odrońców Westerplatte 18)
- 8. 'Czartak' Restaurant (ul. Zakopiańska 254, Gorzeń Górny)

On main card: Photo: The market square in Wadowice during the communist era. In the centre, you can see the monument dedicated to Soviet soldiers who fell in the Wadowice area, created by Fr. Suknarowski, from the collection of the Wadowice Town Museum

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Following the Footsteps of Communist Poland - a City Walk



#WalkInWadowice

During the Polish People's Republic of Poland (1944–1989) the market square was exotically decorated with large pots of agave plants. In our proposed walk you find interesting places, people, and stories that create a fascinating picture of those past years. Some of you will surely recall this time with a touch of nostalgia.

Discover the history of Wadowice. Join us for a walk!



1 The Market Square

The town's main square has changed significantly over the past centuries and decades. Until 1974, there was a gas station on the corner of the square at Sobieskiego Street, which dated back to the Nazi Germany occupation. At that time, the area around the church was paved with concrete, and retaining walls and stairs were constructed on the south side of the square. Until 1960, there was a fountain next to Building 16. The 1960s finally saw the planting of trees and greenery in Wadowice's market square. Flowerbeds, pathways, and a modern fountain appeared along Krakowska Street, creating an oasis of green. After 1975, a period of limiting greenery in the town centre began. At that time, a pyramid-shaped monument dedicated to the soldiers of the Red Army adorned the square. At the end of the 1970s, it was replaced by a monument created by local sculptor Franciszek Suknarski. An interesting, though now forgotten, feature of the market space in summer was the presence of large pots of agaves.



Photo: Wadowice market square in the communist period, from the collection of the Wadowice Town Museum



2 Tadeusz Kościuszko Square

The square was formerly known as the Upper Market and functioned as a marketplace. Every Thursday, carts filled with farm produce would turn up. In the post-war period, the market area housed the regional administration headquarters and a militia station with a holding cell. Around the square, you could find establishments such as bakeries, a tailor's shop, and a beer hall. Some may still recall the private book-lending library 'Kultura i sztuka', run by T. Pawłęga. It was the best place to find 'Wild West' novels, detective stories and romantic novels. In the 1960s, the market square was transformed into a bus station. Its origins date back to the late 1950s when a timetable was displayed on a lamppost in the centre of the square. Back then, the first buses were converted lorries used to transport workers. After over 40 years in the town centre, the station was relocated to its current site in the 1990s. In the upper part of T. Kościuszko Square, there was a glass pavilion known as the 'Akwarium', which, during the communist era, functioned as a beer hall.



Photo: PKS (Polish Bus Service) at Kościuszko Square in Wadowice during the communist period, from the collection of the Town Museum in Wadowice



3 Former Agricultural Trading House

The land on which the current building at Sienkiewicza Street stands once belonged to the Agricultural Company. It was a trading depot operated by agricultural organizations that were established in the late 19th century.

In the 1950s, the depot was moved to the 'Mikołaj' manor grounds, and a new building was constructed on Sienkiewicza Street. This was the Rural Trading House, known locally as the 'Farmer's House', which served as the main market for farmers until 1989. Today, it houses various shops unrelated to agriculture.



Photo: Agricultural Trading House at Sienkiewicza Street in Wadowice during the Communist period, from the collection of the Town Museum in Wadowice

4 PSS 'Społem' or the Powszechna Spółdzielnia Spożywców

The Wadowice Consumer Cooperative was established in 1945 at the initiative of District Starost Franciszek Grzybowski, the employees St. Lach and P. Pawelek, and a group of 45 community activists. It began by opening a grocery shop at 1 Maja Street 2 (now Lwowska Street), followed by bakery No. 1 at 26 Stycznia Street (now Zatorska Street). In 1951, it became known as the Powszechna Spółdzielnia Spożywców (Universal Consumer Cooperative) in Wadowice. Year after year, the number of grocery and industrial shops was systematically increased. In the subsequent years, it housed various facilities, including a sparkling water and beer bottling plant, a wafer and communion wafer factory, a butcher's shop, and a restaurant.

By the 1970s, the cooperative had already established 54 retail outlets, operated three restaurants, four bars, two cafés, four bakeries, a confectionery factory, and a butcher's shop. 'Społem' also played an active role in the community, organising social and cultural events. In the 1980s, the cooperative constructed a large processing complex that included a butcher's shop and a bakery. After the 1989 elections, cooperatives faced a significant crisis that also impacted the Wadowice cooperative. During that time, the cooperative lost all the premises it had leased from the Wadowice Management and the Housing Cooperative.

Today the Cooperative has 5 retail stores, a wholesale warehouse, two restaurants and a number of smaller facilities leased. The seat of PSS 'Społem' is at MB Fatimskiej Ave. 3. (marked with the circle on the photo)



Photo: in the upper right corner, you can see the building of PSS 'Społem' (Universal Consumer Cooperative 'Społem'), Archives of the Municipal Office in Wadowice

5 Former 'Szarotka' Cinema

The Wadowice 'Szarotka' cinema was situated near the 'Beskid' hotel and held screenings twice a day. After the political thaw of 1956, the cinema began to feature Western films, mainly American and French, including 'An American in Paris' or 'Singin' in the Rain'. Wadowice also embraced the growing popularity of Westerns like 'Indian Warrior' and 'High Noon.' Films would arrive a couple of months (or even six months!) after their premieres or Kraków. in Warszawa. They were typically shown for a week. Each film screening was preceded by a Film Chronicle, a newsreel providing an overview of the week's events in Poland and around the world. Although it often featured propaganda from the People's Republic of Poland, it also included interesting and humorous items. The cinema was very popular, and screenings were often sold out.

The cinema welcomed young people from nearby schools, although their admission was restricted to approved films only. At times, during evening screenings intended for adults, students were asked to leave the cinema.



Photo: The building that housed the 'Szarotka' cinema during the communist era, Archives of the Municipal Office in Wadowice

6 Housing Cooperative in Wadowice

In the interwar period, housing cooperatives shaped the newly built districts of many towns. After 1945, the way cooperatives operated changed, becoming more closely aligned with state policy.

Many different cooperatives were active in Wadowice, playing a vital role in rebuilding the town after the economic devastation of World War II. In 1958, the Housing Cooperative was established at the initiative of the Municipal National Council, the District Economic Planning Commission, and the PSS 'Społem' in Wadowice. Between 1962 and 1964, new blocks of flats were completed, including those on the Westerplatte housing estate. In 1967, plans were announced for the construction of a new housing estate on Zegadłowicza Street (now MB Fatimskiej). The new Kopernika estate would join the existing M. Wadowity, Westerplatte, and XX-lecia PRL housing estates.

In 1969, the housing cooperatives of Wadowice and Kalwaria Zebrzydowska merged to create the Wadowice District Housing Cooperative, which encompassed the Wadowice district. At that time, the profile of the cooperative also changed, transitioning to a tenant-ownership model.

From the late 1960s onwards, housing construction relied on prefabricated reinforced concrete elements for building blocks of flats. Between 1966 and 1970, the construction of the housing estate at Obrońców Westerplatte Square was completed. The XX-lecia PRL housing estate (now XX-lecia Konstytucji RP housing estate) was finished in 1971. In the years 1973-1982 the M. Kopernik housing estate was built. Between 1980 to 1992, the Pod Skarpą estate was built. Alongside flats, the cooperative constructed associated facilities, including commercial and service pavilions, community centres, boiler houses, cooperative offices, permanent garages, and prefabricated garages. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the cooperative expanded into social and educational activities, including establishing the 'Garsoniera' Estate Club in the newly opened premises of the Wadowice Housing Cooperative on the housing estate Kopernika 10.



Photo: construction of the XX-lecia PRL estate (now XX-lecia Konstytucji RP) in Wadowice, from the collection of the Wadowice Town Museum.