

| Why the Józef Piłsudski Memorial Failed to Be Installed in Warsaw Before the Second World War

Following the death of Józef Piłsudski on 12 May 1935, numerous initiatives were undertaken to commemorate the late Marshal of Poland. The most important one was the project of a statue dedicated to his memory that would be installed in Warsaw in a new district that was being designed at that time (which was also intended to bear his name). As early as 16 May, the Capital City Committee for the Building of the Marshal Józef Piłsudski Memorial was established.¹ As emphasised by General Bolesław Wieniawa-Długoszowski, the Marshal's friend and adjutant: "This need is felt by the entire nation."² A nationwide fundraising campaign to finance the construction of the Warsaw memorial was launched. For the location of the statue, plac Na Rozdrożu (Square at the Crossroads) was chosen: it was not only the proximity to key government buildings like the Belweder Palace (at that time, the residence of the Minister of Military Affairs, and previously, of the Chief of State), the General Inspectorate of the Armed Forces or the Ministry of Military Affairs that determined the decision, but also the fact that it would be situated on the capital's main road where parades took place. Considered also was the construction of the Piłsudski Alley, leading from the plac Na Rozdrożu to the Temple of Divine Providence.

The First Competition

An open competition was announced on 1 February 1936. The guidelines included a clause that only Polish artists could participate. Despite the fact that the Polish Architects Association (SAP) recommended avoiding gigantic-scale solutions – in the type of the Victor Emmanuel II Monument in Rome or the statue of Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro – the competition's conditions involved the requirement of applying monumental form: the memorial "was supposed to be an artistic symbol of the immense legacy of Józef Piłsudski, and worthy of the victorious Leader, Creator of the Independent and Imperial

¹ The Committee submitted to the Main Committee, established on 6 June, see Irena Grzesiuk-Olszewska, *Świątynia Opatrzności i dzielnica Piłsudskiego* [The Temple of the Divine Providence and the Piłsudski district] (Warsaw, 1993), p. 72.

² "Przemówienie gen. dr. Bolesława Wieniawy-Długoszowskiego na posiedzeniu organizacyjnym Naczelnego Komitetu Uczczenia Pamięci Józefa Piłsudskiego" [Speech by General Dr Bolesław Wieniawa-Długoszowski during the organisational sitting of the Chief Committee for the Commemoration of Józef Piłsudski], *Architektura i Budownictwo*, Ann. 11, no. 2 (1935), p. 37.

Poland.”³ This approach was consistent with the then tendencies in visual representation of the young state and its leader’s cult.⁴

Apart from this clause, the artists were left free to choose the memorial’s size and the material used. In order to suitably shape the Square for the memorial, several buildings were designated for demolition, e.g., the buildings of the Ujazdowski Hospital, the officers’ mess, and private houses on Koszykowa Street and 6 Sierpnia Street.⁵ In the competition’s first stage, thirteen designs were envisaged to be chosen among which five would be passed on to further development and invited to participate in the final, closed competition. The artists were given as many as eight months to finish their concepts, and authors of distinguished designs were guaranteed the return of expenses of building the memorials’s maquette.

Appointed as the president of the competition jury was General Edward Rydz-Śmigły (replaced in July 1939 by General Kazimierz Sosnkowski), and the members were: Warsaw Mayor Stefan Starzyński and Deputy Mayor Jan Pohoski; General Tadeusz Kasprzycki (Minister of Military Affairs, who had been, like the president of the jury, Piłsudski’s close associate), painter Wojciech Jastrzębowski, General Bolesław Wieniawa-Długoszowski, editor Wojciech Stpiczyński (in further proceedings replaced by Senator Artur Śliwiński), Provost of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw Tadeusz Pruszkowski, Dean of the Architecture Department of the Warsaw Polytechnic Aleksander Bojemski, General Conservator of Monuments Jerzy Remer and Stanisław Lorentz – Deputy Director of the National Museum in Warsaw (**fig. 1**). Following an agreement with the Main Sculptors Council, two sculptors were also invited to the jury: Xawery Dunikowski and Edward Wittig (during the second competition, they were replaced by: Ludwika Kraskowska-Nitschowa and Zygmunt Otto).

The competition was officially closed on 31 May 1937. In total, 58 works were submitted (submission deadline was extended as long as eight months after the original date).⁶ Almost 90 percent of the design proposals were sent from Warsaw; two were sent from Krakow and two from Poznań, as well as, among other locations, single ones from Vilnius and Zakopane. The entrants found particularly difficult the requirement to take into account the urban regulation of the square and the location in relation to the Ujazdowski Castle, the park areas and the Vistula valley (which demanded assistance from architects and city planners).

In August 1937, all submitted competition entries were exhibited in the still unfinished building of the National Museum in Warsaw. The anonymous character of the show was ensured: each design was assigned a number, and the artists’ names were kept secret in sealed envelopes (**il. 2**).⁷ The Museum’s curator Juliusz Starzyński ensured that the designs were

³ After: Program i warunki Konkursu na projekt pomnika oraz placu pod pomnik ku czci Marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego w Warszawie, Warszawa, 1 lutego 1936 [Programme and conditions of the competition for the design of the memorial and the square for the memorial commemorating Marshal Józef Piłsudski in Warsaw, Warsaw, 1 February 1936], [s.p.], The National Museum in Warsaw Archive (further on referred to as: ANMW), sygn. 315.

⁴ See Iwona Luba, *Duch romantyzmu i modernizacja. Sztuka oficjalna Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw, 2012), pp. 103–66 (chapter: *Sztuka oficjalna. Tematyka polityczna, militarna i obronna* [Official art. Themes of politics, military affairs and defence]).

⁵ Information after the competition’s rules and regulations.

⁶ See Sprawozdanie komisarzy konkursu Juliusza Starzyńskiego z dnia 2 lipca 1937 [Report of the Competition Commissioner Juliusz Starzyński of 2 July 1937], ANMW, sygn. 315.

⁷ The envelopes are held at the ANMW (sygn. 315). Until recently, a part of them have remained unopened, which explains why not all names of the authors of design proposals submitted in 1937 have been known.

installed in identical conditions, following the order of their allotted numbers. The organisers went as far as employing a plasterer who was assigned the task to repair plaster works damaged during transportation and assemble submitted maquettes. Though the authors signalled that they could take care of these tasks themselves, the commission, in order to maintain the anonymity of works, decided that only the appointed plasterer be permitted to make repairs.

The sitting of the competition jury that gathered all the jury members took place on July 1937 in the building of the National Museum.⁸ For formal reasons, 13 designs were rejected and 20 were considered as not meeting the requirements related to artistic quality or city planning issues. During the following meeting, 15 further submissions were rejected. These were all votings by open ballot, preceded by discussion. Finally, following the original guidelines, 13 design proposals were selected in a secret ballot:⁹ no. 3 (Jan Jakób, sculptor, Poznań and Ignacy Kuczma, sculptor, Poznań) received 10 votes; no. 4 (Bazyli Wojtowicz, sculptor, the State School of Decorative Arts in Poznań and Kazimierz Bieńkowski, Poznań) – 7 votes; no. 6 (Józef Kaban, architect, Łódź and Aleksander Czeczott, sculptor) – 6 votes; no. 20 (Jan Raszka,¹⁰ sculptor, Krakow) – 10 votes; no. 21 (Aleksander Żurawski, Zygmunt Jabłoński, Stanisław Bobiński, Warsaw) – 10 votes; no. 25 (Franciszek Habdas, sculptor and Bruno Zborowski, architect, Warsaw) – 9 votes; no. 29 (Elwira and Jerzy Mazurczyk, Warsaw) – 11 votes; no. 30 (Józef Jasiński, sculptor and Colonel Zbigniew Brochwicz-Lewiński, architect, Warszawa) – 10 votes; no. 35 (Jan Szczepkowski, sculptor, with assistance of architect Jan Sianożęcki) – 10 votes; no. 42 (Henryk Kuna, sculptor, with assistance of architect Andrzej Boni, Warsaw) – 11 votes; no. 46 (Antoni Miszewski, sculptor, Warsaw) – 11 votes; no. 59 (Bazyli Wojtowicz, sculptor and Stanisław Repeta, sculptor, Poznań) – 11 votes; no. 56/60 (double number, for the design proposal was submitted in two parcels – Marian Wnuk, sculptor, the State Technical School, Lviv and architect Jan Kocimski, Lviv) – 9 votes.

In the repeated ballot, the designs received: no. 35 – 12 votes, no. 42 – 7 votes, no. 56/60 – 7 votes, no. 3 – 2 votes, no. 4 – 4 votes, no. 29 – 2 votes, no. 30 – 2 votes, no. 59 – 2 votes. Interestingly, the comparison of the particular voting outcomes reveals that the works which obtained a high number of votes during the first round received fewer or even no votes in the successive voting. Design proposals by the team of Bazyli Wojtowicz and Stanisław Repeta, and the Warsaw team of Elwira and Jerzy Mazurczyk received 11 votes each in the first round, but only 2 each in the second round. As many as 11 jury members originally supported the proposal of Antoni Miszewski, but none of them did so in the second voting.¹¹ It may suggest that certain members of the jury were indecisive and that their aesthetic preferences were rather vague.

In September 2018, the sealed envelopes were opened, and the names of all authors taking part in the First Competition were revealed.

⁸ See *Protokół posiedzenia sądu konkursowego* [Protocol of the competition jury sitting], ANMW, sygn. 315.

⁹ Thirteen opened envelopes with the names of the authors of the design proposals which obtained honourable mention are in the files of Stanisław Lorentz, ANMW, sygn. 315.

¹⁰ Jan Raszka took part in the competition for the Józef Piłsudski Memorial in Katowice in 1936. The winner then was the design proposed by a Croatian sculptor Antun Augustinčić, unveiled in 1993. Raszka's design was realised in Lublin in November 2001.

¹¹ The Polish Legions' warrant officer Antoni Miszewski (alias Lubicz, Pług) is the author of the first equestrian statue of Piłsudski in Poland. The bronze statue was unveiled on 7 August 1932 in Komorowo near Ostrów Mazowiecka on the premises of the School of Infantry Cadets. The statue, demolished in 1950 and then reconstructed, is located on the premises of a military unit.

Certain submitted design concepts surprised with their ingenuity and originality. One of the authors, for instance, referred to the romanticist poet Adam Mickiewicz's prophecy about the liberator of partitioned Poland involving the mystic number 44, and, using mathematical operations, argued that "Poland had 40 reigning kings and 3 prophets (spiritual kings during the period of bondage), no one else could have been the 44th but the PIERWSZY MARSZAŁEK POLSKI [FIRST MARSHAL OF POLAND] JÓZEF KLEMENS PIŁSUDSKI – if we count the [Polish] letters, we will obtain $8+9+6+5+7+9=44$, it is HE who is FORTY FOUR."¹² These digits had key importance for the memorial design – they were used to determine the height of stairs, bases, reliefs, etc. As observed by Iwona Luba, Piłsudski's contemporaries often emphasised his romanticist background and considered him as the one who awakened in Polish people the ability for action: "Piłsudski was not only the one to embody all ideal qualities of romanticist literary heroes and actual historical figures – leaders of military struggles for national independence – he was to be a titan, a demiurge and a messiah – the quintessence of an ideal Pole and knight."¹³ The image of the Marshal must have been also shaped by the 1934 book *Idea i czyn Józefa Piłsudskiego* [Józef Piłsudski's thought and deeds]. Waław Husarski, author of one of the book's chapters, discussed the iconography of the chief of state in the spirit of the legend of the Reviver of the Homeland.¹⁴ An instruction manual of a kind was published in the same year: *Poradnik dla urządzających obchody i akademie ku czci Marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego* [Manual for the organisers of celebrations and commemoration events in honour of Marshal Józef Piłsudski].¹⁵

Three design proposals: by Jan Szczepkowski; Henryk Kuna¹⁶ and Andrzej Boni; and Marian Wnuk and Karol Kocimski, were accepted for further development. Szczepkowski, initially the competition's favourite (he received the most votes both in the jury's first and second voting), proposed the form of a triumphal arch with a very rich and complex decoration of surfaces, in the stair-like arrangement, its iconography referring to the stages of reclaiming independence by Poland. The figure of the Marshal leaning on a sword was inscribed in the arch. According to Tadeusz Filipczak, an editor of the journal *Architektura i Budownictwo* [Architecture and Construction], the form was "unfamiliar to the city's architecture" and, "devoid of utilitarian content, resemble[d] theatrical decoration."¹⁷ The team Wnuk–Kocimski proposed an equestrian statue on a lofty, tapering column, against the background of an arcade. On his part, Kuna installed a figure of the Marshal leaning upon his sword on an elevation to which led more than a dozen stairs. Below, along the four sides of the pedestal, columns were planned to be installed, and under them – figures of soldiers leaning over.

¹² Design proposal without a number, sent in a letter by an unidentified person to the competition jury on 2 July 1939, ANMW, sygn. 315.

¹³ Luba, op. cit., pp. 67–68 (Chapter: *Model romantycznego bohatera* [Model of the romanticist hero]).

¹⁴ Waław Husarski, *Józef Piłsudski w sztuce (zarys ikonografii)* [Józef Piłsudski in art. Outline of iconography], in *Idea i czyn Józefa Piłsudskiego*, Waław Sieroszewski, ed. (Warsaw, 1934), pp. 221–24.

¹⁵ See Adam Galiński, *Dzień 19 marca. Poradnik dla urządzających obchody i akademie ku czci Marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego* (Łódź, 1934).

¹⁶ Henryk Kuna had already realised his design of the Józef Piłsudski Memorial in Rome, on Viale Marciallo Piłsudski, in 1937.

¹⁷ Tadeusz Filipczak, "O konkursie na pomnik Marszałka Piłsudskiego w Warszawie" [On the competition for the Józef Piłsudski memorial in Warsaw], *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 8 (1937), pp. 283–91.

The press criticised the selected design proposals, Kuna's work in particular, and was seconded in this by the artistic circles.¹⁸ As emphasised in many texts describing the proceedings of the competition, the memorial as such was an extremely difficult task for a sculptor who was confronted with the challenge of creating not only a visual representation of the figure, but also architectural surroundings, taking into account the fact that the figure would be viewed from a distance, and that the memorial's concept should do justice to the format and merits of the person commemorated. As observed by a journalist of *Świat* [The World] when presenting her opinion on the competition's results, "it is, unfortunately, a harvest whose average level is very low. The same was stated by the artists themselves during the visual artists' meeting in Lviv, as they found the level of the competition outcome low and demanded a new competition."¹⁹

Thus the first pre-war competition for the Piłsudski memorial in Warsaw remained unresolved.

The Second Competition

The second competition abandoned the open formula and invited selected artists who would obtain remuneration for the submitted entries. The rules underlined the guiding idea of the memorial "which is to be an expression of glory, power and victory, and not sentiment, regret or tragedy, or a tomb-like memorial."²⁰ The artists distinguished in the first competition were invited, as well as: Xawery Dunikowski (then Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow), Tadeusz Breyer (Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw), and Edward Wittig (who, like Dunikowski, was one of the jury members of the first competition). Wittig declined to participate. The memorial committee decided to extend the circle of invited artists with foreign sculptors who were, according to the committee, the leading contemporary artists: Norwegian Gustav Vigeland, Frenchman Aristide Maillol and Croatian Ivan Meštrović. Contacts with those artists were established by proxy of diplomatic agencies in Oslo, Paris and Belgrade.²¹ The Norwegian sculptor was known in Poland mainly thanks to the publishings of modernist literary critic Stanisław Przybyszewski.²² Unfortunately, Vigeland could not be talked into taking part in the competition²³ – he was said to have refused

¹⁸ Wojciech Jakimowicz, "Cztery szubienice Kuna" [Kuna's four gallows], *Prosto z mostu*, no. 40 (29 August 1937), p. 7; Zofia Norblin-Chrzanowska, "Pomniki Wielkiego Marszałka" [Memorials of the Great Marshal], *Świat*, no. 46 (1937), pp. 8–13.

¹⁹ Norblin-Chrzanowska, op. cit., p. 12.

²⁰ Program i warunki konkursu ścisłego na projekt pomnika oraz placu pod pomnik ku czci Marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego w Warszawie [Programme and conditions of the closed competition for the memorial and the square for the memorial in honour of Marshal Józef Piłsudski in Warsaw], ANMW, sygn. 315.

²¹ Protokół posiedzenia Komitetu Budowy Pomnika z 11 marca 1939 [Protocol of the sitting of the Committee for the Building of the Memorial of 11 March 1939], ANMW, sygn. 315

²² See Stanisław Przybyszewski, *Na drogach duszy* (Krakow, 1900); id., "Nieznajomy," *Życie*, nos 48 and 49 (1898); id., *Moi współcześni. Wśród obcych* (Warsaw, 1926); reproduction of the relief by Gustav Vigeland, "Szatan," *Życie*, no. 7 (1898).

²³ Talks were led by the Envoy of the Republic of Poland in Oslo, Władysław Neuman, see Jarosław Trybuś, "Pomnik na rozdrożu," in *Skontrum w Muzeum Rzeźby*, concept of the book and scientific editing by Agnieszka Tarasiuk, Aleksandra Janiszewska (Warsaw, 2013), p. 241, n. 43.

expressly, justifying his decision by his obligation to accept supervision of his realisations for Oslo.²⁴ Maillol refused, too, declaring that he was interested neither in the competition nor the memorial of the Polish hero.²⁵ A positive answer, however, came from Meštrović, the eminent Croatian sculptor, a disciple of Auguste Rodin, who had in his portfolio several memorials across Europe and the United States, just to cite the memorial of *Marko Marulić* (Split, 1925), *Equestrian Indians* (Chicago, 1928), *Statue of Gregory of Nin* (Split, 1929), *Monument to the Unknown Hero* (Avala Mountain near Belgrade, 1934–38). When the proposition to join the Piłsudski memorial competition reached the sculptor, Meštrović was working on two monuments of Romanian kings: Charles I and Ferdinand I (unveiled in Bucharest in 1939 and 1940 respectively). In Poland, his oeuvre was known from the monograph (published in Krakow in 1936) written by Vojeslav Molè,²⁶ a Slovenian art historian, lecturer at the Jagiellonian University, as well as from press articles, one of them written by prose writer and dramatist Zofia Nałkowska.²⁷ The contact with the sculptor was established by the Polish Consul in Zagreb, most likely in September 1938. At that time, the artist was provided with the documentation profiling the figure of the Marshal, today preserved at the Meštrović Museum in Zagreb – books, articles and a few photographs (portrait, full-length and equestrian depictions)²⁸, as well as the competition rules and regulations and topographic documentation.²⁹ The sculptor sent back his answer on 3 October, but made a reservation that by reason of the deadlines of his other works he would only be able to send his proposition in Spring 1939. He sent his first design proposals to the Polish Embassy in Belgrade in April that year,³⁰ and in May he came to Warsaw to personally inspect the area destined for the memorial. After the inspection, the sculptor was inclined to the decision that the memorial should be located at the square in such a manner that it would be visible both from the Piłsudski Alley and the other Vistula bank. “While on the spot, I realised that only something great and monumental could stand here” – he wrote in a letter.³¹ Prompted by the Committee for the Building

²⁴ Protokół posiedzenia Komitetu Budowy Pomnika z 11 marca 1939 [Protocol of the sitting of the Committee for the Building of the Memorial of 11 March 1939], ANMW, sygn. 315.

²⁵ Protokół posiedzenia Komitetu Budowy Pomnika z 1938 [Protocol of the sitting of the Committee for the Building of the Memorial of 1938], ANMW, sygn. 315.

²⁶ Vojeslav Molè, *Ivan Meštrović. Rzeźba monumentalna* (Krakow, 1936).

²⁷ Zofia Nałkowska, “W pracowni Ivana Meštrovića,” *Wiadomości Literackie*, no. 44 (1931), p. 3.

²⁸ The archive of Ivan Meštrović in Zagreb holds a list of books on Piłsudski that were sent to the artist by the Polish Embassy. These were, i.a., *Joseph Piłsudski. Interview by Dymitr Merejkowsky*, translated from the Russian by Harriet E. Kennedy (London & Edinburgh, 1921); *Idea i czyn Józefa Piłsudskiego* (Warsaw, 1934), Zagreb, Atelier Meštrović, Archive of Ivan Meštrović, file no. 56.

²⁹ List konsula Generalnego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w Zagrzebiu z 2 listopada 1938 [Letter of the consul General of the Republic of Poland in Zagreb of 2 November 1938], Zagreb, Atelier Meštrović, Archive of Ivan Meštrović, file no. 56.

³⁰ List artysty do Konsula Ambasady Polskiej w Zagrzebiu z 4 kwietnia 1939 [Letter from the artist to the Consul of the Polish Embassy in Zagreb of 4 April 1939], Zagreb, Atelier Meštrović, archive of Ivan Meštrović, file no. 56.

³¹ List Ivana Meštrovića do komitetu budowy z 20 czerwca 1939 [Letter of Ivan Meštrović to the committee for the building of the memorial of 20 June 1939], translation of the letter in the Archives of the NMW, the French original in the archive of Ivan Meštrović in Zagreb.

of the Memorial, on 20 June 1939 he sent to Warsaw design concepts and photographs of maquettes,³² and several days later – boxes with sculptures.³³

Meštrović's proposal was assessed off-competition, yet it was exhibited along with other selected submissions at the show on 6 August 1939 in the National Museum in Warsaw. The sculptor proposed a very classical solution: an equestrian statue of the Marshal on a socle in front of a triumphal arch: in the first version, with a single arch, and in the second version, with three arches of equal height, decorated by the figures of Victory.³⁴ The artist planned to make the arch of granite or other hard stone, while the figure of Piłsudski on horseback would be cast in bronze (**fig. 3**). The statue of the Marshal was 25 metres, and the arch – 50 metres high: the monument was supposed to dominate over the surroundings. The artist also suggested placing inside the triumphal arch a museum which would recount the history of resuming independence by Poland.³⁵ The first model submitted by him depicted the Marshal on horseback in motion, the other – “peaceful, fully majestic, who guards his homeland like a lion [...] always ready to defeat the enemy”³⁶ (**fig. 4**). In his guidelines preceding realisation he wrote that in-depth research should be conducted and particular attention be paid to the slope towards the Vistula, so that the area would become a natural pedestal, and, moreover, that no high buildings should be built in the nearest vicinity. The take on Piłsudski's figure on horse resembled both in terms of composition and style the two monuments of Romanian kings on which Meštrović worked almost at the same time.³⁷ We know that the sculptor also considered other solutions. In the collection of the Glyptothèque of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Zagreb, preserved have been models of Piłsudski in an extremely dynamic pose, with his coat blown and one arm lifted as if he were throwing something.³⁸ These sculptural sketches have no drawing documentation.

Meštrović acquired particular skills related to memorial design not only throughout his professional career as a sculptor, but also during his architecture studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. Jerzy Stempowski, writer and literary critic, hailed him “the greatest genius of monumental sculpture since the Antiquity.”³⁹ Expert on his oeuvre, Barbara Vujanović is of the opinion that the artist had the extraordinary ability of “inscribing the monument

³² Ibid.

³³ According to the letter to the minister of 20 June 1939, the sculptor sent: 1. Maquette of the environment; 2. Maquette of the arch and the monument (1 : 100); 3. Maquette of the figure of Marshal Piłsudski on horseback (1 : 20); 4. Maquette of the figure of Marshal on horseback (1 : 10); 5. Study of the torso of Marshal Piłsudski (c. one third of the real height).

³⁴ In the first version, on the arch, apart from Victorias, there were figures of the Polish Legion soldiers and an inscription, see Letter of Ivan Meštrović to the Consul of the Republic of Poland of 4 April 1939, Atelier Meštrović, archive of Ivan Meštrović, file no. 56.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Letter of Ivan Meštrović of 20 June 1939, Atelier Meštrović, archive of Ivan Meštrović, file no. 56.

³⁷ The collection also holds the *Head of Piłsudski* (plaster, inv. no. G-MZP-123).

³⁸ *Maquettes for the Józef Piłsudski memorial*, plaster, inv. nos G-MZP-847, G-MZP-848, G-MZP-855, G-MZP-898. I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Magdalena Getaldić for her assistance with my query at the Glyptothèque of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Zagreb.

³⁹ *List do ojca (Stanisława Stempowskiego) z 27 listopada 1945* [Letter to father (Stanisław Stempowski) of 27 November 1945], in Jerzy Stempowski, *Listy*, selected and edited by Barbara Toruńczyk (Warsaw, 2000), p. 135.

into the urban interior.”⁴⁰ Meštrović took a lot of care to consider the questions of adequate distance from the sculpture and space needed around the memorial. He worked on the Warsaw memorial design assisted by architect Harold Bilinić, his regular associate, with whom he created, among other works, the statue of Bishop Strossmayer in Zagreb.

Ivan Meštrović's design proposal followed the canon of triumphal art presenting a ruler on horseback, known from ancient times. Piłsudski was portrayed without his hat (in contrast to the majority of his depictions), with his arms folded across his chest, as a leader confident in his vision of the state, looking forward (**fig. 5**). Joanna Sosnowska remarks that the Marshal was often portrayed “with his eyes fixed somewhere behind the viewer, suggesting that he were immersed in reflection on something lingering in the distance, in the future; it is the face of a thinker, one could say – of a wiseman.”⁴¹ Should the memorial have been realised, it would have been the largest monument in the capital and one of the most spectacular works by Meštrović.⁴²

The sitting of the competition jury took place on 21 July 1939. After inspecting five works, the jury came to the conclusion that none of the designs provided an adequate solution and could not be accepted to be realised (**fig. 6**). The most votes were given to the design by Xawery Dunikowski (11 votes); Henryk Kuna's design concept acquired one vote less, and only one vote went to the design by Jan Szczepkowski who had been the favourite in the first competition. Despite the fact that it was a closed competition, certain artists submitted unsolicited works, and the jury decided to take them into consideration. Among 18 works, three were selected, marked with the numbers 6, 10 and 13 (by Franciszek Strynkiewicz assisted by Konstanty Denko; Stanisław Horno-Popławski and engineer Jan Borowski; Kazimierz Mieczysław Bieńkowski from Poznań, respectively).

The main cash prize destined for the winner was divided between Xawery Dunikowski and Henryk Kuna. Kuna submitted two entries – an equestrian statue and an erect figure, in bronze, 6–7 metres high, placed on an elevated platform surrounded by stairs and four clusters of columns crowned with intertwining architraves with a cornice (height of the columns: 44 metres, framework of reinforced concrete veneered with granite). On socles installed were relief plates illustrating the scenes of the struggle for Polish independence (**fig. 7**). Dunikowski's design concept (**figs 8, 9**), too, involved an alternative depiction of Piłsudski as seated on a postument with a baton held in his right hand, or on a horse walking, inscribed between two modern pylons, their shape resembling caryatides.⁴³ In his letter of 28 July 1939 to the president of the competition committee, Dunikowski pointed out that he had not used his artistic potential to the fullest and that he was ready to prepare another proposal before July 1940.⁴⁴ We do not know the answer from General Sosnkowski. In July 1940, Xawery Dunikowski was sent to the Nazi concentration camp in Auschwitz (he had become the number 774).

⁴⁰ *Epopeja adriatycka. Ivan Meštrović*, exh. cat., 24 July – 5 November 2017, Gallery of the International Culture Centre in Krakow (Krakow, 2017), p. 35.

⁴¹ Joanna M. Sosnowska, “Smutny rycerz – o polskiej rzeźbie pomnikowej,” in *Estetyka dyskursu nacjonalistycznego w Polsce*, Ulrich Schmid, ed. (Warsaw, 2014), pp. 306–23.

⁴² See Ewa Ziemińska, *Ivan Meštrović / Józef Piłsudski. Historia jednego pomnika*, exh. cat., Kordegarda, Gallery of the National Centre for Culture, Warsaw 2018 (Warsaw, 2018).

⁴³ This compositional scheme was later used by the artist in his Memorial of Gratitude to the Red Army (today the Monument of Liberation of Warmia and Mazury) in Olsztyn.

⁴⁴ List Xawerego Dunikowskiego do gen. Kazimierza Sosnkowskiego z 28 lipca 1939 [Letter from Xawery Dunikowski to General Kazimierz Sosnkowski of 28 July 1939], ANMW, sygn. 315.

The reasons why the competition winner was not announced and the main prize was not awarded were explained in detail by the jury in the protocol of their session on 21 July 1939.⁴⁵ It was also decided that the session remain secret and not be revealed to the press, nor the discussion be protocolled in full and the protocol be available, in particular to the artists participating in the competition. The members of the competition jury were obliged to refrain from disclosing information on the jury's proceedings and resolutions.⁴⁶ As a result, the argumentation of the competition jury and the reasons why the competition ended up unresolved remained unknown for many years, and the aforementioned jury session protocol has thus far not been subject to examination. It is therefore worthwhile citing the decision of the competition jury in extenso:

“1. Design proposal by Xawery Dunikowski

An equestrian figure of the Marshal and the figure of the genius [spirit], presented in a sketch version, have high artistic value. A positive element of the design is the very favourable situation of the memorial in relation to the axis of the Aleja Marszałka [Marshal Alley] and the Princes Ujazdowski Castle, and the situation of the column with the genius at the crossroads of the 6 Sierpnia Street and Aleje Ujazdowskie.

Nevertheless, the Competition Jury is of the opinion that the architectural elements of the design like the pylons with figures symbolising the P.P.S. and the P.O.W. [Polish Social Party and Polish Military Organisation], as well as the decorative side architectural elements, installed around the square, and the solution of the square and the base of the monument arouse serious doubts. Under no circumstances is the monument's architecture fit to contain any equestrian figure.

2. Design proposal by Henryk Kuna

The Competition Jury, while appreciative of the sculptural qualities of the carefully worked figure of the Marshal, is unable to find any positive traits as far as city planning and the architecture of the design are concerned. Numerous details in the form of small eagles and coats of arms, as well as secondary symbolical figures weaken the coherence and overall expression of the composition, drawing the viewer's attention away from the figure of the Marshal. The character of the memorial's architecture bears traits of transitory architecture, while screen architecture separating the square from the Aleja Marszałka does not seem to be an adequate solution for the spatial formation of the square. The city planning composition did not take into account the small Castle of the Dukes of Masovia, hiding it behind the trees.

3. Design proposal by Jan Szczepkowski and Józef Czajkowski

The fact that the artist abandoned his original design of a triumphal arch and developed it into an arcade did not add value to the composition. The colonnade forms a kind of curtain for the memorial and the streets' outlets, becoming the main and outstanding element that upstages the proper memorial. The figure of the Marshal in semi-length sketch is insufficiently achieved in terms of volume, proportions and character.

⁴⁵ Protokół posiedzenia Komitetu Budowy Pomnika z 21 lipca 1939 [Protocol of the sitting of the Committee for the Building of the Memorial of 21 July 1939], ANMW, sygn. 315.

⁴⁶ Regulamin Sądu Konkursowego na projekt pomnika ku czci Marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego [Rules and Regulations of the Jury of the Competition for the design of the memorial of Marshal Józef Piłsudski], ANMW, sygn. 315.

4. Design proposal by Tadeusz Breyer

Primitivist stylisation applied in the memorial and its fragments has been assessed as inappropriately applied as far as the task of bringing an accent of heroism and power to the capital is concerned. Particular elements of the base are insufficiently associated with each other. The installation of medallions in the upper part of the base [is] inappropriate. The city planning of the junction forming on the square is left unresolved.

5. Design proposal by Marian Wnuk and Karol Kocimski

The insufficiently characteristic equestrian figure of the Marshal resembles too much the famous statue of Gattamelata in Padua, and the style of the rider and the horse is not uniform in the depiction. The back side of the monument [is] left unresolved. Directing traffic from Aleja Ujazdowska through the architecturally formed square is incorrect.”⁴⁷

The history of competitions for the Józef Piłsudski memorial in Warsaw shows the proceedings of the preliminary stage of the process of embedding a new monument in the city space – the stage, in which the decisive role was played by the competition jury, whose members were aware of the complexity of the project. All judges were handed a list of competition entries and had their own copy to write down their grades and take notes. The rule of secrecy was observed, the ballot was organised and carried out with caution. The space where the memorial was intended to be installed was thoroughly inspected, discussions were held and details were analysed. As pointed out by Irena Grzesiuk-Olszewska, “the real difficulty in this competition was not its sculptural aspect but the architectural and spatial requirements of the competition.”⁴⁸ The statement of the Committee for the Building of the Memorial, published in *Światowid* of 6 August 1939, reads: “[...] in the face of our immense responsibility towards present and future Poland, [the Committee] cannot act in a hurry, cannot decide to accept a design, which, while possessing many good qualities, does not yet fully respond to what Poland today demands, wants and desires to pass onto posterity. Hence the numerous competitions, of which none has yet brought about a definite decision.”⁴⁹

The outbreak of the Second World War interrupted the proposed works, and the post-war political situation in Poland prevented the realisation of the Józef Piłsudski Memorial in Warsaw. The project resurfaced again in the 1990s and, as a result, two memorials of the Marshal were unveiled in the capital, though they were not preceded by any competition.

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Translated by Karolina Koriat

⁴⁷ Protokół posiedzenia Komitetu Budowy Pomnika z 21 lipca 1939 [Protocol of the sitting of the Committee for the Building of the Memorial of 21 July 1939], ANMW, sygn. 315.

⁴⁸ Grzesiuk-Olszewska, op. cit., pp. 104–5.

⁴⁹ “Projekty pomnika marszałka Piłsudskiego” [Design proposals for the Marshal Piłsudski memorial], *Światowid*, no. 32 (6 August 1939), p. 16.