

**THE POST-WAR HISTORY OF THE ST. CATHERINE CHURCH IN BRANIEWO
IN THE LIGHT OF THE ARCHIVAL MATERIAL OF
THE PROVINCIAL MONUMENTS CONSERVATOR IN OLSZTYN**

SUMMARY

The church of S. Catherine in Braniewo was destroyed by the military operations of the World War II. The church was to be restored and left as "a permanent ruin" after 1945. The post-war history of the object accurately illustrates communist policy towards the Christian historico-artistic heritage of Warmia. The documents show that on 22 June 1959 the Provincial Conservator, Lucjan Czubieli, agreed "to remove the upper fragment of remainders of the church tower". In 1961 the Department for Religious Affairs in Olsztyn took a following position on the ruins of St. Catherine church: "the protection of St. Catharine ruins should be postponed for subsequent years". In practice this meant the suspension of any maintenance works and the progressive process of destruction. The documents reveal a deliberate action towards the total annihilation of the church. The shifting of the responsibility for the object between the Provincial Conservator and Town Council Presidium in Braniewo, and also the setting of a deadline for destructing remainders of the ruins on 3 May 1973 (a religious feast day of Mary the Queen of Poland), demonstrate a specific attitude of the authorities in Poland to the Christian heritage in those times. Finally, the ruins of St. Catherine church became the property of the Roman Catholic Church by the Ministry's resolution No. 303 of 31 December 1973. For 28 years the state authorities have been trying to destroy a masterpiece of the Christian historico-artistic heritage, the church in Braniewo. The Diocese of Warmia waited 33 years for a permission to rebuild it. The first mass after World War II was celebrated by Bp. Julian Wojtkowski on Christmas Eve in 1981. Since the ruins were taken back, the temple was rebuilt and restored to its old splendor by the Diocese of Warmia within 8 years.

KEYWORDS: Christian historico-artistic heritage, sacred art, religious politics, Braniewo, the Diocese of Warmia.

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