Magiczny Kraków

Glossary of terms connected with the Kraków Fortress

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In order to make things easier both for novice explorers and for those already familiar with the terminology of defensive architecture, we have created a glossary of the most important terms connected with the Kraków Fortress. This glossary is a set of terms that are rarely used nowadays, but they are indispensable to convenient navigation through fortress-related issues.

- **Cannon** – a large-calibre gun used for launching a projectile by means of explosive chemical propellant against objects far away over the horizon as well as those within sight.
- **Bastille** – an element of fortification in the form of a low and squat tower, or a structure built on a horseshoe plan and projecting in front of the defensive walls, from which artillery fire or rifle fire could be opened. It was used from the 16th to the end of the 18th century.
- **Bastion** – an earth or brick element of fortification built on a pentagonal or star plan, built into or protruding from a fort's walls or embankments, that eliminated blind spots and expanded the fields of fire. It was used from the 16th through to the end of the 19th century.
- **Battery** – 1) a defensive work called also a gun station, where four to six artillery guns could be placed; 2) a barrel or rocket artillery unit delivering shell fire (rockets or artillery rounds).
- **Blockhouse** – a small fortified military building with firing ports.
- **Citadel** – an independent defensive work forming the central point of the fortress. It was used for the protection of inhabitants in the case of an enemy attack in the home area and for maintaining obedience among new subjects in captured areas. The citadel contained a command point, barracks, depots and other non-combat buildings, sometimes also a prison.
- **Front** – a part of fortifications of a defensive work, e.g., a fort, turned towards the potential enemy.
- **Artillery gun** – the general name of an artillery projectile weapon irrespective of calibre, which had to be larger than 20 mm.
- **Defensive work** – a structure used for active defence or a group of such structures.
- **Element of fortification** – an important part of a defensive work fulfilling a specific function (close-range defence, long-range defence, shelter, obstacle or communication functions).
- **Fort** – an independent defensive work connected not with neighbouring permanent "curtains" (walls or embankments), but only with interlocking fire zones.
- **Artillery fort** – a fort dating back to the 1870s–1880s, adapted mainly to long-range defence conducted by means of heavy cannons placed in open positions.
- **Main fort** – the fort that forms the centre of defence, usually of large size, used both for long-range and close-range defence.
- **Armoured fort** – a fort whose basic means of destruction (artillery, infantry positions) are protected by movable (towers) and/or stationary (domes, casemates, shields) armoured devices.
- **Infantry fort** – a fort used mainly for close-range defence conducted by infantry armed with small arms, subsequently with machine guns, and light artillery.
- **Intermediate fort** – called also an interfield fort or a connecting fort, built between neighbouring forts that could not co-operate because of the distance or terrain. It was usually smaller and often more modern than main forts.

- **Dispersed fort** – a fort consisting of positions and shelters loosely dispersed in the field without a geometrically formed moat, difficult to detect and cover with fire. Forts of this kind date back to the early 20th century.
- **Moat** – an obstacle against attackers in the form of a ditch, filled with water or – more frequently – palisades. In the case of moats protecting forts, firing was conducted along the ditch from embankments or caponiers.
- **Howitzer** – a short-barrelled artillery gun of least 100 mm calibre, with a low initial projectile speed, shooting upwards at a steep angle. The howitzer was used for hitting targets hidden behind field covers – a hill, a forest, a wall – and for destroying fortifications.
- **Caisson** – a single-axis vehicle for the transport of artillery ammunition, usually drawn by horses and attached to a limber, on which the crew rode and to which an artillery gun was fixed.
- **Camouflage** – any painting, scenography and landscaping used for the optical concealment of a fortification work aimed at disinformation and confusion of the enemy.
- **Caponier** – an element of fortification located inside the moat that could be used for firing along the ditch and for the control of close approaches to the fortification work.
- **Cavern** – a shelter carved in rock.
- **Casemate** – (Italian *casa di morte* – death house) a closed chamber making it possible to fire from artillery guns or small arms and protecting the crew against projectiles fired by the enemy. It was initially built for active defence, and the name was subsequently extended onto chambers used also for storage, residential or even prison purposes.
- **Tenaille** – walls or embankments forming a closed broken line that made it possible to liquidate dead angles on the foreground. They were used in fortifications mainly in the 18th century.
- **Cat's ears** – a type of double caponier with courtyards in the middle and two closed elements in the shape of a bastille.
- **Neck barracks** – barracks for the crew, often fortified and armoured, situated at the back (neck) of a fort.
- **Artillery laboratory** – a room in a fort used for filling artillery shells and preparing propellants.
- **Lunette** – called also a half-moon. An outwork dating back to the history of the Kraków Fortress, the shape of which if looked at from above resembles a half-moon.
- **Interfield** – a field of fire between forts.
- **Mortar** – a short-barrelled gun capable of an extremely high, near-vertical angle of elevation used originally for firing at the infantry from ambush, launching explosive shells at close range. From the late 19th century, mortars were also used for the destruction of fortified positions.
- **Mitrailleuse** – a multi-barrelled gun that can deliver continuous fire. A predecessor of the machine gun.
- **Hydraulic recoil mechanism** – the structural element of an artillery gun that is used for limiting the recoil of the barrel and causing it to return to the pre-firing position (and obtain the same angle of elevation), so that the position of the gun remains almost the same and shells fired by it hit the same point.
- **Guardhouse – a blockhouse**, a combat shelter or a small infantry fort.
- **Fortified armour** – a movable or stationary iron or steel cover of artillery and machine guns, firing and observation positions. Heavy reinforced armour was intended to protect positions from being hit directly by artillery shells. Light armour protected gates, windows and doors against the blast of an explosion and shrapnel.

- **Postern** – an underground passage connecting elements of a fortification that is used by soldiers to avoid shelling during communication. It is also an underground passage connecting the interior of the fortress with the foreground so that defenders of the fort could launch an unexpected counterattack.
- **Foreground** – the areas located outside the walls or ahead of the front of the fort that remains in the field of defenders' fire.
- **Reduit** – a brick structure with artillery gun stations; the centre of the reduit fort dating back to the middle of the 19th century.
- **Redoubt** – an outwork built on a circular, square or polygonal plan, the crew of which could conduct independent defence.
- **Lateral road or belt road** – a military road running in parallel with or diagonally towards the fortification line that made it possible to regroup troops and equipment and to deliver supplies to forts.
- **Passive shelter** – a shelter that is not used for firing, but for protecting people, military equipment and supplies.
- **Combat shelter** – a shelter from which the crew can deliver fire from the types of weapons to which it is adapted.
- **Main shelter** – the shelter that contained main gun ammunition depots and often rooms for the crew.
- **Emergency shelter** – a shelter for the work crew or the infantry allowing them to survive enemy fire and to join the fight quickly.
- **Sponson** – a structural element of fortification used for flank defence, made of armoured plates, often movable (to a certain extent – usually where the armament for firing at targets outside was placed), equipped with the protection of shooters against enemy bullets.
- **Rampart** – a general name for field fortifications. It could be closed (a redoubt) or open (a redan).
- **Neck** – the rear of the fort ending in fortifications or an element connecting the front of the bastion with the interior of the fort.
- **Gun casemate for flanking fire (German: *traditor*)** – an element of a fort, then an independent defensive work used for interfield defence, guarded from the front with the fort firing ports or a properly fortified embankment.
- **Fortress** – 1) the entire fortress structure, for example a large castle; 2) a group of structures that can range from a bastille fortress to a fort fortress, and which together form a fortress.
- **Background** – the space between the fort line and the centre of the fortress.