



Historic value

2022-12-06

Built over the course of 70 years in the last two centuries, the Kraków Fortress consists of buildings that are significant from the perspective of the history of military architecture. In many cases, they are also valuable testimonies to former times. The military monuments of the Kraków Fortress complement and harmonise with other monuments of the Second Industrial Revolution, when the world entered the era of electricity and diesel engines and which are present and still used in Kraków.

When occupying and incorporating the Republic of Cracow into their state and starting the process of turning the city into a fortress, the Austrians had at their disposal the remains of the fortified camp as well as Wawel Royal Castle, which had been fortified in the previous epoch. Their investment encompassed increasingly modern technical and building solutions drawing upon the experience of other parts of the kingdom, other states, ongoing wars and the latest achievements in engineering technology of military architecture and defensive works.

Consisting of a few defence rings, the Kraków Fortress was erected at the time of rapid changes in technology that improved the quality and efficiency of armament methods.

The former Kraków Fortress dates back to the turn of the 20th century and is the biggest defensive complex in Central Europe; it has more than 120 fortification points and a few dozen back-up and infrastructure facilities in support of the Fortress. 34 forts and many smaller defensive works have survived to date, including artillery batteries, ramparts, gate guardhouses, powder towers, hardened ammunition magazines, caverns, as well as a network of interior pathways, barracks and depot complexes, hospitals, an airstrip, viaducts and a railway station.

Some of these works are unique as a combination of a few fortification methods used during their erection. In many cases, the uniqueness of works lies in their equipment with then-current technological innovations, such as retractable rotary armoured M.2 Senkpanzer towers in Fort 44 'Tonie' or in the fact that few objects of this kind have survived around the world, e.g., a Waagner type hangar made in 1916 in the former aviation complex in Rakowice.

Most of the former combat structures are hidden in the fortress greenery, but the landscape with its layout of fortress greenery is also historically valuable. For all of the aforementioned reasons, works were entered into the list of heritage sites; some of them became 'Monuments of History' in accordance with the guidelines of the President of the Republic of Poland in 1994, and the entire fortress along with other Austro-Hungarian Fortresses has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.