Magiczny Kraków

Functional value

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In the days of its glory, the Kraków Fortress consisted of various types of combat buildings, including main forts and inter-field forts, artillery, armoured and infantry forts, reduit, citadel and tower forts as well as bastions. They were supplemented by ramparts, shelters, caverns and batteries. Equally important were the auxiliary structures: barracks, barrack & depot complexes, depots, railway stations, garages, an armament repair plant and an airport.

Some of the former Kraków fortress structures continue to serve the purpose for which they were built – they are still owned by the Polish Army. The army uses them as barracks, as it does with other buildings useful for military purposes, such as the former uhlan and aviation barracks at Ułanów Street. The military hospital at Wrocławska Street has functioned for over 100 years.

The first former fortress building that began to be adapted for new purposes was the former citadel of the Wawel Royal Castle Fortress. The old seat of Polish kings was recovered from the Austro-Hungarian army at a high price under the pretext of organising an imperial residence there – in return, the authorities of Kraków and Galicia undertook to build a group of buildings for military purposes. Upon its recovery from the military, Wawel became one of the most important museums for Poles. And it continues to fulfil this role this function today.

Upon their handover by the army, old fortress buildings began to be used by various institutions, enterprises and offices as early as the times of the Polish People's Republic. The modification of the barracks was the easiest task. Not only were they often located in the centre, but they also had to be kept in a condition allowing people to stay there. In this way, the barracks complex of Archduke Rudolph became the seat of the Cracow University of Technology, the artillery barracks at Montelupich Street became the seat of the Faculty of Stomatology of Collegium Medicum, the barracks at Henryka Sienkiewicza Street became the seat of the City Police, and the barracks at Rajska Street became the seat of the Provincial Public Library.

Some buildings and areas have become museums – for example, the Museum of Polish Aviation was established in a part of the former airport buildings in Rakowice, the Home Army Museum was created in a part of the former provisioning complex of the fortress, and the former artillery production plant of the fortress at Rakowicka Street has been one of the seats of the Museum of Photography since 2022.

Undoubtedly the most difficult task was to modify the old forts that have a cubic capacity of a few thousand square metres; they are often hidden at least partly beneath the ground, which creates difficulties because of damp walls and can make it difficult to instal necessary utilities. Nevertheless, we can find out about the functional value of old forts by visiting, e.g., Fort 2 'Kościuszko' with a museum devoted to Tadeusz Kościuszko, Fort 49 'Krzesławice' with the Youth Cultural Centre, Fort 51 ½ O 'Swoszowice' ('Wróblowice'), where the Museum of Military Affairs is open, and Fort 52 Borek that has been modified to serve as the home for the Podgórze Cultural Centre and the Polish Song Library. The Centre of the Scout Movement in Fort 52a 'Jugowice' ('Łapianka') will presumably be used, too.

Fort 39 ‘Olszanica’ and Fort 49 ¼ ‘Grębałów’ are also well adapted for hippotherapy and meeting purposes. Fort 38 ‘Skała’ serves as the seat of the observatory of the Jagiellonian University and Fort 52 ½ N ‘Skotniki’ as the seat of the Centre for Documentation of Deportations, Expulsions and Resettlement of the Pedagogical University of Cracow. Non-governmental organisations make good use of Fort 52 ½ S ‘Sidzina’ and 49 1/2 ‘Mogiła’.

Hopefully, the potential of the Tower Fort 31 ‘St Benedict’ will also be utilised in the near future.