

# Historic Architecture Losses in Kraków during the Second World War (1939–1945)<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The loss of historic architecture was one of the most painful material losses (irreversible too, since historical value cannot be restored by way of reconstruction) suffered by Polish society during the Second World War. Research to date has tended to focus on cities and areas that suffered the most damage, sidestepping cases like Kraków. Although it is true that the scale of destruction or damage to historical monuments was quite limited in Kraków as compared to, say, Warsaw or Poznań (as far as the territories of the Second Polish Republic which remained within the postwar borders are concerned), the former cannot be said to have remained fully intact. The purpose of this article is to fill gaps in research on the history of the Polish lands during the Second World War. The analysis of losses carried out herein is divided into three periods: the September Campaign, the occupation, and the armed operations at the beginning of 1945. The present paper is the first monograph on this subject.

The loss of historic architecture was one of the most painful material losses suffered by Polish society during the Second World War. The subject, insofar as the areas occupied by Nazi Germany are concerned, was taken up just after the war by Jan Zachwatowicz, the general conservator of historical monuments at the time. In his report for the Ministry of Culture and Art, Zachwatowicz highlighted the negative impact of the “19th century, a century of statelessness for Poland,” on the condition of historical architecture dating back to earlier centuries. He also commented on the positive effects of various conservation efforts to stop the deterioration of architecture during the interwar period. Zachwatowicz also brought attention to the dramatic losses suffered in 1939–1945 (Zachwatowicz, n.d., p. 1). As he observed, “in sum, the losses suffered by historical architecture in Poland, both in terms of numbers and percentages, represent the biggest losses in the nation’s cultural heritage” (p. 5). According to his estimates, 43% of the historical architecture assets extant on the eve of the war had been destroyed, the former being defined as “any building having artistic value, constructed before 1850” or (especially with regard to religious architecture) “being especially rare” (in which case no chronological cut-off point applied) (Instrukcja do wypełniania..., n.d., p. 35).<sup>2</sup> The ministry and the general conservator also included all kinds of monumental statues (“regardless of the time of their creation”) in the category of architectural losses (Architektura zabytkowa uszkodzona..., n.d., p. 1; Instrukcja do wypełniania..., n.d., p. 38).

Based on the official data that Zachwatowicz had access to, Warsaw was the area most affected by damage to historical architecture. 92% of the heritage assets within its borders were stated to have been destroyed (Zachwatowicz, n.d., p. 7). According to another report from the same period, 723 buildings in Warsaw had been destroyed (i.e., with less than 40% of their substance still intact) and 145 had been damaged (more than 40% of their substance maintained) (Architektura zabytkowa

1 The article was written as a follow-up to research conducted within the framework of the project “Niszczenie polskich zabytków nieruchomych na terytorium okupowanym przez III Rzeszę – dystrykt krakowski” [The Destruction of Polish Immovable Heritage in Territories Occupied by the Third Reich: The Kraków District], headed by the author in 2018–2019, and with the financial assistance of the Witold Pilecki Institute of Solidarity and Valor in Warsaw.

2 This definition, adopted by the conservation authorities just after the war for the purposes of surveying losses, differed from the definition in the Regulation of the President of the Republic of Poland from 6 March 1928 on the protection of historical monuments: “a monument [...] is any object, both immovable and movable, characteristic of a specific historical period, having artistic, cultural, archeological or paleontological value, as ascertained by a verdict of the state authorities [italics – M.G.-K.]” i.e. classified.

uszkodzona..., n.d., p. 1). With this classification in mind, the area least affected by more serious losses was the postwar Kraków voivodeship. Zachwatowicz estimated the scale of destruction there at only 4% (Zachwatowicz, n.d., p. 7). The ministerial calculations put the number of historical buildings destroyed in Kraków at 11 (Architektura zabytkowa uszkodzona..., n.d., p. 1). These official data suggested that this part of Poland had come out of the war almost unscathed.

“Almost,” however, did not mean “not at all.” Although few historical buildings had been destroyed in the Kraków voivodeship, there were quite a lot of damaged ones (as many as 144, so only one less than in Warsaw). Moreover, in terms of war damage, Kraków voivodeship ranked third among all the voivodeships (Warsaw itself was included on this list as a separate entity) (Architektura zabytkowa uszkodzona..., n.d., p. 1). It is difficult to compare the scale of losses in the Kraków voivodeship with the majority of other Polish territories, but there were certainly losses (and not insignificant ones) in the region’s main political, social and cultural center – Kraków.

The myth of the city “saved” by the Red Army marching into Poland concocted just after the war and perpetuated until the fall of communism might have been one of the reasons why earlier generations of scholars were visibly reluctant to engage in detailed study of the condition in which Poland’s historical capital emerged from the period of German occupation. Another possible reason why the problem failed to attract scrutiny was because of the serious losses suffered by Kraków’s movable heritage, so museum, library, archival and academic collections, which channeled the attention of those writing about the city’s cultural heritage lost during the war. It is worth noting that some of the first scholars to explore the topic were museum curators (and not architecture conservators), Feliks Kopera and Kazimierz Buczkowski (Kopera & Buczkowski, 1946; Kopera & Buczkowski, 1949–1957). They did touch on architectural losses, albeit very generally without going into details. Nor was architecture the main focus of Karol Estreicher’s comprehensive volume *Cultural Losses of Poland* published in London as early as 1944. It was a general report concerning wartime losses, focusing in the main on the destruction and theft of precious movable heritage (Estreicher, 2003, pp. 68–154).

Works like Ryszard Sławewski’s 1970 *Manewr, który ocalił Kraków*, essentially a propaganda piece, were silent on the subject of the damage inflicted on Kraków’s historical during the military operations of early 1945 (the third edition of the volume came out in 1970 as part of Wydawnictwo Literackie’s popular historical monograph series *Cracoviana*) (Sławewski, 1970). In later years, the problem of architectural losses was touched on i.a. by Krzysztof Broński in his article *Ruch budowlany w Krakowie pod okupacją hitlerowską*. But this author’s main focus was not so much on acts of destruction and devastation as on new construction projects (especially those planned but never implemented) (Broński, 1987). Nor did Kraków

draw any special attention (with the exception of lost monumental sculptures) from scholars like Jan Pruszyński (Pruszyński, 2001, pp. 430–446), Bohdan Rymaszewski (Rymaszewski, 2005, pp. 97–100) or Piotr Majewski (Majewski, 2005, pp. 217–234), who took a broader approach to describing wartime architectural losses in general. These scholars' wide-ranging perspective was necessarily partial and focused on the most spectacular acts of destruction. Finally, it is worth noting that the most recent publications regarding German-occupied Kraków, for instance Andrzej Chwalba's, also devote little attention to the topic (although, importantly, they question the myth of a city reclaimed without any damage to its buildings) (Chwalba, 2002, pp. 439–440; Chwalba, 2011,<sup>3</sup> pp. 439–440). This is due to the fact that as general overviews they draw chiefly on previous findings, while these, as stated above, are rather limited.

The purpose of the present article is to fill gaps in existing research on the wartime history of Kraków. It should be noted, however, that its scope is not merely local. The following considerations will give us a fuller picture of the general extent of losses when it comes to historic architecture in the Polish territories, which have not been analyzed in detail so far except with regard to a number of specific areas (Oleksicki, 2002; Fałkowski, 2004; Gałęcka, 2006; Sakson & Skarzyński, 2008; Szczepański, 2009; Friedrich, 2015). Taking into account the importance of Kraków as a unique architectural site, highly regarded for its historical significance both prior to and following the Second World War, providing a detailed account of the city's wartime losses in the domain of architecture seems a well-justified endeavor.

### Kraków's Historic Architecture on the Eve of the War

The Arabs have Mecca to which they make an annual pilgrimage, and the Poles' Mecca is Kraków with its castle and cathedral, the relics of the greatest Polish saint, bishop of Kraków, Saint Stanislaus Szczepanowski. Come, therefore, Esteemed Readers, in great numbers to visit ancient Kraków! Having gotten to know its precious age-old treasures dear to the heart of every Pole, you shall love your native land even more (Zimowski, 1937, p. [iv]).

With these words Kazimierz Zimowski, a Kraków educator with a passion for popularizing history, ended his guide to Kraków which appeared in 1937. Zimowski's guidebook was one of many such publications

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3 Essentially the second edition of the same book.

to come out during the interwar period in response to a growing interest in the city at the foot of Wawel Castle as a domestic tourist destination (about 80,000 visitors per year) (Warszyńska, 1971, p. 234).

Kraków's unique position on the cultural map of Poland, its role as an urban monument to the historic greatness of the Polish nation and state, dates back to the late 18th and early 19th century (Getka-Kenig, 2017, pp. 303 ff.). This prestige and fame, gradually expanding in society during the partition period (Purchla, 1992), skyrocketed after Poland regained independence, as the country eagerly looked back to its centuries-old roots. Although in administrative terms Kraków's status did not outweigh that of other voivodeship capitals, it was there – and more precisely, at Wawel Castle – that the head of state had an official residence second in rank to the Royal Castle in Warsaw (Stolarzewicz, 1937, p. 141). Kraków also witnessed momentous ceremonies like the funeral of Józef Piłsudski, which established a direct bridge between the pre-partition past and the present (Hein-Kircher, 2008, pp. 61–72).

In his guide to Wawel Castle from the interwar years, Józef Nekanda-Trepka wrote, “it is the duty of every Pole not only to love but also to thoroughly know these historic sites that we can today fully venerate and tenderly care for thanks to the revival of our Homeland” (Nekanda-Trepka, 1925, p. 5). This was the guiding principle of the conservation milieu, whose eye was steadily fixed on Kraków. The restoration of Wawel Hill was one of the most important conservation projects, although similar repairs were also undertaken with respect to Corpus Christi Church, Saint Barbara's, Saint Adalbert's and Saint Agnes's churches or the remnants of the city walls (Dettloff, 2006). After Warsaw, it was in Kraków that nationwide conservation summits took place most often (Dettloff, 2010, p. 283). From the moment the official register of monuments was introduced in 1928 until the outbreak of the Second World War Kraków's local conservation authorities made 120 entries pertaining both to single buildings and entire neighborhoods in Kraków and its vicinity (today within the city limits) like the Old Town (bounded by the Planty) and Kazimierz along with Stradom.<sup>4</sup> These actions on the part of conservation services were more than a recognition of Kraków's heritage. They were first of all a legal measure meant to protect what still remained intact after the partition period (which had seen the devastation of Wawel Castle, for example) and the rapid development of the city in the 19th and early 20th century.

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4 Based on the entry in the Lesser Poland voivodeship register of monuments. Downloaded from: <https://www.wuoz.malopolska.pl/rejestrzabytkow> [accessed: 01.12.2020].

Kraków's historic architecture suffered minor as well as major damage already during the September Campaign. Affected were primarily buildings perceived as military strategic points such as the barracks on Rakowicka Street or the Main Railway Station complex whose platforms were bombed by the Germans (Chwalba, 2002, p. 10). The proximity of the railway station could have been the reason for the significant damage to Saint Florian's church (collegiate church), a temple serving one of the oldest (12th-century) Roman Catholic parishes in Kraków, whose architecture dated back to the late 17th/early 18th century (Kopera & Buczkowski, 1946, p. 55). On 3 September 1939, it was hit by two bombs which "partially destroyed" the chapel with the altar of the Lord Jesus Crucified as well as the treasury, located on the northern side of the collegiate church (Kwestionariusz dotyczący zarejestrowania szkód wojennych – kościół parafialny św. Florianiana w Krakowie..., n.d.; Kwestionariusz strat i zniszczeń... – kolegiata św. Florianiana..., p. 12). The said chapel, founded by provost Antoni Mikołaj Krząnowski, had been erected in the third quarter of the 18th century and was consecrated in 1779 (Rejduch-Samkowa & Samek, 2000, pp. 3, 5). Due to the proximity of the chapel, the bombs also damaged the rococo organ case above the church entrance (Pismo proboszcza parafii św. Florianiana..., 1946, p. 10). Moreover, six other bombs fell on the nearby rectory, the oldest parts of whose walls dated back to the 14th century (Kwestionariusz dotyczący rejestracji szkód wojennych – probostwo św. Florianiana w Krakowie..., n.d.; Wykaz szkód wojennych parafii św. Florianiana w Krakowie..., 1945). "Since our church had suffered considerable damage," on 17 September 1939, the parish priest of St. Florian's parish announced a collection for its "restoration," noting that the money would be used above all to "protect it against further degradation" due to breaches in the walls. A special "church renovation committee" was to be appointed and a "separate book with the names of [...] the donors" was to be kept. Within a week, the amount of 17 zł 34 gr was collected (Wpis z 17 września 1939, 1939). However, there is no information about the progress of any conservation works (even provisional) which had to be carried out urgently due to the approaching winter.

During a post-war survey of losses, the Resurrectionist Church (or, more precisely, chapel) in Wola Duchacka south of Kraków (formally within the city limits as of 1943) was also reported as having suffered during the German bombing in September 1939 (Litewka, 1984, p. 481). German air raids on a nearby cable factory caused damage to its roof and windows (Ćwiek, 2014, pp. 15–16). It was an inconspicuous, relatively new building that had been erected a year earlier according to a design by Jan Drożdż (the works were in their finishing phase) (p. 15). According to the above-mentioned exception to the chronological principle when religious buildings were concerned, this church could potentially have been of

interest to the Ministry of Culture and Art. However, it was not qualified as a monument by the voivodeship conservator, who stated it to have “no historical value” in the loss questionnaire that he submitted (*Kwestionariusz strat i zniszczeń... – kościół św. Józefa, Wola Duchacka...*, n.d., p. 9).

### Kraków’s historic architecture during the German occupation

The occupier’s policy with regard to Kraków’s architectural monuments was ambivalent. The Nazi political apparatus treated the city as an “old German” city (*urdeutsche Stadt*), the easternmost stronghold of Germanic culture, whose most splendid expressions were the local movable and immovable monuments from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (Głębocki & Mórąski, 1986, p. 77; Purchla, 2005, p. 195). This specific understanding of Kraków’s history in principle ensured some protection and care for its most valuable sites; at the same time sites associated with the city’s Polish and Jewish identity were targeted.

First of all, we have to mention the destruction of monuments qualified after the war both as architecture and as having historical value (even though they were not particularly aged). Until 1939, there were three freestanding, large-scale monumental statues in Kraków: that of Adam Mickiewicz (unveiled in 1898), the Grunwald Monument (unveiled in 1910) and the statue of Tadeusz Kościuszko (unveiled in 1921). The first whose dismantling started already in November 1939 was the Grunwald Monument in Plac Matejki, opposite the Barbican. Its dismantling continued inconspicuously behind a fence until April of the following year (Urbańczyk, 1974, p. 105). In January 1940, the Germans removed the monument to Kościuszko on Wawel Hill (towering over Straszewskiego Street), and in August of the same year they knocked the statue of Mickiewicz off its pedestal in the Main Market Square. In both cases the operation proceeded in public view (Urbańczyk, 1974, p. 108; Majewski, 2005, pp. 218–219; Kopera & Buczkowski, 1949–1957, p. 146).

It should be pointed out that the German campaign against Polish monuments was typical of territories incorporated directly into the Reich. Kraków thus took a major hit as far as the General Government was concerned (in Warsaw the only statues of comparable size to be destroyed prior to the uprising of 1944 were those of Chopin and Kiliński as well as the relatively inconspicuous monument to fallen soldiers of the Polish Military Organization, although the invaders had initially planned to remove a number of other monuments as well) (Majewski, 2005, pp. 218–219). And the Germans proved quite selective while implementing these measures, in Kraków destroying first and foremost the monuments that either unequivocally offended German pride (like the Grunwald Monument which, according to Adam Ronikier was to Hans Frank “a kind of reminder of a historic German humiliation” (Ronikier, 2002, p. 78) or commemorated



superheroes of Polish independence (like Mickiewicz and Kościuszko). The monuments that survived the war were those that celebrated the memory of patriotic “supporting actors” like Tadeusz Reytan or Artur Grottger, or eminent personalities who had played a role in the development of Kraków, like Florian Straszewski and Józef Dietl, but evoked no direct political message. Perhaps in the case of Grottger and Dietl their Germanic surnames had some bearing on their survival, while Reytan with its Neogothic form was somewhat reminiscent of the Prussian National Monument for the Liberation Wars in Berlin’s Kreuzberg district, designed by Karl Friedrich Schinkel (Schwarz, 2009, pp. 82–84), an architect that the Nazis had a special appreciation for. Let us add that the surviving monuments were placed in prestigious locations (Reytan, Grottger and Straszewski in the Planty, and Dietl along the route connecting the Main Market Square with Wawel). One exception to this rule was the removal of an entire set of likenesses of great Poles from Jordan Park. In this case, however, we are dealing with a kind of collective monument to Polish genius, whose destruction was part of a more general ruination of the park which the Germans filled with bunkers and wooden barracks (Broński, 1987, p. 178; Kos, 2008, p. 323).

The premise that realistic monuments were slated for destruction also partly explains why certain kinds of plaques were stripped away. All plaques honoring Kościuszko were removed – two from the Main Market Square (marking the spot where he had taken his oath and on the wall of the house he had spent the night in), both in 1940, in addition to two on Loretańska Street (on the Loreto chapel adjacent to the Capuchin Church, where Kościuszko had had his sword blessed, as well as on the house standing at the former site of the gate leading from the Wodzicki Manor to the Capuchin Church through which the military chief had passed) (Lubicz-Pachoński, 1984, pp. 316, 320, 327). A plaque in Podgórze dedicated to Piłsudski’s Legionists was also dismantled (Wroński, 1974, p. 303). By covering (although the Germans had initially planned to remove it) the statue of Aleksander Fredro in front of the Juliusz Słowacki Theater in 1940 the Germans wanted to expunge any associations between the said building and Polish culture (even the Polish surname of the thermometer maker was painted over on thermometers in the building at this time) (Drewniak, 1997, p. 471). Given all this, it is quite astonishing that the plaque honoring Władysław Żeleński was only “torn off” the facade of the Old Theater in January 1944 (Wroński, 1974, p. 322). In later years the Germans also removed a memorial plaque devoted to Stanisław Wyspiański (left in Mariacki Square until 1 December 1943) and a plaque to Adam Asnyk put up on the facade of the latter’s house on Łobzowska Street (a less representative lane) just before the war (it remained undisturbed until 22 November 1943) (Kopera & Buczkowski, 1949–1957, p. 147; Wroński, 1974, pp. 303, 305). Perhaps in this case the inscription hailing the poet as a “fighter for the freedom and illumination of the [Polish] nation” and



as a member of the national government during the January Uprising of 1863–1864 was deemed particularly dangerous. The Germans also removed a plaque commemorating Jewish settlement in Kazimierz from the facade of the Kazimierz town hall (Kopera & Buczkowski, 1949–1957, p. 147).

The district of Kazimierz suffered some serious losses during the occupation period. According to postwar stocktaking seven houses built in the 16th and 17th centuries were dismantled in their entirety, and around 60 buildings built between the 16th and 19th centuries suffered damage amounting to close to 20% (Spis zniszczeń, n.d., pp. 26, 28). In the latter case, however, it is difficult to determine when exactly these losses occurred and whether they were not in part due to the military operations of January 1945 (more on this below). The most precious building to be destroyed in Kazimierz during the occupation was the 16th-century renaissance Landau residence at Szeroka Street 2, once identified as the historic residence (townhouse or even palace) of the powerful Jordan clan (Krasnowolski, 1992, pp. 118–119; Rożek, 1990, p. 29). According to the list of losses compiled by the postwar voivodeship conservator Józef Dutkiewicz, the townhouse had been “ruined in 1940–1944 through lack of supervision and ransacking,” while the value of the losses was estimated at 150,000 zł (Wykaz szkód wojennych w zabytkach, n.d., p. 3). While the question of why this neglect occurred remains open, there is hardly any question about the motivation behind the deliberate devastation of the Kazimierz synagogues, in line with the anti-Semitic policies of the Third Reich. The oldest of these, the so-called Old Synagogue on Szeroka Street, had its roof burned and the ceiling of its main hall destroyed, not to mention windows and doors torn from their hinges, while the building itself was at risk of collapse. The damage was estimated at 150,000 zł (Wykaz szkód wojennych w zabytkach, n.d., p. 3; Kubiak, 1953, p. 139; Piechotka & Piechotka, 1999, p. 53). The High Synagogue was also heavily ruined (Kubiak, 1953, p. 141; Piechotka & Piechotka, 1999, p. 123). The remaining historic synagogues – Remuh, Isaac and Popper – suffered some serious damage, albeit to a lesser degree (Kubiak, 1953, pp. 140, 142; Piechotka & Piechotka, 1999, pp. 119, 126, 133).

German construction works whose purpose was to adapt historic Kraków buildings to new functions also had a destructive character. An example of such activity was the demolition (having previously deliberately allowed the building to fall into ruin) of the royal stables and the thorough reconstruction of the structures near the Wawel kitchen. The Germans built a new (still extant) office building at the site (Szyszko-Bohusz, 1949–1957, pp. 165–166; Wykaz szkód wojennych w zabytkach, n.d., p. 2).<sup>5</sup> The reconstruction of the former Potocki Palace (a.k.a. “Under

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5 According to the Catalogue of Historic Monuments (Katalog Zabytków) what happened during the occupation period was a “thorough reconstruction of the building [...] impressing a Germanic mark on the architecture, yet nonetheless

the Rams”) in the Main Market Square, which the Germans connected with the neighboring townhouses in order to create a new usable space for the headquarters of the head of the Kraków district, entailed some heavy-duty tampering with the historic substance. According to official propaganda, the Germans were clearing these buildings of their Polish additions and restoring their medieval (i.e., Germanic) appearance (Przebudowa pałacu, 2019; Komorowski & Sudacka, 2008, p. 306). It is known that there were even plans to redesign the Main Market Square in order to highlight the Germanic quality of its architecture; the above endeavors could have been a prelude to this undertaking (Broński, 1987, p. 165).

Another structure that suffered some degree of damage as a result of wartime reconstruction was the early 17th-century Montelupi Palace on Szlak Street, adapted in the latter half of the 19th century by Antoni Łuszczkiewicz as a residence for the aristocratic Tarnowski family (Beiersdorf, 2003, p. 90). After the war, the extent of destruction was put at 70% (Spis zniszczeń, n.d., p. 26). Taken away from its Polish owners like “Under the Rams,” the building was adapted in 1943 as the Haus der Jugend (House of Youth), the local Hitlerjugend headquarters designed by the Berlin architect F. W. Walter Fuchs (Pismo krakowskiej Policji Budowlanej..., 1942, p. 27). The surviving project documentation does not however show any far-reaching interference in the historic substance of the building. The most serious changes involved the construction of columned porticoes (preserved to this day) – a freestanding one with two columns facing the street in the front, and an inner portico with four columns and two half-columns on the garden side. Some changes were also made to the interiors but without seriously altering their arrangement (Projekty przebudowy Domu Młodzieży..., n.d., l. 3–8). It is known that in 1943 the German Office of City Planning intervened in the “thorough renovation works” (“gründliche Instandsetzungsarbeiten”) carried out without a permit on the palace’s “late-Baroque facade” (“Spätbarack-fassade,” instead of “Spätbarock”, doubtless a typo) (Pismo Urzędu Planowania Miasta..., 1943, p. 25). We also know that the Montelupi Palace was “burned” or “burned out” when the Red Army entered Kraków, which seems to have completed the work of destruction (Karta zabytku „Pałac Montelupich”..., n.d.). When Polish Radio was taking it over as their broadcasting station after the war, a design was developed not for its renovation but its “reconstruction” (Projekt Rozgłośni Radia Polskiego..., n.d., p. 3).

In concluding this section, we must not forget the German authorities’ reconstruction of parts of the ground floors of some Kraków townhouses. As a result, there are arcades (surviving to this day) that were

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with the old walls for the most part preserved” (Szablowski, 1965, p. 59).  
For more on the “reconstruction” and “adaptation” of these buildings, see:  
Gwizdałówna, 2019, pp. 70–118.

supposed to facilitate the flow of human traffic. These were added to the 18th-century Stadnicki Palace at the corner of Grodzka and Poselska streets, a building next to the Church of Saint Gilles at the foot of Wawel Hill, and to a number of houses from around 1800 on Krakowska Street. The Polish government-in-exile's reports on the condition of national heritage in Poland made note of these modifications, describing them as a "very detrimental" campaign against Polish heritage "which may cause large-scale damage to the condition of historic monuments and the appearance of the city" (Sprawozdanie [Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych]..., 1942, p. 41).

### Kraków's historic architecture during the period of fighting in 1945

Kraków's historic architecture definitely suffered its most serious losses (in terms of the number of buildings affected) close to the end of the war in January 1945. These were caused directly by German and Soviet armed operations, in particular Soviet bombings and the detonation of explosives by the Germans in strategic points like bridges on the Vistula. The best known (as evidenced by the existing literature) example of their destructive fallout is the damage inflicted on Wawel Hill.

on 17 I at 3 p.m. the first and final aerial bomb fell on Wawel, luckily it fell in the Batory courtyard between the castle's western wing and the cathedral, without inflicting any direct damage, even though it dug a crater all the way down to the rock. Nearly all the windows within a radius of several dozen meters were shattered, the Gothic buttress was torn off the west wing facade and fell on the roof of the Batory chapel. The upper part (stone cover) of the buttress destroyed part of the [chapel] ceiling and dropped down into the chapel (Szyszko-Bohusz, 1949–1957, p. 174).

When writing of no direct damage, Szyszko-Bohusz was surely thinking of the lack of damage to the frame of the Castle which is what he was interested in most. In the case of the chapel, aside from the ceiling the bomb also ruined the southern quoin, ripping out a piece of wall several meters wide along its entire height over the middle cornice. According to the documentation compiled by the church authorities, the explosion "knocked all the statues inside off their pedestals," including the huge monument to Batory himself. In addition, the ceiling in the nearby sacristy was also damaged (Zestawienie szkód w zabytkowych kościołach..., n.d., p. 45).

It is worth mentioning that the bomb was most certainly a Soviet bomb, however, for political reasons this fact became an uncomfortable

piece of information to the postwar surveyors. Even the church documents emphasized that the destruction had been wreaked by the Germans (*Zestawienie szkód w zabytkowych kościołach...*, n.d., p. 45). At the same time, Kopera and Buczkowski for their part suggested that the damage had been caused not by an air raid (which would have pointed a finger at the Red Army), but by an explosion set off by the Germans on a nearby bridge (“the force of the explosion was so great that pieces of the iron Zwierzyniec bridge were propelled as far as the cathedral. Wawel Castle suffered, the Batory chapel sustaining the most serious damage”) (Kopera & Buczkowski, 1946, p. 56).

It is indeed true that the blast on Zwierzyniec Bridge (actually, Dębniaki Bridge) caused extensive damage on Wawel Hill. The blast occurred on 18 January 1945, adding to the earlier damage caused by the bomb. The church survey of losses however showed that as a result of blowing up the bridge, “all the ordinary windows [inside the cathedral] were destroyed, while some of the stained-glass [windows] sustained extensive damage and some lesser damage” (*Zestawienie szkód w zabytkowych kościołach...*, n.d., p. 45). The most damaged stained-glass windows were in the Szafraniec, Saint Sophia and Świętokrzyska chapels, so those located on the western side and therefore most exposed to the blast. Moreover, “fractured walls threatening collapse” were reported in the Waza Chapel neighboring the Szafraniec Chapel to the east (it may be that the note only concerned fractured wall lining, since the estimated repair cost was not high) (*Zestawienie kosztów na roboty budowlane...*, n.d., p. 25). As regards the entire cathedral, the general scale of destruction was estimated at 4% in the documentation prepared by the county office (*starostwo powiatowe*), while the church authorities estimated the cost of the planned renovation at 54,600 zł (*Wykaz zniszczeń w budynkach państwowych...*, n.d., p. 13; *Spis zniszczeń na Wawelu*, n.d., p. 141; *Zestawienie kosztów na roboty budowlane...*, n.d., p. 41). However, the Ministry of Culture and Art documents talk about 10% losses (*Spis zniszczeń*, n.d., p. 27), with a total repair cost (according to the calculations of the voivodeship conservator) of 100,000 zł (*Wykaz szkód wojennych w zabytkach*, n.d., p. 2).

The remaining buildings on Wawel Hill did not avoid the consequences of armed operations during this time either, including the Royal Castle itself, 3% of which was deemed to have been destroyed (*Spis zniszczeń na Wawelu*, n.d., p. 137). The damage included shattered windows and torn off roof tiles which, due to the season, required urgent repair.<sup>6</sup> The most heavily damaged building was the former theological

6 This is evidenced by the surviving photographic documentation in the holdings of the Museum of Kraków (MHK-Fs 12434/IX, MHK-Fs 12435/IX). The administration of the Wawel Royal Castle institutional archive has not granted permission for the publication of documents relating to the wartime losses suffered by the Wawel buildings.

seminary, followed by the ethnographic museum created in the 18th century from the merger of three 15th-century townhouses (Szablowski, 1965, p. 143). The extent of the devastation, put as 8% (Spis zniszczeń na Wawelu, n.d., p. 139), was probably due to the adaptation of the building by the Germans for residential purposes (Szablowski, 1965, p. 143). Other examples of damage included: building no. 2 (“representative, residential”) – 6%; building no. 3 (“residential”) – 4%; building no. 5 (“residence of the head of state”) – 6%; building no. 8 (“former Austrian hospital”) – 5%; building no. 9a (“residential, former National Museum storage space”) – 4%; building no. 9b (“former hospital building”) – 0,5%; garages – 1%; fortified towers and “barbicans” – 0,5% (Spis zniszczeń na Wawelu, n.d., pp. 137–141).

Apart from Wawel Hill, the aftermath of explosions and to some extent of bombardments was evident throughout the entire historic center of Krakow, including Kazimierz, where the Augustinian church of St. Catherine of Alexandria was located. As Bogdan Treter, the voivodeship conservator, wrote to the Ministry of Treasury in October 1945 with a request for subsidies, “of all the local churches [it is here that] military operations [...] have inflicted the most damage” (Brudnopis pisma B. Tretera..., 1945, p. 29). The church was considered one of the “five most magnificent buildings erected by Casimir the Great” and “one of the most valuable monuments in the Polish lands” (Projekt odezwy..., n.d., p. 33; Pismo konserwatora metropolitalnego..., 1945, p. 38). The church surveyors noted the destruction of the roof over the main nave and side naves with a gap measuring 18 m<sup>2</sup> (Pismo Urzędu Parafialnego św. Katarzyny..., 1945, p. 204); the roof over the monastery buildings had also been destroyed. In addition, the windows in the chancel and side naves, in the vestibule, above the bays and in the cloisters had been shattered, which meant not only missing fragments of glass but also the destruction of the Gothic covering made of Szydłowiec stone. Some of it was “completely smashed,” while what survived was “so badly damaged that without repair it [threatened] to fall apart” (Kosztorys robót remontowych..., n.d., pp. 17–27). In this situation, the interior of the church seemed to be in special danger – “in winter it was covered with snow” (Pismo konserwatora metropolitalnego..., 1945, p. 38) – including the monumental Jordan sepulcher, carved from Pińczów stone in the early 17th century by Santi Gucci. The Ministry of Culture and Art estimated the damage to St. Catherine’s Church at 10% (Spis zniszczeń, n.d., p. 27), the repair cost set by the voivodeship conservator was 300,000 zł (372,600 zł according to the calculations of the church authorities) (Wykaz szkód wojennych w zabytkach, n.d., p. 2; Zestawienie kosztów na roboty budowlane..., n.d., p. 41).

With regard to the assessment of costs, prepared for the Kraków curia, two more churches that had suffered the most damage in January 1945 were located in Kazimierz, i.e., Corpus Christi Church and the Church of the Brothers Hospitallers of Saint John of God. The direct cause of the losses was the blowing up of the Józef Piłsudski Bridge. In the former

case, the church authorities estimated the repair cost at 267,670 zł (the voivodeship conservator at 146,000 zł) (*Zestawienie kosztów na roboty budowlane...*, n.d., p. 41; *Wykaz szkód wojennych w zabytkach*, n.d., p. 3); the losses included: blown off roof cover over the central nave for an area of 40 m<sup>2</sup> on the southern side, holes in roofs on the lower levels, destroyed windows, including stained glass. The inter-window stone coving in the chancel had also been destroyed. The monastery buildings were damaged too, especially the roof (both the covering and the binding) in addition to the vault in the corridor on the first floor (*Pismo urzędu parafialnego Bożego Ciała...*, 1945, p. 202; *Kwestionariusz strat i zniszczeń – Kościół Bożego Ciała*, n.d., p. 7). Considering the rather high cost of the planned repairs, it is puzzling that the ministerial documentation only put the extent of damage at 2% (this may be an error) (*Spis zniszczeń*, n.d., p. 27). In the Church of the Brothers Hospitallers of Saint John of God, located close to the blown-up bridge, the roof cover, window panes and wooden window frames were destroyed. What is more, a shell fell on the building, leaving a hole in the wall (*Zestawienie kosztów na roboty budowlane...*, n.d., p. 33). The voivodeship conservator put the cost of repairs at 110,000 zł, and the church authorities at 188,950 zł (*Wykaz szkód wojennych w zabytkach*, n.d., p. 3; *Zestawienie kosztów na roboty budowlane...*, n.d., p. 41).

In total, according to the documentation of the church authorities, as many as 29 churches in Kraków had been damaged, both due to the blowing up of bridges and to bombs. Apart from those already mentioned, the following churches were also included on this list (in the order of damage; the first figure comes from the church report only taking the most urgent repairs into account, the second from the report of the voivodeship conservator): Church of the Holy Cross (141,600 / 10,000 zł), Saint Nicholas's Church (84,150 / 80,000 zł), the Dominican Church (84,150 / 80,000 zł), the Franciscan Church (71,850 / 70,000 zł), Saint Florian's Church (including recent damage from January 1945, 50,080 / 150,000 zł),<sup>7</sup> the Missionaries Church (46,470 / 46,000 zł), Saint Barbara's Church (33,200 / 30,000 zł), the Carmelitan Sisters' Church (30,550 / 30,000 zł), the Visitandine Sisters' Church (27,975 / 27,000 zł), the Capuchin Friars' Church (26,880 / 26,000 zł), the Norbertine Sisters' Church (21,050 / 20,000 zł), Saint Gilles' Church (22,440 / 20,000 zł), Saints Peter and Paul Church (21,700 / 18,000 zł), the Bernardine Church (18,690 / 18,000 zł), Saint Anne's Church (5,310 / 5000 zł), Saint Mary's Church (39,000 / 140,000 zł),<sup>8</sup> and the Piarist,

7 It may be that the conservator's calculations also include losses from 1939.

8 This conservator's estimate most certainly also included the consequences of wartime neglect which especially affected the wall-paintings inside. The final cost of renovation works on the church, including the "repair of damage caused by military operations" was 200,000 in 1946 (*Pismo archidiecezjalnego kościoła Mariackiego...*, 1946); see also: *Szkody wojenne w kościele Najśw. Marji Panny...*, 1945/1946, p. 193 (which mentions the amount of 122,271 zł).



Reformed Franciscan, Saint Adalbert's, Sisters Canonesses of the Holy Spirit de Saxia, Presentation of Mary Sisters, Carmelitan, Divine Mercy and Bernardine churches. The total losses in these eight temples – only as far glass is concerned – were put by the church authorities at 13,200 zł (*Zestawienie kosztów na roboty budowlane...*, n.d., p. 41; *Wykaz szkód wojennych w zabytkach*, n.d., pp. 2–3).

The church report makes no mention of the Church of Saint Lazarus (actually the Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary), which had been desacralized for a while and belonged to the university hospital. In this case, the voivodeship conservator estimated the losses at 20,000 zł (*Wykaz szkód wojennych w zabytkach*, n.d., p. 2). There was also no shortage of temples damaged during the war that were rejected by the conservator due to a lack of “artistic” or “historic” value. These included the early 20th-century Saint Joseph's Church in Podgórze (*Kwestionariusz strat i zniszczeń... – kościół św. Józefa, Kraków...*, n.d., p. 4) and the interwar Church of the Divine Mother of Good Council in Prokocim (unfinished when the war started) (*Kwestionariusz strat i zniszczeń... – kościół Matki Boskiej Dobrej na Prokocimiu...*, n.d., p. 11).

The damage to the above-mentioned religious buildings was usually tantamount to damaged roofs and windows (not just windowpanes but also the coving in medieval windows). In some cases, it also included fractured walls or even gaps, for example at the Norbertine Sisters' Church (a fractured wall behind the grand altar, with a gap in the wall), Saint Florian's (an opening in the vestibule wall), Saints Peter and Paul (an opening in the northern wall) and Holy Cross (fractured vault with an opening) (*Zestawienie kosztów na roboty budowlane...*, n.d., pp. 31, 34, 37). Damaged windows often meant damaged interiors, damaged movables and decorations, as for instance in Saint Mary's Church, where the upper part of the 18th-century tombstone of Franciszek Dunin in the chapel of Saint John Nepomucene was smashed (*Szkody wojenne w kościele Najśw. Marji Panny...*, 1945/1946, p. 193),<sup>9</sup> and in Saints Peter and Paul Church, where “as a result of military operations” the 17th-century “stuccos by [Giovanni Battista] Falconi” were reported to be “in a state of great destruction” (*Referat zabytków nieruchomych...*, 1945, p. 1).<sup>10</sup> In the case of churches belonging to religious orders, the monastery buildings also frequently experienced similar losses.

The condition of secular buildings was documented much less thoroughly. The list of war losses among Kraków buildings which survives as part of the legacy of the Kraków County Office (*starostwo powiatowe*),

9 The “smashing of the window's 20 fields” was commemorated with an inscription on the new stained-glass window put in in 1945 (*Inwentarz kościoła Wniebowzięcia...*, n.d., pp. 12–13, 98).

10 It is interesting that the church documentation makes no mention of this (*Pismo urzędu parafialnego Wszystkich Świętych...*, 1945, p. 196).



numbering 445 items, does not include (this is explicitly stated) buildings in the Planty and the central part of Kazimierz, and so the oldest architecture (*Wykaz szkód wojennych szczegółowy...*, n.d., pp. 45–97). However, it is to be expected that since practically every church in this area had been damaged, secular buildings would have suffered a similar fate. We do have a list of architecture losses for Jagiellonian University which shows that the oldest part of the city did not indeed, emerge from the war unscathed. The most damaged university building was the Collegium Minus, its roots reaching back to the 15th century, although it went through considerable refurbishments during the following centuries, especially at the turn of the 19th century. The building, which housed the offices of the German Press Institute during the occupation period, suffered 15% damage as a result of a Soviet air raid on 17 January 1945 (*Zestawienie kosztów odbudowy...*, n.d.; Niemiec, Starzyński, 2015, p. 135). The oldest university building, Collegium Maius, back then still housing the Jagiellonian Library, suffered 10% (*Zestawienie kosztów odbudowy...*, n.d.) or 13% damage (*Spis zniszczeń*, n.d., p. 28) to its roof, roof truss, carpentry, and external plasterwork (the voivodeship conservator put the value of these losses at 130,000 zł) (*Wykaz szkód wojennych w zabytkach*, n.d., p. 2). The 17th-century Nowodworski Collegium suffered 5% damage, Collegium Phisicum (dating back to late 18th/early 19th century in its pre-war form) – 6%, and two other centuries-old university buildings – Collegium Iuridicum and the Geographical Institute in the former Royal Arsenal building, standing opposite each other) – 3% (*Zestawienie kosztów odbudowy...*, n.d.).<sup>11</sup>

The post-war surveys also took note of losses to historic townhouses that had belonged to the Catholic Church (in the Planty area). The townhouse at Kanonicza Street 11, belonging to All Saints Parish, had some of its roof damaged in addition to all of its windows, “some together with the window frames” (*Pismo urzędu parafialnego Wszystkich Świętych...*, 1945, p. 196). Similar losses were recorded at Szewska Street 22 in a townhouse belonging to Saint Anne’s Parish; in another house also belonging to the same parish at św. Anny Street 11 shrapnel had “made a hole in the roof” and “pierced the ceiling, demolishing the third floor of the annex” (*Pismo urzędu parafialnego św. Anny...*, 1945, p. 195). Small losses within the purview of the original medieval city were also recorded with regard to a number of historic state buildings such as the seat of the Appellate and District Court located in the 17th-century Jesuit college on Grodzka Street, where the damage was estimated at 5%, or the Office of the District Court Prosecutor in the 16th-century Samuel Maciejowski Palace on Kanonicza Street – estimated at 2% (*Wykaz zniszczeń w budynkach państwowych...*, n.d., pp. 17, 19).

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11 However, other sources provide a lower estimate for the Arsenal – only 1% (*Wykaz zniszczeń w budynkach państwowych...*, n.d., p. 7).

## Conclusion

Shortly after the cessation of military activity work started on repairing the damage. Slowly, architectural elements such as monumental statuary began to be restored to their former condition. A special committee was formed to look after the heavily devastated (and very valuable) Church of Saint Catherine. Its members included Bogdan Treter, who was briefly the voivodeship conservator after the war, and Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz (*Projekt odezwy...*, n.d., p. 33). Other historic buildings whose renovation benefited from state support in 1945–1946 included Wawel Castle, Saint Mary's Church, Holy Cross Church, Saint Gilles' and Saints Peter and Paul churches as well as the Leszek Czarny Gate in the Gródek (*Sprawozdanie z działalności Wojewódzkiego Konserwatora...*, n.d., pp. 98–116). Over the following year the state conservation authorities turned their efforts to Collegium Maius, the cathedral, Saint Andrew's Church, synagogues and houses in Kazimierz, and the Zerwikaptur townhouse (i.e. the Wacław Sierakowski Palace) (pp. 73–94). Financial support was extended to other historic monuments in the following years.

Not all of these buildings had been damaged directly as a result of military operations or other types of activity during the occupation. As pointed out in 1954 by Józef Lepiarczyk (Treter's former assistant, the city's chief conservator at the time), the time had come to rectify damage resulting from long-time neglect. In Lepiarczyk's view, this neglect had been a consequence of the development of the modern (i.e. capitalist, as his choice of wording implied) city, whose grievous aftermath for historic buildings would be set right by the anti-capitalist policies of Poland's new rulers (Lepiarczyk, 1954, p. 54). As it later turned out, however, protecting the medieval and early modern heritage of the town at the foot of Wawel Hill was not one of the communists' priorities (although the local authorities can hardly be suspected of deliberate destruction).

Kraków's wartime losses, not exceeding 10% of the pre-war substance of most buildings, faded into the background as more pressing problems emerged: not just the destruction in other Polish cities, but also the consequences of previous generations' neglect. This neglect, even though noted by experts before the war, began to be harshly criticized and institutional efforts were launched to reverse it, as seen in the establishment of a special conservation office for Kraków and other cities. This, however, should be seen as the outcome of the general experience of war rather than a special achievement of the new political regime – and this not only with regard to actual damage but also the risk of losing precious heritage. Kraków's historic architecture, to a large extent luckily spared in the war, thus entered a new era. This proved to be a period of rising public awareness of the dangers that monuments faced due to their historic fragility.

(transl. by Dominika Gajewska)

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