



Nowa Huta: the City Within a City

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In the 1950s, on former agricultural land east of Kraków, a new city was built. It arose as a result of Joseph Stalin's "proposal" that Poland build a large steelworks.

Various locations were considered, but ultimately, at the beginning of 1949, it was decided that the country's largest factory, together with a socialist model city, would be built in the vicinity of the Wanda Mound (the kurgan of a legendary princess) in Mogiła near Kraków. The population of the surrounding villages in the fertile lands of the river Dłubnia had worked in agriculture for centuries, and traces of settlement in these areas date back several thousand years BCE. In early mediaeval times, Mogiła was settled by Cistercians, founding a monastery which soon became one of the most popular shrines on Polish soil. For many years it was the only house of worship in atheist – as the Communist authorities would have it – Nowa Huta.

Construction of the combine was part of the six-year plan (1950-1955), which stated that the condition for “building the foundation of Socialism” was primarily the rapid industrialisation of the country. Therefore, metallurgy and machine industry were expanded, which in turn allowed the development of the armaments industry, essential in case of war. The centre of Nowa Huta, built following the plan of chief designer Tadeusz Ptaszycki, combines the key features of the ideal city and the garden city. It is the social realist embodiment of the utopian dream, especially popular during the Renaissance, of a city that combines symmetry and beauty with functionality. The Central Square, the nearby housing estates, the buildings housing the steelworks’ administrative centre, and the cultural facilities all refer in their architecture and town planning to the Renaissance, Baroque, Classicism and Modernism.

Today, the estates located in Nowa Huta, joined to Kraków in 1951, are home to more than 200,000 people. A new generation, no longer linked to the steelworks, has arrived that explores the history of this place with interest. The “old” Nowa Huta, listed in 2004 in Kraków’s register of monuments as a representative example of socialist realist town planning in Poland, has raised great interest both among architects fascinated by the realised concept of the ideal city and among tourists who are attracted by the relics of recent history present here. In 2010, Nowa Huta even received its own online encyclopaedia NHpedia.pl, co-authored by historians and residents. (Dorota Dziunikowska, *Karnet*)

Mogiła

The name of the site relates to Wanda, daughter of the legendary ruler of Kraków – Krak – who, not wishing to marry the German Rytgier, allegedly drowned herself in the Vistula, after which her body was washed ashore here. To celebrate the princess’ heroism, the nation built a high kurgan (burial mound) here. In 1890, a monument on its top was erected, designed by Jan Matejko.

The Wanda Mound is one of the oldest still visible pieces of evidence of human presence in the area. It was probably constructed in the seventh or eighth century. There is also a hypothesis dating it, like the Krakus Mound, to the times of the Celts, around the first century AD, but the



first written mention of the mound comes from the thirteenth century. It was then known as Mogiła (*The Tomb*), hence the name of the village which lay at its foot. In 1222 the Bishop of Kraków, Iwo Odrowąż, gave the village to the Cistercians and founded a church. The Mogiła Church of Our Lady and St Venceslaus, as well as the accompanying monastery complex, are some of the most valuable religious relics in Małopolska, and at the same time they have been the centre of the Christ Crucified cult. On the other hand, the wooden Church of St Bartholomew belonging to the complex of Cistercian buildings is the only religious building in Poland where an example of the mediaeval triple-nave construction in wood has been preserved. It was built by the royal joiner, Maciej Mączka, in 1466. The dedication, carved in the church's Gothic oaken portal, reminds us of this. This small church is part of the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska. (Barbara Błońska, *Karnet*)

The Ideal City

In June 1949, before the creation of the final plans and the commencement of construction of the steelworks, the first accommodation block in Nowa Huta started to rise near the monastery in Mogiła. The first estates, Wanda and Willowe, were created here. Nowa Huta's main square – Central Square – refers to Baroque architectural designs: surrounded by monumental buildings, 5 main thoroughfares radiate, between which there were quarters marked with consecutive letters of the alphabet – intimate mini-towns, smothered in greenery and self-sufficient, equipped with air-raid shelters and defensively strong. The Administration Centre of the former Lenin Steelworks (today ArcelorMittal Poland) makes a powerful impression – constructed in a Renaissance style at the factory gates – and is known by the locals as the “Doge's Palace” or the “Vatican”. The old electrolytic tinning plant is currently a concert venue, featuring the Sacrum Profanum festival among others. With time, the socialist town centre was surrounded by more estates which reflect the typical stages of People's Republic of Poland's architecture. As early as the 1950s, the Ludowy Theatre was opened in Nowa Huta, as were two identical cinemas – Świt and Światowid. However, Nowa Huta had to wait a long time for its own churches. The construction of the first of these – the famous Ark of the Lord – was only started in 1967, following a long struggle by the inhabitants.

Contrary to the assumption of the Communist ideologues, the authorities failed to stir up the new town against the old Kraków intelligentsia, or maintain it as a town without churches. During martial law, it was here that large demonstrations in defence of the outlawed “Solidarity” trade union were held. Nowa Huta's architecture, constructed for defence in case of attack by NATO, made it difficult for the militia (Communist-era police) to catch the demonstrators... (Dorota Dziunikowska, *Karnet*)

The Ark of the Lord Church

The first church in this working class district of Kraków was built on the initiative of Fr. Józef



Gorzelany between 1967-77. The history of its origins is associated with the defence of the cross by the residents of Nowa Huta in 1960 in the place where the church was originally to be built. Then came the riots and clashes with the militia, but eventually the authorities approved the construction of the church, albeit in a different location (a church was finally built at the site of the Nowa Huta Cross between the years 1996 to 2011). On 18 May 1969, the Archbishop of Kraków, Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, laid the foundation stone, originating from St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican and blessed by Pope Paul VI, and on 15 May 1977 he consecrated the church, dedicating it to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Poland.

The Ark of the Lord, so named because of its characteristic shape, was designed by Wojciech Pietrzyk, taking inspiration from Le Corbusier's chapel at Ronchamp. The church is one of the most distinctive and recognisable buildings in Nowa Huta. Its interior is equally as remarkable as its external appearance. It is dominated by an 8-metre crucifix carved by Bronisław Chromy. Because the construction of the church became a symbol of the unity of the Christian world, many elements of the furnishings were sent by Catholics from all corners of the world... and even outside it – the tabernacle holds a crystal of rutile (mainly titanium oxide) brought from the Moon by the astronauts of Apollo 11.

During martial law (13 December 1981 – 22 July 1983), on the 13th day of every month, a mass was held in the Ark for the homeland. After each mass finished, there were demonstrations here against the authorities' infringements of civil rights, the internment of "Solidarity" activists, and repression of political opponents. These demonstrations were usually suppressed by force, and in 1982 19-year-old student and worker Bogdan Włosik was shot by an officer of Security Services in front of the church. (Barbara Błońska, *Karnet*)

Museum of Communist Poland

The Museum of Communist Poland was created in 2008 as a branch of the Polish History Museum. Its main originators and creators were Krystyna Zachwatowicz (chair of the Programme Board at the Museum of Communist Poland) and Andrzej Wajda. The old Światowid Cinema building in the Nowa Huta district was selected for the museum's location. It regularly holds temporary exhibitions, and a permanent presentation on the history of Poland between 1944-1989 is currently being prepared. It aims to introduce the issues faced by people living during that period, especially to visitors too young to remember the days of Communism. The Museum works closely with the city of Kraków, and strives to serve the memory and warn against totalitarianism and oppression.

In 2010 the Museum and the Tischner European University conducted a project *History of Everyday Life* based on a "spoken history" method. Cracovian teenagers recorded a series of interviews with witnesses to the Communist Poland's realities from Nowa Huta. The results include a webpage presenting the biographies of all responders, photographs, and selected fragments of interviews. (Dorota Dziunikowska, *Karnet*)



**Magiczny
Kraków**

Polish Aviation Museum

The establishment of the museum is associated with an aviation exhibition organised in 1964 by the Aero Club of Kraków at the former Rakowice-Czyżyny airport. At that time, exhibits collected since the end of the Second World War were brought to Kraków. After the presentation by the Aero Club finished, the Aviation Equipment Exhibition Centre was created, in 1967 taken over by the Chief Technical Organisation and named the Aviation Museum.

The museum occupies part of the land and buildings of the former Rakowice-Czyżyny military airport, one of the oldest standing airports in Europe, founded by the Austrians in 1912 at the balloon landing site for Kraków Fortress. This was also the first air base in independent Poland. The airport closed down as late as 1963, due to the expansion of Nowa Huta. The current collection includes aircraft, helicopters, gliders, and aircraft engines, many of which are unique relics of world aviation. For many years, they were exhibited in the old hangars and outdoors. In 2010, a modern main building was opened for the museum which resembles a bird's eye view of a propeller.

The Małopolska Aviation Picnic, held here since 2004, is extremely popular. (Dorota Dziunikowska, *Karnet*)

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