



## REPAIR Good Practice Example: Kaunas, The Ninth Fort



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***The Ninth Fort with its unique architecture is an object of tourist attraction in Kaunas, unclosed to townspeople and guest's visitors can learn about the heritage and different historical periods of the Ninth Fort.***

*By the late 19th century - early 20th century one of the new first class fortresses had been built in Kaunas, it was an important strategic point on the Western Russian Imperial frontier.*

Initially it was planned to erect seven forts and nine intermediate batteries. Building work was started in 1882 and continued until 1889.

The forts at the first stage of construction had been built following the typical plan of the Russian fort in pattern of 1879.

The Ninth Fort was created according to the scheme suggested by prof. Velichko in 1897. It had a tracing of a trapezium in the plan. As in the previous sample there was only one rampart, adapted for infantry. Under the floor rampart the shelter for the duty part, connected with gorge barracks, was located. The inner position, that was available in the sample of 1889, disappeared in this project: it happened due to the economic requirements, as the increase of the inner space of the fort entailed the lengthening of the ditches with expensive concrete scarp and counterscarp. The intermediate caponnier still remained as the integral part of the fort, but it divided into two small rounded semicaponniers, adjoining the



extremities of the barracks. The cost of the fort reached 600 000 roubles.

There were twenty-eight light cannons, fourteen 57mm cannons, four copper martyrs and four Maxim machine-guns in the Ninth Fort. Kaunas fortress lost its strategic importance after the occupation of Kaiser's troops in 1915. It wasn't destroyed during the First World War and became a division of the Kaunas Hard Labour Prison in 1924. In 1940/1941 the NKVD imprisoned political prisoners in the Ninth Fort



before sending them to the Soviet prisons. It was a site of execution during the Nazi occupation. From 1941 until 1944 more than 50,000 people of different nations (among them more than 30,000 Jews), inhabitants of Kaunas, prisoners of the Kaunas Ghetto and 20,000 other Lithuanian people and foreigners were killed there.

The Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR created the Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum on July 9, 1958. The Museum was opened to public on May 30, 1959. The Kaunas Ninth Fort, as the historical architectural monument, was ravaged by the military and left with few authentic details due to the damage caused.

Two years later after research and restoration led by the museum director Albinas Balčiūnas, the Ninth Fort became a memorial site for visitors.

In the former barracks there is information about different periods of the history of the Ninth Fort. Shown are documents about Kaunas Fortress and the First World War, photos about building works, defence of the Kaunas Fortress, the armament and ammunition of the Russian and German soldiers during the First World War. You can see the original military architecture of the former Kaunas fortress.

Special attention is paid to the Defensive wall of the Ninth Fort. Visitors can visit the undergrounds of the Ninth fort, which contains a drinking water well, food, ammunition stores, cannon chambers, shelters for cannons.

*If visitors wish they are able to go out on top of the Defensive wall and admire the view of the Kaunas neighbourhood.*

**Visitors can see authentic cells of the division of prison of Hard Labours (1924-1940) and NKVD prison (1940-1941) with bunks, household articles, and three penal cells.**

*The largest bit of information is dedicated to the Nazi occupation (1941-1944), the Holocaust, the mass murders in Lithuania, the history of the Kaunas Ghetto, the legendary escape of 64 prisoners in 1943, the tragic fates of Jews from Germany (Munich) and France (Dransy). Other information includes details on the Japanese council Chiune Sugihara.*

The inscriptions of people from Lithuania and other foreign countries are seen on the walls of one of the cells.

Many educational projects such as live historical lessons, events with the former deportees, prisoners of the ghetto and concentration camps are organised annually. As well as exhibitions to commemorate dates of historical significance.

During the educational project *"Kaunas Ninth Fort during the First World War"* students can find out about the history of the Kaunas Fortress and the Ninth Fort during the First World War, ammunition and armament of those days. Students can participate in the game "Who will find exit from the vaults and Defensive wall first?"

Historical Holocaust lessons are arranged at the Museum, not only Lithuanian students, but young people from Israel, Russia and other countries. Students learn about the Holocaust, watch films, meet with survivors, and former prisoners.

To commemorate the "Great Action", during which 10,000 prisoners of the Kaunas Ghetto were executed at the Ninth Fort on October 28-29, 1941, pupils arrange stage performances.

Commemorating the legendary escape from the Ninth Fort on December 25, 1943, pupils of Raudondvaris gymnasium and Vershvai secondary school arrange performances based on the book of A.Faitelsonas "Pabėgimas" (Escape). Holocaust education through these dramatic devices are a great influence on the youth their tolerance for ethnic minorities thus influencing the democratic and open society.

The main goals of the educational projects are to reveal and to evaluate the consequences of violation of human rights and intolerance during the Nazi occupation.

Scientific conference "Military operation in the territory of Lithuania during the First World War" was arranged at the museum on May 24, 2005. In cooperation with the Municipality of the Kaunas City at Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum there was arranged international conference "The history of researches of the Kaunas fortress" on September 15, 2006.

Since 2005 annually the international action "Museum Night is arranged at Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum.

In memory of the victims of the Holocaust, at Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum on 22 September 2003 marking the Day of the Remembrance of the Lithuanian Jews, inauguration of the bas-reliefs by sculptor Arbit Blatas, dedicated to the victims of the Holocaust was held.

In 1984, in the extermination site at the Ninth Fort a monument by sculptor A.Ambraziunas was put up. It symbolizes pain, sorrow, torture and eternal remembrance.

The remembrance mosaic, a gift from Munich in memory of the killed Jews from there in 1941, was put up on November 20, 2000.

*On the initiative of the president of the Association of the Sons and Daughters of Jews Deported from France, Serge Klarsfeld, a memorial plaque was put up in memory of 878 Jews who were deported from France on May 15, 1944 and some of them were killed in the Ninth Fort, was put up.*

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