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"Fires of Krakow in the 15th and 16th centuries" - summary

"Fires of Krakow in the 15th and 16th centuries" is an author's dissertation on the most important fires that took place in Krakow between the 15th and 16th centuries. Therefore, the content of the work fits in with the rich and extensive literature devoted to the history of Krakow in the times of the First Polish Republic, but it takes up an aspect that has so far remained somewhat on the margin of deliberations, namely the issue of urban fire disasters. The text has been divided into four main chapters, while the final part contains annexes to source texts and studies as well as photographic documentation.

Chapter I, "Fire risk in Krakow until the end of the 14th century" it is introductory. Its main function is to outline the historical and socio-cultural background in which Krakow has developed and to discuss the most influential factors of general fire risk and the causes of fires. Separate sub-chapters were devoted to the building materials of that time and their properties in terms of fire resistance, as well as spatial planning, understood as a system of legal and practical actions aimed at reducing the risk of fire in urban space. In addition, the first chapter includes the Mongol invasion of 1241, as well as the fire of the former Okół and Wawel Hill from the beginning of the 14th century.

Chapters II and III are devoted to the fires of Krakow in the 15th and 16th centuries, respectively. Each chapter includes an analysis of four fires of urban space or the Wawel Hill, based on source materials and scientific studies. The selection of fire episodes for subsequent chapters was based on criteria including, first of all, the size of a given event and its broadly understood effects, also conditioning the source and developed literature on the subject.

Chapter IV, "Ways of preventing fires and removing their effects" explores the extensive topic of defense against fire, both in the Middle Ages and in the early modern era. The analysis covers, as in the title, preventive actions and rescue operations, fire-fighting methods and fire-fighting equipment used in the discussed period. In this part of the work, the author also decided to include a fragment devoted to the locations of cities under German law, understood as the phenomenon underlying organized fire protection, both in legal and practical terms. A separate sub-chapter is devoted to innovative fire-fighting solutions of the 16th century, keeping the division into a section dedicated to technical measures and legal issues, also taking into account Polish didactic literature of the Renaissance era. The chapter ended

patron of Krakow, also revered as the guardian of the fire brigade and people working near the fire. In the opinion of the author, a citizen of Krakow and a city guide of Krakow, the discussion of the genesis, history and manifestations of the cult of St. Florian, in the culture of the city, gives this work a local color, at the same time showing the phenomenon of religious worship as a specific method of protection against fire.

This study was created as a proposal of a new look at an interesting fragment of the history of Krakow, which are fire disasters and their complex consequences, and in order to draw attention to the possibilities that complex issues of natural disasters, in particular city fires, offer to historians and cultural historians.

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