

# Health in the Military – Military in Good Health: Prestige and Propaganda in the Architecture of Modernist Military Holiday Houses



PhD. Eng. Arch.  
**MARTA M. RUDNICKA-BOGUSZ**  
 Wrocław University of Science and Technology  
 Faculty of Architecture  
**ORCID: 0000-0001-6137-5517**

Military architecture can largely bring to mind standardised urban layouts of barracks complexes filled with repetitive architecture. However, the architecture of holiday houses, sanatoriums and officers' homes dedicated to recreation and entertainment (pensioners insisted on the hosting of dancing nights) and health treatment/convalescence is something different altogether. Recreational homes were not only of recreational and integrative significance, but were also important in propaganda.

After the First World War ended, the nation was in catastrophic physical condition and in very poor health. A significant part of the working-age population was affected by disability due to the war. Malnutrition and chronic diseases caused by insufficient hygiene also threatened to affect future generations. Apart from food aid actions and the propagation of hygiene, the solution to general health problems was seen in the national physical education strategy by providing citizens with access to sports and holiday facilities [1]. The state's highest officials propagated it, promoting the opening of major sports facilities with their presence and ostentatiously posing for photographs while staying at sanatoriums (Phot. 1.). In 1919, the Physical Education and Bodily Culture Council was established. It was tellingly replaced by the Chief Council on Physical Education and Military Training, and later converted into the State Office of Physical Education and Military Training, established in 1927, which indicated how critical the physical fitness of future recruits was to the state's highest officials. Already in 1929, at the General National Exposition in Poznań, one of the pavilions housed an exhibition on Physical fitness and military training. It also resonated in the programme of 'increasing the nation's physical fitness' in the 1930s, which operated under the motto 'Every citizen—a soldier' [2].

The health of officers and their families had left much to be desired. The government went about improving this state of affairs in two ways. Firstly by establishing the Officers' Holiday Homes system (Fundację Oficerskich Domów Wypoczynkowych). Secondly, by introducing

the Military Quarters Fund (Fundusz Kwaterunku Wojskowego i.e. F.K.W.) to provide members of the army with equitable living conditions. It was mainly the establishment of the military holiday homes system that improved the situation. The role of Officers' Holiday Homes (OHH) was to offer military personnel recreation in hygienic conditions, physical therapy treatment and active rest. Therefore they represented the healthy architecture: 'architecture which contributes to a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' [3]. Recreational facilities that operated year-round were always situated in localities that allowed the practicing of both winter and summer sports and accompanied by jetties, landings, tennis courts, etc. The buildings offered to holidaymakers were typically newly built in the Modernist style, which perfectly fit with the relaxed atmosphere and was healthy due to its immanent characteristics – it was equipped with impressive glazing, and the clash of massings resulted in the appearance of open rooftop terraces and ground-floor decks protected by overhangs from driving rain, etc. The pursuit of the quick and cost-effective construction of extremely functional buildings was distinctive for Polish 1930s Modernism, particularly in military architecture [4]. The buildings were primarily erected using brick, and less prestigious ones featured timber structural systems.

Due to the special privileges afforded to military personnel in the Second Polish Republic, the construction of impressive year-round holiday homes entered into a phase of con-

sultation with the Ministry of Military Affairs (Ministerstwo Spraw Wojskowych) very quickly. On 19 January 1928, the MMA hosted a press conference devoted to the necessity of providing organised recreation to the officers' cadre of the Polish Army [5]. However, state institutions did not have the means to build and maintain holiday infrastructure, which is why the Foundation for Officers' Holiday Homes (FOHH) was established in Warsaw towards the end of 1928. It was an association tasked with the construction, maintenance and promotion of recreation at military holiday homes. Several similar organisations were established: such as the 'Rodzina Wojskowa' association, founded in 1925, or the Eighth Corps District Sanitary Corps Officers' Association, founded in 1927.

Since that moment, holiday homes began to be built. Initially, these were seasonal facilities, open largely between the beginning of June and the end of September, and year-round facilities were built later. The first seasonal OHH, the so-called 'White Manor', was opened already in 1929 in Cetniewo and built in the manorial style. Successive projects, such as the new casino in the complex in Cetniewo following a design by Edgar Norwerth in the years 1931–33, drew heavily on Modernist architecture (Phot. 2.) The casino was a part of a bigger, more traditionally arranged set of buildings and the first one to be purposefully built for the complex. Other buildings were a medley of corrugated-iron trailers, half-timbered huts and villa-like brick houses accumulated over the years on the premises. Besides providing a healthy environment for meals the casino was a meet-

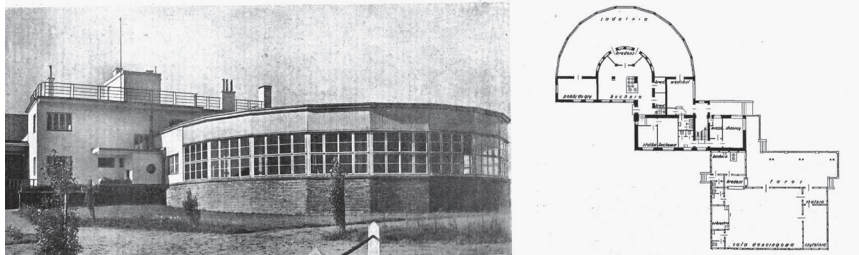
ing point, a place for socializing and recreation. The new building stood out in the open, in the immediate vicinity of the sea. To exploit this location to the benefit of the users the dining hall was designed as a semicircle facing towards the northern lying sea. The sea-facing elevations were predominantly glazed forming a gallery. Due to the use of timber framing construction, it could seat 200 people allowing them unobscured view of the sea and the greatest possible use of sunlight from east, north and west, making it the healthiest (best lit and aired) building in the whole complex.

The seasonal holiday complex in Jurata, built in 1937, was a prestigious complex of this type. It was built in a location perfect for tourism, on the Hel Peninsula, between a Baltic beach and Puck Bay. All design and costing work was to be performed by the cadre of the Construction Department of the MMA [6]. Following the promoted policy of using local materials and building purposeful, durable and cheap buildings [1], the complex, due to its seasonal character, consisted of vacation homes, which allowed for the extension of its accommodations in the future. The homes were characterised by functionalism: the texture of timber was their sole decoration. The houses in Jurata were built as either timber-frame or half-timbered with brick nogging, with wooden siding on the inside (painted) and on the outside (plastered). They had timber frame roofs finished with bitumen paper on boarding. Glazed two-leaf entrance doors led from a veranda to a day area. They consisted of 2-3 rooms with a small terrace, kitchen, service room, washroom and a toilet. Descriptions of the complex praised the fact that the buildings were full of light and well-ventilated [7]. One of the complex's most illustrious guests was Ignacy Mościcki, who cyclically stayed at the house dubbed 'Seashell Villa' [8] (Phot. 3.)

Non-Commissioned Officers' Holiday Homes (NCOHHs) were built using a similar system. Such houses included, among others, the garrison holiday homes in Galkówek (Phot. 4.) near Łódź (4th CDC). They were designed by Stefan Derkowski, chief of construction of the Fourth Corps District Command of the Polish Army in Łódź. The facility in Galkówek offered fourteen beds in a four-family building during every season [9]. Its simplified massing was covered with a flat roof and enhanced by verandas, placed at its corners so as to provide maximum intimacy. To ensure the greatest possible affordability, attempts were made to adapt the price range to the earnings of junior military personnel [10]. This was also the cause behind the functionalism and conciseness of the buildings' forms. Combined with the low price and ease of obtaining lumber, this resulted in its rather broad use in this type of architecture. The holiday quarters were fully furnished with bedding and the necessary equipment. Sanitary facilities were located some distance from the lodgings and the



Phot. 1. Ceremonial inauguration of the sailing season at the Republic Officers' Yacht Club in Warsaw with the President of the Republic of Poland Ignacy Mościcki in attendance, NAC sign. 1-S-3511-1



Phot. 2. Casino near officers' holiday homes in Cetniewo. Repr. from: "Architektura i Budownictwo" 1933, no. 10-12, p. 339, il. 346



Phot. 3. Jurata. President Ignacy Mościcki's vacation house, 1937, NAC sign.: 1-U-1883-2

meals were served in the casino.

The year-round guesthouse in Rabka-Zdrój of the 'Rodzina Wojskowa' association was built in 1931 based on the already ongoing construction of a single-storey pavilion, which was extended by three storeys and a tall loft, following a design by Kazimierz Kulczyński, a Professor of the Industrial School in Krakow. It is therefore difficult to assess its traditionalist floor plan and the massing that was forced upon it. However, echoes of Modernism left their mark on its facades: it had large glazings and strip balconies. In addition, from the southern side, two terraces were

placed and inscribed into the floor plan: one with a floor area of 60 m<sup>2</sup> on the ground floor, with a path down to the garden, and one above the second-floor dining room (85 m<sup>2</sup>) [11].

The OHH in Augustów, whose construction was specifically commissioned by the MMA, was a true hallmark among year-round military holiday homes. Although the first Polish Army rowing Club was established in Warsaw already in 1919 and the popularity of sailing, promoted as preparation for military service [12], had been steadily increasing since then, it was the renaming of the association as the Repub-

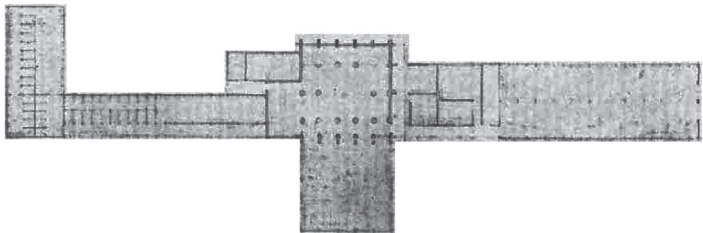
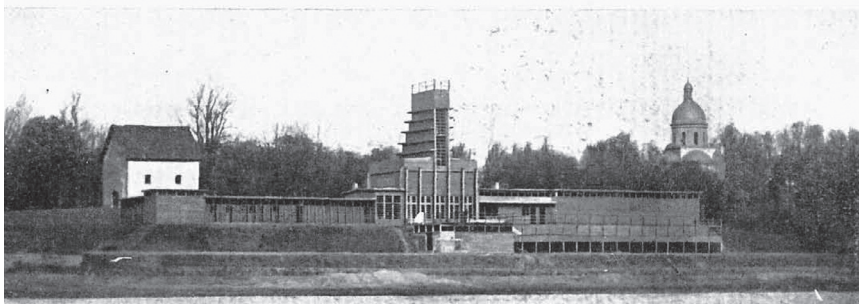




Phot. 4. Non-Commissioned Officers' Holiday Home in Gałkówek. Repr. from: "Architektura i Budownictwo" 1933, no. 10–12, p. 347, il. 69–70



Phot. 5. Republic Officers' Yacht Club in Warsaw, NAC 1-S-3507-4



Phot. 6. Military yacht club in Zegrze, repr. from: "Architektura i Budownictwo" 1933, no 10–12, p. 355, ill. 90–91

lic Officers' Yacht Club (Oficerski Yacht Klub Rzeczpospolitej) under the protectorate of Marshall Józef Piłsudski that elevated the prestige of the organisation. During the interwar period, the ROYC was the largest water sports organisation in Poland [13] (Phot. 5). A luxurious ROYC facility was built at Wybrzeże Kościuszkowskie

in Warsaw in the years 1930–1932 to practice the sport, following a design by Juliusz Nagórski [14], in addition to the exceptionally original timber complex of the Military Communications Training Centre Yacht Club in Zegrze, following a design by Czesław Stankiewicz (Phot. 6). The promotion of sailing soon started to produce re-

sults, which necessitated the construction of a modern sailing training facility. Augustów was selected to be its site [15], as its vicinity was popularised among the public as a recreational destination and where, thanks to the Krechowce Uhlans, a branch of the ROYC had already been operating [16]. The facility was to have a prestigious rank and act as a culmination point for cyclical sailing competitions. It was to be jointly financed by the ROYC and the FOHH.

In 1935, the building was sited on a forested peninsula dubbed 'Officers' Peninsula', which was surrounded from three sides by the waters of Lake Białe. Its design was prepared by Juliusz Nagórski, a Warsaw architect, urban planner, painter and graduate of the Faculty of architecture of the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris (Phot. 7). The building was constructed of perforated bricks and suspended beam and block floor (so called Ackermans' ceiling). The elevations were made out of light-shaded brick and partially plastered. The attractiveness of the facility was founded on its division into a sports and a holiday section, which allowed for sailing training to be performed while members of the FOHH could stay at the facility. The right wing housed a sports block, which comprised group rooms adapted to accommodating the ROYC's organised training groups. The centre of the building featured a hall, bridge playing rooms and a ballroom with a height of 7 m. Above them there was a recreational complex that housed smaller rooms suited for officers and their families [17], with access to balconies and terraces. The building's massing appears to reference the peninsula's topography, which is hilly and steeply descends towards the water. It is a clash of simple masses, cuboids and cylinders that are stacked and extend in front of one another. Due to this procedure, which is formally interesting and results in spectacular light and shadow effects, the building is also functional as it was possible to increase the floor area of terraces and balconies [18].

Although in the beginnings of its existence the Department of Construction of the MMA wanted to centralise operations, in light of the diversity of design tasks, after 1928 the CDCs would sign contracts with civil engineers, selecting those with the highest renown. For instance, Edgar Norwerth began working for the Department of Construction of the MMA in May

1925, for which in 1934 he designed the year-round Officers' Holiday Home in Truskawiec. A healthy parcel, access to sunlight and fresh air were the highest priority during its construction [19] (Phot. 8.). The three-storey building was oriented on a parcel abutting the nearby Resort Park along the east-west axis. The longer facade from the southern side was equipped with strip balconies. On its northern side, the building was designed as a clash of a cuboid main body and vertical cuboids and cylinders of varying size. However, in contrast to the building in Rabka-Zdrój, instead of a recessed terrace with an exit towards a garden, it features an arcade, which resulted in a terrace on the first floor. The building had a corridor layout, with rooms located on the southern and western side and a passage to common spaces on the northern side.

As a part of systemic efforts towards the public improvement of physical fitness, the State Office of Physical Education and Military Training (SOPEMT) was established in 1928–1929 with a building in Bielany, Warsaw. It was one of the largest institutes of its type in Europe at the time. The complex, designed by Norwerth, included, among others, a swimming hall with a distinctive pressure tower, an enormous training hall with spaces for fencing training and gymnastics, as well as a main building and boarding houses. The design features echoes of barracks architecture. The complex's buildings were sited so as to form internal courtyards intended to act as formal spaces and sports pitches. For instance, the wings of the main building, which have the shape of the letter 'U' in plan view, delimit a rectangular courtyard along a propylaea axis [20].

The entirety of the efforts towards ensuring the good health of the Second Polish Republic's military personnel was supplemented by sanatoriums. The Military Sanatorium in Otwock, designed by Edgar Norwerth, is an outstanding example among them, as are hospitals, such as the Marine Hospital in Gdynia, designed by Marian Lalewicz and built in the years 1930–1932 (Phot. 9.). The building, sited on a small hill along the east–west axis, has three storeys. The plan, which references the Renaissance Revival style of the nearby barracks complex, consists of a corps de logis with an avant-corps that is slightly recessed relative to its complementary side wings. However, this recess has a highly utilitarian function as it acts as a pseudo portecochère for ambulances. The hospital's facades were accentuated with horizontal strips of clinker brick that encircle it akin to cordon parapets, and vertical bricks of clinker, similar to pilaster, decorate the avant-corps. However, the entire building is cubised, as is the simplified form of the loggias in the north-eastern corner of the eastern wing. If we also account for the large, standardised windows, the building can be considered to represent moderate Modernism that blends with its context.

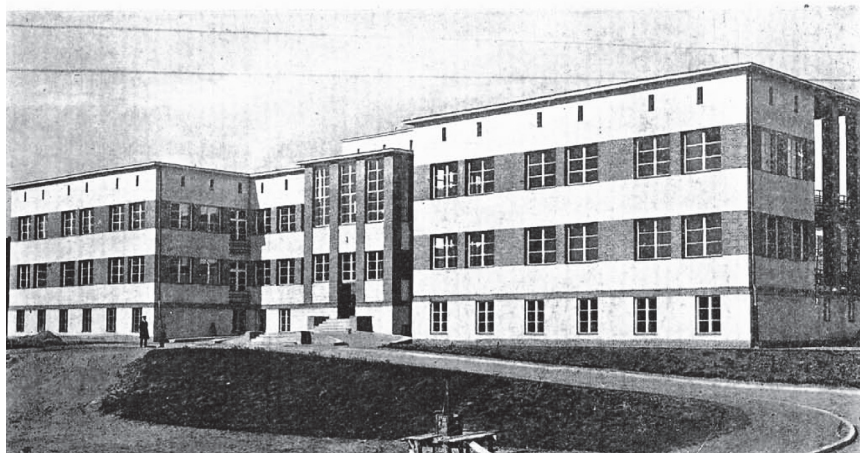
After the WWI Poland fought its way to independence after 123 years of partitions. The pol-



Phot. 7. Republic Officers' Yacht Club in Augustów. NAC\_1-W-1033-1



Phot. 8. Officers' Holiday Home in Truskawiec. repr. From: Król A., *Budownictwo wojskowe w latach 1918–1935*, p. 452



Phot. 9. Hospital in the complex of the Navy Barracks in Gdynia, repr. from: "Architektura i Budownictwo" 1933, no. 10–12, p. 339, il. 47

icymakers appreciated the effort of the military by creating a separate social class for them and elevating the members of the army to a kind of elite. They received special state favours and one of them was the provision of specialized healthcare and leisure housing.

When thinking about the military architecture we evoke the image of standardized quar-

ters of historicizing architecture: robust, austere and repeatable. But as the heyday of military construction fell upon the time of partitions, the newly built military facilities of reborn Polish Second Republic were naturally trying to stand apart from all the standards historically set for barrack complexes. Even more so in the area of branch holiday houses, sanatoriums and offic-



ers' homes dedicated to recreation and entertainment, health treatment and convalescence. Barracks' design was always under ideological control of the policymakers. Therefore, leisure architecture's ambitious modernist designs resulted not from the lack of ideological control, but rather from the encouragement to seek out new style appropriate for a forward-looking modern country. They were the means of modernization of a nation made backward by occupation. The creative freedom that the designers experienced allowed them to bridge the gap caused by the years of strict policies under partitions. All of the changes that took place in military architecture can certainly be called a revolution. Modernism introduced hygiene through air, light and space into traditionally rigid military design. It manifests itself particularly clearly in military holiday architecture, which is highly diverse and full of individual solutions. The relaxed atmosphere facilitated the expressive design of sanatorium and yacht-club. Among functionally diverse facilities (sanatoriums, hospitals, holiday homes), one would be hard pressed to find two identical buildings. These new buildings were a source of pride for the military. Therefore, modernist leisure and healthcare facilities enjoyed much publicity. An exhibition entitled Military Architecture was organised in 1933, and a double issue of *Architektura i Budownictwo* was devoted to it.

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**Abstract:** As a result of wartime operations, many citizens of child-bearing and working age either fell or became disabled, and in the best of cases required treatment due to a worsening of hygienic conditions and malnutrition. According to the *Polska Zbrojna* magazine from 1933, the health of the Fatherland's defenders required particular attention. For this reason, in the Second Republic of Poland, the officers' corps had its own holiday system. Military architecture can largely bring to mind standardised urban layouts of barracks complexes filled with repetitive architecture. However, the architecture of holiday houses, sanatoriums and officers' homes dedicated to recreation and entertainment (pensioners insisted on the hosting of dancing nights) and health treatment/convalescence is something different altogether. Although the first military holiday home in Cetniewo was built in the manorial style, the so-called White Manor (Biały Dworek), successive buildings were largely designed in the Modernist style, which perfectly fit the relaxed atmosphere and was healthy due to its immanent assumptions: it was equipped with impressive glazing, where the clash of masses caused the appearance of open rooftop terraces, etc. Officers, non-commissioned officers and their families had access to year-round holiday facilities such as the Officers' Holiday Home in Augustów, seasonal facilities (Officers' Holiday Complex in Jurata), as well as sanatoriums (Military Sanatorium in Otwock). After sailing and kayaking had become popular among officers, facilities dedicated to specific sports club began to appear, such as the Yacht Club in Zegrze. The design of such facilities was the domain of not only military engineers, but also avant-garde civilian designers, such as Edgar Norwerth, Marian Lalewicz, etc. Recreational homes were not only of recreational and integrative significance, but were also important in propaganda: the Officers' Recreational Home in Cetniewo was to mark Polish presence on the freshly reclaimed Baltic coast through its modern, avant-garde architecture.

**Keywords:** military holiday homes, military architecture, architecture of the interwar period

**Streszczenie:** ZDROWIE W WOJSKU – WOJSKO W ZDROWIU. PRESTIŻ I PROPAGANDA W ARCHITEKTURZE MODERNISTYCZNYCH WOJSKOWYCH DOMÓW WCZASOWYCH. W wyniku działań wojennych wielu obywateli w wieku rozrodczym i produkcyjnym

poległo lub zostało inwalidami, a w najlepszym przypadku wymagało poratowania zdrowia w związku z obniżeniem warunków higienicznych oraz niedożywieniem. Szczególnej uwagi, według magazynu „Polska Zbrojna” z 1933 roku, wymagał stan zdrowia obrońców Ojczyzny. Z tej przyczyny w II RP korpus oficerski doczekał się własnego systemu wypoczynku. Architektura wojskowa może kojarzyć się głównie ze stypizowaną urbanistyką zespołów koszarowych wypełnionych powtarzalną architekturą. Jednak odmienna jest architektura domów wypoczynkowych, sanatoryjnych i domów oficerskich przeznaczonych na wypoczynek, rozrywkę (wczasowicze nalegali na organizację wieczorków tanecznych) oraz rekonwalescencję/poratowanie zdrowia. Choć pierwszy wojskowy dom wypoczynkowy w Cetniewie zbudowano w stylu dworskim, tzw. Biały Dworek, kolejne obiekty w przeważającej mierze projektowano w stylu modernizmu, doskonale pasującym do rozluźnionej atmosfery oraz ze względu na swoje immanentne założenia – zdrowym: wyposażonym w okazałe przeszklenia, gdzie zderzenie brył skutkowało pojawieniem się otwartych tarasów na dachach itp. Oficerowie, podoficerowie i ich rodziny mieli do dyspozycji ośrodki wypoczynkowe całoroczne (np. Oficerski Dom Wypoczynkowy w Augustowie), sezonowe (Oficerski Zespół Wypoczynkowy w Juracie) i sanatoryjne (Sanatorium Wojskowe w Otwocku). Po rozpropagowaniu żeglarskiego, a także kajakarstwa wśród kadry oficerskiej zaczęły się pojawiać także obiekty dedykowane konkretnym sportom wodnym, jak np. Yacht Club w Zegrzu. Projektowaniem tych obiektów zajmowali się nie tylko inżynierowie wojskowi, ale często awangardowi twórcy cywilni, jak Edgar Norwerth, Marian Lalewicz itp. Domy wypoczynkowe miały bowiem nie tylko znaczenie rekreacyjne i integracyjne, ale również propagandowe: Oficerski Dom Wypoczynkowy w Cetniewie miał służyć zaznaczeniu poprzez nowoczesną, awangardową architekturę polskiej bytności na świeżo odzyskanym wybrzeżu Morza Bałtyckiego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** wojskowe domy wczasowe, architektura wojskowa, architektura 20-lecia międzywojennego