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## **FRANCISHEK KOKESH'S ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE IN INTERWAR VOLYN**

***Abstract.** The article makes an attempt to trace the stages of professional development and career of a Polish architect Francishek Kokesh who worked in Volyn in 1920-30s in the Second Polish Republic. The period of study at the Polytechnic School in Lviv, work in the design bureau of Lviv architects A.Zacharijewicz and J.Czerwiński. Based on archival material the article outlines the social and creative activity of F.Kokesh in Lutsk, describes the typology, architectural and stylistic features of his conception of public, religious and residential buildings.*

***Key words:** Franciszek Kokesh, architecture, interwar period, Volyn.*

**Introduction.** Francishek Victor Kokesh was born on December 15, 1892 in Krakow. After graduating from high school in 1911, he began his studies at the faculty of architecture of the Polytechnic School in Lviv<sup>1</sup> in 1913, where he held the first of two mandatory state exams<sup>2</sup>. Certificate of study results proves his successful mastering of introductory courses: descriptive geometry, drawing in descriptive geometry, general and technical mechanics, general and technical physics, elements of higher mathematics, geology [1, Sheet 9].

Like many recent graduates and students of the institution, F.Kokesh had to go through the difficult years of World War I. Since its first days and until 1916, he served in the Austrian army. Continuation of studies immediately after relief from service was not possible due to irregularity of classes (much of the teaching staff was in the army as well), damaged buildings of the Polytechnic School and the emplacement of a hospital in some buildings. However, the following biography facts demonstrate a consistent desire of F.Kokesh to master the profession of architect in practice, despite the adverse socio-political conditions.

**The aim of the article** - to explore F.Kokesh's architectural creativity in Volyn during interwar period.

**Discussion.** By the end of July 1918, he gained the project and management experience in the Company of Construction and Renovation Estimation in Krakow. Later he worked at the State Reconstruction Bureau with the estate in Bohorodchany, departments of the Ministry of Public Works in Lviv and Krakow [1, Sheet 9]. Since

1919, he again continued his studies at the Polytechnic School in Lviv, becoming its attendee.

Learning process was once again interrupted in the winter semester of 1920-1921, when during the Polish-Soviet War most students were conscripted to the Polish army. Only a small part of them had the opportunity to listen to specially organized lectures of professors during holidays [2, p.33]. In such difficult conditions, F.Kokesh again demonstrated persistence in achieving his goals - in June 1922, after compiling oral and practical examinations, he got a diploma of architect with «very good» overall result [1, Sheet 11].

From the autobiography of the architect we know that during and immediately after graduation (from 1921 to 1923) he worked in the design office of leading Lviv architects Alfred Zacharijewicz and Yevgen Cherwiński. Here F.Kokesh gained the invaluable experience of «working with plans, details, and estimates of various buildings», conducting the designer supervision and construction. For example, he implemented the project of Czechoslovakia pavilion in Eastern Trades<sup>3</sup> in Stryi park in Lviv [1, Sheet 10]. The building, designed in compliance with the classic compositional and formative methods - symmetry and hierarchical construction of volume, succinctly decorated with flute pillars at the central and lateral projection, was distinguished by innovative solution of the constructional problem. The new building material - sand-lime brick - was used in the construction of the pavilion walls, facades decoration and for filling cavities in hollow jumpers with thin-walled reinforced concrete [3, p.511].

In 1923, F.Kokesh together with young Lviv architects Witold Hizbert-Studnytskyi and Tadeusz Jankowski took part in the competition to design the voyevodship administrative building and Silesia Sejm (parliament) in Katowice. This event caused great interest in the architectural environment of Poland: 65 projects were submitted for participation. The article, published in the only existing at the time professional magazine «Architect» and dedicated to the results of the competition, stressed the spiritual and symbolic significance of the projected object. The new image was to be identified with the Polish national culture in contrast to the «Northern German character» of the existing building, which was associated with the previous colonial period in the history of «Western provinces» of the Second Polish Republic. Therefore, the fact that the project of the abovementioned authors was distinguished (jury recommended to purchase the project), along with the works of winners of the competition - known artists from Krakow (K. Wyczyński, P. Jurkiewicz, S. Zeleński), Lviv (J. Czerwiński, M. Nikodemowycz), Warsaw (M. Goldberg, I. Rutkowski, B. Żurkowski, J. Gerich, W. Michalski) and others - was a real success in the early architectural career of F.Kokesh [4, p.55].

Getting acquainted with architectural and stylistic trends of Polish and European architecture, all technological stages of the architectural process (from the project stage till its implementation) under the guidance of renowned architects gave grounds for the young architect to start an independent way in the profession. After a brief period of several months of teaching at the Industrial School in Lviv (until February 1924) F.Kokesh radically changed his life. The architect moved to the administrative center of Volyn province - Lutsk, where since July 1924 he worked at the architectural and construction department of the District Directorate of Public Works [1, Sheet 28]. For F.Kokesh, like many other graduates of technical universities in Poland, Eastern provinces, which became part of the Second Polish Republic (in our case - Volyn), became a place where they could find a job, realize their professional potential, implement the latest modernistic concepts into practice, test them on different types of buildings.

Over the next fifteen years in Volyn, Franciszek Kokesh could demonstrate the diversity of his talent, outstanding organizational skills and active position of a citizen, who seeks to serve the state and national culture.

Several another facts from the biography of F.Kokesh demonstrate his professional ambitions. After failing to be promoted (in 1925 he was not appointed chief of Architectural Department, despite getting a recommendation) and misunderstandings that arose between Kokesh and Volyn head of administration during the repair of buildings of the Provincial Office, the architect quitted the public service on January 1, 1928 and started his private architectural practice. This way became possible in late 1927, when he successfully held a practical exam, which, according to the decision of the Minister of Public Works, gave authority to manage and perform any construction work - «without restrictions» - in the eastern and central provinces of the Second Polish Republic [5, Sheet 38].

In fact, this period in life of F.Kokesh was extremely fruitful. The architect was deeply engaged in the design and social activities. So, in 1925 he launched a special edition of the magazine «Volyn Technical Journal» of the Volyn Technical Society, which was published until September 1939. The journal edited by F.Kokesh became an effective means of spreading of information on challenges and achievements of architectural and construction industry in Volyn province among technical intellectuals.

In particular, the subject of articles covered the widest range of issues and problems related to the development and modernization of the environment: strategic projects of regional development, development of settlements in the region in the context of European and Polish urban studies, articles of leading metropolitan and local experts, publishing of projects of public and residential buildings, announcement of architectural competitions, publishing of research materials on the most valuable

monuments in Volyn etc. By the end of 1930s, the Journal has become a powerful tool for promoting economic, social and cultural progress of the region, visualized in the changes in the built environment.

The final formation of professional architectural circle was defined by the establishment in Lutsk of Volyn Branch of the Architectural Society of the Polish Republic (SARP) in place of the Circle of Architects founded back in 1928. In particular, it is known that in 1937 Franciszek Kokesh presided in this organization, whose members were thirty architects [6, p.27-28]. At the meetings of the Society, its members discussed not only the immediate problems of professional activity, but also delivered speeches on topics of historical and architectural heritage of the region, its research and promotion. Obviously, the broad thematic field of research was associated with the research interests of the president. In 1934 F.Kokesh was elected to the Presidium of the Board of Lutsk regional department of the Polish Regional Society [7, p.4], and headed the Committee of the cathedral in Lutsk for assessment of works of art, which were kept in different churches of Volyn and Zhytomyr diocese.

Architectural heritage of F.Kokesh is significant in quantity and typological variety of objects. The projects identified during the research represent development stages of his professional outlook, revolutionary changes in his creative manner, which reflected the nature and the primary modernization vector of the development of Polish architecture in the interwar period. We have to note that the architectural heritage of the architect consists of residential and public buildings, schools, churches. Undoubtedly, the objects designed by F.Kokesh for settlements of Volyn, cannot compete in scope and significance with the iconic style samples of the facilities planned for construction in the capital and major cities of the Second Polish Republic. However, we should pay tribute to the ability of the author to adapt compositional methods and means of retrospective or avant-garde style to create a new, distinct from post-imperial or colonial, image of the small cities and towns of Volyn.

In the following part of the article, we analyze several groups of buildings, designed by F.Kokesh and united by the criterion of image and stylistic solutions.

It is well known that by the end of 1920s in Volyn, as in most territories attached after the Riga Peace Treaty 1921, the architectural practice got national-romantic forms, which embodied the idea of «national» and «family-oriented» architecture of the revived Poland.

Traditional «national» image solutions and elements of architectural plastic and decoration got the modern interpretation and were used for buildings of different functions and scale. First of all, the approach was used in individual housing. In particular, the effect of the so-called estate («dworkowy») style on the architecture of certain houses in Lutsk is evident: houses of S.Zarębski (1931 [8]), J.Borkowski on Striletska Str. (1931 [9]) - the officers colony area, on Senkevych Str. (1931 [10]).

Each house is covered with high roof, decorated with small entrance portico on squat columns or pillars, which clearly point to the connection with national prototypes. A simplified version of the estate housing is presented by the project of a wooden house for M.Pabian (1928 [11]) in Lutsk and colony houses for employees in Horokhiv (in 1934, for example [12])

In the competitive project of a community hall in Horokhiv (1928 [13]) F.Kokesh based the idea of embodiment of «Polishness monument» in Volyn on a synthesis of «national» and «family» (here - neoclassical) elements. Dualism of image content consisted of distinct binding of classic methods of volume construction and morphology with the principles of shaping national architecture. The design of the house for O.Dude in Krylova Str. 10 in Lutsk was influenced by the idea of «modernized classicism» (early 1930s). The main facade of two-storied cubic volume is dissected by lesenes, which support a reduced flat entablature and a massive linear attic with narrow vertical slits, which hides a four-slope roof. Splendor of the urban mansion is highlighted by a deep portico of the Tuscan order with a figure of lion on a retaining wall at the stairs.

It is also known that another way to emphasize regional specificity and «Polishness» of territories of the Second Polish Republic and at the same time to mark hydrotherapy sanatorium complexes was the «Polish» («Zakopane») style<sup>4</sup>. In Volyn such sanatorium was founded in Huta Stepanska, where mineral springs and deposits of boron were discovered in the late 1920s. Together with a wooden church, built in late 1927, F.Kokesh designed a sanatorium building, which was later built upon his project [14]. Symmetrically planned building was covered with a high shingle mansard roof. The central part was emphasized by a projection of the main entrance and a small turret installed on the roof ridge above its high forceps. The general design solution demonstrated the author's knowledge of expressionist trends in the Polish architecture of 1910-20s.

Retrospective trends through recourse to forms of Polish Romanic style of the 13<sup>th</sup> century and provincial baroque of the 17-18<sup>th</sup> centuries were demonstrated in projects of Roman Catholic churches in Kivertsi (1929 [15, p.431]) and Ozhenyn (1930 [16]). In both cases, F.Kokesh sought to preserve not only the formal semantic relationship with distinctive stylistic methods, but to find their expression in regional architectural transcription of the twentieth century. Both in the first and second case, the architect used the frontal construction of the main facade, where only the outlines of the pediment, the elements of architectural decoration on the main facade (framing of the window openings, expressionist vertical profiling of the upper tier) and the completion of the sanctuary part of the volume are variable.

Retraction from nationally oriented design solutions in the works of F.Kokesh took place in the context of the change of stylistic priorities on a national scale. Projects

implemented after 1934 demonstrated the architect's adoption of common European approaches of universalization and geometrization of forms in accordance with the norms of extreme architectural modernism - avant-garde.

Thus, the absolute reduction of detailing emphasized the rigor and prudence of the spatial structure, including school buildings in Rozhische (1935 [17]), Nesuhoyizhi (1939 [18]), Kremenets (late 1930s [19]). Each of the facilities demonstrate a connection with the modernist trends: Polish architectural expressionism, functionalism or Streamline Style. One of the clearest examples of the impact of the avant-garde is the main facade of the theater «POLON» in Lutsk (1939 [20]), where the geometric shape of window openings formed a composition, reminiscent of a movie screen.

**Conclusion.** Unfortunately, most buildings designed by Franciszek Kokesh for various reasons have not reached our time. However, project materials, preserved in the archives, demonstrate the architect's fluent mastering of architectural techniques and means of expression of various architectural styles and trends, ability to work with large forms and architectural detailing. Creative and social activity of F.Kokesh has undoubtedly contributed to the transformation of the environment in which and for which the architect worked in both material and spiritual sense. World War II stopped this progress. The destiny of the architect after 1939 remains unknown until now.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1921 the educational institution received the status of polytechnics.

<sup>2</sup> Lviv Polytechnic School used the example of Polytechnics in Prague and introduced two state exams: first after two years of study for introductory courses and second after finishing of studies for main thematic courses. [2, p.29].

<sup>3</sup> In 1921 – 1939 Eastern Trades (Targi Wschodnie) in Lviv became one of the leading annual international exhibitions, which took place in the Stryiskiy park. It was a large architectural and city-planning complex, which consisted of more than 20 pavilions, constructed upon the projects of prominent architects from Lviv.

<sup>4</sup> In particular, situated in Truskavets, Morshyn – on the territory of “Eastern provinces”.

#### Анотація

У статті здійснено спробу простежити етапи професійного становлення та творчого шляху польського архітектора Францішека Кокеша, який працював у 1920-30-х роках на Волині у Другій Речі Посполитій. Розглянуто періоди навчання у Політехнічній школі у Львові, праці у проектному бюро львівських архітекторів А.Захарієвича та Є.Червінського. На основі архівних матеріалів окреслено громадську та творчу активність Ф.Кокеша в Луцьку, охарактеризовано типологію, архітектурно-стилістичні особливості запроектованих ним громадських, культових та житлових будівель.

Ключові слова: Францішек Кокеш, архітектура, міжвоєнний період, Волинь.

#### Аннотация

В статье осуществлена попытка проследить этапы профессионального становления и творческого пути польского архитектора Францишека Кокеша в 1920-30-х гг. на Волини во Второй Речи Посполитой. Рассмотрены периоды обучения в Политехнической школе во Львове, работы в проектом бюро львовских архитекторов А.Захариевича и Е.Червинского. На базисе архивных материалов исследованы общественная и творческая активность Ф.Кокеша в Луцке, охарактеризована типология, архитектурно-стилистические особенности запроектованных ним гражданских, культовых и жилых зданий.

Ключевые слова: Францишек Кокеш, архитектура, межвоенный период, Волинь.