

The conversation with Dr Magdalena Piwocka about the exhibition *Odsiecz wiedeńska 1863* [The Relief of Vienna, 1863] organised at the Wawel Royal Castle on the 300th anniversary of the Battle of Vienna was carried out in the summer of 2022. The exhibition, which was prepared in the early 1980s, during an extremely difficult political and economic period of Polish history, not only proved a success in terms of attendance, but also represented a significant research achievement. In the course of field trips and search queries carried out during the two-year preparation period, about one and a half thousand previously unknown objects related to the era of King John III and the Relief of Vienna were identified. The result of this work was a scientific study of the objects selected for presentation during the exhibition and a catalogue edited by Jerzy Szablowski, Antoni Franaszek and Kazimierz Kuczman entitled *Odsiecz wiedeńska 1683. Wystawa jubileuszowa w Zamku Królewskim na Wawelu w trzechsetlecie bitwy*, which for a variety of reasons was released only as late as in 1990. In the interview, Dr Magdalena Piwocka describes the behind-the-scenes organisation of the exhibition, including, above all, the extensive search queries carried out throughout the country in the conditions of martial law, the results of scientific research, and the social context, which was reflected both in the attempts at political exploitation of the exhibition and in the teamwork of people from different backgrounds aimed at creating a unique event.

MG, MW: Before our meeting, we wanted to prepare for the talk by reading articles describing the 1983 anniversary exhibition, which was a great event, also in the social sense, somewhat formative for many later researchers of the era. We looked at several texts, most of which were definitely enthusiastic.

MP: But they were written after the opening of the exhibition, not during preparations.

MG, MW: Yes, but these press releases were created when the exhibition was still open. One article ends with the words: 'it's an absolute must-see'. We [i.e. the staff of the Museum of King Jan III's Palace in Wilanów], who also deal with the figure of the king, including the memory of the Relief of Vienna, organised exhibitions on the anniversaries of the Battle of Vienna, and the catalogue of the Cracow exhibition for the 300th anniversary is a constant reference for us.

MP: I'm very pleased.

MG, MW: This catalogue is a treasure trove of information and is actually where we often start our work. Because you were then able to accumulate an extremely extensive body of knowledge about the memorabilia of the

COMMUNICATION

ODSIECZ WIEDEŃSKA 1683. THE 1983 EXHIBITION AT THE WAWEL ROYAL CASTLE IN THE RECOLLECTIONS OF DR MAGDALENA PIWOCKA

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period, the trophies which, captured at Vienna, came to the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania, any researcher dealing with the *Sobieszciana* will undoubtedly regard this publication as one of the primary sources. However, we are very interested in the process of preparing the Wawel exhibition itself. We would like to ask you to tell us how it all began, who drew up the concept for the exhibition, how the search was conducted and what ultimately happened to the enormous research material acquired as a result of this search, because, as we read in Director Jerzy Szablowski's commentary, the objects shown at the exhibition were only a fraction of what was collected and identified as memorabilia from the time of the Relief of Vienna.

MP: This was undoubtedly the case, and if we want to recall some figures at this point, suffice it to say that the first inventories of artefacts included 1,500 items. We then realised that only half of them could be included in the exhibition. The others were left out, not because they were not authentic, but because they already repeated a narrative formulated with the help of other exhibits, and besides, there were simply too many of them, even though almost all of the Wawel Castle's exhibition rooms were used for the purpose of the exhibition. In the end, the catalogue includes 640 objects and obviously does not take everything into account, for example, the high-class Turkish Oriental rugs from the Kulczycki Collection, which were used to line the large podium in the Senators' Hall, the last exhibition hall where the trophies were presented. We thought that was somewhat self-explanatory. Several various objects from the exhibition of Oriental objects, namely the Turkish tents forming an enfilade, were not included either, even though they provided a strong accent at the end of the exhibition. It was through this enfilade that visitors were leaving the exhibition; there were pieces of armour standing there, the Oriental rugs were shown, and all these artefacts are not found in the catalogue. The exhibition therefore certainly included more than seven hundred items.

MG, MW: In the catalogue, some objects are described as illustrated outside the publication accompanying the exhibition.

MP: This means they have no entries, only images. For example, the wall hanging from the parish in Żębocin was discovered at the last minute. We did not have enough time to study it scientifically, but it was so attractive that we decided to publish its photographs. Similarly, in the case of the six paintings of Sobieski's battles from the Munich collection kept in Schleissheim, only some are described in the catalogue and the others are reproduced. The catalogue was not published until several years after the exhibition, for a number of reasons. Basically, due to an overload of ongoing tasks and a dramatic lack of time, we could not fully study all the objects. For example, it was only two years after the exhibition, in 1985, that I went on a short reconnaissance trip to Turkey (a ten-day

scholarly exchange), and it was only then that I became sure that Poland had the artistically best and oldest collection of tents, while the Turkish collections held mostly nineteenth-century artefacts.

MG, MW: Can you say when the initial conceptual work on the exhibition actually began?

MP: It was the autumn of 1981. Professor Szablowski felt that two years would be sufficient to prepare the exhibition. At that time, exhibition schedule was not as busy as it is today. The first meeting was held in September and Professor Szablowski, who can be regarded as the *spiritus movens* of the project, decided that the organisation of the exhibition would be based on cooperation between the Wawel Royal Castle and the National Museum in Cracow.

He invited two specialists from the National Museum in Cracow, the then director of the museum, Tadeusz Chruścicki, and Zdzisław Żygulski Jr., to join the organising committee. Director Chruścicki remained somewhat in Żygulski's shadow. This was unjust, because he was a wonderful man and a great organiser: for example, his contacts proved very helpful in borrowing artefacts from Dresden. He also had a practical sense, he listened to his colleagues' comments and consulted them when in doubt. When he went to Dresden, we asked him to ask about the portraits of Prince-Elector John George III, commander of the Saxon troops at Vienna. He was shown these portraits and then he immediately called me: 'I've got this John George here. A portrait measuring three metres twenty. What do you think?'. I replied: 'I think we shouldn't take it; this painting will overwhelm Sobieski's portrait with its size, we can't let that happen'. 'Excellent, my thoughts exactly', and so we abandoned the idea of acquiring this work. Professor Zdzisław Żygulski Jr., in turn, is listed in the catalogue as the author of the concept for the exhibition, the narrative of which was to begin with the sixteenth century, a period of friendly relations with the Ottoman Turkey. It was the contribution of myself and Jerzy Petrus into the creation of the exhibition to present the royal family, the court milieu, the closest associates and soldiers, the participants in the expedition, which is why sentimental mementos, such as the diary of Teofila Sobieska on 'how my children were born', appeared in the exhibition. It is very important to show not some anonymous ruler, but also his background, his ideological formation. The king's ancestors included the Żółkiewski and Daniłowicz families; the history of Żółkiew [today: Zhovkva], the family seat, and the inscriptions on the tombstones of his brave ancestors shaped his patriotic consciousness. Żółkiewski's *burka* mantle and his *żupan* (now in the Czartoryski Museum), weapons and other family symbols were kept in Żółkiew.

MG, MW: In your opinion, to what extent did the 1983 exhibition relate to the previous anniversary exhibitions that were so extensively described in the opening essays of the catalogue?

MP: To a maximum extent, because we began our work by studying the catalogues of these previous exhibitions: first and foremost the

1883 exhibition in the Cloth Hall and the two 1933 exhibitions at Wawel and in Warsaw.¹ These were our first reading materials, but we also looked back to nineteenth-century exhibitions of antiquities: the 1858 Cracow exhibition,² the 1856 Warsaw exhibition organised by August Potocki and his wife,³ and the 1894 exhibition of antiquities in Lvov.⁴ They all contained information about the exhibits we were looking for. We made index cards from the catalogues relating to specific objects and, above all, we read everything carefully in our three-person team.

MG, MW: So, please tell us who read it; surely yourself...

MP: I'll say right away, in this organising committee, in addition to the directors of the National Museum, there were, of course, representatives of the Wawel Royal Castle: Professor Szablowski with his deputy Stefan Zajęc. The latter was a historian, a man who acted as organisational curator and coordinator in our team, making sure that everything was in order, including the technical side.

The content team consisted of three persons: Aleksandra Kietlińska, a historian, our chief cataloguer, and myself with Jerzy Petrus. We two were assigned the task of developing a script for the exhibition, so we started with this. We took photographs of the selected objects, we also used old photographs or prints from the museum's photographic archives, we put it all together in the form of a large A4 file, the photographs were pasted on cardboard and captioned, the idea was to collect not only inventories but also visual material before we start the search query. We also ordered prints from the photo library of the Catalogue of Monuments held at the Art Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences; only later, after several months of preparation, did we go into the field. First, however, we read some specific works, primarily on the history and culture of the Eastern Borderlands of the Commonwealth, that is, on all the important churches in the Borderlands, *Pamiętki miasta Żółkwi* by Barącz,⁵ Father Nowakowski's minutes

1 *Katalog wystawy zabytków z czasów króla Jana III i jego wieku* (Kraków, 1883); *Zabytki XVII wieku: wystawa jubileuszowa Jana III w Krakowie 1883* (Kraków, 1884); S. Świerż-Zaleski, *Przewodnik po jubileuszowej wystawie epoki króla Jana III w Zamku Królewskim na Wawelu od 15 lipca do 30 września 1933 w dwustupięćdziesięciolecie odsieczy wiedeńskiej* (Kraków, 1933); *Katalog wystawy jubileuszowej zabytków z czasów króla Stefana i Jana III w gmachu Muzeum Wojska w czterechsetlecie urodzin Stefana Batorego i dwieście pięćdziesięciolecie odsieczy wiedeńskiej* (Warszawa, 1933).

2 *Album fotograficzne wystawy starożytności i zabytków sztuki urządzanej przez c.k. Towarzystwo Naukowe w Krakowie 1858 i 1859 r.*, eds K. Beyer, H. Hirszel (Warszawa, 1859).

3 B.P. Podczaszyński, *Przegląd historyczny starożytności krajowych z powodu wystawy urządzanej w Warszawie w r. 1856. w pałacu JW. Hr. Aug. Potockich* (Warszawa, 1857); *Album wystawy starożytności i przedmiotów sztuki*, K. Beyer (Warszawa, 1856).

4 W. Łoziński, *Katalog wystawy zabytków starożytnych we Lwowie w r. 1894* (Lwów, 1894).

5 S. Barącz, *Pamiętki miasta Żółkwi*, zebrał Ks. Sadok Barącz, dominikanin (Lwów, 1852).



Fig. 1

Jubilee exhibition *Odsiecz wiedeńska 1683* (The Relief of Vienna 1683), Wawel Royal Castle, Eagle Room.

The part of the exhibition entitled 'Participants in the relief'

of the restoration of the Żółkiew collegiate church;⁶ all these books, by the way, are still in our library today. Also museum catalogues, as well as the Army Museum catalogue by Zofia Stefańska.⁷ Thanks to our own contacts, we also knew the location of the artefacts we were interested in. We were fortunate to have Aleksandra Kietlińska in our team, as she had acquaintances among the previous generation of researchers. During her studies in Cracow, for example, she struck a friendship with Professor Jan Wimmer, who was then working at the Military University of Technology. At the time, he was preparing a monograph entitled *Wiedeń 1682*.⁸ Thanks to his friendship with Aleksandra, he agreed to make the content of his work available to us before it went to print.

These were completely extraordinary human relationships. It is actually Professor Wimmer, who, by providing us with these materials, gave us the idea of creating a catalogue of the participants in the Vienna

6 [J. Nowakowski], *Pamiętka odnowienia i poświęcenia kościoła żółkiewskiego dnia 12 września 1867* (Lwów, 1868).

7 *Katalog zbiorów: wiek XVII*, Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw, ed. Z. Stefańska (Warszawa, 1968).

8 J. Wimmer, *Wiedeń 1683: dzieje kampanii i bitwy* (Warszawa, 1983).

expedition and the parties to that conflict. The professor told us, for example, that this-or-that nobleman came with a regiment consisting of so many footmen, so many horsemen, so many horses, at this time. And that this nobleman is, for example, known only from the date of death or, for instance, from some decoration he received. On the basis of this data, together with Aleksandra Kietlińska and Jerzy Petrus, we compiled a catalogue of military participants in the expedition, then also of popes, bishops, diplomats, rulers, including prominent Turks. Over the course of two years, an absolutely fantastic resource was created, containing a wealth of unknown genealogical material, dates of life written down from paintings – unfortunately, this material has been lost. Regardless of the catalogue, we started to generate a map of the places we should visit.

MG, MW: Based on that literature you mentioned and those inventory cards you prepared?

MP: Based on all available literature, catalogues of historical artefacts, and museum search queries; everyone knew something, we put it all together. Just when the programme and even the timetable for these trips had started to be drawn up, the martial law was declared. It may have seemed that all this work would go to waste, but actually, the opposite happened.

MG, MW: This is also something that we find extremely interesting: the background to the organisation of the preparatory activities of the exhibition, especially in the new, very difficult political conditions.

MP: I think that what happened was the fulfilment of the common saying that when a Pole has to stand up to some difficulty or to an enemy, he will come up with a solution. Seemingly nothing could be done. No telephones were allowed, or actually you could call, only that the conversations were tapped. That was why we communicated with partners we wanted to reach only by telegram. We cannot imagine such mechanisms today, since we have e-mail. At the time, there was nothing else to use. Every day I had to send telegrams through our telephone exchange, I could only fill in a blank and the telephone lady at the exchange would call the intercom at the main post office and then the message would go out. And so, we were receiving answers such as: ‘You are very welcome to come, just please explain to us what do you mean by “a search query”’. Because the priest was a bit anxious...

MG, MW: Well, yes, under martial law this anxiety could additionally have been fuelled by concern about the purpose of such a visit.

MP: In any case, the difficulties were enormous; above all, there was no film for the camera, no petrol, and we had to apply for everything at the town hall. I have here a folder with requests for film and petrol allocations, we were asking for this or that, so many pieces. I used to go to the town hall where there was a lady who was quite capricious and one time she would say we would get that much and the next time she would say we wouldn’t because others had their needs too.

MG, MW: So, you actually had to do more than just substantive work, prepare the exhibition script and select the locations?

MP: We were dealing with everything, simply everything. Before the installation of the exhibition, I was on the move all the time: buying nails, screws; I lost all my father's carpentry equipment, which was spread among the technical staff, several hammers, pincers and other tools.

MG, MW: Not much survived.

MP: We had to buy everything. When, for example, we wanted a neutral background, a silk curtain for Sobieski's insignia of honour, for the coat of arms and for those elements from Żółkiew that were preserved in Pilica, we used materials that I had brought from Milanówek for quite a different purpose: to make a copy of the royal banner that is now on display in the Treasury.

MG, MW: We saw it with you today, in the new treasury.⁹

MP: This turned out to be impossible at the time. Friendly conservation specialists dyed the Milanówek fabric red, because it was cream silk. When we needed to buy a piece of fabric, we used to go to the shop and buy it ourselves.

MG, MW: Did the authorities assist you in any way during this difficult period in organising this exhibition?

MP: No, no, no authorities were involved, their involvement was limited to signing those films and petrol allowances. But let's return to the organisation of the search trips: we somehow mastered the situation. At the beginning of 1982 another blow fell when Professor Szablowski suffered a heart attack and was hospitalised. He was so affected by all those political problems.

MG, MW: Did the introduction of martial law affect the operation of your institution?

MP: No, we all did what we needed to do, we all met at work the day after it was declared, according to the established mode, and said that we needed to act as if nothing had happened. As long as it would be possible. Only one of our Wawel colleagues reported to a military unit, saying he was available for service, after which the military laughed at him and so he returned to work. He went there with a toothbrush and pyjama. The one and only coward. After all, no one was mobilised at the time. Of course, we had members of the Solidarity among us, but no one was arrested or interned. In short, we acted in such a way to keep substantive work separated from politics. When the director [Jerzy Szablowski] was at the hospital, we tried to carry everything ourselves and it worked. Fortunately, he was only in hospital for a month. In March 1982, we started our search trips. I had planned them in advance, there were nine of them, the schedule generally envisaged trips of several days' duration

⁹ *Crown Treasury*, a new permanent exhibition at the Wawel Royal Castle, opened 30 June 2022.

to each region. Only one was about two weeks long. Everything, including hotels, was booked via telegrams. The ID card would be retained at the reception, only to be collected on departure. I once forgot my ID when we were leaving the hotel in Włocławek in the morning. It was something of a nightmare, I arrive in Kętrzyn, our next destination, report to reception and have no ID with me. Gosh. Of course, I had to go back to Włocławek by train, not by our car, and my colleagues were doing this search in Kętrzyn, but never mind, it all worked out somehow.

MG, MW: And what vehicle did you use to reach the subsequent locations where the search queries were carried out?

MP: We had a Nysa van with a tarpaulin in the winter; it was snowy that March and there were snowdrifts in the second half of March, so we got stuck in the Kielce region on our first trip.

MG, MW: Who was the driver? Anyone from the team?

MP: There were five of us together, I was the only woman, the rest were men, and in those five was the driver, a great guy. We were all very close to each other. The driver did not stay in the car, he went with us, walking around churches, monasteries, carried the equipment with the photographer. Anyway, he was at the stage of finishing primary school at the time, he had four grades, I think, and he had to have at least seven. He studied at night, read school books, such as *Krzyżacy* [a historical novel by Henryk Sienkiewicz on Poland's fight with the Teutonic Knights] under the duvet with a torch, and because he slept in hotels in a shared room with our photographer, Mr Stanisław Michta, every so often Michta would say: 'Look, I can't sleep with this man in one room, because he keeps commenting on that book with shouts like "Oh man, did he smash him!"'.

MG, MW: Evocative literature!

MP: Evocative indeed, it had its effect on people, as it seems. This driver, Mr Zięcik, was an excellent companion, and we basically travelled in the same group until the end of 1982.

MG, MW: Only around Poland?

MP: Yes, only around Poland, we did not travel abroad, foreign loans were arranged with the help of intermediaries.

MG, MW: As you mentioned at the beginning, this concerned Dresden, for example.

MP: Yes, thanks to Director Chruścicki we acquired from Dresden two Turkish flags and the so-called Sobieski Armour, the famous *karacena*, which was made available without any problem.

MG, MW: Great!

MP: And they brought it all themselves.

MG, MW: And what about Munich, Budapest?

MP: The Munich artefacts were actually the acquisitions of Professor Michał Komarzyński. In this case, Komarzyński proved to be a godsend.

A biography of Queen Maria Casimire he had written was in print at the time.¹⁰ I helped him a little with the publication of this book. I met him in 1977 in Warsaw at a session of the Association of Art Historians on textiles and costume history, where he gave a lecture on French costumes that appeared in Poland during the reign of Maria Casimire. We got to know each other and he said: 'I'm preparing a monograph on Queen Maria Casimire. It won't be a *vie romancée* exactly, but popular literature, and I have no idea where to publish it'. I replied: 'I'll ask at Wydawnictwo Literackie, because I have acquaintances there, a cousin of mine'. I went to this publisher and they bought it straight away.

Professor Komarzyński used to come to Cracow for various library and archive search queries and at one point he said he was going to Munich for a longer period to study Maria Casimire's letters to Theresa Kunegunda. In addition, he knew German, as he was originally from the Lvov area. His knowledge of French came from his studies in France and he studied the correspondence of the Sobieski family, which was conducted in French. He showed me these letters, they were venerable but terribly scribbled. He got a scholarship in 1982, even though martial law was on, but there was some kind of deal that had to be respected. He said: 'So, I'm going to Munich, tell me, what problems do you have?'. Well, we had a whole bunch of problems. I showed him a list of our Munich desiderata.

MG, MW: How did you find out about these Munich artefacts?

MP: Mainly from literature, no other sources but literature. Komarzyński promised to try to help us arrange it somehow. We had previously exchanged letters with Bayerisches Nationalmuseum and got an insurance quote that we wouldn't have been able to cover. It was known that a specialised transport service, Hasenkamp, was needed for this; the museum in Munich would only accept this one company operating in Europe. So, what could we do? We weren't going to make it... Komarzyński took the lists from us, took copies of the letters from Director Szablowski and went to the management of the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum. As he spoke German flawlessly, he told them about martial law, about all the difficulties. He said we didn't have those films and that petrol, that we had food ration cards and restrictions on long-distance communication, even telephone communication. The next day he got a guest room for free for a month, full board and a promise that they would reduce this insurance tenfold for us, and so they did. The professor then travelled there a few more times. He was welcomed everywhere as if he were a close friend, and we started getting parcels from Munich: coffee, tea, layettes, soap, toiletries, towels, later on also books. All from this

10 M. Komarzyński, *Maria Kazimiera d'Arquien Sobieska królowa Polski 1641–1716* (Kraków, 1984).

museum. This contact was unbelievably fruitful, and of course the paintings for the exhibition arrived as well.

As to Hungary, we had good relations, an inter-museum exchange with Budapest, from where we were sent the so-called Sobieski Kaftan, made of eastern fabric, a drawing by Altomonte, some prints. In this case insurance was symbolic, it was taken care of by transport companies, there was no need to look for a broker. However, the biggest surprises and amazing discoveries awaited us during the tours in Poland.

MG, MW: Right, let's go back to the Polish search queries.

MP: Sometimes these were the guardians of the objects themselves who were coming with news to us because everywhere – and I emphasise this repeatedly – the clergy at the time was unbelievably helpful. It was a different world, after Solidarity and during martial law it was clear that clergymen stood by the society, that they hosted underground universities within their walls, looked after the internees. This time they also opened their arms. And indeed, in the places we reported to, they found a lot of things themselves, and others were found by chance. I remember, for example, the Golejewko caparison from the Museum of the Archdiocese of Poznań. These were things that were not yet included in the catalogue of historical artefacts, at that time only Father Director knew about them, while in the archives, slowly, thanks to contacts with historians, we discovered documents relating to participants in the Vienna expedition, funeral speeches, diaries and other materials.

In addition to Wimmer and Komaczyński, we also had Professor Jerzy Wiśniewski as a consultant, as well as Dr Henryk Kotarski from the then Pedagogical Academy. Professor Wiśniewski died a few days before the exhibition opened in 1983. He was a man of great knowledge; he specialised in the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. He lived in Cracow and it turned out that he was very keen to help: 'Please provide me with this list of names: where do you have any gaps? Do you have any comments or questions?'. It turned out that we were providing a mutual service to each other. When professor was conducting search queries at the branch of the State Archives, located until recently at the Wawel Castle, he used to come to us from the reading room of the Archives and say that he had found this and that, and we replied: 'And we have just brought the dates of the life of this and that person you asked about'. Dr Kotarski, in turn, was a lecturer in history; he studied Sobieski's art of war and was our consultant on the military matters. He was credited with maintaining contact with the Lvov Historical Museum, where he saved various *Sobiesciana* from destruction. It was a great communion of souls.

In addition, there were many surprises along the routes of our trips, one of the greatest being the group of liturgical textiles in Pilica, which

I mentioned during my lecture at your museum.¹¹ This was simply the first time that we saw something that left us speechless.

MG, MW: Do you remember that moment?

MP: I remember it well, because in Pilica we planned to focus mainly on the church of the Franciscans of Primitive Observance, but there was also something in the parish church and the parish priest showed us a Turkish chasuble to start with. Beautiful indeed, composed of several Turkish fabrics. We admired it, took pictures, we said we were going to loan it, then suddenly, because he had let the fox into the henhouse, that is he let us into the sacristy, we started looking through the hangers there and found a lot of *Sobiesciana*.

MG, MW: Amazing, really. I think every museum researcher dreams of just such an experience.

MP: The set in question is illustrated in the exhibition catalogue. We saw the symbols of the Order of the Holy Spirit on these chasubles, both on the dalmatics and on the antependium. We realised that not far from Cracow, we had a chapel decoration from Żółkiew, made in Paris for the occasion of Sobieski being awarded with this decoration. It was one of the greatest experiences.

It was a great, truly great experience to find a painting of Our Lady of Loretto from Kahlenberg in the Radziwiłł collection. We owed it to a priest from Warsaw, who happily still resides in his parish and used to be vicar in Nieborów. The Radziwiłłs lived there after their return from England, the priest used to go there for his annual pastoral visit, he was accepted and became familiar with the place where this image was kept. This legendary painting could not be traced for years, it was not shown at the 1933 exhibition. The priest said he knew where it was and that he would recommend us. We went there and Mrs Radziwiłł loaned us not only this painting, but also the equestrian portrait of Emperor Leopold I, which is also reproduced in the catalogue. She owned both these paintings. We subjected the one with Our Lady of Loretto to conservation. I even had it at home; the reason was that when we brought it in, it was late in the evening, night actually, so it spent the night at my place. It was a great joy for us to be able to show this work at the Wawel Castle, on the second floor, where the royal chapel was arranged. Another painting, one from the Warsaw Archcathedral, was also exhibited there.

11 The meeting with the participation of Dr Magdalena Piwocka was organised at the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów as part of the cyclical *Monumentum Sobiescianum* seminars. The reading of the paper entitled *Plaszcz kawalera Orderu Świętego Ducha ofiarowany królowi Janowi III Sobieskiemu (The Mantle of the Chevalier of Order of the Holy Spirit Offered to King Jan III Sobieski)* took place on 7 July 2022. In the current year, i.e. 2023, a temporary exhibition presenting the Pilica paraments discussed by Dr Piwocka was organised by the Wawel Royal Castle – State Art Collection: *Dary króla słońce (Gifts from the Sun King)*, 19 May – 27 August 2023.

We formed various friendships that continue to this day. A great many new artefacts and information emerged in the course of the work, as if by accident; it is always the case that some things overlap. During the Częstochowa search query, for example, our previously undocumented assumptions and conclusions from the previous Wawel historical exhibitions and searches got confirmed. It all started to fit together.

As we toured the churches, the villages which received some gifts from John III, or the places where the objects moved from the Borderlands were kept, we noticed that the participants in the Relief of Vienna had married their children with one another. They clearly felt that they were an integrated social group. It was not just a desire to acquire offices or property, there was an emotional element to it, they knew each other very well, so parents were able to decide that the son of this particular comrade-in-arms would be the best husband for their daughter.

As far as the imagery of the individual exhibition sequences is concerned, we tried to build the narrative of one of the segments around Sobieski's family and surroundings. We also showed the European background, i.e. political relations, the European political scene of the time, and included the portraits there. In the sequence of chambers on the second floor, the Eagle Room was located in front of the part telling the story of the Relief of Vienna itself, and it was there that we placed the portraits of the participants of the expedition as a compact 'wallpaper'. Among them were some that apparently also appeared at the time of the 1933 exhibition; one time Mr Antoni Wójtowicz, the caretaker, who was putting one of these portraits up on the wall, said to me, while he was standing on a ladder: 'Ma'am, but in 1933 this portrait hung in that corner there'. I thought to myself that it was the history itself that was speaking through him.

MG, MW: This is remarkable and very moving, both for the preparation of the exhibition and for the history behind the Vienna comrades-in-arms recalled in the portraits present at the exhibition.

MP: Based on the material collected, I should not be the only one to have this observation, I think historians have also noticed it, because it was impossible not to. I think that this can partly be explained by such a lavishing of rewards for outstanding participants of the battle that flowed from the centre of power; Sobieski rewarded his friends with benefits, privileges, land grants and offices. The veterans later formed a strong political class, which was further united by blood ties.

The impression I got from this time of preparation was remarkable, as I became convinced that everything could be done, that above all you had to rely on people, and that trust was the basis of all cooperation. And then nothing is impossible. This attitude stayed with me for a long time. It seems to me that today it is not relevant any more. Now very little action can be done collectively, there is no such solidarity: one for all, all for one. This is a *signum temporis*, there are other



requirements, a different type of availability, and back then the availability was spontaneous, not forced.

MG, MW: We are also very surprised by what you mentioned earlier, talking about the people who were involved in these activities, i.e. Professor Komarzyński, Professor Wimmer, that you all had the feeling that you were doing something really important together. This is an example of an attitude that is getting rare today, when one acts primarily for individual development, less in the name of the common good.

MP: Rare or even completely absent. It was simply unbelievable, because it was not even about the provision of some manual work, which, by the way, also happened. Imagine that with this huge installation effort, as it was clear that there would be an opening at 5 p.m., we worked all the night before, until 5 a.m. We were hanging some objects to the very end and just everyone was doing it: carpenters, maintenance workers, colleagues from the education department, administration staff, everyone. Mainly the technical department, for instance one of the carpenters who was installing Sobieski's portrait under the canopy of the Podhorce bed told me already in the morning: 'Please hold this ladder for me or I will soon fall down'. I was holding the ladder and he stepped down, not onto the rung of the ladder, but onto my arms. I thought I was going to fall, but knowing that I had to keep that ladder standing, I didn't even wobble, even though it was a really heavy man, and somehow it all worked out.

Yes, it was truly remarkable. Also, the commitment of the clergy, which I will always remember with extraordinary affection. To this day I revere

Fig. 2

Jubilee exhibition *Odsiecz wiedeńska 1683* (The Relief of Vienna 1683), Wawel Royal Castle, Senators' Hall.

The part of the exhibition entitled 'Trophies of the Vienna Campaign' (Turkish flags, militaria, tent from the collection of the Princes Czartoryski family)

two special friendships with priests I formed in this period. One of these priests was later provincial of the Discalced Carmelites and the other became secretary to the provincial of the Franciscans of Primitive Observance. The first was a historian of the order, he died in 2013, Father Benignus Wanat, an unbelievably helpful man, who wrote a great monograph on the Order of Discalced Carmelites in Poland. He introduced me to the world of monastic clergy, told me how many monasteries there were in the province, what could be hoped for, as recommendations were required everywhere. When we started working on the exhibition, he was still only an archivist, but everyone knew him because he travelled everywhere and collected material; the same applied to the other colleague who was an art historian at the Franciscan monastery. He simply said: 'Look, here you can count on cooperation, you can count on the male monasteries for sure, female convents are less certain because they are less accessible, but I'll arrange it somehow to get you in'. Such contacts really helped us a lot.

MG, MW: Let us continue the issue of contacts with monasteries and convents during the period when you were conducting the travelling search query. The catalogue included a very large collection of liturgical textiles made from Turkish and Persian fabrics. Could you elaborate on the circumstances in which they were found?

MP: In the first instance, we read about the Oriental artefacts present in Poland. Ones of Turkish or Persians origin, these studies were present in specialist literature, sometimes new ones appeared, but this field of research was already well developed and it was known that Poland, which used to import a lot of textiles, had the largest collection of Eastern vestments outside the ethnic and geographical East. And indeed, during the search, new objects also came to the surface; these were, by the way, artefacts that could be linked to specific individuals. In Turobin, for example, we found a gold chasuble that is surely linked to Zygmunt Druszkiewicz, the Pantler of Parnawa [Estonian: Pärnu], whose tent is held in the collection of the National Museum in Cracow. His wife Elżbieta donated chasubles made of Turkish fabrics to Jasna Góra, as is recorded in the sanctuary's inventories. In the catalogue, although there were many photographs from the exhibition, a photo of chasubles made of oriental silks presented in the showcases in the Senators' Hall opposite the trophy podium was unfortunately not included. This arrangement was very impressive.

There were also new discoveries, because we knew about Opole Lubelskie, Jasna Góra, various well-known places, but in Przemyśl we found textile memorabilia of the Drohojowski family, various amazing things. We conducted only basic conservation work on many of the paraments to preserve them, as they were not museum pieces but liturgical textiles used in the sacristies. More effort certainly went into the conservation of the paintings. We subjected the portraits of the Daniłowicz family from the collegiate

church in Żółkiew to conservation procedures. In Krzeszów in Silesia we discovered the portrait of Prioress Daniłowiczówna which the Latin Benedictine nuns smuggled on carts under the Raclawice Panorama painting during their evacuation from Lvov. For the most part, we had to deal with wonderful, responsible people, such as Bishop Ignacy Tokarczuk or Bishop Alfons Nossol, or the bishop of Kielce Stanisław Szymecki, or the bishop of Wrocław Wincenty Urban, who donated us his own books about Lvov. He was a historian, so he had a different perspective on the world.

MW: Have you often encountered refusals to lend exhibits?

MP: No, not at all, never, which is why the problem with borrowing a set from Pilica was so singular. But we were supported by the bishop and finally we managed to borrow it. There were never any refusals. Sometimes priests submitted objects for the exhibition themselves, during the course of the search. That was the case with Father Marian Lewandowski from the Archdiocesan Museum in Poznań, who called the hotel late in the evening and said he had found something and would be happy to give it to us. These were extraordinary things.

MG, MW: We would also like to ask you to recall an anecdote you told during our meeting in Wilanów, about someone running up to you and saying that they had found Sobieski.

MP: Yes, there were a few such incidents, I remember one in the Lublin region: when we asked ‘Do you have a Sobieski?’ someone replied: ‘Yes, of course!’ – and brought a portrait of Kościuszko. Since the interviewees knew it was all about a national hero, they recognised that they could bring an image of another one, so they suggested the one of Kościuszko. The funniest thing is that this happened mainly in godforsaken villages where there were also various very valuable monuments, such as the full-length portrait of Marek Matczyński in Sulinowo. In many places in churches, there were old military drums that were used for Mass liturgies, such as the Easter Mass, and were in fact battle kettle drums with the coats of arms of the owners, participants in the Relief of Vienna.

MG, MW: Objects of this kind were documented in the catalogue of historical monuments and this, as far as we understand, was how you reached these artefacts.

MP: Yes, all sorts of strange things were found in the field. There were also many surprises in the private collections of priests who were setting up private museums in Poland at the time, especially in the southern Poland. In Opole Lubelskie, there were some Persian fabrics, which a priest presented at his place. This ‘Vienna search’ was indeed the trip of a lifetime.

MG, MW: How long did these tours last?

MP: From March 1982 to the end of the year. I collected material from each tour in separate folders. Apart from the fact that Mr Stanisław Michta documented it all, when the coat of arms, for example, had to be drawn, it was me who did the drawing. Before such a tour, I would

make a list of addresses and telephones so that I would have all my contacts on hand, because wherever we went, we always had to call or send a telegram first.

There were other situations as well. One of our colleagues, the late Kazimierz Kuczman, came from Rzeszyca Okrągła, located in the Rzeszów area, near Tarnobrzeg. And so Kazio Kuczman says: 'Look, in our parish there is such a custom that at Easter, in the Resurrection procession, some men are dressed as Turks, they are mostly the local firemen. And they have these mortars, I don't know, bronze mortars or something, that they shoot and say "Hail!", like for the Resurrection Mass. They say that these are some kinds of relics from Vienna, because Lubomirski was returning to Przeworsk through the village and the Turkish prisoners or some soldiers converted to Islam were left there'. We wrote to Father Brzuszek of the local parish, who heads the list of invitees to the exhibition opening (Professor Szablowski continually reproached me for this: 'You invite some Brzuszek, while I have five hundred of invitations to send out!'. I replied that we have to respect everyone.) Father Brzuszek agreed to see us, especially as we came with Kazio Kuczman, who was a local parishioner. And so, the priest says: 'You know what, since he is here, I'll tell you the truth: we had these mortars, but there came an order from the Militia that all the weapons have to be surrendered'. All of this happened, as I said, during martial law in 1982. 'Well, we didn't want to hand them over, because these are some historical artefacts, so our parishioners buried them, but fortunately, in some barn'. So they unearthed these mortars in our presence and we loaned one of them. Because indeed, these were small cannons for firing salutes.

MG, MW: From what we understand, during the 1883 exhibition there was such a call published in the press to invite people to share information on interesting memorabilia, right?

MP: Yes, and then there was an article by Władysław Łuszczkiewicz about what we received and from whom. We had, of course, letters of recommendation to all the owners of the artefacts, but during the second tour, not around the Kielce region, but the Opole region and Silesia, we realised that our letter addressed to the bishop had been placed in the diocesan circular by the bishop himself, i.e. it was printed and distributed to all the parishes, and then read from the pulpits. This was very effective, because as a result, various priests referred to the curia with their findings, and the curia then informed us. Encouraged by this, we wrote a letter to Primate Glemp, but he only circulated it in the Warsaw and Gniezno dioceses.

MG, MW: We may be touching on a sensitive issue, but we would like to ask about the funding of this exhibition.

MP: I know nothing about this, unfortunately, because of all the things that were upon us, we were spared the financial element. We were buying various things ourselves, often a little illegally, for example film for

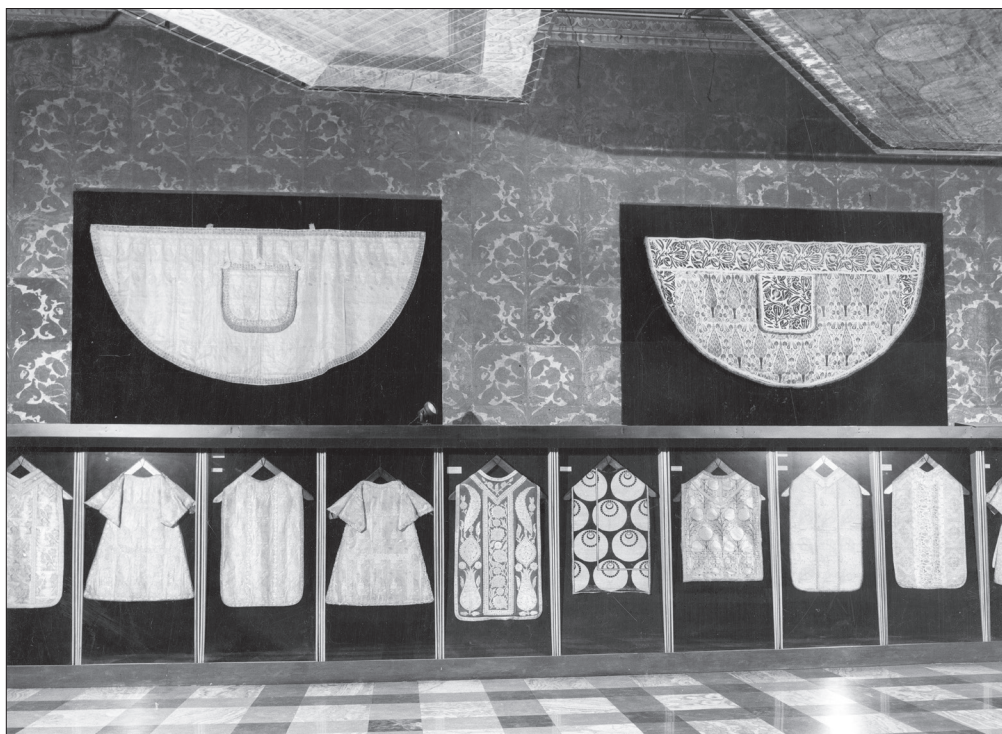


Fig. 3

Jubilee exhibition *Odsiecz wiedeńska 1683* (The Relief of Vienna 1683), Wawel Royal Castle, Senators' Hall. The part of the exhibition entitled 'Trophies of the Vienna Campaign' (votive gifts – vestments made of Turkish and Persian fabrics)

cameras. Conservation procedures that were carried out at the museum were not financed from the exhibition budget, the employees received overtime leave as part of their salary. The Wawel Royal Castle also bore the costs of technical preparations, display designs, showcases and workmanship. We did not have to arrange this ourselves. The employees of the investment department, engineer Szalonek and Mr Kuczek, who designed the exhibition's framework, later resented us (the organising team) for not publishing the exhibition catalogue with photos of their work on time. Eventually the catalogue came out, very late indeed, in 1990. This is certainly not an example to be followed. Professor Szablowski even wanted the catalogue to be titled *Souvenir from an Exhibition*, but I said it was a catalogue after all, so we should not imitate the nineteenth-century 'antiquarian' publications. Professor Szablowski did not live to see the publication of this catalogue; he died in 1989.

The social resonance of the exhibition, especially among the clergy, was immense. We gave tours almost every day. Seminaries and entire monasteries that did not have the papal cloister requirement were coming en masse, demanding very detailed information. I have to say that there was a completely different level of interest than now, when priests do not come to museum exhibitions at all, which results in the lack of knowledge of the historical value of the sacred objects and works of art under their care.

MG, MW: From today's perspective, when we think about historical exhibitions, which are much less popular than art exhibitions, it seems

remarkable to us that *Odsiecz wiedeńska 1683* at the Wawel Castle had such a large response.

MP: It is unbelievable how much this exhibition moved people, especially those who were more historically aware. On the other hand, and I continually emphasise this, what caught my attention was the involvement of the clergy, priests and monks who came to the exhibition, knowing that the exhibits were on loan from ecclesiastical institutions, if not even their local ones, then, for example, from the same congregation.

MG, MW: Did they feel that they were co-creators of the event?

MP: Yes, they had the feeling of co-creating the exhibition, there was, if I may use the expression, a real ‘army of priests’ at the exhibition, having almost opposite, around the castle, the army of General Jaruzelski and other members of the party apparatus.

MG, MW: What can you say about the attendance at this exhibition compared to others organised by the Museum in these years?

MP: Unlike today, back then no one counted visitors, either individuals or groups of twenty or thirty. It was really hundreds of people a day. Due to the high level of interest, the exhibition was extended until the following April, although it was due to end after three months.

MG, MW: Have you also participated in return transports?

MP: Yes, of course, I had to, the objects were often loaned through specific people, such as clergymen, so I also had to return them in person, it was impossible to hire a transport company at the time.

MG, MW: Let us return to the issue of the exhibition itself, do you remember the opening day?

MP: Yes, of course.

MG, MW: Did it take place on the same date as the state celebrations with General Wojciech Jaruzelski?

MP: Yes, Jaruzelski was at the cathedral and on Błonia meadow in Cracow. Everything took place on the same day. The opening of the exhibition was scheduled for 5 p.m.; guests entered the Senators’ Hall via the Senator Stairs. A very large number of military staff were gathered there, some of them, I presume, were dressed in civilian clothes, perhaps to save the bigwigs in the event of a possible coup. When I saw the bodyguards leaning with their backs against the tapestries, despite the poles having been set up, I just kept running up and down along those fabrics and asking them to move away, warning them not to touch anything. General Jaruzelski was welcomed and during the handshakes he kissed my hand, which was an exception to the whole ceremony.

MG, MW: This vernissage was all the more unusual because the authorities of the communist state met there with the dignitaries of the Catholic Church, and it was shortly after the end of martial law.

MP: There was Cardinal Franciszek Macharski, invited as chairman of the honorary committee, and he was always with us, we remembered him very

fondly. During all negotiations he helped us to overcome the resistance of the monastic decision-makers, for in the case of religious orders it was not he who decided, but the general or provincial of the congregation. This was, for example, the case of Sobieski's cabinet¹² kept in the Capuchin monastery in Cracow. We wanted to acquire this object, but there was a tabernacle inside it, in a cupboard. According to the provincial, we could not borrow the cabinet, even if we removed the tabernacle, because the wooden structure had been in contact with the consecrated host. I went to the cardinal for advice. Macharski put it this way: 'You know, I'm not an expert in this matter, but I think that chalices and monstrances are displayed on exhibitions after all. And they also come into contact with the consecrated host. I'll write to them that there are absolutely no contraindications'. An initially reluctant young guardian said: 'Well, then, let Wawel take it'. Engineers were invited to determine how to remove the tabernacle and make a makeshift altar in the Loretto Chapel so that the liturgy could be celebrated. We constructed an altar for them and eventually borrowed this cabinet. Then the Capuchins were coming to the exhibition for six months in a row, monasteries from all over Poland were coming to see it.

I also have other memories. Before Easter 1984, just before the end of the exhibition, I came to confess at the church of the Virgin Mary, maybe it was Maundy Thursday... There were gigantic queues for the confessionals. I thought, I can't stand in a queue like that, I have to think of something else, and suddenly I see one confessional opening and father guardian runs out of it and starts greeting me in the middle of the church. I replied: 'Please, Father, don't interrupt yourself...' – 'Well, how long can a person sit in the confessional?'. I said: 'Please don't give me any privileges, I'll come back another time'. Friendships made then truly lasted for years, for decades. I remember them very well. I think it was such a creative experience from the perspective of social psychology.

MG, MW: Do you think that the apparent willingness of many of the people you mentioned to get involved in this project and to favour it is the result of a positive identification with the feats of John III and with the Relief of Vienna?

MP: I think this is one of the more enduring tales in our history, but also a kind of skilfully constructed myth, an episode of our history that covers not only the Relief of Vienna itself, but also a brief period of glory and stability.

12 It is the cabinet given to John III after the victory at Vienna by Pope Innocent XI. According to the inventory of movable property compiled at Wilanów after the king's death, it was most likely that this particular piece of furniture stood in the King's Antechamber. On 18 February 1733, Prince James gave the cabinet to the Polish Capuchin Province to be used as a ciborium for the Loretto Chapel in the monastery church in Cracow. In the years 2014–2024, the precious memento of the king has been on deposit at the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów. It underwent extensive conservation between 2014 and 2016.

MG, MW: It can be said that Sobieski also achieved his goal, that the propaganda he so intelligently pursued after 12 September 1683 is actually still working today.

MP: Absolutely, yes, but in our case this impetus came largely from Professor Szablowski, who was a great admirer of John III. And it was he who simply assumed that he would make the kind of exhibition that would outshine all the previous ones, which actually was the case. And we contacted director Fijałkowski because he organised an exhibition in the Wilanów museum, *Chwała i sława*,¹³ showing the durability of the memory of the ‘Vienna Victory’, somewhat influenced by our exhibition.

MG, MW: Did this well-known theme of Polish history, that is, Sobieski and his victory at Vienna, contribute in some way to an understanding between members of the authorities and members of the opposition at the time?

MP: For the authorities and the opposition, I don’t think so, but on the level of the society, yes, indeed. This was the case, among others, perhaps because we tried to emphasise the social ties linking the king to his environment, the fact that Sobieski was not just a soldier. The king’s patronage, family life, political ties, the presentation of these themes aimed to show that he was a multi-dimensional figure, a great individual who deserves to be looked at in many aspects. I think this proved successful to some extent.

MG, MW: We did find such a reference, in a text by Kazimierz Kuczman, written for the 2008 catalogue *Pamięć o wiedeńskiej odsieczy*. There is a following passage: ‘[...] it contains a pioneering, very reliable discussion of the history of the Viennese Jubilee celebrations in Poland and abroad by Professor Szablowski, according to whom the organisers were motivated by the idea that the present jubilee celebrations, based on mutual respect and appreciation, should make at least a modest contribution to the general understanding and reconciliation so necessary for all mankind’.¹⁴

MP: Certainly yes, it must also be said that the Polish-Turkish conflict ceased to exist in this exhibition. Of course, it was present in history, but the narrative of the exhibition was not directed against the Turks. We struggled, for example, to show an engraving that depicts the strangulation of the grand vizier Kara Mustafa, the punishment he suffered for losing the campaign. Since due to the reality of martial law we were in conflict with Russia, not Turkey, the exhibition took on an anti-Russian dimension. By coincidence. After all, it was not organised against our government, because everyone understood that these were pawns, that

13 *Chwała i sława Jana III w sztuce i literaturze XVII–XX w.*, catalogue of the jubilee exhibition commemorating the 300th anniversary of the Battle of Vienna, September – December 1983, Wilanów Museum, eds W. Fijałkowski, J. Mieszko (Warszawa, 1983).

14 K. Kuczman, ‘Pamięć o królu Janie i jego wiedeńskim zwycięstwie’, in: *Pamięć o wiedeńskiej odsieczy*, a publication accompanying the exhibition commemorating the 325th anniversary of the Battle of Vienna, September – December 2008 (Kraków, 2008), p. 27.

it was not Jaruzelski or Jabłoński who were in charge, but the Kremlin; they wanted to frighten us and that was why martial law was introduced. The mementos of Żółkiewski were in the spotlight because of the hetman's military biography, as they evoked the conflict with Moscow. It was not said explicitly, but many people read it that way.

In my opinion, this was a museum exhibition that left its mark on some sphere of public feeling, referring to the national identity and patriotism. It is believed that one of the motives behind the Solidarity movement was Marek Rostworowski's exhibition *Polaków portret własny*.¹⁵ The exhibition *Odsiecz wiedeńska 1683* was, in human terms, a kind of continuation of this exposition. The Wawel exhibition also included a gallery of portraits of Poles, participants in the Relief. In preparing this retrospective, we learnt about the biographies of these people and knew, for example, that Andrzej Potocki, castellan of Cracow and the first senator of the Commonwealth, lost his son Stanisław at Vienna. It was a great trauma because the first-born son was the heir to the family name. And such people continued to fight, despite the bitterness and grief. All the time during our work, there were overtones arising from a broader knowledge of the subject itself. This is why we regret so much the lost catalogue of participants in the Vienna expedition. This is a huge loss, impossible to make up for, especially as it was created on the basis of verified source material, at a time when we needed, and already knew how, to separate the facts from the legends created in the nineteenth century about the period in question.

MG, MW: Thank you very much for the interview.

Comment by Dr Magdalena Piwocka

Professor Jerzy Szablowski, who remembered the two anniversary exhibitions of 1933, in Warsaw and Cracow, was a great admirer of King John III and promoted the awareness about the solemn moments from the Polish history. It was Professor Szablowski who decided to organise at the Wawel Castle an exhibition that would be suitable for the viewers of the second half of the twentieth century and that would also highlight the broad knowledge and enthusiasm of museum professionals. At the beginning of the preparations, our team possessed more enthusiasm than knowledge. But the period of the preparations changed this thoroughly. The "project", as we would say today, took off in September 1981. The Professor based the whole project on the cooperation of two museums: the Wawel Castle and the National Museum in Cracow. Two main collaborators were appointed from the National Museum in Cracow: its

¹⁵ The exhibition *Polaków portret własny*, held by the National Museum in Cracow, which opened on 5 October 1979, became a unique cultural event visited by more than 80,000 people. The exhibition was curated by Marek Rostworowski, then director of the National Museum in Kraków.

director Mr Tadeusz Chruścicki and a prominent expert on weaponry and militaria Prof. Zdzisław Żygulski Jr., associated with the Princes Czartoryski Museum. From Wawel, the organising committee included two directors, Prof. Jerzy Szablowski himself and his deputy, Stefan Zajac, as well as Aleksandra Kietlińska, a historian and registrar at our museum, and two curators of the textiles and militaria, Jerzy Petrus and myself. Prof. Żygulski submitted the “exhibition concept” and the script was developed by both of us, myself and Jerzy Petrus. Prof. Szablowski had a vision of a show that should engage the space of the entire Castle, from the first floor to the end of the permanent exhibition “The East in the Wawel Collection”, including the enfilade of Turkish tents.

The main historical advisors we found among our private acquaintances.

Aleksandra Kietlińska, a historian who had contacts among senior researchers, was always the guardian angel of our team. One of the most significant figures among her acquaintances was Professor Jan Wimmer, a historian and lecturer at the Military University of Technology. The Professor provided us with lists of participants of the relief of Vienna in 1683; it was the result of many years of his research, which he had not yet published. From this emerged the idea of creating a catalogue, a “portfolio of participants”. We also intended to include in it biographies of all the protagonists involved in the conflict; rulers, diplomats, clergymen, courtiers, etc. A magnificent typewritten documentation was produced. Regretfully, its publication was thwarted by the Wawel historian Dr Antoni Franaszek, out of concern that this broad contribution would delay the completion and printing of the exhibition’s catalogue. The second invaluable collaborator was Professor Jerzy Wiśniewski, recommended by Maryla Kałamajska of Warsaw, the then editor of the Catalogue of Historical Monuments in Poland. He was an outstanding expert on political and religious relations in the 18th-century Commonwealth, working at the Wawel State Archives. After a promising three-month query in Cracow, martial law was suddenly declared in Poland. It might seem that this new political situation would paralyse or cool our enthusiasm. Nothing could be further from the truth. This new hardship and challenge has given us additional strength and will to act.

We planned several tours of a few days’ duration and one longer tour, a two-week research trip. The route included museums, churches and monasteries. Monastic archives, collections, sacristies and even church attics opened to us their doors. The episcopal curias sent me the lists of clergy from particular dioceses. We had to know the names and telephones to arrange appointments, and the communication was only through telegrams. Since the postal service and telecommunications were bugged by the authorities at the time, all communication had to be transparent. After one of our first trips, a very fruitful visit to Kielce, Sandomierz and Przemyśl, and following our letters to the bishops there,

we came up with the idea of writing an intent letter to the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Józef Glemp. In the Opole diocese, which was then under the authority of Bishop Alfons Nossol, our letter was published in diocesan circular addressed to all parishes and read during the mass services. After the letter to Primate Glemp, this was repeated in the dioceses of Warsaw and Gniezno. During subsequent tours, we met with kindness and good will from the priests who hosted us. The decision-makers were also keen to further our project; sometimes they gave us additional hints about the new sites or further details about the monuments we had seen. Such was the case of the then deputy director of the Archdiocesan Museum in Poznań, Father Marian Lewandowski, who called us in the evening at the hotel to share additional information.

During the nine tours we undertook throughout the whole country, from March to December 1982, we came across dozens of works hitherto unknown to scholarship and unrecorded in literature: trophies, personal souvenirs, portraits. Due to martial law, however, the settling of foreign loans was complicated, with the exception of Dresden and Budapest. Colleagues from the National Museum in Cracow travelled to Dresden and discussed there the possibility of our loaning from them two Turkish flags and a scale armour traditionally linked with King John III. From the Budapest museums we managed to loan the so-called Sobieski Kaf-tan (originally from the collection of the Esterházy family), Altomonte's sketch for the great painting in Żółkiew depicting the Battle of Vienna, as well as several prints with portraits of foreign politicians and Hungarian commanders Batthyány and Esterházy. The challenge was to acquire for the exhibition a series of six representations of Sobieski's battles from the Schleissheim Palace, held at the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlun-gen in Munich. These battle panoramas, painted by an unknown French painter (probably Pierre Martin), based on accounts from the epoch, constitute a particularly important visual documentation of Sobieski's mil-itary successes. We realised that the loan required expensive insurance, as well as costly professional transportation. And at this point, to quote Joseph Conrad, "fate sent us its angel". This time, it was Professor Michał Komaszynski, a historian from the University of Katowice. An excellent expert on the era of John III, and a monographer of queen Maria Casimire (Marysieńka), in 1982 he travelled to Munich to study the correspond-ence of Theresa Kunegunda with her mother, the queen of Poland, in the archives there. Having arrived in Munich, Professor Komaszynski described our struggle with obstacles in the everyday reality of martial law to the Museum's staff. He recounted the impossibility to buy photo-graphic films to document objects during research, the rationing of petrol, the shortage of soap and cleaning products, and for the rationing of meat, butter and sugar. The result was stunning. He was given a free locum in the Museum's guest rooms, full board, and a contract for the loan of the

battle paintings, together with insurance ten times lower than the original. Soon, packages of what were, to us in Poland in those days, luxury goods, namely, coffee, tea, chocolate, towels, baby diapers or cosmetics, all of them intended for us, the Wawel employees, began to reach me at my address. We received also books, mainly exhibition catalogues, featuring most significant monuments and artefacts from the Munich collections.

The list of consultants also included Dr Henryk Kotarski of the Pedagogical Academy in Cracow, a historian and researcher of the military skills of John III. In the background, there remained “an army of priests”, as we collectively called nuns, parish priests and bishops, in whom the idea of celebrating the victorious king and the glorious moments in our history awakened layers of energy, revived national pride, indestructible optimism and will to assist.

The exhibition became a highly significant event. It was visited by crowds of students and seminarians and by religious tours from all over Poland. The dialogue with the clergy, as I constantly emphasise, was extremely fruitful. Search queries conducted in churches resulted in conservation procedures being undertaken for various religious images, conducted by friends from the Cracow Academy of Fine Arts. The paintings of the Madonnas from the cathedral in Opole underwent conservation, and later, the paintings from Czerna, Otwock, Szczyrzyc and the Franciscan Observant monastery in Cracow. Years later, I realised that the success of the exhibition was not only in terms of scholarly achievements and attendance figures. The especially important “added value” that we acquired with this experience was a faith in people. This trust in partnership and collaboration, as well as the conviction that everything can be accomplished despite difficulties, stayed with me for many years. Of the people most closely associated with this exposition, I would like to mention, above all others, Professor Szablowski. The Professor constantly motivated us with his commitment and enthusiasm. He was a titan of labour, but also a visionary and an artist, who visualised certain artefacts in concrete frames and compositions for the exposition. However, the effects and echoes of the exhibition exceeded the Professor’s sense of foresight. When the exhibition was on show, during martial law and just after its revocation, it turned into a national demonstration, a show of strength of the Polish society which – despite the circumstances – was a unified one. The reception of the exhibition unexpectedly acquired an overtone that was by no means anti-Turkish; it was strictly anti-Russian, and this could be felt very clearly.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- p. 515 Jubilee exhibition *Odsiecz wiedeńska 1683* (The Relief of Vienna 1683), Wawel Royal Castle, Eagle Room. The part of the exhibition entitled ‘Participants in the relief’. Photo by Łukasz Schuster

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