

## BATTLE ICONOGRAPHY IN THE FOREIGN RESIDENCES OF MARIE CASIMIRE (SOBIESKA)

In the spring of 1699, following unsuccessful attempts to gain the Polish throne for the Princes Sobieski, Marie Casimire found herself in Rome where for several years she stayed at the Palazzo Odescalchi and then the Palazzo Zuccari, until in the summer of 1714 she moved to the Blois chateau in France. From the queen's letters to the Elector of Bavaria, Maximilian Emanuel, we know that her residences were filled with various battle scenes showing the military feats of her husband John III and her son-in-law, the elector. The heroism of John III was commemorated in a series of ten canvases which Marie Casimire had ordered in Paris. The queen regarded with the greatest admiration the battle of Vienna and therefore gave it suitable publicity in connection with its successive anniversaries. This purpose was served by funds she had provided for church building in Warsaw and during her stay in Rome by ceremonious celebrations of the anniversaries of the Viennese victory.

When still in Rome she received the first five pictures of the series commissioned in Paris as well as a large portrait of the king. When she settled at Blois she placed two of them over an imposing mantelpiece in her apartment the walls of which were adorned with tapestries showing the war expeditions of the Elector of Bavaria.

In this battle iconography of particular interest is the series of pictured devoted to Sobieski. From the literature on this subject it transpires that two series of paintings were produced: the "Bavarian" series composed of small-sized canvases, also known as the "Dupont" series because of the name of Philippe Dupont, a participant in John III's war campaigns, appearing in the cartouches with commentaries; and the "Żółkiew" series. Only the "Bavarian" (Fig. 13, 14) series made up of eight paintings has been preserved, of which the picture showing the battle of Jazłowiec is signed by

Jean-Baptiste Martin and dated 1705. It is believed that the series was commissioned by Dupont, an artillery engineer of John III, and executed according to his directions, therefore the series is marked by considerable authenticity.

The "Żólkiew" series, ascribed to Altomonte, was composed of seven large canvases of which none has survived, and according to A. Czołowski was produced during Sobieski's lifetime. It is dated more or less at the same time by M. Gębarowicz who moreover believes that three-fourth of the Bavarian series are copies of the Żólkiew paintings. Also, because the series is not mentioned in the Wilanów and Żólkiew inventories compiled following John III's death, he thinks that at the time the pictures were in the possession of Jakub Sobieski.

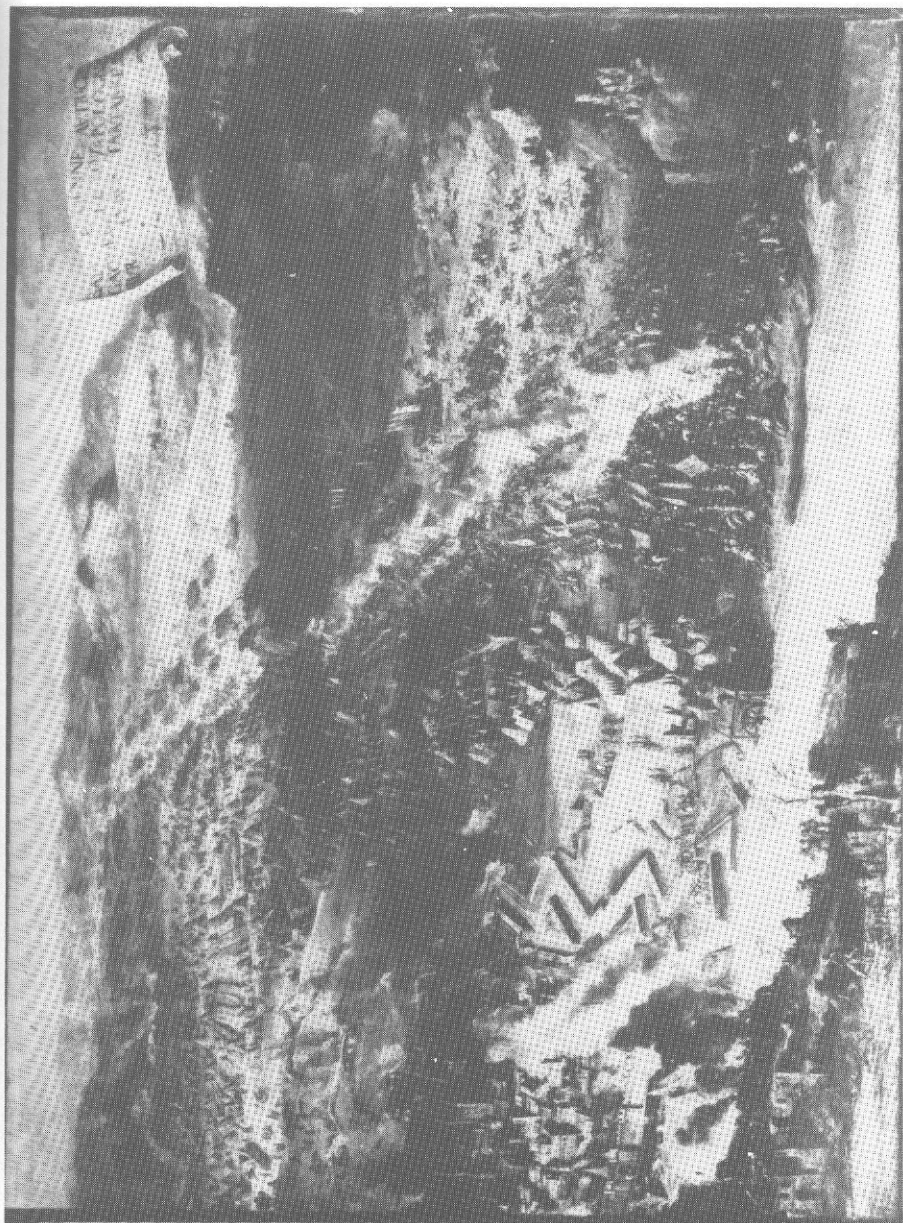
It appears from the above-mentioned letter of Marie Casimire to the elector, that a series of ten canvases - to which Dupont made his by no means small contribution - was executed for her in Paris. However the problem of the execution of two series is unclear, as it is unclear why the "Żólkiew" series numbers seven and the "Bavarian" series eight pictures, although the queen ordered ten. It is possible that for Marie Casimire a series of large canvases (their size is confirmed in the letter to the elector), that is the "Żólkiew" series, was produced, of which five were sent to her to Rome. The remaining five were either kept by Dupont or were dispatched to Oława to remind Prince Jakub about the greatness of his father. Thus the "Żólkiew" series should be dated in the early 18th century, and not as it has been presumed during John III's lifetime. After the death of Marie Casimire in 1716 the pictures probably found their way to Jakub's residence at Oława, and subsequently to Żólkiew. No wonder that they were listed in the Żólkiew inventory as late as 1740 and 1746.

As far as the "Bavarian" series is concerned, the supposition that they were replicas of the "Żólkiew" series and were ordered by John III's daughter Teresa Kunegunda, the wife of the Elector of Bavaria, seems to be correct. When she was in exile in Venice she could have seen the first series and ordered one for herself, though smaller in size. In 1715 she took the pictures, which she had probably obtained in Venice, to Munich and that is how the series found itself in Bavaria.

The series of John III's "war feats" commissioned by Marie Casimire is evidence of her interest in and patronage of the arts, but also of her incredible attachment to the memory of her husband.



13. Portrait of John III Sobieski. Painting by Jean Baptiste or Pierre de Martin. Coll. Bayer. Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich



14. The Battle of Vienna (1683). Coll. Bayer. Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich