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## THE FORTRESS-MONASTERY ON THE WHITE MOUNTAIN (JASNA GÓRA) AT CZĘSTOCHOWA

The monastery on the White Mountain at Częstochowa, one of the most frequented pilgrimage places of Central Europe, was founded in 1382 by the duke Ladislaus of Opole, on behalf of the King of Hungary and Poland Louis d'Anjou (1370-1382). The gothic church and cloister of the Hungarian Order of St. Paul the First Eremite owe their religious importance to the veneration of the miraculous picture of Virgin Mary with the Child Jesus. The icon is of Byzantine *Hodigitria* type, which means one of the images that replicates the famous icon of Our Lady in the Hodegon Church in Constantinople, said to be painted by St. Luke, and purchased by the Emperess Eudocia during her trip to the Holy Land (AD. 438-439).

Venerated in the 15<sup>th</sup> century by the members of the new Polish-Lithuanian dynasty of Jagiellons, it enabled the monks to acquire vast estates of land as well as rich furnishings for the Lady Chapel and many precious gifts in liturgical vestments, illuminated manuscripts, gold vessels and *ex votos*. The proverbial richness of the monastery was a reason that the Hussites from Bohemia assaulted it and plundered it twice, in 1430 and 1466.

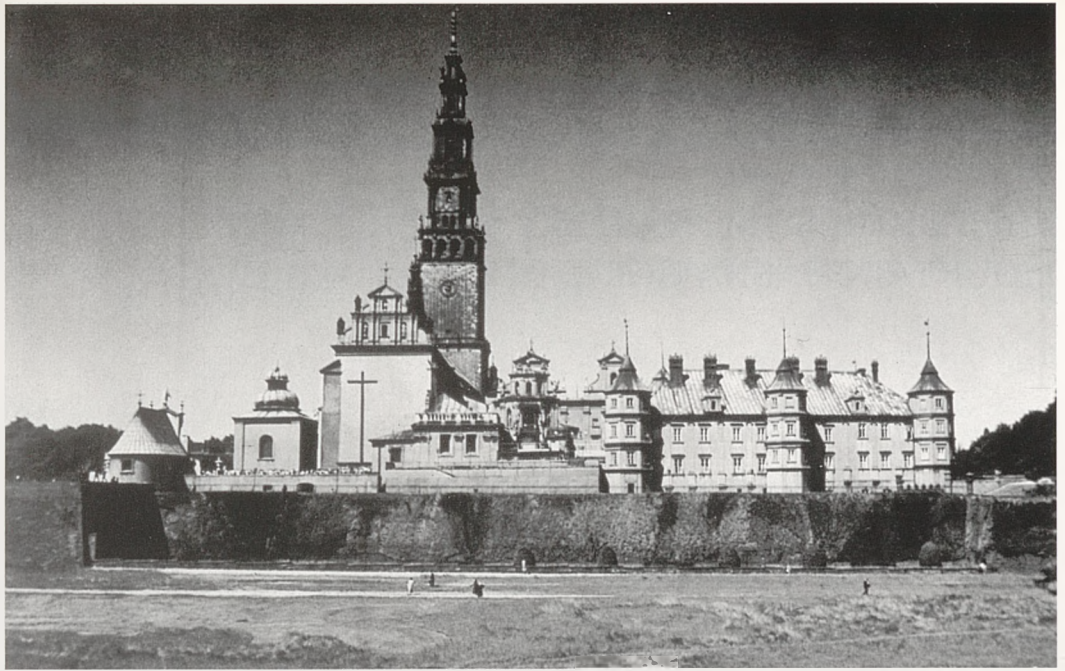
On the other hand the church and convent, situated on the limestone rock of the Jurassic hills on the border between the core lands of the Polish Kingdom (the so called Minor and Major Poland) and Silesia, from the 14<sup>th</sup> century a Bohemian fief, had also a strategic importance.

The protection of the monastery by some kind of fortifications became urgent in times of instability outside the border; as Silesia - being a part of the German Roman Empire - was involved in the Thirty Years War, which started in Prague in 1618. It was the reason that King Sigismund III decided in 1620 to construct, at the cost of the State, a fortress around the sanctuary to defend it against the expected protestant incursion.

The works, probably designed by the Venetian architect Andrea dell'Aqua (b. 1584), started in

01. Fortresses in the western border of Poland in the 17th century (map after Dybas).





1621. They were not finished in 1631, when the engineer, from Grison's region of Switzerland, Jan Zywerth (d. 1636), undertook the job of constructing the missing wall of brick and two bastions at the western side of the fortress. The additional sums of money provided by King Ladislaus IV in 1638 and 1639 helped to bring the construction works to an end in 1641.

The newly erected fortress, called *Fortalicium Marianum*, constructed of brick, was rectangular in shape and had four bastions with casemates on the corners, surrounded by the deep dry moats but without counterscarps. Planned in the Old Dutch System it followed the module of the so called Small Royal Line.

With its garrison of ca. 70-90 friars and ca. 150 soldiers provided with 36 bronze cannons, 100 harquebuses, and ca. 300 muskets, it was sufficient for unexpected inroads of enemy but not sufficient for a regular siege with heavy artillery. Nevertheless it resisted heroically the six-weeks-long siege by Swedish troops during the Polish Swedish war in 1655.

The repair of the fortress after that siege involved some new additions to its defence system, such as the construction of a ravelin before the entrance gate (1677-1681), and the new earthworks all around. Overseen by among others the military engineer and architect Krzysztof Mioszowski, these works were linked with the taking over in 1665 of the command from the hands of friars to the officers of the Royal Army, appointed by King. In cases of danger the garrison could be now increased to 400 soldiers.

In the stormy years of the second Polish-Swedish war at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when





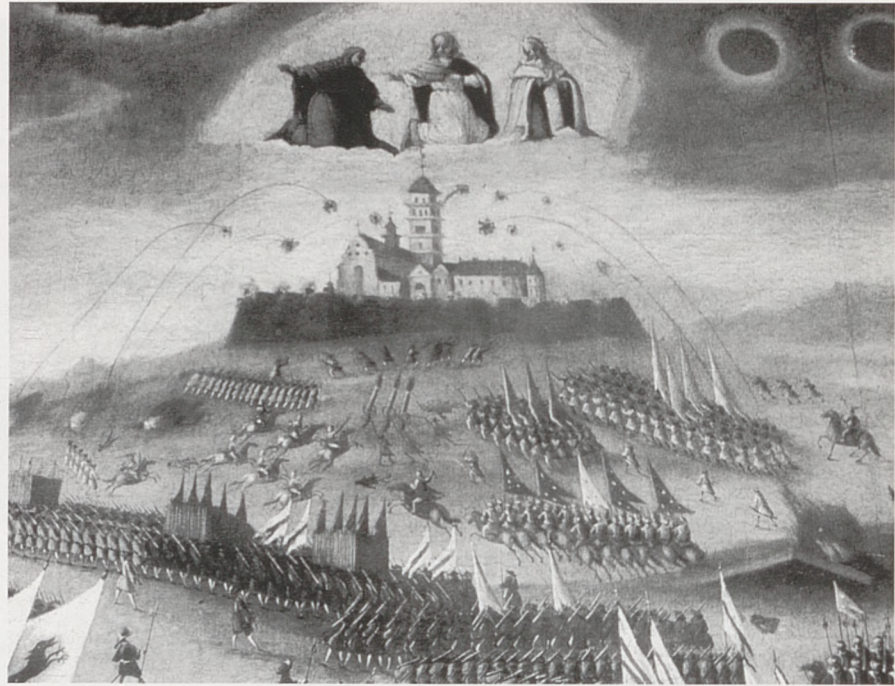
02. The monastery of Częstochowa (photo by Rozanow; Smulikowska).

03. The fortress of Częstochowa (photo by Pasierb, Samek).

04. The icon of Virgin Mary without "vestment" (photo by Pasierb, Samek).

05. The icon of Virgin Mary in "ruby vestment" (photo by Pasierb, Samek).

06. The siege of monastery in 1655. Painting of the 17th century (photo by Pasierb, Samek).



07. The ebony and silver altar of 17th century with Icon of Virgin Mary (photo by Golonka).

08. The fortress of Częstochowa in 18th century. Drawing by Francesco Placidi (photo by Lepiarczyk).

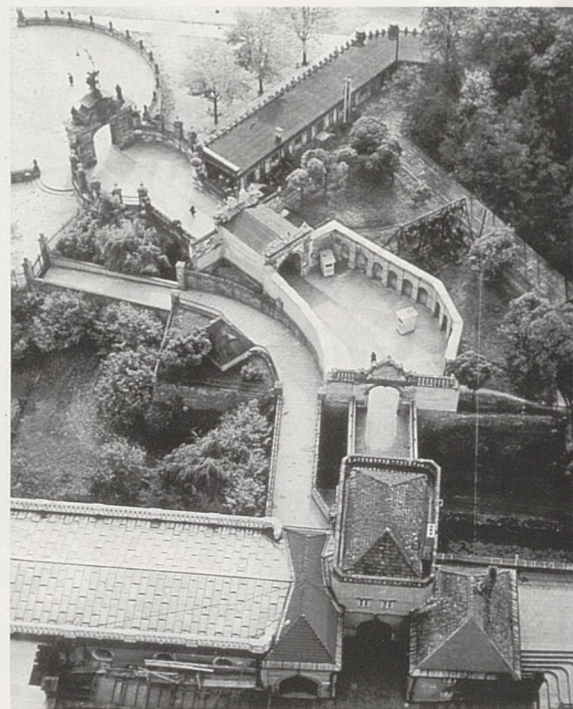
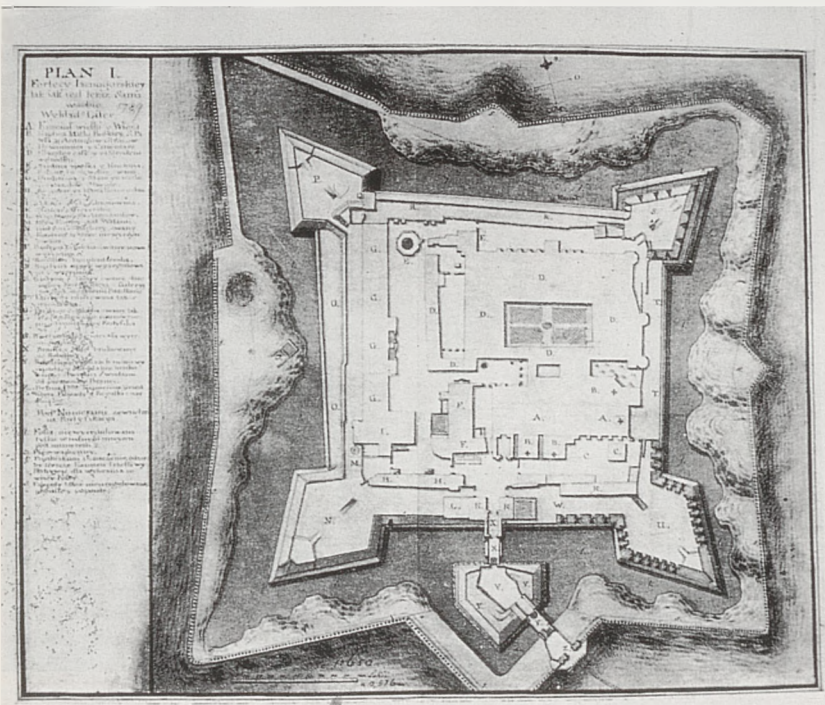


enemy troops approached Częstochowa several times between 1702 and 1709, the fortress was not involved in any serious military action. But in spite of the following peaceful years the defensive system of monastery was augmented in 1711 by an additional palisade of 15.000 stakes and new counterscarps.

The solemn festivities of the coronation of the miraculous icon in 1717 gave a new impetus to modernizing of the fortress. At the expense of Prince Jerzy Dominik Lubomirski the south-western bastion of St. Barbara was rebuilt, and the new imposing entrance gate of stone was constructed on the revelin in 1722. For the new works on the south-eastern bastion of St. Jacob the funds were provided by hetman Józef Potocki (1745), as well as for those in the north east (St. Trinity) by bishop of Cracow Konstanty Felicjan Szaniawski and those in the north-west (St. Roche) by castellan Michał Morstin. In the works between 1722-1745 several foreign master-builders and engineers were involved, such as Jan Christian Limberger, Neugebauer, Giacomo Antonio Buzzini and colonel Christian Dahlke.

All the bastions were enlarged in such a way that on each flank two cannons could be placed. To the previous entrance gates going through the ravelin, that of the Rampard Gate (1631) and of Virgin Mary (1641), two others were added, that of Lubomirski family (1722-1723) and of King Stanislaus Augustus (1767).

This reinforcement of the monastery fortifications was also due to the political changes over the border in Silesia. The conquest of that Hapsburg province by protestant Prussia in 1740-1748 made

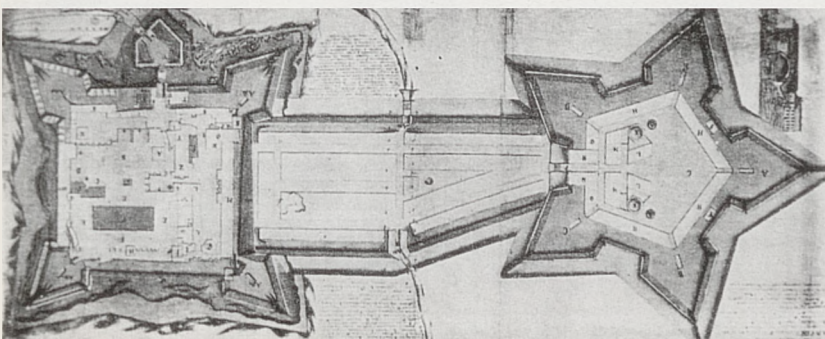


09. The plan of the fortress in Częstochowa of 1789 (photo by Dybas).

10. Entrance gates to the monastery of Częstochowa today (photo by Rozanow, Smulikowska).

11 The first project of building up the defence system of the monastery of 1790 (plan by Szymanski).

12. The Lubomirski Gate (photo IS PAN).



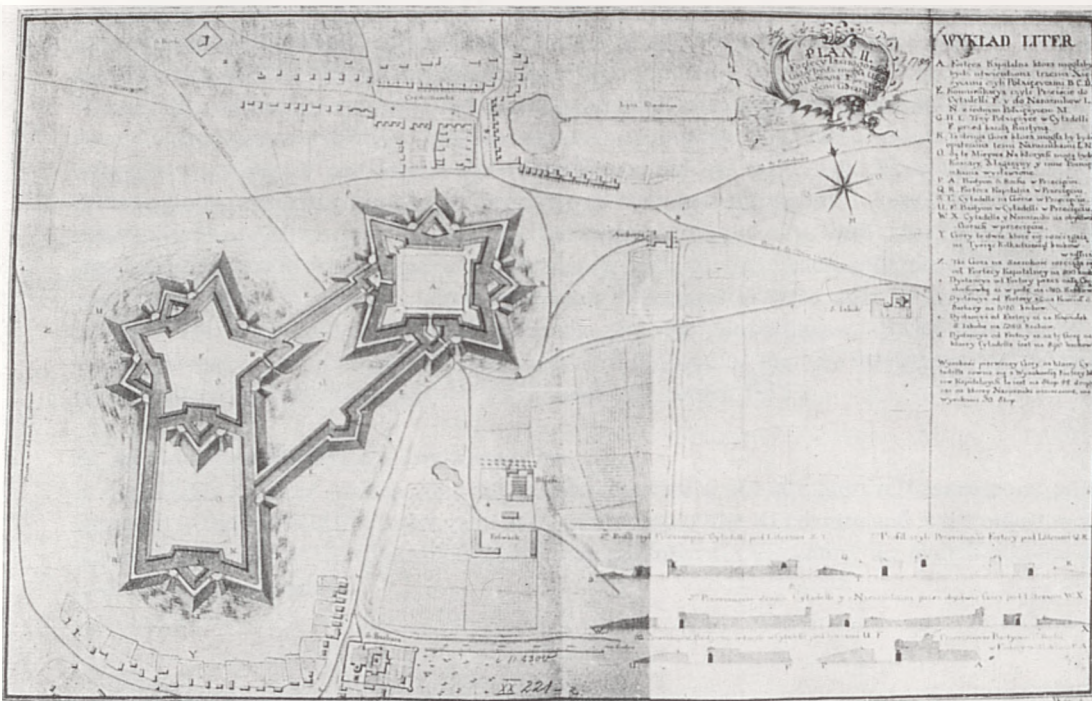
the monastery of Częstochowa an important stronghold on the western border of Catholic Poland. The election to the Polish throne of Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski in 1764 along with the entrance to the country of the Russian military forces, and the civil war of 1768-1772 (so called Confederation of Bar), which followed, were disastrous for the fortress. It had been taken three times by insurgent troops, and finally besieged by Russians in January 1771, who took it in 1772. A part of the fortification was ruined and its military equipment robbed.

The experiences of that civil war highlighted the necessity of enlarging the whole defensive system of the monastery, as decided by the Royal Military Commission after the inspection of 1783. The two engineers of artillery, lieutenant Karol Polewski and colonel Karol Sierakowski, were involved in the preparation of the plans for this enterprise in 1789-1790.

The first one provided for the construction, the west side of existing fortifications, of the new citadel, pentagonal in plan, with the five bastions and a moat, connected with the old fortress by two roads defended by ramparts and moats.

In the more elaborate second project the new pentagonal citadel could be situated more on the south-west side and preceded by the huge horn-work with double caponieres. New ramparts with a second ravelin and two caponieres were to be added to the old fortress.

The realization of these projects could not be achieved because of the Russian invasion of the country in 1792, and – as a consequence – the second partition of Poland. That part of the country, previously under the Polish Crown and containing the monastery of Częstochowa, was taken



13. The second project of building up the defence system of the monastery of 1790 (plan by Szymanski).

14. The fortress-monastery at Częstochowa in 1809 (plan by Szymanski).



by Prussia.

In the following Napoleonic wars and during the short existence of so called Dukedom of Warsaw nothing of importance happened in the monastery and its fortress until the spring of 1813, when – after a short siege – it was surrendered to the Russians. As a small fortress situated on the distant border of the huge empire, and for that reason not easy to maintain, it was perceived as useless. So the tsar Alexander I decided to demolish it. Only the lower parts of the brick walls, later partly restored in 1842-1844, are preserved today.

The once glorious *Fortalitium Marianum* ceased to be a military stronghold, but it continues to retain its religious importance, as the most venerated place in Catholic Poland.

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*Le monastère de la Montagne Blanche à Częstochowa, fut fondé en 1382 et doit son importance religieuse à la vénération de l'image miraculeuse de la Vierge Marie à l'Enfant Jésus. L'église et le couvent, situés sur un rocher calcaire à la frontière entre les terres centrales du Royaume de Pologne et la Silésie, ont aussi une importance stratégique. La protection du monastère devint importante pendant la Guerre de Trente Ans. Pour cette raison le sanctuaire fut entouré par une forteresse afin de le défendre contre les incursions protestantes. L'ouvrage, probablement dessiné par l'architecte vénitien Andrea dell'Aqua (n. 1584) et poursuivi par Jan Zywerth (d. 1636), commença en 1621 et se termina en 1641.*

*La nouvelle forteresse, construite en briques, était de forme rectangulaire, comportait quatre bastions avec des casemates dans les angles et était entourée de fossés à sec profonds mais sans contrescarpe. La restauration de la forteresse après le siège suédois de 1655 apporta quelques ajouts à son système de défense tels la construction d'un ravelin devant la porte d'entrée (1677-1681) et de nouvelles fortifications en terre tout autour. Le système de défense du monastère fut encore renforcé en 1711 par une palissade supplémentaire et de nouvelles contrescarpes. En janvier 1772 le monastère passa sous le contrôle des Russes, une partie des fortifications fut détruite et son équipement militaire volé. En 1792 cette partie du pays, précédemment sous la domination de la Couronne Polonaise et incluant le monastère de Częstochowa fut conquise par la Prusse. Au Printemps 1813 la forteresse se rendit à nouveau aux Russes. En tant que petite forteresse située sur une frontière éloignée de l'énorme empire elle fut jugée inutile. Aussi le Tsar Alexandre Ier décida de la démolir. Seules les parties basses des murs de briques, partiellement restaurées en 1842-1844, sont préservées aujourd'hui.*