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## **Military tradition of the Jasna Góra hill formation**

**T**hese reflections are an attempt to look at the problem of the Jasna Góra fortress and its origin not only from the point of view of history of the army or research on the history of military architecture. I mean a view, as it were, from the inside, from the monastery and sanctuary, taking into consideration its basic functions, including undoubtedly the protection of the miraculous image of Our Lady and looking after pilgrims.

I would like to emphasise the fact that when in 1620 King Zygmunt III Waza (Sigismund III Vasa) made the decision to build the fortifications on Jasna Góra, it was rather to finish the first, a very important and probably thus far underestimated stage, of forming *Fortalitium Marianum*, and not at all the beginning of this process. Obviously some direct factors influenced the king's decision to fortify the monastery, namely: the actual danger menacing the state's border and the monastery itself from the Bohemian states rebelling against the Habsburgs and Silesia where riots were taking place. Zygmunt III, whose foreign policy was in favour of the alliance with Austria, met the emperor's envoy, the Bishop of Wrocław, Karl Habsburg on Jasna Góra in 1620. It is believed that the immediate result of this meeting was the decision to fortify the sanctuary. In spite of the Czechs' defeat in the battle of Biła Góra (November 8th, 1620), thus the decreased threat to the border of the Polish state, the fortification work was not halted, and this foresight, more than thirty years later, during the war with the Swedes in 1655 brought about real results in the shape of the triumphant and fully successful defence of Jasna Góra.

However, *Fortalitium Marianum* - as the son and successor to Zygmunt III, King Władysław IV Waza (Vladislav IV Vasa) called the Jasna Góra fortress in 1639 - would not have been able to take on its final complex form: of a fortified pilgrim centre and the "fortress" of Catholic faith, if it had not been for several important motives, playing a significant part in the history of the monastery. I would like to trace these very motives, bearing in mind the military traditions forming the Jasna Góra hill.

The first question concerns the problem of the existence of a stone building, defensive in nature on the hill from before the foundation of the monastery. The research conducted by the author in the years 1971-1979, during work to drain and protect the ground at the eastern façade of the monastery and the curtain of defence walls, revealed fragments of the prefoundation-building of broken limestone and lime mortar erected directly on the solid rock of the hill. Their outline, visible along 40-45 metres - allows us to reconstruct a straight section of walls supported by two buttresses, spanning between a quadrilateral tower to the north and a polygonal (perhaps hexagonal) tower to the south. These relics, preserved up to the height of 1.5 - 2.5 m, are set apart from the face of the existing monastery premises by about 2 - 2.5 m.

There is absolutely no doubt that the uncovered fragments are the remains of the defence building from before the foundation of the monastery. Here I would like to mention the fact that in the middle of the 14th century Kazimierz Wielki (Casimir the Great) began building throughout the Cracow-Częstochowa Jura Upland about a dozen new border castles and watch-towers making up a defence system along the border with Silesia. In the close vicinity of the mountain of "Old Częstochowa" on which, in 1382 the Pauline monks settled, there existed an imposing castle in Olsztyn. Thus we may cautiously surmise that the uncovered fragments of the building are the remains of a watch-tower, one of the numerous small fortresses of this type erected on the west side parallel to the line of castles, at a distance allowing light signaling. Most probably the fortress on the Jasna Góra hill was to signal possible threats from Silesia to the castle in Olsztyn, about 15 km away. When the Land of Wieluń, after the death of Kazimierz Wielki, was enfeoffed by his successor Ludwig of Hungary to Prince Władysław Opolczyk (Ladislaus of Opole), some of the watch-towers and castles were abandoned and others taken over by private persons. Władysław Opolczyk retained an armed company only in few of them - among others in Olsztyn, which was his main residence. In view of these facts, Władysław Opolczyk's establishment of the Pauline monks' monastery on Jasna Góra in 1382 and consignment of the miraculous picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary to them appears in a different light. The foundation document does not mention fortifications, it only notes a church standing on the hill. However, the meaning of the archeological sources is obvious. In the earliest period of their functioning on Jasna Góra, the Pauline monks had at their disposal surely modest, perhaps unfinished, however existing defence structures. I think that in view of this fact we may talk about the former military tradition of forming the hill of Jasna Góra.

Another problem, greatly significant in forming the idea of *Fortalitium Marianum* is the tradition of the palladium quality of the painting from Jasna Góra. Known to us are written versions of the painting's legendary history, beginning with the oldest one, dating back in its main shape probably to the time of Władysław Opolczyk, *Translatio tabulae*, existing in manuscript, through consecutive ones, printed in the 16th and 17th century. They all contain the description of events proving the role of the painting as a palladium - the miraculous "shield" protecting

the owner of the painting against enemies. The image of the Blessed Virgin Mary was supposed to have played this role in Constantinople, where - as Father Ambrose Nieszporowicz wrote - "*The most Dignified Virgin Mary... took upon herself the merciful duty of the Protector, when each Tuesday the Painting was carried around the Town with Supplications and Processions. Whenever the enemy planned to invade the Town, and had almost attacked the ramparts and walls, [the Painting] was raised on the walls as a shield or a sign of victory*". Naturally the consequence of the appearance of this "sign" was to repel the siege and conquer the enemy. A similar role was played by the painting in Russia, at Belz where Władysław Opolczyk repulsed the Lithuanian and Tartar invasion with the miraculous intervention of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The manner of treating the painting from Jasna Góra - as a palladium - was present in the Polish people's awareness long before the Swedish siege in 1655. The earliest remark concerning the miraculous intervention of the Blessed Virgin Mary present on the painting from Jasna Góra, dates back to 1514 and concerns the Orsza battle. According to the seventeenth century account, which is fully confirmed by the earlier sources: "*When His Royal Highness Zygmunt I, the Polish King was in the middle of a heavy battle against Basil, the Tsar of Moscow, on this very day and at that very hour His Majesty Jan Konarski, the Bishop of Cracow was saying the Holy Mass before the painting of V[irgin] Mary, at a miraculous trial, with the intention that the Lord God might favour the Polish army, for this everyone including the Shepherd supplicated the Blessed Virgin Mary: and just after the church fair they went to their homes, and when they were on their way, there came the message and spread around Poland, of the victory in Moscow, on this day and during that Mass. It was best confirmed by the victor, His Majesty Zygmunt I himself, who acting according to V[irgin] Mary's will, fulfilled his vows, and throwing the banners torn away from the enemy to the feet of the Triumphant V[irgin] Mary, left them as a souvenir*". Thus the events from 1514 are not only the first manifestation of the recognition of the painting from Częstochowa as the palladium of the Polish nation obvious in its meaning. They also provide the information of the treatment of Jasna Góra - also for the first time - as the place of trophies. Up until then the Wawel cathedral with Saint Stanisław's confession was the only one in this respect.

The examples of miraculous intervention of the Virgin Mary of Jasna Góra in wars and sieges can be enumerated - a fairly complete artistic rendering is the painting from Zaplecek presenting the miraculous painting, called *Mensa Mariana*, where among others the following were depicted: Cracow saved in 1672 from the invasion of Turks, Toruń regained from Swedish hands during "The Deluge" and Gliwice freed from Mansweld in 1627. All these military victories over the pagans or heretics were won thanks to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Jasna Góra. Hence it seems that we can unequivocally speak of an old and deeply rooted "military" tradition connected with the miraculous painting. Thus it would be the second component forming the ideal basis of *Fortalitium Marianum*.

We might point to two other significant elements of local tradition. The first of them is the constant fear of raids on the monastery and desecration of the painting. It was a fear well-founded indeed, if we recall the well-known iconoclastic attack of Hussites in 1430, connected with serious damage to the miraculous image, as well as another invasion of the Bohemian army in 1466. It was sent by King George from Pobierady to suppress the rioting townspeople of Wrocław, and returning from Silesia forced the monastery to pay ransom. This last episode fortunately did not bring about the profanation of the image. However, the fear of such a possibility was large, and particularly well justified at the time of reformation. This is why the priests visiting the church on Jasna Góra towards the end of the 16th century paid particular attention to protecting the chapel and the painting. Cardinal Jerzy Radziwiłł stated with satisfaction in 1593 that the miraculous painting of Virgin Mary was “closed with strong and suitable bolts” and “the closing of the chapel is safe and careful”. Of course such protection would not have been sufficient in the case of an armed invasion or war and it may be supposed that the Pauline monks were glad for this reason to hear about the decision of Zygmunt III to build fortifications.

Finally one more significant element - as early as the 15th century the Blessed Virgin Mary of Jasna Góra was considered to be “the Lady and Queen of the world and ours” to use the notion applied in regard to the painting from Częstochowa by Jan Długosz. The title “Queen of Poland” was confirmed long before Jan Kazimierz vows, as early as the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century, both in written sources and in the manner of decorating the picture from Jasna Góra with crowns. It is a separate, very broad problem. What is significant, however, is that the final consequence of this very treatment of the miraculous painting was the conviction of the true presence of God’s Mother on Jasna Góra. This thesis, undoubtedly medieval in origin, was in its most mature form rendered by Father Jan Dionizy Lobzynski in the middle of the 17th century. This theologian often and consistently in his sermons calls the Jasna Góra sanctuary Virgin Mary’s “palace” or “home”, regarded as the private property of Mary’s “heritage”. He calls the chapel with the miraculous painting “the Throne Room” of the palace and its main altar the Royal “Throne”.

It seems that the natural consequence of all these reasons was the completion of Mary’s “palace”, erected to protect this miraculous image playing the role of a palladium with the fortifications against the very real possibility of profanation and above all against heretics.

This is the appearance, with great simplification, of the most important military motives in the tradition of shaping the Jasna Góra fortress. At the beginning of the 17th century when it was being formed, they played a role no less important than the real threat of the border with Bohemia and Silesia where the anti-Habsburg rebellions were spreading. If one looks at the events of 1655 and the miraculous repelling of the seiging Swedish forces from the monastery on Jasna Góra during “the Deluge”, we can see the way in which all the above mentioned motives of the “military” tradition of Jasna Góra hill met in this one, exceptional moment. This

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Situational plan of the Jasna Góra fortress from 1790.  
The Pauline Archive at Jasna Góra

event should be attributed to Father Augustyn Kordecki, who looking at the Holy Image, prayed with the words: "*You are stronger than the destructive culverins*".

Finally, I would like to discuss one more important issue noted only at the introduction. This is the entirely unique, both ecclesiastical and state nature of Jasna Góra. Care of the fortress was passed from the King's hands into those of the Diet even before the years of "*the Deluge*". In consecutive parliamentary constitutions of 1652, 1658, 1676, 1710 and finally of 1764 the monastery received, among others, the profits from the district of Kłobuck, which were appropriated not only for the further construction of fortifications, but also for the maintenance of a special military team with a separately commissioned commander, permanently stationed within the monastery walls. In this way on Jasna Góra there existed a situation having no equivalent anywhere else in Poland. We encounter the fact that in the area under ecclesiastical jurisdiction there functioned an enclave, difficult to delimitate, subject to the state authorities. The situation was somewhat similar on the Wawel Hill in Cracow, yet there the differentiation between areas subject to the State and the Church was much clearer. And it should be remembered that Wawel never played the function of a pilgrimage centre. The authorities of the monastery on Jasna Góra never undermined the decisions of the Diet, whose argumentation can be best presented by the beginning of the text of the parliamentary constitution of 1764: "*As Poland is always pious towards its Most Holy Virgin Mary in the painting in Częstochowa, renowned for its miracles, and receiving Her protection in times of need... that is why we wish to state that we constantly desire the Blessed Virgin Mary's efficient assistance and care for us and the whole Kingdom, with the consent of all the estates of Poland of both nations, expressed by the said constitutions in their proper descriptions, through the power of the present diet*".

It is significant that contrary to appearances, this situation was not always convenient for the monks and at times presented them with difficult decisions. This was the case in the tragic year of 1665, during Jerzy Lubomirski's rebellion, when the Pauline monks maintained their neutrality during the battle between the king's army and rebel forces taking place below the sanctuary walls. The monastery exposed itself to the wrath and reproach of the monarch, who even dismissed the company of the fortress and replaced it with his own divisions and commanders. I quote this event here as it was both significant and characteristic. The Pauline monks felt themselves to be first of all the protectors of the painting and sanctuary, which belonged to all Poles. They did not want and could not become pawns in a temporary political game. At moments of external menace the situation obviously changed, but during an internal fight the duty of the monks was to above all to protect the Miraculous Painting, the sacred place - the mutual property of the whole Nation. It also constitutes an element of the local tradition and influences the entirely singular nature of *Fortalitium Marianum* of Jasna Góra.