

# JAN SOBIESKI

## ANNIVERSARIES OF THE 1683 BATTLE OF VIENNA (FROM 1783 TO 1983) AND ITS HISTORICAL IMAGINATION

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*This article presents how the image of Jan Sobieski evolved between anniversaries of the Battle of Vienna celebrated in Poland from 1783 to 1983. Which figure was celebrated, memorized, and presented during these years? Was it still the same figure of the Father of the Nation, Savior of the Nation and Christianity, Lion of Lechistan, Lightning of the East, and Leader of the Nation? Or a forgotten figure of the past? Keywords: Jan Sobieski, battle of Vienna, ritual practice, anniversary, memory*

*Avtor v članku predstavlja, kako se je razvijala podoba Jana Sobieskega med obletnicami bitke pri Dunaju na praznovanjih med leti 1783 do 1983. Katera podoba je bila pslavljena, spominjana in prikazana v the letih. Ali je šlo za isto podobo očeta naroda, rešitelja naroda in krščanstva, Leva Lechistan, svetlobe vzhoda in voditelja naroda. Ali pa gre za pozabljeno figure preteklosti. Keywords: Jan Sobieski, battle of Vienna, ritual practice, anniversary, memory*

Every nation creates and preserves a certain set of myths. They might be myths of folklore as a national treasure, based on a vision of the elites shaping the collective identity. When Poland lost its independence, more significance was given to the myth of the *Rzeczypospolita*—the Republic of Poland. A separate myth was that of Cracow and Wawel Castle, a city seen as the capital for the longest period of time. Among other sites, the city has tomb hills: the cathedral church on Wawel Hill—where ashes of saints and blessed patrons of the nation were located, of great kings, heroes, leaders, and wise men—and smaller hills such as Krakus, Wanda, and Kościuszko. Their tombs contain the remains of Jan Sobieski, Tadeusz Kościuszko, and Stanisław Poniatowski.

Within this group, one encounters the figure of Sobieski. Who was Jan Sobieski? How was he perceived as a historical personage, a military leader, a defender of Christianity, a king, or a father of the nation? Today, he is a relatively forgotten figure. How did his image change with the passage of years? Extensive historical literature is devoted to Sobieski, but he is also present in numerous historical novels.<sup>1</sup> He distinguished himself for numerous reasons, and students

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<sup>1</sup> He is also present in film adaptations of these novels.

of Polish history are very familiar with his status, but it is largely due to his participation in the Battle of Vienna in 1683 that he entered the history of central Europe.

This article passes over Jan Sobieski as a historical figure. I am interested to a larger degree in how the memory of this battle changed, together with his place in it as the military commander. The Battle of Vienna became an event worth memorializing. It became an element of the history of this part of Europe, including the history of Poland. I look at this figure from the viewpoint of commemorations of anniversaries of the Battle of Vienna (the thirtieth, fiftieth, 100th, 200th, 250th, and 300th),<sup>2</sup> of a form of collective historical and cultural memory. I examine the relationship between historical imagination and the way it is commemorated. I believe that the celebrations of the anniversaries themselves are arranged in order to articulate certain values that allow for the past and memory to be expressed. It might be assumed that subsequent celebrations will differ from the previous ones, if only due to the fact that all of them are creations of separate, intentional act of commemoration, taking place in specific political and social circumstances. At the same time, celebrations belong to the more popular variety of historical imagination.

In line with the interest stated above, I focus on representation emerging from the point of view of commemorating celebrations. I draw my information from press material,<sup>3</sup> the accounts from 1883,<sup>4</sup> academic studies (regarding earlier anniversaries), the accounts from 1933,<sup>5</sup> and more contemporary accounts from 1983.<sup>6</sup> All of the celebrations were arranged within a specific context, most often clearly dominated by political issues.

The celebrations were organized under various political and historical circumstances, and their scope, content, and the way they were carried out greatly depended on the context.

<sup>2</sup> More attention is given to anniversaries of certain key numbers. The 100th anniversary is considered more important than the ninety-ninth. Years in groups of tens and hundreds capture the imagination, a practice that dates back to the Romans. Shorter anniversaries (e.g., the twentieth) have significance if they commemorate events that are widely remembered and valued. They involve participants in the original event that are still living. They are expressions of personal memory. Centennials and longer anniversaries draw on the construction or imagination of collective or social memories to determine their importance and meanings (Frost & Laing 2013: 2).

<sup>3</sup> *Biblioteka Warszawska* (1841–1914), *Prawda* (1881–1915), *Biesiada literacka* (1876–1917), *Gazeta Lecka* (1886–1992), *Tygodnik Mód i Powieści* (1871–1912), *Przyjaciół domowy*, *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* (1859–1939), *Tydzień Literacko Artystyczny* (1874–1879), *Przegląd Tygodniowy* (1866–1904), *Wędrowiec* (1863–1906), *Ognisko domowe* (1883–1888), *Kronika Rodzinna* (1867–1914), *Niwa* (1872–1905), *Świat* (1888–1895), *Mucha* (1868–1952), *Nowa Reforma* (1882–1928), *Krakus*, *Przegląd Powszechny* (1884–), *Dziennik Poznański* (1859–1939).

<sup>4</sup> *Czas*, Kraków 1883, issues 198, 207 (Russian restrictions), 206–208 (celebrations of the anniversary ...), 210 (celebrations of the Sobieski commemoration in Poznań); *Dziennik Polski*, Lviv 1883, no. 208 (anniversary in Lviv); *Dziennik Poznański*, Poznań, 1883, nos. 201, 204 (bans by the authorities); *Gazeta Lwowska* 1883, nos. 207–209 (Lviv celebrations); *Gazeta Narodowa*, Lviv, 1883, nos. 208–209 (Lviv celebrations), 214 (in Paris), 216, 217 (in Rapperswil); *Gazeta Toruńska*, 1883 no. 197 (Sobieski in America), 227 (in Rapperswil), 240 (New York); *Nowa Reforma*, Cracow 1883, no. 209 (in Lviv), 227, 228 (Rapperswil), 242 (New York).

<sup>5</sup> *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* of 1933.

<sup>6</sup> *Trybuna Ludu*, *Gazeta Krakowska*, *Życie Warszawy*, September 1983.

During the partitions of Poland, the celebrations appear to have been more meaningful. The exhibitions showed the personal figure of Sobieski, his deeds, and the bravery of the warriors.

The content of the celebrations differed thematically and ideologically. During the partitions, for example, it seemed illogical and tactless to display anti-Turkish propaganda because Turkey became a shelter for refugees from Poland during the nineteenth-century Polish uprisings.

How should one work with commemorations? What can such studies reveal? I draw attention to several specific traits of commemorating anniversaries as a genre, which allowed them to be utilized in constructing a national identity. Commemorating anniversaries as such is a characteristic phenomenon that might be included in the broader category of commemorative events. They are mostly singled out by the specificity of the event being commemorated. A typology of this type of events is presented in the literature.<sup>7</sup>

Another typology is related to unpleasant or even shameful parts of the past, and was expressed as seven basic categories of dark commemorative events.<sup>8</sup> Here, the evaluation of the events comes to the fore.

Generally, all commemorating events combine historical facts with their contemporary evaluation; they reflect on past occurrences and their relationship to the present. The specificity of such types of ceremonies arises from the fact that they are held on anniversary dates, either annually or after the passage of significant time periods, such as fifty and 100 years, or more. In form and organization, they usually share similarities with a wide range of other types of planned events and festivals. However, it is this focus on remembering that distinguishes commemorative events.

I focus on remembering as a process that includes the construction and retention of that memory. It may incorporate various features: solemn reflection, playful celebration, or something else. Depending on a particular event, remembering may invoke distinct sentiments such as pride, glory, sadness, happiness, humility, shame, anger, or compassion. What has to be emphasized is that memory is something that one still has or has lost, or something in between. It does not form a solid body, a monolith, but it undergoes varying degrees of fluctuation, deviation, or sometimes a significant turn, and, with the passage of time, it definitely loses its sharpness.

Commemoration and anniversaries ought to be treated as cultural performances with script and directing. As cultural performances, they are an aesthetically isolated and sublime way of communication, shaped in a special manner and presented to the audience. One can

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<sup>7</sup> National days and anniversaries, independence days, major anniversaries of independence or nationhood, founding days (e.g., of cities), religious anniversaries, protests or oppositional events, war remembrance days, battles, other historical events, cultural anniversaries, buildings and constructions, corporate and product anniversaries, the structure of commemorative events, authenticity, and contestation (Frost & Laing 2013: 6–7).

<sup>8</sup> Dark exhibitions, dark re-enactments, national days of mourning or remembrance, memorial services and concerts, significant anniversaries, dark parades, marches and processions, and dark festivals. In contrast, the whitening of commemorative events is also mentioned (Frost & Laing 2013: 36–38).

use these events at the level of content, script, reception, and their impact; thus, categories of time, place, organizers, ways of acting, scenarios, strategies, participators, main characters, and minor features are relevant. In the case of enactments, they seem to be not only the carriers of a set of meanings (a part of communication); the other point is evoking what emerges during the performance.

From the viewpoint of script, the commemorative events are typically designed with the intention of affirming and reinforcing memories that provide a sense of heritage and identity. The concepts of heritage and identity are what seem to be at stake, and what both organizers and participants value and wish to preserve for future generations. Not all participants, however, tend to agree on the detailed issues: a commemorative event's priorities, message, and interpretation of the past. The meanings of events are often contested, and in the case of commemorative events the level of contestation may be very high and difficult to resolve. Nonetheless, this article disregards the contestation of commemorative events.

To sum up, commemoration of anniversaries belongs to a category of practices that commemorate and relate (or narrativize) collective consciousness. One might ask why these very forms of ceremonies, and not others, became thinkable and meaningful at a given moment, which also points to the manner in which the struggle of discourse is played out.

In this context, a broader question might be posed: whose memory was restored most often? Who was revived most often? Each social field generates heroes, every epoch creates a new one, and wars and crises all have different major names. During a lack of independence, there would be partisans, outlaws, or great figures of the past. During the lack of a state, there would be a king of a former state, a guardian of Europe, and Christianity. There would be princes, generals, leaders, founders, fathers, teachers, professors, patriarchs, wise men, priests, and military men. In the words of Tadeusz Bujnicki, such figures were mostly soldiers and priests.

There is another feature specific to war-related anniversaries. War remembrance days may be arranged in such a way as to articulate collective or personal grief that otherwise has no outlet for expression. During difficult times, it can serve to cheer people up. In the case under discussion here, the point of reference for the anniversaries is the Battle of Vienna, also known in Polish as the "Relief of Vienna" (*Odsiecz Wiedeńska*). As a battle, it constitutes a specific event that undergoes commemoration. However, in all anniversary celebrations, especially in Poland, the figure of Sobieski comes to the fore. Consequently, the elements usually constituting the commemoration of battles have been subsequently modified. The role of the battlefield (battle noise, tactics, and weapons) is replaced by elements that, on the one hand, are related to the military (marches, weapons, and banners) but, on the other hand, emphasize signs pointing to victory and the main figures of the battle.

What is necessary is a focal point, a symbol that draws attention and triggers the desire for ritual and ceremony. In the case of commemorative events, a date provides that centerpiece (Connerton 1989). This article presents the material chronologically, beginning with the oldest forms of commemoration. I start with a sketch of the political context and then move on to the description of events.

FIRST EXHIBITION OF THE TURKISH TROPHIES,  
CRACOW, NOVEMBER 1683 (1684)

Those events—although, in a sense, the first in a series of subsequent ones—did not possess a commemorative character because they mostly comprised trophies and victory signs, and their presentation to the general public. They took place, first of all, in Cracow, but also to a lesser degree in Warsaw and Zhovkva, Sobieski's ancestral town.

The big tent of the vizier was erected on the outskirts of the city, and a small part of the trophies were displayed. This made an impression on people and can be seen as the first exhibition in an entire future series.

On Christmas Eve, Sobieski made a votive offering of a Turkish banner in the cathedral at the tomb of St. Stanislaus.

In Warsaw, a mass was held.

The events of the following year, 1684, ought to be treated as a continuation of a display of war trophies.

Exhibition of the tents that used to belong to the vizier, displaying the richness of their designs, embroidery, and so on;

In July, a display of the vizier's tents was held in Zhovkva.

The trophies presented on these occasions were intended to depict the position the former state of Poland held within Europe, to demonstrate its strength and power. Gradually, a myth surrounding the leader was born, and the first representations of Sobieski in various aspects started emerging.

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY, 1733

The first major anniversary took place at a unique moment in time, which influenced the manner of its commemoration. It was the year when Frederick Augustus II was crowned as Polish King Augustus III. This event overshadowed the celebrations. Two days before the very day of the anniversary of the victory, the funeral of the former King Augustus II took place. However, there was another, symbolic funeral of Sobieski, whose body had been temporarily buried in the Capuchin church in Warsaw.<sup>9</sup> In this case, one can already speak of an externalization of collective memory, and memories become increasingly conscious in the course of celebrating the anniversaries. In this particular case, the commemoration was overshadowed by the burial of the regnant king. Not much can be said about that commemorative event, it seems, except that the memory of Sobieski and his military action was quite vivid. Probably there were no longer any witnesses that could provide a first-hand account of the victory, but a large number of living people still remembered news about the event from their childhood.

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<sup>9</sup> *Tron pamiątek ...* (1996: 26).

A fiftieth anniversary falls at a period of time when memory metamorphoses into commemorative forms available for the new generations, as the generation that holds its childhood memories begins to pass away. The hero figure vanishes together with its generation, and the memory that surrounds the figure and the events becomes increasingly shaped by the expectations of the living.

### HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY, 1783

The centennial of the Battle of Vienna also took place at a special moment in time. This was the period of King Stanisław August Poniatowski's reforms, only a few years after the First Partition of Poland. In the face of military defeat, the threat of increasingly powerful neighboring states, and a necessity to introduce changes, the era's climate contributed new elements to the commemorations.

The monumental sarcophagus of Sobieski was placed in St. Leonard's Crypt, and its project was modified by King Stanisław Poniatowski himself.<sup>10</sup> The crypt was designed in the form of three Roman arcades, which according to some people resembled a triumphal arch.

With the view of new threats, the focus on the person of Sobieski became the leitmotif of the commemorations of the great victory at Vienna, and Sobieski's knightly virtues and heroic deeds were to become a model to follow for the contemporaries.

Memory is employed to provide references to the contemporary situation. The manner of conducting commemorative events becomes a part of contemporary political discourse, and the figure of Jan Sobieski gains new splendor and vitality.

### TWO-HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY 1883 CELEBRATIONS IN THE SHADOW OF THE THREE EMPIRES

The bicentennial of the Battle of Vienna, which occurred after Poland had lost its independence, was commemorated in several large towns and dozens of smaller towns under the rule of Russia, Austria, and Prussia. Due to the different attitudes of the respective authorities to the anniversary, the event was celebrated in a number of ways. The official celebrations were conducted in Cracow (in the Austro-Hungarian Empire), which was mentioned in the press in Poznań (in the Prussian Empire) and totally forbidden from being referred to in Warsaw (in the Russian Empire). In any event, the figure of King John III Sobieski was present in numerous Polish journals of the time; however, it could be treated as a result of the growing interest in history, in commemorating these elements that were vanishing together with the

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<sup>10</sup> *Tron pamiątek* ... (1996: 24).

increasing modernization throughout Europe, during those times of imperial apogee both worldwide and in Europe.

In Poland under foreign rule, these events were part of a wider stream of experiences, and these ways of commemorating past glory were used to evoke certain national sentiments. Thus, it is relevant to ask how it felt to be a Pole celebrating this anniversary and what the celebrations meant to their participants.

Commemoration sustains historical imagination,<sup>11</sup> and historical imagination finds expression in events, celebrations, museum exhibitions, magazines, and books. The main celebrations in Cracow had to overshadow Vienna's events. The main focus of this article is the mood these celebrations must have generated, and the way that Sobieski was represented.

### *Cracow*

There were few ways of celebrating and few ways of commemorating the figure of Sobieski. This is what can be extracted from press materials:<sup>12</sup>

A Polish committee for the commemoration was formed: its sixty members held their first meeting on 27 March, chaired by Canon Chelmecki. A representative for the Imperial Council, Prince Konstanty Czartoryski, vice-chairman of the Prussian House of Lords, was elected chairman of the committee by acclamation. Senior tax commissioner Pius Twardowski and A. Miller, inspector of the Galician Railway of Archduke Charles Louis, were chosen vice-chairmen, the president of the Ognisko society, Baron Alfons Gostkowski, was elected the secretary; Grzegorz Smolski and Karol Olchowicz vice-secretaries, and attorney and doctor of law Duniecki, Antoni Kaczorowski, the secretary of Hungarian-Galician Railway, and Korytyński were chosen cashiers. The committee was to establish contact with the central Lviv committee, chaired by member of the Prussian House of Lords Prince Adam Sapieha, and to lead its activities in cooperation with the national committee (*Czas* 1883, nos. 206–208).

The inhabitants of Galicia, unfettered by prohibitions, strove to invest the anniversary celebrations with a magnificent and rich character, and at the same time to give them dignity and solemnity appropriate for Poland's situation. Sensing that during the commemoration Sobieski would not be granted a prominent position proportional to his role in the Battle of Vienna,<sup>13</sup> it was decided not to participate in the events in Austrian territory, but to limit the presence to local activities.

The main highlights of the celebrations comprised the following (*Czas* 1883, issue 206):  
On 2 September, unveiling a bronze commemorative plaque in the Cloth Hall;

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Edwards pointed out the fact that the last two decades of the nineteenth century were a period of significant development of historical activities at the popular level in England. According to her, the cult of historical values and their commemoration took numerous forms (Edwards 2012: 18).

<sup>12</sup> Wojciech Fijalkowski mentions that commemoration of this anniversary largely extended the borders of the country and spread to the Polish emigration communities in the U.S. and France (1996: 41).

<sup>13</sup> A catalogue from Vienna, including the information that "only the Poles kept away from the intentions of the Vienna District because they were simultaneously organizing a separate exhibition in Cracow to commemorate King Jan III Sobieski."

Jan Matejko's painting *Sobieski at Vienna* was exhibited in the Cloth Hall, drawing crowds of spectators;

Preparation for a historical display of museum pieces from Sobieski's era;

A decision was made to erect a monument of Sobieski (5 meters high) in Shooters' Park (*Park Strzelecki*) in Cracow;

A commemorative medal struck, with a bust of Sobieski in a crown and a breastplate.

Other elements of commemorating the bicentennial of the Battle of Vienna included various local initiatives, press articles, and publications,<sup>14</sup> and also public information on commemorations in Vienna and abroad.<sup>15</sup>

### *Warsaw*

In Warsaw, celebrations were forbidden by the Russian administration. An order was issued to the press not to print any mention about the celebrations, not even the name of Sobieski. Under Russian rule, the anniversary was not celebrated; the authorities made it difficult, or even impossible, to maintain contact in this respect with Cracow.

A circular letter was issued by Iosif Gurko, the Warsaw-based governor-general of Poland, forbidding the press to spread any information about the Cracow commemorative events. It was forbidden to mention the name of Sobieski or Matejko (*Czas* 1883, nos. 198, 207).

### *Poznań*

There were some limitations because an order was issued forbidding the participation of students in the celebration of this anniversary. Nonetheless, many small-scale anniversary activities were held in small towns. There was a lecture by a historian, Kazimierz Jarochoowski, with the polonaise "Jan Sobieski" played by a violinist, and three beautifully arranged *tableau vivants*: "Austria and the Pope Beg the King for Support," "The Victors' Entry into Vienna," and "Faith, Hope, and Charity" (*Czas* 1883, issue 210). In the evening, the houses inhabited

<sup>14</sup> "Song on the Victory of Sobieski at Vienna," Maria Skidmore, San Francisco, transl. Seweryna Duchcińska; publications on the subject of Jan Matejko's works, "Sobieski in Krasnopuszcza," French voices on the Battle of Vienna, Voices of Contemporary Germans on King Jn III Sobieski and his Participation in Freeing Vienna from the Turks in 1683, *Biesiada literacka*, pp. 182–183, 186; LucyanTatomir (43, 44, 45); pp. 166–167; 170 (46, 47, 48), "Okruszyny," "Jan III the Conqueror of the Turks," "Polish Landowner from the Battle of Vienna" (a card from the social history of the seventeenth century, pp. 12–163), *The Battle of Vienna. A Drama in Five Acts with a Prologue and an Epilogue*. First prize at a contest in Cracow held to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Vienna. Written by Wincenty Rapacki.

<sup>15</sup> 12 September, Vienna. At the Vienna Music Association (*Wiener Musikverein*) there was an event staged with besieged Vienna. The Turks in characteristic tableaux: Kara Mustafa carried in a litter, followed by Turkish Janissaries, then the mayor of Vienna—Liebenberg—with his council, and the German and Austrian army led by Count Stahremberg. The rest of the program was devoted to the Poles: first there was a march of Polish infantry, then King Sobieski, royal Prince Jacob, and many Polish gentry. Later the Hussars with long lances, all in the armor with wings and covered in tiger skins. All of the Polish troops paraded in front of the archdukes: Karl Ludwig, Rainer, Ludwig Victor, and Eugen (2), "Annual Celebrations of 13 September in Rome" (3), "Tapestries Depicting the Battle of Vienna, from Burg" (4).



by the Poles were illuminated. Thus, modernity accompanied the past, or rather modernity presented itself as capable of similar vividness as the glimpses of the past.

According to the press in Prussia and Poznań it was better, but still impossible, to dream of unreserved manifestation of patriotic sentiments. The circular letter from the Prussian Minister of Education, Gustav von Gossler, banned students of higher education establishments from participating in all types of celebrations commemorating Sobieski, even outside the school; a circular letter from Kleve to the teachers instructed them that the schools were neither allowed to organize any celebrations, nor expected to provide classes on that particular date (*Dziennik Poznański*, 1883, issue 201, 204).

Despite certain difficulties in a number of large and small towns, a variety of anniversary events were initiated and arranged on a small scale. Quite numerous examples of these may be found in the press material published in Cracow, Poznań, and Toruń.

### *Lwów (Lviv)*

In 1883, on the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Vienna,<sup>16</sup> the City Council of Lviv decided to erect a monument to honor King Jan III Sobieski, who was born near Lviv in the small town of Olesko, and had his urban residence at Market Square (*Ploshcha Rynok*) no. 6, where he often stayed. The statue presents him wearing national dress: a robe known as a *kuntush* and a long garment known as a *zhupan*. The king is sitting in the saddle of a rearing horse, which is jumping over broken arms. This form of representation draws attention to the important military achievements of the monarch. The statue resembles the one in Warsaw, which was erected in 1787. The model was made by a Viennese foundry that belonged to Arthur Krupp, whereas the pedestal was constructed in the workshop of the Lviv sculptor Julian Markowski. On 20 November 1898, the statue was triumphantly unveiled and since then the statue has become a favorite place for photographers. In 1950 the statue was moved to Poland and, after restoration, it was placed in Gdańsk on Wood Market Square (*Targ Drzewny*).

In 1898, in the center of the park on Holy Spirit Square (*ploshcha Sviatoho Dukha*) a statue of King Jan III Sobieski was erected at public expense, following a project by the sculptor Tadeusz Barącz. The periphery is also a space of complex patterns of agency. Near Zolochiv (Pol. *Złoczów*) is Pomoryamy (Pol. *Pomorzany*), the former estate of the Sobieski family (*Biesiada literacka*, 1889).

In Galicia, there were celebrations at Zhuravno (Pol. *Żurawno*). The commemoration of the victory at Zhuravno was to begin with a memorial service and to finish with a speech to the public and a procession to the statue of Sobieski erected on the Poberaż hill (*Gazeta Narodowa* 1883, 208–209).

In the town of Kalush (Pol. *Kalusz*), a statue of Sobieski was erected on the embankments where Sobieski fought against the Tartars. The town council proclaimed a celebration of the

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Edwards writes about the action of the Society for Photographing Relics of Old London, which produced a series of photographs connected with city improvements (Edwards 2010: 4).

anniversary because Sobieski was also the administrative official (*starosta*) of Kalush, and the town's main square was to be named after Sobieski (*Gazeta Narodowa* 1883, issue 208–209).

Under foreign rule, when Poland was not independent, it became significant that people lived in past times and became part of an increasing mass spectacularization of reality. What was their way of employing memory? What was their categorization of the event?

## TWO-HUNDRED-FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY 1933 CELEBRATIONS IN THE INDEPENDENT STATE

What characterized these times? The celebrations took place in an independent Polish state. The figure of Sobieski as the military leader was commonly known and it provided the majority of Poles with a symbol of former power and greatness of the *Rzeczypospolita*. However, 1933 marked the beginning of the increasing power of Germany and a growing sense of threat in Poland. However, most importantly, the commemorative events had an official character. The anniversary was celebrated in Warsaw, mostly at the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw and at Wawel in Cracow.

Cracow: Exhibition at Wawel Castle.<sup>17</sup>

The parade of twelve regiments of cavalry at Błonie, a festival of Polish cavalry.

Warsaw: a mass at the Capuchin church attended by President Józef Mościcki and the government.

Procession from the center to the statue of King Sobieski in Agrykola, with people enacting the historical characters. Scouts and legionaries paid homage to the king.

The double exhibition at the National Museum on the 400th anniversary of the birth of Stefan Batory.

## 1983 CELEBRATIONS IN THE SOCIALIST PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF POLAND

Sobieski did not have good fortune in the 1983 celebrations of the anniversary of the Battle of Vienna. Here, several explanatory remarks are also called for. The political background: in 1978 a Polish cardinal was elected pope (he made his first visit to Poland in 1979), there were national strikes in 1980 and 1981, the Solidarity movement, martial law (the pope's visit in June 1983, both to the Capuchin church in Warsaw and to the sarcophagus in Cracow). What characterized these times?

It was a half-celebrated anniversary. In Cracow there was a display at Wawel Castle, an exhibition catalogue (history of celebrations abroad), and a military-historical festival. In

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<sup>17</sup> Information from Tron pamiątek (1996: 41).

Jan Sobieski, *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, 1933, September 10 (cover)



The 300th anniversary in the Wawel Castle 11 September 1983. From: *Tron pamiątek 1696-1996 ku czci Jana Sobieskiego w trzechsetlecie śmierci* (katalog wystawy) Muzeum Pałac w Wilanowie, Warszawa 1996.

Warsaw there were major exhibitions at the Royal Castle and the palace in Wilanów. In Vienna postcards memorialized the victory. The events were attended by President Wojciech Jaruzelski.

When there were no leaders, or when leaders did not meet the expectations (as in the case of the November Uprising), authority was taken over by poets, who outlined the vision rather than creating political programs. Their poetry’s power and meaning lay in the fact that it prophetically explained the importance of history (national distress) and formed the basis for something more than thoughts of mere survival and the rebirth of a nation.

Commemorative events combine two key features: remembering something important and a special date. It is this combination that distinguishes them from other types of events.

Practices of making him a father of nation: why Sobieski is not a father of the nation.

Date	Anniversary	The figure and meanings evoked
1683 (1694)	—	Military leader, savior of Christianity
1733	50 years	
1783	100 years	In the arts: Lion of Lechistan, Lightning of the East
1833		Former king, a great military leader
1883	200 years	Alternative model or a ruler faithful to the obligations, generating solidarity
1933	250 years	State celebrations
1983	300 years	Official celebrations

Organization of commemorative celebrations of the victorious Battle of Vienna has not always had the same formal and ideological content. Instead, the scenarios significantly differed, depending on changing political determinants.

In more recent times, there was a change in the evaluation of Polish participation in the Vienna campaign and relieving the capital of Austria. During the partitions and foreign rule, Austrian and German scholars and writers attempted to eradicate the memory of the Polish contribution to this great historical event, whereas the Poles attributed credit for the victory almost solely to Polish armies and Sobieski.

As can be seen, the anniversaries were solemnly celebrated, above all, in two cities: in Cracow and Warsaw. It was influenced by two issues: Sobieski’s body was buried in a tomb in Cracow, at a place reserved for the most distinguished Poles, and the heart of the military commander was moved to Warsaw and buried in the Capuchin church in 1773. On the other hand, the earliest events devoted to the Vienna victory—the displays of trophies and commemorative events—took place in Cracow and Warsaw. This tradition is over 300 years old now.

Local celebrations were an act of agency related to a process that connected and transmitted the local into the national or civilizational. There are too few data to develop this topic any further; it seems, however, that smaller communities are more conservative and evolution from the significant event, through political contexts, to an empty event proceeded more slowly than in the urban environment.

## CONCLUSIONS: HISTORICAL IMAGINATION

This article showed how the commemorative anniversaries of the Battle of Vienna were reflected in Polish printed materials and presented in a variety of forms in the press, and how the anniversary was celebrated in towns inhabited by Poles but belonging to separate states. As mentioned above, for an anniversary, the date provides a form of authenticity and justifies the organization of the event. Focusing on the date in these cases broadcasts an idea that it is a special day, when something important happened in the past, and is worthy of being remembered in the present. There was an expectation to grasp the time and to rematerialize it, and the manner of achieving this aim reveals the changing historical imagination of the organizers.

What does the material discussed indicate? It is clear that there are shifting practices of memorialization, historical appreciation, and identity formation. In the beginning, these practices focused on presenting the banners won in battle and the tents, confirming the victory of the Polish army. This is a customary element of a victory, making it possible to understand its dimensions. Later, the goal of celebratory events was to deservedly glorify their main figures, as was expected by the participants in the ceremonies, who rewarded such an approach with huge appreciation. During the partitions, former military leaders served as models for younger generations. Under occupation, Sobieski was presented as a former and ideal king, a leader, and an educated person. Pierre Nora pointed out that history, nation, and national development form the oldest collective traditions (1989: 4). During those times, the image of Sobieski acquired new expression; an alternative model of a ruler faithful to the obligations undertaken.

With the passage of time, the goal of the commemorations was to renew the old, fading portraits of Sobieski and past glory, and to preserve them for the young. It is a sign of the situation having changed, and that the former events and their heroes do not have the same, great significance for current times. Later, the goals of commemoration change again. After independence was regained, the figure of Sobieski became part of a larger myth of the old Republic of Poland.

Currently, emphasizing a key date and a significant number of years fits well with the way popular media are constructed. Knowledge becomes reduced to a concise piece of information. It provides an easily digested news event, a minute or two in the evening news program, or a good photo in a newspaper.

At the end of the seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth century, knowledge of the victory and role of Sobieski was spread via manor houses and was familiar in the circles of the aristocracy and gentry. In the later years, information circled more widely. Late nineteenth-century historical consciousness was spread by means of illustrated books and print media.<sup>18</sup>

Did Sobieski gain the status of an icon? When did he lose it? Or has the icon begun to

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<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Edwards also adds that the late nineteenth century was fueled by photography, but mostly by illustrations, paintings, and prints. In her opinion, time reconstructs narratives and leads to democratization of historical sensitivity.

fade and, if so, why did this happen? What did Sobieski symbolize? The roots of tradition and the myth of historical imagination are constantly forged, transmitted, and reconstructed.

In the course of 300 years, this figure has changed in its portrayal. The stress shifts from the victorious commander of a great battle on a European scale, a defender of the Christian faith, and a king of the powerful Republic of Poland, towards the nineteenth-century depiction as a patron of science and art, and a ruler responsible for issues of state. Later he turns into a mere figure from history textbooks.

As can be observed in the material cited, commemorative events in subsequent years often encountered obstacles (the death of a regnant monarch, a threat to the state, partitions, and the pope's visit to Poland), which only serves to confirm the fact that the form of ceremony is shaped by current events. Commemoration of anniversaries became more vital during the loss of independence (1883). Later, the relevance of the figure and his deeds decreased, although threats to the country usually served to enliven the commemorative celebrations, and Sobieski was then shown as an old model of civic or military virtues.

Today Sobieski is a historical figure, part of the real glory of the past. As in former anniversaries, the celebrations evoked patriotism and hope, and then after the Second World War he became a figure limited to the interest of the army and soldiers. He does not evoke any intense feelings, like many historical personages of the past. Contemporary celebrations have become part of the state routine.

One encounters an empty ritual, removed from its original meanings. Naturally, one might wonder what was shown and what was not presented during commemorative ceremonies. Communicating the coded meanings is significant, but the key to answering the question of topicality lies in the reception of the ceremonies, in experiencing them, and in the results of participation in their representations. The scholars of the performative trend would call it an interpretation, which is not only a vehicle of established meanings but rather a means to generate this, which is born via participation in every such event. Not only the experiences themselves are shared, but also the framework for their understanding, which is related to the historical imagination of the participants.

Based on the descriptions of commemorations above, it is possible to claim which emotions and meanings were evoked in their course. One might conclude that evoked meanings change. On the one hand, the level of tension and fascination decreases (it was the highest in 1883), and on the other hand an empty ritual emerges—devoid of significance, an occasion for entertainment and social gathering.

In my opinion, there is no rule stating that the fiftieth or 200th anniversaries are particularly important. It appears that the first anniversaries resonate the strongest. The fiftieth anniversary involves the last living witnesses. A centennial has some import. The later celebrations of the events depend on mutual relations between a given event and the current situation. If some vivid references to the past are available, then the commemoration finds additional expression. If there are none, commemoration turns into an empty ritual.

According to Benedict Anderson, limitedness is one of the essential characteristics of

the nation as an “imagined political community” (Anderson 1983: 19); commemorative rituals comprise an element that supports community. On the other hand, as a result of such activities the symbolical borderlines of old and current notions change, imparting new form to the same representations. In the case of such distant anniversaries, the differences are more pronounced than in the case of close, annual anniversaries.

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## JAN SOBIESKI, OBLETNICE BITKE LETA 1683 PRI DUNAJU (1783–1983) IN ZGODOVINSKA IMAGINACIJA

Vsak narod ustvarja in ohranja vrsto mitov. Med poljskimi je bil pomemben mit o bitki pri Dunaju in o vlogi Jana Sobieskega, ki so ga dojemali kot zgodovinsko osebnost, vojaškega vodjo, zagovornika krščanstva, kralja in očeta naroda. O tem, danes v veliki meri pozabljenem vodji, avtor v razpravi razbira spreminjanje podobe v več kot tristo letih od obleganja Dunaja, od dogodka, ki je zaznamoval zgodovine tega dela Evrope, vključno s Poljsko. Komemoracije obleganja in bitke pri Dunaju, ki so se zgodile ob 30., 50., 100., 200., 250. in 300. obletnici, so tudi oblikovale del kolektivnega zgodovinskega in kulturnega spomina.

Spominske slovesnosti ob obletnicah je treba obravnavati kot kulturne prireditve s scenarijem in režijo, torej kot estetsko izolirane in s pridvignjenim načinom komuniciranja. Pomembne kategorije izvedbe so bile čas, kraj, način igranja, tekst scenarijev, strategije deležnikov in glavnih likov. Obletnice so bile praznovane v zelo različnih obdobjih Poljske. Tako se je praznovanje 200-letnice dogajalo v času izgube neodvisnosti, a se je kljub temu praznovala v številnih krajih, a glede na okoliščine na zelo različne načine. Najbolj organizirana pa je bila ob 250-letnici leta 1933 v neodvisni državi Poljski, v kateri je bila posebej poudarjena podoba kralja Jana Sobieskega kot vojaškega vodje, simbola nekdanje moči in veličine Poljske. Praznovanja so imela prvič uraden značaj, posebej z rituali v Varšavi in Krakovu. Leta 1983 so v intenzivnem družbeno političnem dogajanju na Poljskem, povezanem s Solidarnostjo, papežem Janezom Pavlom II. obhajali 300. obletnico le z vojaško zgodovinskim festivalom in dogodki, ki se jih je udeležil predsednik Wojciech Jaruzelski.

V zadnjih 300 letih so se motivi in poudarki praznovanj in same vloge Jana Sobieskega spremenili; od poudarjanja zmagovitega poveljnika v veliki bitki na evropski ravni in branitelja krščanske vere, kralja močne Poljske do podob v 19. Stoletju, kjer je poudarek na njegovem mecenstvu znanosti in umetnosti, do patriotizma. Danes je Jan Sobieski zgodovinska osebnost, sestavni del podobe slavne preteklosti. Če je bilo za prejšnja praznovanja obletnic bitke značilno poudarjanje patriotizma, so se motivi za obhajanje obletnic v zadnjem stoletju omejili na interese vojske in vojakov. Ob praznovanjih ni več posebnih občutkov, postala so del državne rutine, ritualne prakse, pri katerih je njihov prvotni, izvorni pomen izgubil.

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