

**WARSAW** ...From Zadrzin is only forty miles to Warsaw, the road running all the way within sight of the Vistula; in some places skirting marshes, but in others all through an arable country. This we travelled the 1st. of May, arriving at that city in the afternoon. It is the seat of government, the capital of the kingdom, and the residence of the King; yet there is nothing striking in it. The streets are many of them crooked and ill paved, the buildings have little of elegance in them, tho' some new ones, few in number, make a tolerable show; these are houses belonging to the Polish nobles, who make Warsaw their winter residence. The royal palace is a noble edifice, being beyond comparison the finest building in Poland. The apartments are very spacious, and some of them new fitted up and furnished in the English manner, being executed by London artists brought from thence at the king's expence: The room they call the Hall of Victory, from formerly having been a hall, is converted into a saloon hung with tapistry from Brussels; the ceiling, panels, door-cases, and window frames all neatly executed in white carving gilt: The rooms are very numerous, and all the offices for a court extremely convenient.

...The fortifications of Warsaw are sufficient to prevent the town being insulted by flying parties, or small armies, but could not stand a siege of any duration against an army well provided; it has two good walls, flanked by many bastions and tolerably lined with artillery; the ditch is broad and deep, and the waters of the Vistula may be let into it at pleasure. Warsaw is populous; being the capital of Poland always brought great numbers to settle in it, which the miserable state of most of the other towns in the kingdom has lately increased very much, so that the number of its inhabitants are computed to be above eighty thousand.

*Travels through Holland, Flanders, Germany, ... in the years 1768, 1769, 1770, London, 1772-6.*

JOSEPH MARSHALL

May 1770

...I never saw a road so barren of interesting scenes as that from Cracow to Warsaw; there is not a single object throughout the whole tract which can for a moment draw the attention of the most inquisitive traveller.

The country, for the most part of the way, was level, with little variation of surface; it was chiefly overspread with vast tracts of thick gloomy forest; and even where the country was more open, the distant horizon was always skirted with wood. The trees were mostly pines and firs, intermixed with beech, birch, and small oaks. The occasional breaks in the forest presented some pasture ground with here and there a few meagre crops of corn.

Without having actually traversed it, I could hardly have conceived so comfortless a region: a forlorn stillness and solitude prevailed almost through the whole extent, with few symptoms of an inhabited, and still less of a civilized country. Though in the high road, which unites Cracow and Warsaw, in the course of about 258 English miles, we met in our progress only two carriages and about a dozen carts. The country was equally thin of human habitations: a few straggling villages, all built of wood, succeeded one another at long intervals, whose miserable appearance corresponded to the wretchedness of the country around them. In these assemblages of huts, the only reception for travellers were hovels, belonging to Jews, totally destitute of furniture and every species of accomodation. We could seldom procure any other room but that in which the family lived; in the article of provision eggs and milk were our greatest luxuries, and could not always be obtained; our only bed was straw thrown upon the ground, and we thought ourselves happy when we could procure it clean. Even we, who were by no means delicate, and who had long been accustomed to put up with all inconveniences, found ourselves distressed in this land of desolation. Though in most countries we made a point of suspending our journey during night, in order that no scene might escape our observation; yet we here even preferred

continuing our route without intermission to the penance we endured in these receptacles of filth and penury; and we have reason to believe that the darkness of the night deprived us of nothing but the sight of gloomy forests, indifferent crops of corn, and objects of human misery.

The natives were poorer, humbler, and more miserable than any people we had yet observed in the course of our travels: wherever we stopped, they flocked around us in crowds; and, asking for charity, they used the most abject gestures.

The road bore as few marks of human industry as the country which it intersects. It was best where it was sandy; in other parts it was scarcely passable; and in the marshy grounds, where some labour was absolutely necessary to make it support the carriages, it was raised with sticks and boughs thrown promiscuously upon the surface, or formed by trunks of trees laid crossways.

After a tedious journey we at length approached Warsaw; but the roads being neither more passable, nor the country better cultivated, and the suburbs chiefly consisting of the same wooden hovels which compose the villages, we had no suspicion of being near the capital of Poland until we arrived at its gates.

The situation of Warsaw is not unpleasant: it is built partly in a plain, and partly upon a gentle ascent rising from the banks of the Vistula, which is about as broad as the Thames at Westminster-Bridge, but very shallow in summer. The city and its suburbs occupy a vast extent of ground, and are supposed to contain between sixty and seventy thousand inhabitants, among whom are a prodigious number of foreigners. The whole has a melancholy appearance, exhibiting that strong contrast of wealth and poverty, luxury and distress, which pervades every part of this unhappy country. The streets are spacious, but ill-paved; the churches and public buildings are large and magnificent; the palaces of the nobility are numerous and splendid; but the greatest part of the houses, particularly in the suburbs, are mean and ill-constructed wooden hovels.

...The levee being ended, we went over the palace, which was built by Sigismund III and which since his time has been the principal residence of the Polish monarchs. Warsaw is far more commodious for the capital than Cracow, because it is situated nearer to the centre of the kingdom, and because the diet is assembled in this city. The palace stands upon a rising ground at a small distance from the Vistula and commands a fine view of the river and of the adjacent country. Next to the audience chamber is an apartment fitted up with marble, which his majesty has dedicated to the memory of his predecessors the kings of Poland.

*Travels into Poland, Russia, Sweden and Denmark, London, 1784.*

WILLIAM COXE  
August 1778

...Warsaw is a rather large city of about 75,000 inhabitants, so ill-paved that it is impossible for horses to trot; the streets are dirty, with no lighting whatsoever, in some places flanked by buildings of considerable beauty but often by houses, or rather hovels, which are quite horrible. The palaces of the nobility are generally large and well-furnished.

Although the streets are in a shocking condition, and the roads leading to the city are covered with mud and dust, the Poles often ride on horseback: they have excellent horses and ride them perfectly.

The Vistula, a river of notable importance, separates Warsaw from the suburb of Praga, which can almost be considered a town in itself, since it has about 15,000 inhabitants; there are no bridges to facilitate communications, or at any rate there were none when we were there, and the river flowed tranquilly without any sign of ice.

The entertainment afforded by the city amounts to very little: a theatre which presented



Italian melodrama and an abominable national theatre. We attended a special concert, which was mediocre. Social life is said to be pleasant; the women have the reputation of being the best educated in Europe, all speak French, as indeed the men do also. This country has a marked aptitude for the study of languages: nothing is more common than a Pole of twenty years who can speak three or four languages perfectly, without a trace of foreign accent. Yet in spite of their famous upbringing, we find the Polish women have a rather brazen air, and besides, they act like young girls, which it appears to be the fashionable thing to do; it is apparently also the fashion to have the hair dressed in a horrible style.

The Royal castle is built on a hill close to the Vistula; it is a simple building, the roads leading to it are not at all convenient and its surroundings correspond perfectly to its extreme simplicity. In the square in front of the castle stands a tall column with a monument to Sigismund. The king's apartments have nothing of interest about them.

...At Lazienki, less than half a mile from Krakowskie Przedmiescie, the king has a villa which is particularly dear to him and which he visits almost daily (the road is truly appalling), and indeed it is believed that he intends to make it his permanent residence. Everything there is on a small scale but care has been paid to the least detail. The amenity of the surroundings of the villa, and the entertainment provided here by His Majesty for the people every Sunday during the summer make it a very pleasant and frequented place at that season. The palace stands on a little island; there are thirteen windows in the façade, with four Corinthian columns in the centre separated from the main structure by a wide terrace, and Corinthian pilasters decorate the whole length of the building; the shorter side has five windows, three of which are encased, with four Corinthian columns in front of it, and on each side there is a curved wing with three windows. The building is on one floor only. The Primate, the King's brother, owns a palace of which the exterior is imposing and the interior very gracious, its apartments being furnished in fine taste. It houses several paintings among which is a 'Holy Family' attributed to Raphael; the attribution is rather improbable, although it is a painting of some value.

The palace of Princess Lubomirska is also impressive in appearance, and within it is furnished with elegant taste and adorned with many paintings. A palace which is not merely in need of repair, on the other hand, but even of rebuilding is the large Palace of Saxony. It has always been the property of the Elector, but now only a detachment of guards lives there, some old servants of the king, and the Elector's representative. The gardens, together with those of the Commission, provide the only places where one may stroll; they are extensive but bare and unadorned, there are only a few statues in wood or rough stone.

The Krasinski palace, now the High Court of Justice, contains the archives and also houses all the courts, the police, and so on. It is a building of noble design; opposite is the theatre and beside it the public garden of the Commission.

The buildings of the Artillery Barracks and the Horseguard Barracks are also noteworthy. The first has a façade containing twenty-three windows, with eight columns, four grouped and the other four standing separately, and two pillars, and the extremities of this front are adorned with four Ionic pilasters. The Horseguard Barracks, at the end of the gardens of the Saxon Palace, consist of a long street with nine pavilions on either side, grouped in threes, and linked one to another by stables, of which there are therefore twelve, each of which can house 44 horses. All the building is of brick save for the six centre pavilions, whose roofs are of boards and their stables entirely of wood.

...Warsaw is totally lacking in hospital facilities; everything that concerns health and personal well-being is in a state of complete abandon. Moreover the apothecaries have the reputation of carelessness in making up prescriptions, and it is well known that the mistakes of these gentlemen are rarely without grave consequences... There are few artists in

Warsaw, indeed there would be none if the king did not provide them with commissions; and it can be said that it is thanks to him that any have settled there. The sad events of 1795 must have inflicted a terrible blow on the Fine Arts, one whose consequences will make themselves felt for a long time to come.

...The road between Warsaw and Cracow runs uninterruptedly across plains and forests. We passed through several villages, but all were very poor, and some towns of which nothing remains but their name. It is hard to imagine the deplorable state of this road, especially during a time of thaw, the period in which we had to traverse it. The same thing occurs after heavy falls of rain. We will say only that the soil is very fertile, the roads are not constructed at all, and no work is ever done to them. The two last posting-houses are the most humble that can be imagined. Many ascents and descents are full of enormous holes and littered with the roots and trunks of trees which lie where nature has placed them, without it occurring to the public administration to remove them or to alter the direction of the road; this latter would be certainly a far easier solution to choose since there is no lack of land. But what can be expected of the public administration in a country without a government, abandoned to itself, remaining in a state of nature especially in those respects in which it should not be? To the left, beyond Drzewicy and beside a bridge, there is a furnace for iron-smelting. From Radoszyc to Malagoszeza the five-mile stage is divided into two equal parts: the postmaster of the last posting-house is extremely insolent and a rascal to boot — that is, the one who was there at the beginning of 1792. From Warsaw to Cracow is 190 miles, all the route is as full of Jews as the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the country before that.

*Voyages de deux français... en 1790-1792, Paris, 1796.*

...Warsaw, which is separated by the Vistula from the suburb of Praga, is a large city which, to anyone arriving there from Lithuania, has the appearance of a great capital; but the population does not correspond to the size of the city.

There were once about 60,000 inhabitants and at the time of the Diet of 1791 it attained a peak of 95,000 souls. The castle of the King, situated close to the Vistula, has an impressive appearance, but the architecture of the exterior is in poor taste. The interior, however, is furnished in excellent fashion, and adorned with *objets d'art* collected for the purpose and at his own expense by Stanislas Augustus Poniatowski.

Several of the city streets are quite wide and are paved. The many churches, most of which deserve to be visited, bear witness to the devotion of the Poles of times gone by. The Palace of the Governor, formerly the Krasinski Palace, is Italianate in style. The Saxon Palace stands at one end of a very wide square in a splendid garden which is open to the public. The school for military cadets, the Arsenal and the Barracks deserve mention as fine public buildings. As for the residences of the noble families, I will name only the palaces of the Prince, and of the Brühl, Radziwill, Czartoryski, Oginski, Potocki, Branicki, Raczynski, Bielinski, Tepper families, and there are more.

There are besides the country residence of the king at Lazienki, the castle at Wilanow, once the dwelling of John Sobieski; Ujazdow castle, now used as a barrack; La Garenne (Krolikarnia), Powonoski, Mariemont, the wood of Bielany and several other villas standing in parks, which adorn the surroundings of Warsaw on the right bank of the Vistula. On the opposite bank, however, the surroundings of Praga are sandy and uncultivated territory.

*Observations sur la Pologne et les Polonais pour servir d'introduction aux mémoires de Michel Oginski, Paris 1827.*

177. BERNARDO BELLOTTO:  
*General view of Warsaw and the Vistula from the suburb of Praga.* (detail). Warsaw, National Museum.

This work is dated 1770. On the right bank of the Vistula can be seen part of a royal procession along the road beside the river. On the left bank lies the city, with the front of the Royal Castle, built in 1742, above which rises its baroque tower. Beyond it to the right are the Cathedral of St. John and the tower of the Jesuit church. Along the Vistula are the buildings of the Old Town and the New Town (Stare et Nowe Miasto) with slender towers and the cupola of the Church of the Sisters of the Holy Sacrament.



178. BERNARDO BELLOTTO:  
*View of Warsaw from the terrace of the Royal Castle* (detail). Warsaw, National Museum.

In the centre of the terrace Prince Joseph Poniatowski is being given a riding lesson; the apparent age of the prince suggests that the date of the painting is about 1773-4. On the right is a wing of the Royal Castle, and among the buildings of the city can be seen the church of the Carmelites in Krakowskie Przedmiescie and, behind it, the two towers of the Church of the Holy Cross.



179. BERNARDO BELLOTTO: *View of Krakowskie Przedmieście looking towards the statue of King Sigismund III and the Cracow Gate* (detail). Warsaw, National Museum.

In the right foreground is the statue of the Virgin erected in 1683 by the Italian architect Bellotti to commemorate the liberation of Vienna from the Turkish siege. On the right are the church of the Carmelites, of the second half of the seventeenth century, the Radziwill Palace and the church and convent of the Order of the Bernardines. In the distance can be seen the statue of Sigismund III and the front of the Cathedral of St. John.



180. BERNARDO BELLOTTO: *View of Krakowskie Przedmieście looking from the Cracow Gate* (detail). Warsaw, National Museum.

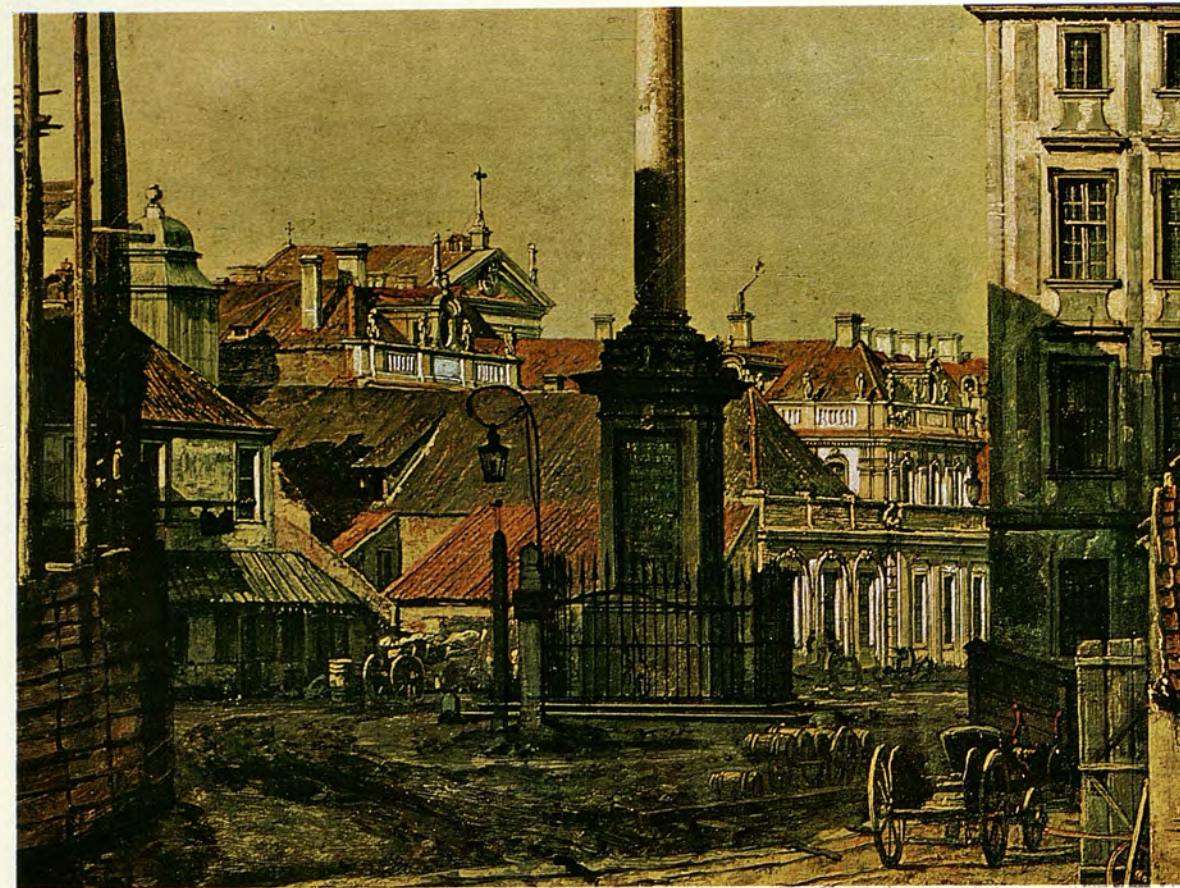
In the background to the left is the Carmelite church and the Church of the Holy Cross. On the right of the painting is the entrance to Senatorska Street in which can be seen part of the Palace of the Bishops of Cracow. The gateway which interrupts the line of houses on the right leads to the Malachowski Palace, beyond which lies the Palace of the Princes Czartoryski. This painting can be dated to 1767-8.





181-182. BERNARDO BELLOTTO:  
*The Statue of King Sigismund III  
and part of Warsaw near the  
Vistula (details).* Warsaw, National Museum.

This painting is a replica of one lost during the war and whose fate is unknown. It is one of Bellotto's first Polish paintings, contemporary with his decoration of Ujazdow Castle, near Warsaw. The view shows the column of Sigismund III and the top of the façade of the Capuchin church in Miodowa Street, and on the left, part of the ruins of the convent of the Bernardines. The probable date of this painting is 1767.

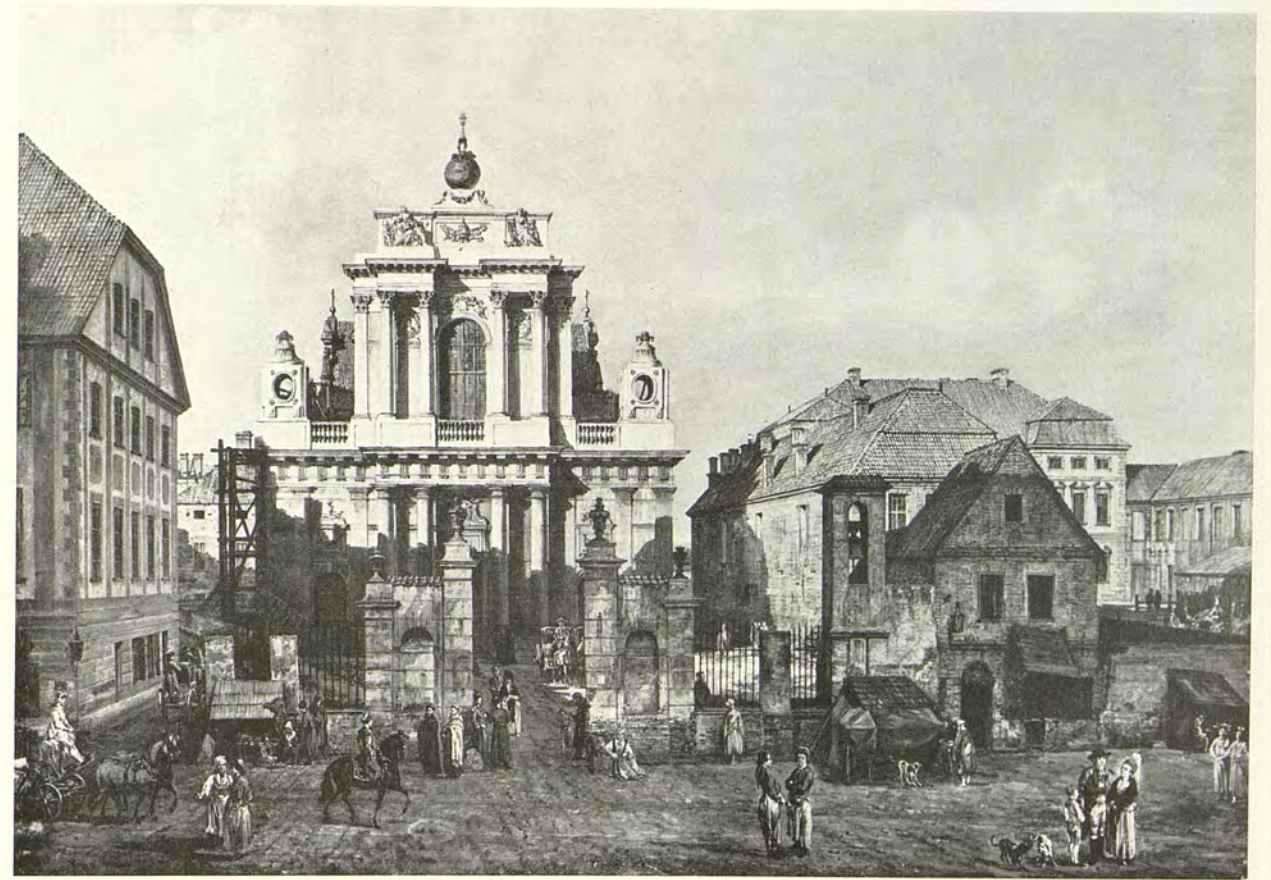


183. BERNARDO BELLOTTO:  
*View of Krakowskie Przedmieście  
from Nowy Swiat.* Warsaw, National Museum.

The view is dominated by the façade of the Church of the Holy Cross, which was begun in 1682 by Giuseppe Bellotti and completed towards the middle of the following century by Giuseppe and Giacomo Fontana. Among the houses which line the street on the right, beyond the gateway which leads to the Casimir Barracks, is the Poniatowski Palace.

184. BERNARDO BELLOTTO:  
*The Carmelite Church in Krakowskie  
Przedmieście (detail).* Warsaw, National Museum.

The front of the church of the Discalced Carmelites was built in 1773-80 by Ephraim Schroeger. To its right is the palace of Stanislaw Koniecpolski (1645) which was rebuilt in the middle of the eighteenth century.





◁ 185. BERNARDO BELLOTTO: *View of Warsaw with the Prince's Palace* (detail). Warsaw, National Museum.

The view from beside the Vistula shows a country scene in the foreground, of the buildings and the atmosphere of the rural suburbs. Among the aristocratic palaces built on the slopes of the hill predominates the imposing edifice of the Prince's Palace, built at the end of the seventeenth century by Tylman de Gameren. Beyond are the towers of the Church of the Holy Cross, the Palace of the Prince of Nassau, the church of the Order of the Visitation and the Casimir Barracks.

◁ 186. BERNARDO BELLOTTO: *The Church of the Order of the Visitation in Krakowskie Przedmieście*. Warsaw, National Museum.

The church was begun in the second half of the seventeenth century, but the façade, perhaps after a design by Giacomo Fontana, was built only in 1760. Beside the church are the convent buildings.

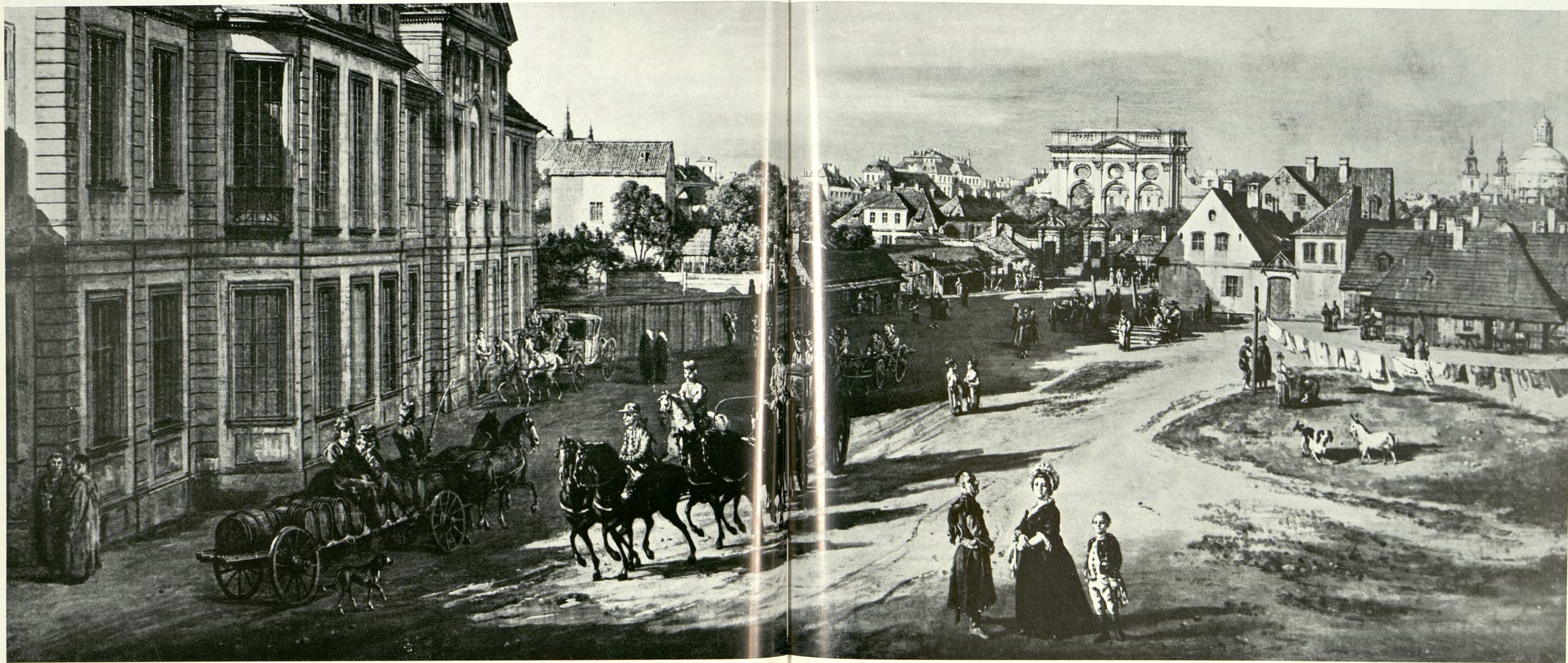
187. BERNARDO BELLOTTO: *The Reformed Church in Senatorska Street, Warsaw*. Warsaw, National Museum.

In Senatorska Street, a scene of peaceful animation, the church of the Reformed Franciscans stands surrounded with trees. At the end of the street is a group of houses. The baroque church was built in the last quarter of the seventeenth century.



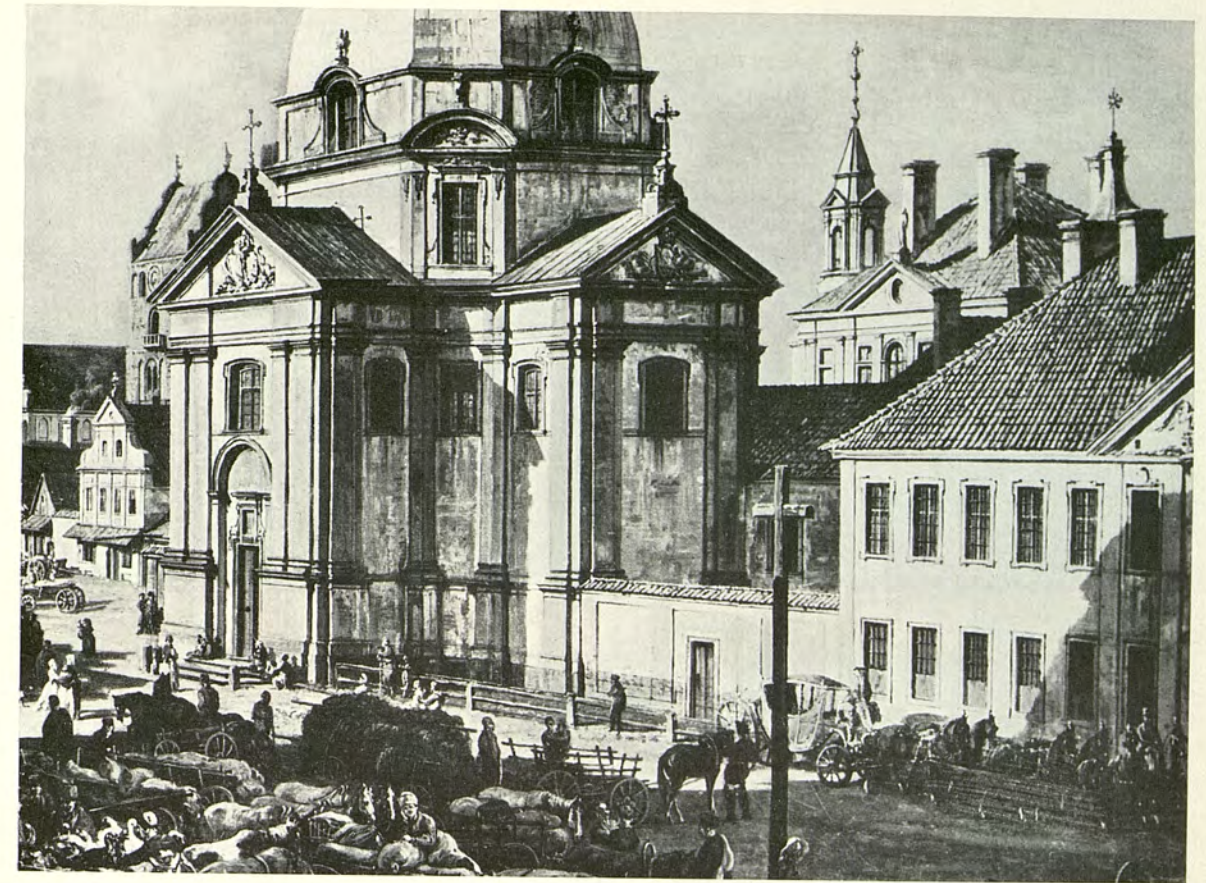
188. BERNARDO BELLOTTO: *The Square behind the Iron Gate* (detail). Warsaw, National Museum.

This corner of the city is painted from the Horse Guards Barracks. The left of the painting is occupied by the Wielopolski Palace, which later became the property of the Radziwill and the Lubomirski families. In the centre are the Saxon Palace and Gardens, in which a kind of 'Gloriette' was constructed in 1724. On the right of the painting are the towers of the Church of the Holy Cross and the dome of the Lutheran church, built in 1777-9 by Simeon Zug. This is therefore one of Bellotto's last works.



189-191. BERNARDO BELLOTTO: *The Church of the Sisters of the Holy Sacrament in the Market Square of the New town.* Warsaw, National Museum.

The wide square, filled with carts and people busy buying and selling in the market place, is dominated by the Church of the Holy Sacrament, built in 1688-90 by the Dutch architect Tylman de Gameren. Among the buildings of the New Town are prominent the Gothic Church of the Virgin (fifteenth century) and the roof and turret of the Church of St. Benno (seventeenth century). On the left are buildings of the Old Town.



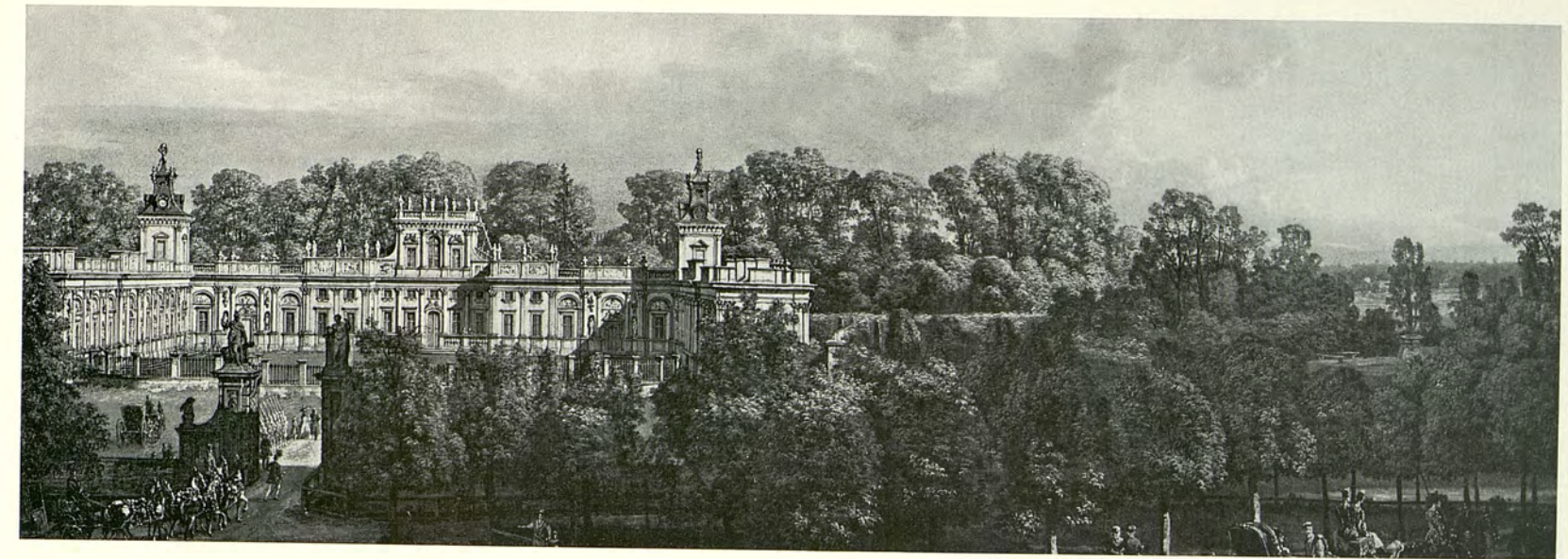


192. BERNARDO BELLOTTO: *The Church of the Briggittines and the Arsenal.* Warsaw, National Museum.

Soldiers in uniform are drawn up in ranks outside the Arsenal, which is surrounded by a little fence. Like the church of the Briggittines, the Arsenal was built towards the middle of the seventeenth century, but it was completely rebuilt a century later.

193-194. BERNARDO BELLOTTO: *View of the Wilanow Palace from the entrance (details).* Warsaw, National Museum.

One of the four views which Bellotto painted of this country palace. It was begun under King John III Sobieski in 1677 as a summer residence and work continued on it until his death in 1696. The chief architect and builder was the Italian Agostino Locci. The palace was bought by Isabel Sieniawska and then passed to the Czartoryski family and later to Isabel Lubomirska, who lived there often during the period in which Bellotto was active in Poland.





195-196. BERNARDO BELLOTTO: *View of Miodowa Street* (view and detail). Warsaw, National Museum. On the left in Miodowa Street are the Palace of the Archbishop and that of the banker Tepper. The first was built in the first half of the seventeenth century and rebuilt towards the middle of the eighteenth century, the second is a new building, of 1774-5, which gives an approximate date for the painting. Among the trees further along the street can be seen the top of the façade of the Capuchin Church (in which the artist is now buried), in the distance is the Krasinski Palace, and on the right the Branicki Palace, built in the middle of the eighteenth century, probably by Giacomo Fontana.



197. BERNARDO BELLOTTO: *Długa Street* (detail). Warsaw, National Museum. The detail reproduced here shows the Krasinski Palace and the church of the Piarists, with the convent beside it.





198. BERNARDO BELLOTTO:  
*Krasinski Square* (detail). Warsaw,  
National Museum.

A long procession files across the square in front of the Krasinski Palace, built in the last quarter of the seventeenth century by the Dutch architect Tylman de Gamenen for J.D. Krasinski. The palace was handed over for government use in 1765 and was known as the Palace of the Republic.