

= Battle of Byczyna =

The Battle of Byczyna or Battle of Pitschen (German : Pitschen ; Polish : Byczyna) was the deciding battle of the 1587 ? 1588 War of the Polish Succession , which erupted after two rival candidates were elected to the Polish throne . Both sides had rough parity in forces , with armies about 6 @, @ 000 strong , divided roughly into half infantry and half cavalry . The battle was an overwhelming victory of the Polish @-@ Swedish faction , led by the Swedish @-@ born king @-@ elect Sigismund III Vasa , over the army of his rival to the throne , Maximilian III , Archduke of Austria . Taking place near the Silesian town of Pitschen (modern Byczyna) , then just a few kilometres outside the territory of Poland @-@ Lithuania , on 24 January 1588 , Sigismund 's supporters were commanded by Chancellor and Great Crown Hetman Jan Zamoyski . Besides the commanders , notable participants included Stanisław Stadnicki on the Maximilian 's side , and Stanisław Żółkiewski on Sigismund 's . The army of the Polish @-@ Austrian (or Habsburg) faction was largely annihilated , the Archduke was captured and his cause came to an abrupt end . He subsequently renounced his claim to the Polish throne .

= = Background = =

In 1586 , following the death of previous Polish king , Stefan Batory , the Swedish duke Sigismund III Vasa and Habsburg Maximilian III , Archduke of Austria took part in the election to the joint Polish ? Lithuanian throne . Each of the two candidates had supporters in the Polish @-@ Lithuanian Commonwealth with the two opposing sides gathered around pro @-@ Sigismund Chancellor and Great Crown Hetman Jan Zamoyski and the Primate of Poland , Stanisław Karnkowski on one side and the pro @-@ Maximilian Zborowski family on the other . The rivalry between Zamoyski and the Zborowski family dated years past and tensions during the elections ran high .

Sigismund , supported by Zamoyski and the former king 's wife , Anna Jagiellon , was elected King of the Polish @-@ Lithuanian Commonwealth on 19 August 1587 and recognized as such by the interrex , the Primate Karnkowski . The election was disputed , however , by Maximilian and opponents of Sigismund chose not to respect the election outcome , decreeing that Maximilian was the rightful monarch three days later on 22 August . The Zborowski family called for the rokosz (legitimate right to rebel) and the election ended in chaos , with several killed and many wounded . For both Zamoyski and the Zborowski family , losing was not an option , as they knew the losing side would likely pay a severe price , from confiscations and a loss of prestige to a possible death sentence for treason .

Neither Sigismund nor Maximilian were present in the Commonwealth at that time . After receiving news of the election , both Sigismund and Maximilian made haste for Poland . Sigismund arrived at Danzig (Gdańsk) on 28 September and , after approximately two weeks , he had departed to Kraków , where he arrived on 9 December and was crowned on 27 December .

Maximilian attempted to resolve the dispute by bringing a military force to Poland , thereby starting the War of the Polish Succession . After a failed attempt to take Kraków in late 1587 , successfully defended by Zamoyski , he retreated to gather more reinforcements but was pursued by the forces loyal to Sigismund . Zamoyski at first wanted to avoid a large battle , as he hoped for more reinforcements and supplies , but , when it became apparent that Maximilian would be reinforced first , he decided to press an attack . He also received the king 's and royal permission to cross the borders and attack Maximilian in Silesia . Zamoyski divided his army into several regiments that were able to march quickly , at approximately 24 kilometers a day . He reformed his army after a week near Człuchowa . In the meantime , on 22 January 1588 , Maximilian crossed the border into his own territory , towards Byczyna (Pitschen) .

= = Opposing forces = =

Each side had comparable forces : Maximilian had about 6 @, @ 500 men , about half of which (3 @, @ 290) were infantry . His forces consisted primarily of Silesians , Hungarians and Moravians . ,

with artillery consisting of four heavy and a dozen or so lighter pieces . Zamoyski 's forces numbered about 6 @, @ 000 , including 3 @, @ 700 cavalry , 2 @, @ 300 infantry , and several cannon . Maximilian 's Polish supporters included 600 cavalry under the command of the " devil of ?a?cut " Stanis?aw Stadnicki . Another of Maximilian 's notable Polish supporters at the battle was the poet Adam Czahrowski . Overall Maximilian 's forces held the advantage in infantry , while Zamoyski 's was in cavalry . The Poles favored the cavalry , which had supreme mobility and used the effective charging tactics , but also meant that their infantry was geared too much towards cavalry support .

= = The battle = =

On the night of 24 January the Archduke 's army took positions east of the small town of Byczyna on the royal road leading into Poland . They felt secure in their camp , on the Habsburg side of the border , and did not expect the Poles to cross . Zamoyski marshaled his forces into three lines and was able to position them at an angle to the opponent 's line .

The exact position of the Polish Army is unknown , but part of the Polish right flank , moving quietly in the dense mist , encircled Maximilian 's left flank . After the mist began to clear the Archduke realized his force was being flanked and his retreat to Byczyna was threatened . He ordered an attack , but a miscommunication of his orders confused part of his army and the Hungarian regiment began to retreat . The Polish left wing , under command of future Hetman Stanis?aw ?ó?kiewski , dispersed the opposing units . The battle saw more infantry action than many others of the Commonwealth but , even so , the Polish cavalry (Polish winged hussars) played a major part . The battle began with some duels between elears (cavalry champions) , soon followed by Polish cavalry charges , on the left flank and in the center , which did not result in any significant breakthroughs for either side . Zamoyski is said to have commanded the battle very well , turning it at several points . Eventually a Polish hussar counterattack on the left flank mauled Maximilian 's Hungarian cavalry and forced his army to start giving ground . The bloody retreat quickly turned into a general rout during which the Archduke 's army suffered heavy casualties .

The entire battle lasted approximately one to two hours . Maximilian took refuge in Byczyna , but the Poles took control of his artillery and turned the guns on the town . Before the Polish forces began their assault , Maximilian surrendered and was taken prisoner . The battle , therefore , ended up being the decisive victory for the Polish @-@ Swedish faction .

= = Aftermath = =

Exact casualties are unknown , but the Archduke 's army suffered heavier losses , estimated at about 2 @, @ 000 , whereas the Poles lost about 1 @, @ 000 men . ?ó?kiewski captured an enemy standard , but received a knee wound which lamed him for life . After the intervention of a papal envoy Maximilian was released , but only after spending thirteen months as a " guest " of Zamoyski . In the Treaty of Bytom and B?dzin (signed on 9 March 1589) Maximilian was to renounce the Polish crown and Rudolf II , Holy Roman Emperor had to pledge not to make any alliances against Poland with the Muscovy or Sweden . The town of Lubowla , taken early in the conflict by Maximilian , was returned to Poland . Upon his return to Vienna he failed to honor his pledge and renounce his claim to the Polish crown and would not do so until 1598 .