

# BLACKFRIARS

## A MONTHLY REVIEW

Edited by the English Dominicans

Published by Basil Blackwell, Broad Street, Oxford.

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**VOL. XXV. No. 292.      JULY, 1944      ONE SHILLING**

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### POLAND

IN 1914 Germany marched into Belgium and we entered the war ostensibly to keep our word with Belgium. In 1939 Germany invaded Poland and we declared war for similar reasons. In the end Belgium survived, though a very divided country. The question now at issue is whether Poland—a far more united and integral nation—will survive even after another victory for the Allies? Mr. Belloc has rightly called this *The Test*.

When the invasion of France was launched the King, in words of stirring piety, recalled his people to the spirit of Crusade that inspired the first year of the war. If his moving call to prayer and dedication is the right call, therein lie the truth and justice of our position. Any faltering in our defence of right against might, of

the small nations attacked by the barbarian hordes, will compromise the justice of our cause. It is therefore of first importance that we should be faithful to our original pledge to Poland, otherwise we shall bely the King's words or the prayers he has encouraged.

But a small nation that has been overrun and pillaged for five years stands almost helpless before a powerful neighbour, however friendly, that comes to drive off the invader. Poland has in fact shown a remarkable unity in spite of the treatment she has suffered (compare the state of her people with, for example, that of France) yet there are bound to be potential divisions which can be easily played upon in her defenceless position. The political cohesion can be tampered with when the Government itself is an exile in foreign parts; and the Poles who have found refuge in Moscow have been used in the last weeks to attempt a division between the organisation in Poland itself and the Polish Government in London. The racial differences in the country that has had the greatest Jewish problem provide another field for attempted disintegration as we see in the case of the desertion of the Jewish soldiers. And finally the religious divergencies which always provide the most powerful weapon for dividing a nation against itself have been exploited in the case of Fr. Oriemanski.

It should be made clear that if we connive at any attempt to disintegrate Poland, morally or even territorially, the war, for us, ceases to be a just war. It would mean a connivance at what we originally declared to be the occasion of starting this 'crusade.' And as soon as we throw justice overboard we become mere plundering pirates intent to get and to hold as much as we can, so that any post-war settlement would be the dividing of the spoils among three powerful thieves.

The need for restoring an integral Poland is not simply a question of keeping our pledges to her. Mr. Belloc's dogma that 'The Test is Poland' is firmly based on the political and cultural position she occupies in Europe. And Michael de la Bedoyere has given deeper significance to the dogma by insisting on the place of Catholicism in the Polish, and therefore European, cause. 'Is there no hope? There is, I think, but only because Poland enjoys the privilege of being a Catholic nation. There still remains one living and un-eclipsed witness to the truth that peace must be a unity of differences and not a uniformity of force, and that is the Catholic Church. . . . If ever a nation needed to be Catholic in the fullest and profoundest sense and by being so to keep alive the flame of the Christian spirit which alone can save Europe, that nation is Poland' (in *Wiadomosci Polskie*, Nov. 21, 1943).

To speak thus is to run the risk of the disastrous confusion between Catholicism and politics, or at least to turn Catholicism into a sectarian thing to belabour other religions. It would be possible for the Poles to *use* their Catholicism instead of *being* Catholics. Yet we must so speak, for the only hope of peace and justice lies in the domination of the Christian spirit in politics. People too often think of Polish Catholicism as a reactionary political force, whereas true Catholicism will always be impelled by the Spirit of Pentecost moving to renew the face of the earth. If this war therefore is to be justified the integrity of Poland must be respected; and if the future is to bring any hope of peace the Catholic spirit of Poland must be renewed and strengthened. The first depends upon the Allies, the second upon the Holy Spirit and the Poles themselves. To the restoration and rejuvenation of Catholic Poland this issue of BLACKFRIARS is dedicated.

THE EDITOR.

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## SOBIESKI AND THE RELIEF OF VIENNA.

It was the misty dawn of a Sunday morning, September 12th, in the year 1683. From the height of the Kahlenberg, where the last wooded escarpment of the Alps dominated a landscape of hillocks and ravines, a man was gazing towards Vienna, some three miles eastwards. As the light strengthened he could pick out the spires and steeples of the city, and the broken ravelins and splintered bastions which marked the line of the fortifications. He could also see, between him and the city, a vast town of tents, where the besieging Turkish army had encamped in a crescent outside the ramparts of Vienna. A wind arose, and dissipated the mist, and the watcher, sitting his bay horse, could hear the trumpeting of elephants, the beating of little war-drums, and strains of eastern music. The horseman, though only fifty-four years of age, had grown corpulent, and his face was already heavy. But the large dark eyes, with