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# EVENTS AND PERSONALITIES IN POLISH HISTORY

BY

PAUL SUPER

GENERAL DIRECTOR OF THE POLISH Y. M. C. A.



19 TORUŃ—GDYNIA (POLAND) 36

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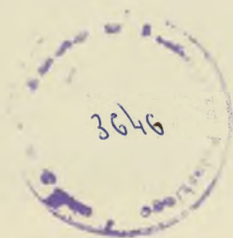
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EVENTS AND PERSONALITIES IN POLISH HISTORY

*M. Sadowski*





Death of the Virgin

The central group of the High Altar, Church of the Virgin Mary, Cracow  
carved by Veit Stoss (1477—1489)

Photo S. Kolowiec, Cracow

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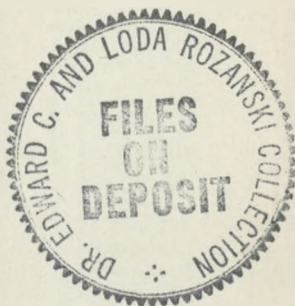
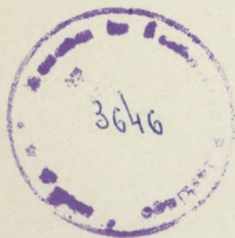
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To  
*Margaret L. Super*

*Co-operator, Research Worker and Translator of Polish,  
Latin, German and French Materials in our long and  
continuing study of Polish History*

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## ON THE PRONUNCIATION OF POLISH NAMES

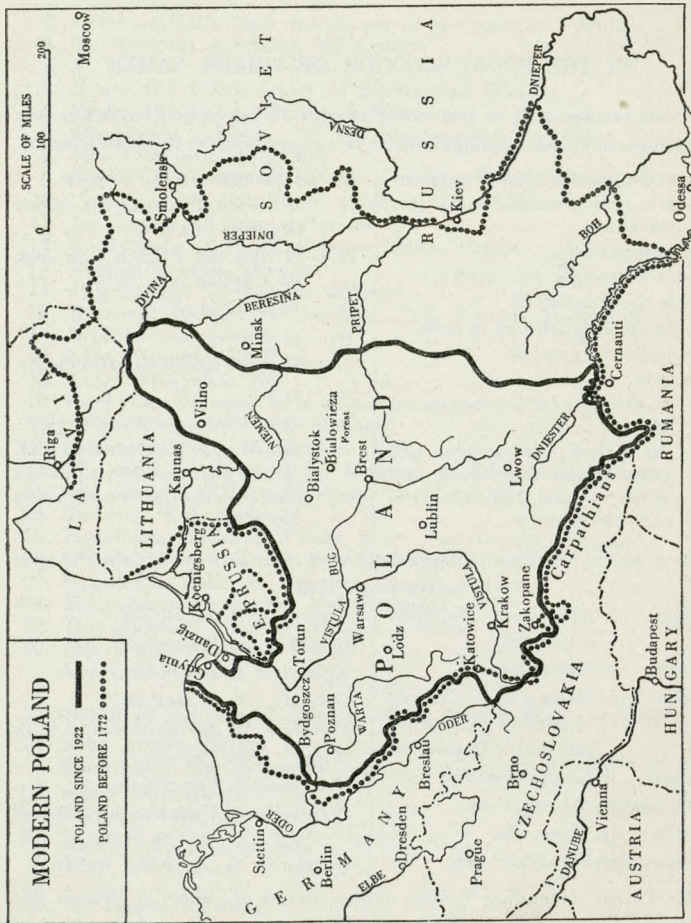
It has seemed best to the writer to give Polish names, with but few exceptions, in Polish spelling; hence a few suggestions as to pronunciation.

<p><i>a</i> — is the broad <i>a</i> as in <i>art</i> or <i>father</i>.</p> <p><i>c</i> — is <i>ts</i>, except as follows, but it is never <i>k</i>.</p> <p><i>c</i> — before <i>i</i> is <i>ch</i>.</p> <p><i>ch</i> — is a strongly aspirated <i>h</i>.</p> <p><i>cz</i> — is the English <i>ch</i>.</p> <p><i>dż</i> — is the English <i>j</i> as in <i>jump</i>.</p> <p><i>e</i> — is short as in <i>bed</i>.</p> <p><i>i</i> — is <i>ee</i>.</p> <p><i>j</i> — is our <i>y</i>, so <i>Jan</i> is pronounced <i>Yan</i>.</p> <p><i>l</i> — the Polish <i>l</i> is rounder and more liquid than ours, and when crossed like a <i>t</i> (<i>ł</i>) it resembles our <i>w</i>.</p>	<p><i>o</i> — is between our <i>o</i> and <i>aw</i>.</p> <p><i>r</i> — is the English <i>r</i> as in <i>room</i>, but never as in <i>short</i>.</p> <p><i>rz</i> — is like the French <i>j</i> in <i>Jean</i> or English <i>si</i> in <i>vision</i>.</p> <p><i>s</i> — before <i>i</i> is <i>sh</i>.</p> <p><i>sz</i> — is <i>sh</i>.</p> <p><i>u</i> — is the English <i>oo</i> as in <i>moon</i>.</p> <p><i>w</i> — is <i>v</i>.</p> <p><i>y</i> — is a short <i>i</i>, never as in <i>sky</i>.</p> <p><i>z</i> — is as in the English alphabet.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">There are two other kinds of <i>z</i> but they do not occur in this booklet.</p>
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Each vowel is pronounced separately as a rule. Always accent the next to the last syllable.

<p><i>Bolesław</i> is <i>Bo-le'-swav</i>. The 2nd <i>l</i> is crossed.</p> <p><i>Jadwiga</i> is <i>Yad-vee'-ga</i>.</p> <p><i>Jagiello</i> is <i>Ya-gee el'-wo</i>. Crossed <i>ls</i>, hard to get; better just call it <i>Ya-gee el'-lo</i>.</p> <p><i>Kazimierz</i> is <i>Ka-zhee'-mee erzh</i>.</p> <p><i>Kościuszko</i> is <i>Kos-tsiush'-ko</i>.</p> <p><i>Matejko</i> is <i>Ma-tay'-ko</i>.</p> <p><i>Mickiewicz</i> is <i>Mits-keey'-vich</i>.</p>	<p><i>Mieszko</i> is <i>Mee esh'-ko</i>.</p> <p><i>Pałaski</i> is <i>Poo-wa'-ski</i>.</p> <p><i>Sienkiewicz</i> is <i>Shee en-keey'-vich</i>.</p> <p><i>Sobieski</i> is <i>So-bee e'-ski</i>.</p> <p><i>Stanisław</i> is <i>Sta-ni'-swav</i>; <i>i</i> as in <i>is</i>.</p> <p><i>Wilno</i> is <i>Veel'-no</i>.</p> <p><i>Wit Stwosz</i> is <i>Veet Stvosh</i>.</p> <p><i>Władysław</i> is <i>Vwa-di'-swav</i>. Crossed <i>ls</i>; <i>i</i> as in <i>is</i>.</p> <p><i>Zygmunt</i> is <i>Zig'-munt</i>; <i>i</i> as in <i>is</i>.</p>
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The Polish *ski* ending family names means *of*, like the French *de* and the German *von*.



By courtesy of Światowy Związek Polaków z Zagranicy

## CHAPTER 1

# DURING THE RISE OF POLAND TENTH TO FIFTEENTH CENTURY

### THE CONVERSION OF POLAND TO CHRISTIANITY [966 A. D.]

The Polish people enter into recorded history with the conversion of their ruler Mieszko to Christianity in the year 966 A. D., this enlightened leader bringing his people with him into the family of Christian nations. With this event Poland emerges from among the Slavic tribes occupying the areas east of the Elbe and becomes enrolled among the historic and civilized countries of Europe.

Both the causes and the consequences of that act are of more than purely Polish interest.

As far back as Charlemagne there had begun an expansion of the Teutonic nations toward the east. This is that vast movement called the *Drang nach Osten*, 'the pressure toward the east'. The Slavs between the Elbe and the Oder, less warlike, smaller in stature than the Teutons, not well organized, relatively ill armed, were slowly subjugated.

When Otto I of Saxony was crowned Emperor in 962 his already great power was so enhanced that he became a menace to all the Slavs east of him. Mieszko soon saw that the only means of preventing the enslavement or extermination of his people lay in the same alliance that had so strengthened Otto, that with the Church. For as long as the Poles were heathen they were the legitimate prey of any Christian king, but as Christians they would

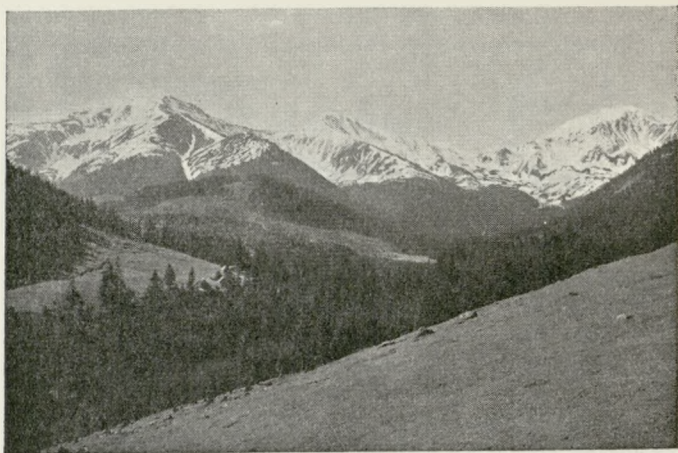


Photo H. Podębski, Warsaw

### The western Tatra Mountains

at once be on a par with other western nations. Their entering the fold of the Catholic Church would deprive Otto of a valid excuse for incursions into their territory, win the sympathy of the other nations of Christendom, and gain the favour and advocacy of the Pope. By calling in monks from France and Italy they would forge valuable ties with those lands.

These were the motives prompting Polish adhesion to the Christian Church. The results were not only good but momentous. The nation became really and increasingly Christian. In the first centuries of Christianity the people received the light of Latin learning and the advantages of western civilization, largely from the hands of Benedictine, Eremite, and Cistercian monks from the monast-

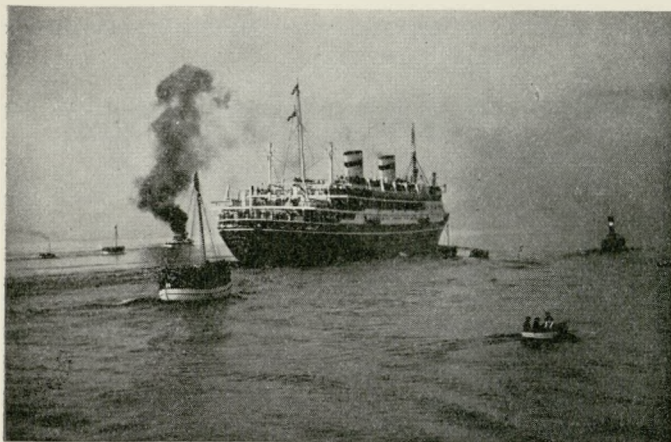


Photo H. Poddębski, Warsaw

A transatlantic liner towed out of the port at Gdynia

eries of Liège, Cluny, and Monte Casino. The Pope became their advocate.

But 'two results even more far-reaching than these were determined by this step. First, in deciding to be Catholic, Poland decided to face west. The Czechs had already taken the same step. But when Poland also became Roman Catholic, a second, less desirable effect was permanently to divide Slavdom, for most of the other Slav nations, the Russians, the Bulgarians, and the Serbs, are of the Eastern Orthodox faith. However, notwithstanding certain important consequences resulting from the division of the Slavs in the matter of religion, it was good for all the world that in accepting the Christian faith Poland came in through the western and Latin door and not

through the more backward and orientalized Orthodox one, with its absolutism, Greek alphabet, and decaying Byzantinism.

Thus as the year 1000 A. D. approached Poland assumed its now historic role of eastern outpost of western religion and civilization, or, as a British historian puts it, 'of Christian culture, of the civilization of Rome, and the Latin spirit', graciously adding that 'this heavy charge Poland faithfully fulfilled'. It was through Poland that Christian religion spread towards the north and east, as King Bolesław the Brave sent Bishop Adalbert in 997 to convert the heathen Prussians, and the conversion of Western Pomerania was accomplished by the envoys of King Bolesław III. In the 14th century Lithuania became Christian through the Union with Poland.

#### BOLESŁAW THE BRAVE

[992—1025]

#### FIRST CROWNED KING OF POLAND

A great father was followed by an even greater son. Seeking allies against the ever expanding and advancing Teutons, Mieszko had married Dombrowka, a Czech princess. From their union came the capable, brave, and energetic Bolesław who in 992 at the age of 25 inherited the ducal throne upon the death of his father. The Czech alliance and the conversion of the nation to Christianity somewhat consolidated things on the west.

Extending his domain he united under his rule the Slavic groups from the Baltic Sea to the plains south of the Carpathians and from the Elbe to the Bug. In 1024 he was crowned the first Polish king at Gniezno near Poznań. He developed internal organization, established a definite system of taxation, and maintained a large standing army.

His brilliant career, considers Professor Slocombe, 'had no parallel in the history of contemporary Europe'.



Photo by R. S. Ulatowski, Poznań

St. Adalbert (Wojciech) receiving his Crosier from the hands  
of the Emperor

Detail of the 12th century bronze doors of Gniezno Cathedral

Within a century before or after him probably only the Emperor Otto I was his equal. During his reign Poland became one of the greatest powers of Europe, a position it was again to occupy during the 16th and early 17th centuries. It is interesting to add that a sister of Bolesław's was the mother of King Canute of England, and his aunt was the mother of Stephen, the great king of Hungary and its patron saint. One of Bolesław's principal achievements was the establishment of an Archbishopric at Gniezno, symbol of Poland's political independence and autonomy.

It is strange that this 'Polish Charlemagne' should be so little known in the western world of today. The

broad extent of his acknowledged Polish territories is worth noting. They are at that time capable of quite definite delimitation. On the north, the boundaries are the Baltic Sea from the River Oder to the Vistula. Present-day East Prussia, beyond the Vistula, was an independent heathen people. The eastern boundary of Poland was the line of the river Bug. On the south the dominions of Bolesław included Slovakia as far as the Danube, and Bohemia. On the west he waged war for fifteen years against the German Emperor Henry II for possession of the Slavic lands of Lusatia, during which period his power extended to the middle Elbe, and for a time even to the Saale.

This kingdom of Bolesław's was subject to threefold pressure. That from the south was dynastic, local and temporary. Its last echoes in modern times have been the disputes over the possession of Cieszyn, or Teschen, and the question of Upper Silesia. The second, from the west, was more fundamental in character, and has lasted from the days of Otto I to those of Hitler. The third was the pressure from the east, executed in turn by Tartars, Turks, and Muscovites, from the days of Genghis Khan to those of Lenin and Stalin.

#### THE THREAD OF THE STORY

[1025—1225]

At the death of Bolesław III in 1135, Poland, by the last will of the dying king, was divided into 5 principalities: Silesia, Great-Poland, Mazovia, Sandomierz and Cracow, each of his four sons receiving a principality and the eldest son, two (Silesia and Cracow). In this he was recognized as the superior of his brothers; each of these, except the Duke of Sandomierz who fell in battle, became the founder of a separate ducal line. In total they formed the Piast dynasty, which in spite of sub-divisions preserved the feeling of kinship and with it a degree of unity in



the state. The province around the Warsaw of today was the Duchy of Mazovia, and to this section we now turn.

### THE TEUTONIC KNIGHTS

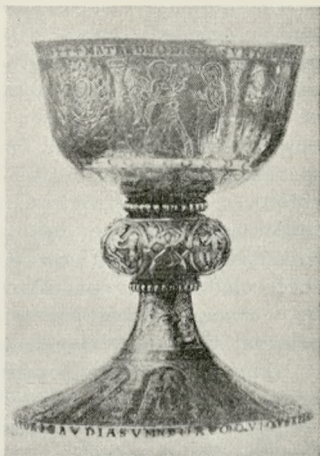
[1226—1308]

East of the Vistula between the Duchy of Mazovia and the Baltic Sea lay a province occupied by a savage pagan tribe from whose name the modern name of Prussia

A twelfth century chalice,  
Trzemeszno Parish Church,  
Great-Poland

School of Godefroid de Claire,  
one of the eminent artists of the  
Moselle region

After J. Kohte



is derived. These heathen resisted all efforts for their conversion. They became so aggressive in their warlike incursions into Northern Poland that they constituted a serious and continuous menace to the life and peace of the border people of the Duchy of Mazovia. The then duke, Conrad, seeking protection against them, in 1226 called to his aid the military and religious order of the Teutonic Knights of St. Mary's Hospital at Jerusalem,

recently expelled from Hungary and seeking lands and occupation. They are sometimes referred to as the Knights of the Cross because of the large black cross on the white cloak they wore over their armour.

Conrad offered them lands and special privileges in return for their services in the conversion and pacification of the heathen Prussians, just as the Benedictines or other orders were given grants of land, with no thought on the part of the duke of a surrender of sovereignty. The Knights soon proceeded against the Prussians with vigour, and practically exterminated them, either reducing survivors to serfdom or driving them into their inaccessible swamps and marshes. The Order built huge castles on Polish territory, of which the one at Marienburg is the best specimen, and with these as their base proceeded to occupy, colonize, and christianize the lands farther east, not as missionaries, however, but as sovereign rulers. They applied this idea of complete ownership to Polish land also, basing their claims on a document of 1230 now recognized even by German palaeographers as a falsification of the 'lost' original document signed by Conrad.

The religious and military functions of the Knights being accomplished, the Polish rulers desired them to restore to Poland the Polish lands they had pre-empted, but the Knights had established themselves too firmly and were too well satisfied with the secular state they had founded to retire from it. Their constantly increasing numerical strength, territorial expansion and military prowess threatened to and eventually did separate Poland from the Baltic Sea and the mouth of the Vistula, and this the Poles regarded as a fatal menace to their political and economic life, especially when the Knights exterminated the Polish population of Danzig in 1308 and thereafter completely controlled Poland's access to the sea. The power

of the Order became so great that in 1343 the Polish king Kazimierz the Great acknowledged the necessity of giving up to it eastern Pomerania, which the Teutonic Order had occupied by force of arms in 1308—09; and this surrender of territory had to be made notwithstanding the fact that the Poles had obtained a judgment favourable to their claims from the papal court in 1339 and had the support of Pope Benedict XII.

At this same time the Margraves of Brandenburg were expanding eastward and conquering the Slavic tribes in western Pomerania and thus excluding Poland from contact with the sea 'Pomerania' is an adaptation of the Polish *Pomorze*, meaning 'by the sea'.

Conrad, seeking the welfare of his country, had brought about its destruction, for the founding of the state of Prussia led, through a series of events which we shall trace, due consideration being given to other causes also, to the partition of Poland in 1772 and to its disappearance from the map of Europe from 1793 to November 1918.

In 1331, at Płowce, during one of many wars with the Order, the Poles won a great victory in a battle with the invading Knights; an incident of which introduces an ancestor of Jan Zamoyski, of whom we shall hear more, and illustrates how crests and coats of arms developed. This ancestor of Zamoyski's was Florian, called Szary because of the gray clothes he wore. After the battle, as the Polish king rode about the field viewing the dead and wounded he saw Szary on the ground with three spear wounds in his abdomen and his entrails exposed. The king was impressed by the man's suffering and ordered him to be well cared for. He recovered, and for his bravery in battle and because of his three spear wounds, received as an addition to his coat of arms three spears. This had been a goat's head and shoulders; below were added three crossed

spears, and the whole was renamed *Jelita*, for every armorial bearing has a name independent of the name of the family. The main branch of the family eventually lived in a house beyond a little stream, approached by a bridge. Owing to this circumstance going to their place was referred to as going *za most*, 'beyond the bridge'. From this the name of the family property gradually acquired the form Zamość and in due time the family name Zamoyski evolved, for in Poland, as elsewhere, noble families often took their name from the name of their chief estate.

## THE TARTAR INVASIONS

[1241 AND AFTER]

Let us now turn our attention from these western forces to the further great pressure to which Poland has been subjected all through its history, that from the east. The earliest dramatic event on a grand scale connected with it was the Tartar invasion of 1241 under Batu, grandson of Genghis Khan and one of the greatest of all the Mongol generals.

The long ranges of the Carpathian Mountains sweep eastward across the whole southern length of Poland and then bend southward through western Roumania, and invasions of Europe from Asia through Russia are naturally directed to the north of them. So when Batu led his mounted Tartar hordes into Europe it was Poland which received them as they swarmed westward. They hurled themselves across southern Poland in countless thousands, destroying and killing as they went, leaving the land a smoking desert. Burning Cracow they advanced into Silesia, destroyed the Polish forces and their ruler at the battle of Liegnitz, April 9, 1241, and then turned back and south, leaving age-long memories of rapine and horror. Other great incursions followed, notably those of 1259 and 1287, and on through the centuries until their once

invincible force had been spent and curbed. But maps, made as late as 1692 and 1709, still show three great roads leading across southern Russia to Poland and converging upon Lwów, with the name *Czarny Szlak*, 'black trail'.

The Tartars played a part in the east of Poland similar to that of the Indians in the west of America, only the role of invader and numerical strength was in Poland on the Tartar side. It used to be said that grass never grew on ground once touched by the hoofs of Tartar horses. Often there were two invasions a year. A Polish general of the Middle Ages speaks of having seen thirty. In the museum of a walled city far to the north of the *Czarny Szlak* there is a tablet recording over forty Tartar sieges sustained by the place. In turning back these terrible invasions Poland earned for itself the honourable name of 'the rampart of Christendom'. The might and extent of this pressure can probably best be visualized if one remembers that what is now Russia was once entirely under Tartar rule.

#### KAZIMIERZ, WELL CALLED 'THE GREAT' [1333—1370]

When Kazimierz III, (Casimir in English) came to the throne at 23 and began a reign that was to last 37 years, he adopted the policy of depending more upon his head than upon his sword. He stands in Polish history as one of the wisest of Polish kings, the only one except Bolesław I now generally called 'The Great'. Many of his notable achievements are of interest only to Poles, but the results of some of his acts last until today and are of permanent significance to the wider world. It may be recalled that he was a contemporary of Edward III of England.

The father of Kazimierz, Władysław 'Łokietek' or the Short, had united the Poland divided into dukedoms by



After A. Matejcek

Henry the Pious, Duke of Silesia and Cracow, fighting the Tartars at the Battle of Liegnitz (1241)

A miniature painted in 1353 in the illustrated MS. Life of St. Hedwig, now the property of Baron Rudolf Gutmann, Vienna

Bolesław III in 1138. What the father had united the son consolidated and unified, for to unite is not always to unify. Arranging a truce with the Teutonic Knights on the north, he secured peace on the south and west by ceding Silesia to Bohemia, 1335, these Polish lands and their Polish inhabitants thus passing out of Polish control until part of them returned nearly 600 years later,



After A. Matejcek

Henry IV Probus, Duke of Wrocław and Cracow († 1289)

A late 14th century miniature in the Heidelberg Library

after the Great War, as the much written about Upper Silesia. In 1340, on the other hand, Kazimierz obtained the Duchy of Halicz, in the south-east. It had been under Polish influence since the early fourteenth century, and since 1325 had been governed by the Mazovian duke Bolesław, who took the Ruthenian name of George. From him the duchy passed to Kazimierz as collateral heir.

These vast new lands on the east compensated him in part for lands lost on the north and west and south.

Kazimierz secured peace in the east and established civilized life in those long troubled regions.

Kazimierz began the codification of Polish law, one of his mottos being 'one law, one king, one currency', and saw its completion in his 58th year, near the end of his long reign. One of the provisions ensured a better defence of the peasants against the oppression of the nobles, and for this and his general interest in the welfare of the simple people of the soil he was often referred to as 'the peasants' king'.

The Jews also won his interest. Shortly after his accession to the throne he enacted a statute, 1334, which freed them from all civil and commercial disabilities, and in 1367 he granted them certain special privileges. From that time, the Jews, persecuted in most countries of Europe, found a refuge in Poland.

Two of his achievements are permanent. In order to promote the growth of an educated class he founded the University of Cracow, 1364, on the model of the University of Bologna. To restore wooden towns which had been burned by the Tartars, he founded towns of brick and stone, and in so doing developed the beautiful 'Kazimierz style' of architecture. Grain warehouses of this style are still to be seen on the Vistula, memorials of the great international trade in grain which developed during Kazimierz's wise and peaceful reign.

Thus as statesman, educator, builder, law-maker, man of peace and enlightenment he raised the whole cultural level of early Poland. Under Mieszko I Poland became Christian; under Kazimierz the Great it became modern and European. Cracow, the capital, assumed European importance. The Emperor Charles IV married Kazimierz's grand-daughter, and during the wedding ceremonies Cracow entertained 'an emperor, four kings, and numerous princes and their trains'.



Kazimierz was the last of his dynasty, the Piasts, who had ruled Poland from the dawn of recorded history. His heir was his sister's son King Louis of Hungary, who was followed in 1383 by Louis' 13 years old daughter Jadwiga, which brings us to another colourful personality and to important events.

Silver head-reliquary of St.  
Sigismund, Płock Cathedral

According to an inscription on the reliquary, it was given by King Kazimierz the Great in 1370; the original crown has been replaced by a ducal diadem dating from the middle of the 13th century

Photo Z. Rokowski, Warsaw



QUEEN JADWIGA, WHO SACRIFICED SELF [1383—1399]  
AND FOUNDED AN EMPIRE

This young woman has furnished Mrs Charlotte Kellogg with material for a book entitled 'Poland's Great Queen, Jadwiga'. Here 300 words must serve the purpose of bringing to western attention this true but almost mythical figure in Polish history. She is extolled for two things; her goodness and her patriotism. As to her undoubted goodness, to mention it suffices; her great patriotism can only be understood against its background. The act itself was simple enough. In 1386, turning from the Austrian fiancé she deeply loved, she yielded to the wide-

spread desire of the Poles and married Władysław Jagiełło, the grand duke of Lithuania, and at one stroke brought that nation into the Christian faith through the conversion of its duke, and united the two great powers of Poland and Lithuania.

For the Lithuania of those days was a power indeed. Slocombe quotes German writers to the effect that the Lithuanians were 'the most terrible of all the barbarians'. The founder of greater Lithuania, Gedymin, who died in 1341, had by the might of his arms and by virtue of the disorganized state of Russia extended Lithuanian rule far to the north, east, and south. Now, in the latter decades of the century, these territories were menaced on the west by the Teutonic Knights and on the east and south by the Tartars. When the nation wished to become Christian the Pope had insisted that they receive their religion at the hands of the Knights, but the Lithuanians, knowing what had become of their neighbours and kinsmen the ancient Prussians under this treatment, preferred a different course, and looked toward the Orthodox Church of Russia. In fact, the country stood at the crossroads.

She took the western, Latin and Catholic path when the two nations, threatened by common foes, united their dynasties for mutual protection. The kingdom thus formed was able to withstand the Teutonic Knights on the north, Muscovite and Tartar on the east, and Hungarian and Czech on the south and west. Its vast territories spread from the Baltic to the Black Sea. In sacrificing her private desires, Jadwiga won the eternal gratitude of both Church and State. The union was good for Poland, and was especially beneficial for Lithuania. The Lithuanian nobles received the coats of arms and rights of the Polish nobles, western civilization and religion gained ground, Wilno, the Lithuanian capital, became a great centre of Polish

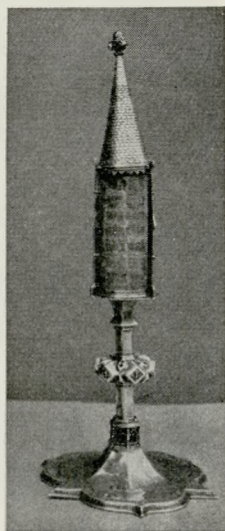
culture, and the foundation of one of the greatest powers of the 15th and 16th centuries was laid. Jadwiga died in 1399 but Jagiełło reigned 48 years, until 1434, and founded the generally fortunate dynasty bearing his name which lasted till 1572.

When Jadwiga died she left her private fortune to the University of Cracow which, refounded the next year,

### The Grunwald reliquary, St. Florian's Church, Cracow

This reliquary was made in 1365 at the order of Henry de Bode, Grand Master of the Teutonic Order; it was captured from the Order in 1410 at the Battle of Grunwald and donated to the church by King Władysław Jagiełło

Photo J. Krieger, Cracow



1400, with these larger funds, became and still is one of the great universities of Europe. Within its walls the world-famous Polish astronomer Copernicus, was an undergraduate in the year Columbus set sail for the west.

Jadwiga's warrior-statesman husband survived her many years, and the conqueror of the Teutonic Knights died

at the age of 86 — from a cold caught listening to the song of a nightingale.

There is a strange fact connected with Jadwiga's coronation. She was crowned 'king'. It was the position of 'king' that was vacant, and as such she was crowned.

## THE BATTLE OF GRUNWALD

[1410]

### THE DEFEAT OF THE TEUTONIC KNIGHTS

With the passing of the years and the conversion of all the Baltic tribes the Knights of the Cross had lost their religious character and objective and become a powerful secular state living by and for conquest. They were joined by warriors and adventurers from all lands; one of these, in 1390, was Henry of Bolingbroke, later to become King Henry IV of England. It was clear to both Poles and Lithuanians that to maintain their existence as free nations they must break the power of this Order, and preparations to that end were made. In 1410 they gathered a large army representing both parts of the Kingdom of Poland and advanced against the Knights. The battle, fought on the fields near Tannenberg in East Prussia, is known in history as the Battle of Grunwald; it was in this same area that Hindenburg overwhelmed a Russian army in 1914.

The Knights were utterly defeated in this battle of 1410 and their power broken for all time, though it was not until 1466 that the Poles finally reaped the fruits of the victory, when the Treaty of Toruń restored to them the lands west of the Vistula, giving access to the sea, and East Prussia became a fief of the Polish crown. In 1525 the latter was formally declared a secular duchy, subject to Poland. In 1657 it became independent; in 1701 it became part of the Kingdom of Prussia. The province west of the Vistula, *Pomorze* in Polish, famous

at the time of the Treaty of Versailles as the 'Polish Corridor', Slav in its population, was now for 306 years,



Photo F. Jabłoński, Cracow

Upper marble slab of the tomb of King Władysław Jagiełło (1386—1434)

Wawel Cathedral

The part of the tomb shown above was made in the year of the King's death

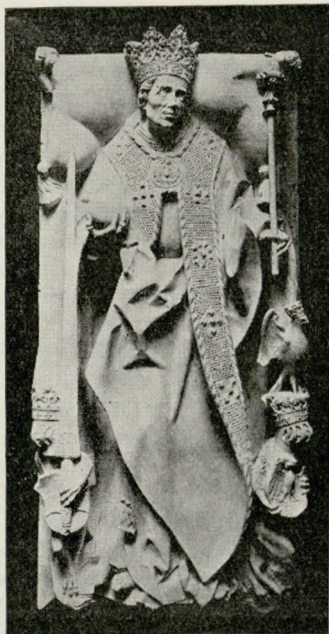


Photo A. Pawlikowski, Cracow

Upper marble slab of the tomb of King Kazimierz IV (1447—1492)

Wawel Cathedral

This sculpture is the work of Wit Stwosch and was executed in 1492

from 1466 until the first partition in 1772, to remain Polish.

The battle of Grunwald had then and has today great significance for the Poles. It meant the breaking of the power which from 1308 until 1410 had seized and occupied their northern provinces, shut them off from the sea, plotted against them in Rome and in the courts of Europe, and stood as a permanent menace to their freedom. During the years of the German oppression of Poland, 1772 to 1918, it meant to all Poles that they had once been able to shake off this foe and might again be able to do so. Matejko's historic painting of the battle is the central picture in the art museum at Warsaw. It is more than a picture. It is in truth a shrine.

#### THE ACT OF HORODŁO, A UNIQUE TREATY [1413]

We must now emphasize the fact that the Polish-Lithuanian union was in its origin and until 1569 only dynastic, a union in the person of a common king and queen, internal administration remaining separate. But with the passing years and especially after Grunwald the union became ever closer. In 1413 the Polish and Lithuanian nobles met at Horodło and in a remarkable treaty strengthened the bonds that bound them together. The Poles gained strength on the east, the Lithuanians gained valued privileges and western ties.

The treaty begins: 'In the Name of the Lord, Amen'. It continues 'May this deed be remembered for ever. It is known to all that he will not attain to salvation who is not sustained by the mystery of love, which does nothing wrong, radiates goodness, reconciles those in discord, unites those who quarrel, dissipates hatred, puts an end to anger, furnishes to all the food of peace, brings together the scattered, lifts up the fallen, makes rough ways smooth,

turns wrong into right, aids all virtues, injures no one, delights in all things; he who takes refuge in its arms will find safety, and thenceforth, even though insulted, will have no need to fear. Through love laws are established, kingdoms are ruled, cities are set in order, and the welfare of the state is brought to its highest; among all the virtues it is the most to be commended, and if anyone shall hold it in contempt he will deprive himself of everything good'.

What a document! Was there ever another such a treaty? It puts the 13th chapter of First Corinthians into politics, where it is certainly much needed even if not thoroughly at home. And that treaty was written, read, discussed and signed, on the far eastern plains of Poland in the year 1413, between the leaders of two nations, one just entering into the Christian family, the other still living largely in wooden houses and under thatched roofs.

One would like to print the whole text; it is a noble document. Its general effect was to give the Lithuanian gentry the coats of arms and privileges of the Polish gentry, and to give each nation the strength of the other against external enemies. 'May love unite us, make us equals', they wrote, 'we whom religion and identity of laws and privileges have already joined'.

WIT STWOSZ, MEDIAEVAL SCULPTOR [1438—1533]

In western books you will see him referred to as Veit Stoss, the German form of his name. He was one of the greatest wood-carvers of his age, and in addition to what he himself accomplished, he quite definitely inspired some of the work of Albrecht Dürer and other of his Nüremberg fellow-workers. Most of his work was executed at Cracow, where he was born in 1430 and lived till he was 58, and at Nüremberg, where because of his long

residence he is claimed as a German. But he was undoubtedly a Slav.

His masterpiece, notwithstanding his great work in Germany, is recognized by all to be the altar-piece in the Church of St. Mary at Cracow, containing scenes from the life of our Lord and his crucifixion. Many of the numerous figures are life size, but the favorites of this writer are the three and four inch heads which have been reproduced in plaster. These heads are wonderfully life-like, deeply satisfying as art and superb as decoration. There are 8 large reproductions of Stwosz's work in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, and as Poland increasingly becomes known to the western world other museums will probably also want plaster casts of his best pieces. Composition, drapery, posture, feeling, in all of these Stwosz was one of the first artists of his age. His name and his work are of prime importance to all interested in the history and masterpieces of ecclesiastical art.

In Poland, Wit Stwosz and his school mark the climax and the end of the Gothic style. Shortly after he left Cracow there came to the throne a king whose Italian wife introduced the Renaissance style into Poland, as well as much else that was fine and useful, and some things not quite so good.

And so we introduce Poland's 'Golden Age', bounded by Zygmunt I and Zygmunt III, something over a century, an era full of interesting and significant personalities, and events worth more pages than they will here receive lines.



## CHAPTER 2

# DURING POLAND'S 'GOLDEN AGE' THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

It is sometimes helpful to a reader, in perusing the history of a country with whose records he is not familiar, to recall events taking place at the same time in lands with which he is better acquainted. Let us see therefore what was going on elsewhere during the opening periods of the 16th century contemporary with the men and matters in Poland to which we are about to refer.

Knowledge of the recent discovery of America was penetrating to the most remote corners of Europe and the age of exploration had fully opened.

This was the period of such great rulers as the Emperors Maximilian I and Charles V, Francis I of France, Henry VIII of England, and of the last years of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. Luther launched the Reformation in 1517. Michael Angelo, Raphael, and Leonardo da Vinci were painting in Italy. The Renaissance of art and learning was at its height.

The Turks, after the capture of Constantinople in 1453, had advanced their armies to the very gates of Vienna. Poland was on the eve of becoming one of the greatest countries in Europe.

KING ZYGMUNT I

[1506—1548]

PEACE AND ENLIGHTENMENT

Zygmunt I (in western spelling Sigismund or Sigmund) holds a place of importance in Polish esteem and has an

interest to foreign visitors to Poland somewhat out of proportion to his intrinsic greatness. Monuments and interesting memories of his reign abound there even 400 years after his death; but the progress of his country which made his reign memorable seems to an impartial student to have come about largely as a result of other forces rather than of his direct efforts.

As to Zygmunt himself, like the Jagiellons generally, he had a due equipment both of brains and of personality. He was large in person, not specially a warrior, and indeed more devoted to peace and to cultural progress than to war. His shortcoming was his lack of a certain energy and driving force that creates events, shapes circumstances, and brings possibilities to realization. In addition to his personal endowments he was favoured by the following great assets and circumstances.

1. He lived in an era of relative peace in Poland, partly, to be sure, of his own securing. The power of the Knights of the Cross had been broken, and enemies on the borders were otherwise occupied or bought off by great concessions of dynastic right.
2. He came to the throne at the mature age of 40 with a successful experience as governor behind him.
3. He had as primate and chancellor the learned and able Jan Łaski (not the reformer known in England; who was his nephew), and as vice-chancellor the cultured Tomicki.
4. The classical Renaissance was at its height in the chief countries of Europe, and both through Poles who studied abroad and artists and architects brought to Poland by the king's Italian wife, the capital and the nobles generally had effective contact with this movement.
5. His second wife, Bona of the great Milanese family of Sforza, though unpopular both in her own time and



Photo J. Voigt, Cracow

Jan Łaski, the great reformer and divine (1499—1560)  
 From a copper-plate engraving in the Jagiellon Library

in Polish history, was an unusually capable woman, and probably no small amount of what is credited to Zygmunt was in part due to her. Much of this, however, one must add, was balanced by the corruption she occasioned and encouraged.

6. The king had received his early education under the tutorage of the Pole Jan Długosz (Johannes Longinus

to the outside world) one of the foremost European historians of his day and one of the founders of historical writing in the modern meaning of the term. The concrete results of Zygmunt's reign were partly good and partly bad.

1. Gothic Cracow, his capital, was transformed into the Renaissance Cracow we see today, the three chief monuments being the beautiful Cloth-Hall in the centre of the square, the royal castle on Wawel Hill, and the type of building we still call the Cracow style. His own chapel-tomb in the cathedral on the Wawel is considered by art critics to be one of the finest specimens of Renaissance architecture in Europe.

2. The general cultural level of Poland was materially raised and the foundations laid for the high level of European civilization which prevailed among the privileged classes from this time on.

3. The Protestant Reformation, though edicts were issued against it, was not suppressed with blood as in all the other important Catholic lands, and was for many years a source of increasing freedom of mind and a stimulation to learning. Among other things it brought about the elevation of the Polish tongue to the status of a literary language, gradually replacing Latin, which had been the language of documents, official addresses and correspondence until about 1550.

4. The large and purely Polish province of Mazovia, of which Warsaw was the centre, passed to the Polish Crown in 1526 through the dying out of the reigning ducal line.

5. East Prussia was reorganized as a secular duchy tributary to Poland with King Zygmunt's nephew, Albert of Brandenburg, as the first duke. Matejko's historic painting of this duke paying official homage to Zygmunt out-

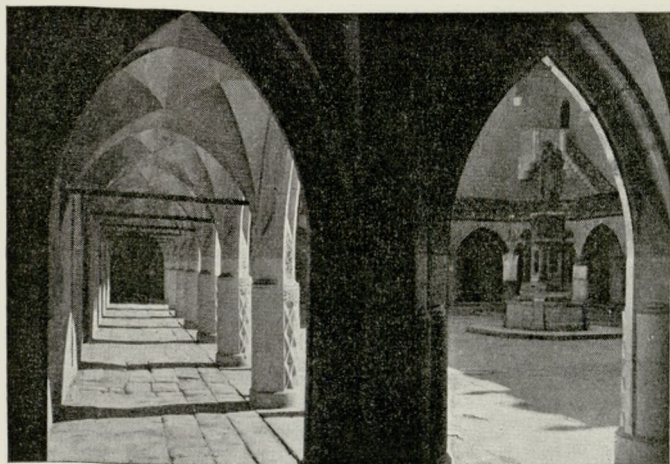


Photo S. Kolowiec, Cracow

Quadrangle of the Collegium Maius (15th century), Cracow  
University; statue of Nicholas Copernicus

The great astronomer was a graduate of the University. This edifice was formerly the main building of the University and now houses the Jagiellon Library

side the Cloth-Hall in Cracow (the vast canvas itself is in the National Museum within the Cloth-Hall) is, like the Grunwald picture in Warsaw, not only a great painting but a national shrine. This solution of the problem of East Prussia appeared satisfactory at the time, but for Poland it proved later on to be a step along the direct road to the abyss.

6. Another negative result of Zygmunt's reign was the constantly increasing legal power of the gentry and great nobles at the expense of the crown, the cities, and the

peasants Here, apparent even then, lay one of the seeds of the ultimate fall of Poland some 200 years later. The landed gentry and nobles acquired supreme power but developed no technique or machinery for its constructive use and control. They used it to secure personal benefits for themselves; they rarely used it for the good of the state.

### QUEEN BONA

Here is material for a whole book. As a woman of unusual ability she may well be compared with her younger contemporary Queen Elizabeth of England. The dark and selfish side of her nature and record tends to obscure to Poles her real contribution to Polish life and culture. They think of her in terms of court corruption and plots and poisons, and of her thwarting opposition to her son, who became king upon the death of her husband, and forget her useful services. Without her firm and able management Zygmunt I would certainly have had less money and accomplished less than he did, and her wit and beauty were no mean asset at court.

Farm and estate management under the Polish gentry was carried on until her time in a most vague and haphazard manner. She showed the nobles what real business management of an estate meant. Hers were the best administered properties in all Poland, and were recognized as such. Though queen, she was the model farmer of her day. The little bunches of potherbs which we buy today in the Polish markets as the base and flavour of our soup, we owe directly to Queen Bona, who introduced them from Italy, so that they are still called *włoszczyzna*, 'Italian things'.

Bona survived Zygmunt nine years, returning to Italy a year before her death. Poles who know nothing else about Bona know that she is supposed to have poisoned

Barbara, the wife of her son Zygmunt August, and that when she returned to Italy in 1556 she took with her 24 waggon loads of valuables. This final clean-up, added to her corrupt practices, obscures all her services, such as the founding of the fortified city of Bar, chief fortress against Tartar and Cossack for a hundred years.

## ZYGMUNT II AUGUST

[1548—1572]

Zygmunt II, or Zygmunt August, is a rather pleasing figure in Polish history notwithstanding his moral failings and that lack of force and decision which seems to have been characteristic of the Jagiellons. Poor fellow, he was brought up under the supervision of his mother Queen Bona by women, priests, and corrupt Italians. and the achievements of his reign are all the more to his glory. He was reared to be a king, having as a boy been elected to succeed his father upon the latter's death. When he came to the throne at 28, he revealed that he had been secretly married to a Lithuanian Calvinist, the beautiful Barbara Radziwiłł, and this created trouble, as she was not of royal blood. It was two years before she was accepted and crowned as queen. Her early and mysterious death left a permanent mark on her husband the king. He married again later, but never with his heart.

The 24 years of his really distinguished reign were marked by three things; a splendid flowering of Polish literary and artistic culture, much internal turmoil due to the turbulent individualistic nobles and to the Protestant Reformation, the struggle for Livonia and war with Ivan the Terrible, and the final establishment of the union with Lithuania, which left Poland at his death in 1572 one of the greatest powers of Europe.

He was himself a man of high personal culture, and he was favoured by the rise during his time of such men



Photo H. Poddębski, Warsaw

### Windmills near Osieczna, Poznań

as Jan Zamoyski, Mikołaj Rey, Jan Kochanowski, Bishop Kromer and others to be noted later. In his day printing received a great impetus, Polish became a literary language, and the Polish mind, both Protestant and Catholic, experienced that liberation characteristic of and produced by the Reformation.

The Reformation was naturally one of his greatest administrative problems. It had spread rapidly in Poland, chiefly among the nobles outside of Mazovia, and Zygmunt himself worried considerably as to what his attitude should be. For a while he considered the establishment of a national church independent of Rome, after the example of his father's contemporary, Henry VIII of England. He wavered between this extreme and his dictum 'I am not





Photo H. Poddębski, Warsaw

### A goose-girl — Łowicz district

king of your consciences', but finally accepted the decrees of the Council of Trent in 1564 and welcomed the Jesuits to Poland to launch a counter-reformation in 1565. He was, however, fundamentally a liberal and tolerant man and king.

In the broader field of foreign relations three important events crowned his arms and diplomacy. In 1561, Livonia, the Latvia of today, at its own request became a duchy subject to the Polish crown. Zygmunt's nine years' war with Ivan the Terrible of Muscovy ended favourably for Poland in 1571. But this struggle, one now sees, was only the first great war with this rising power, later to expand and become Russia, and was really indecisive.

Zygmunt's third great victory, one of peace, was the securing of the final and complete union of Lithuania

with Poland in 1569, referred to in Polish history as the Union of Lublin. Only by this union could Lithuania save itself from Muscovy, and the advantages of culture and privilege which this act brought to Lithuania doubled its value. From then on there was just one country, Poland, with its parliaments meeting no more separately at Wilno and Cracow, but after 1569 in Warsaw, which became the full and official capital, however, only in 1596.

The man himself stands out in the mind of Poles chiefly as the centre and embodiment of the high culture and intellectual glory of their 'Golden Age', which was at its height during his reign, an impression somewhat reinforced by the wonderful arras tapestries made for him and now displayed in the castle at Cracow, and by the historical opera bearing his name which brings the events and incidents of his reign to popular memory in a most attractive setting of music, drama, costumes, and noble deeds.

#### THE REFORMATION IN POLAND

[1519—1570]

There is no phase of Polish history so hard to characterize in 500 words as is the Protestant Reformation, yet there is no phase so interesting. For the story of the Reformation in Poland is like that in no other land. How it came to Poland, by whom it was taken up, the causes, nature, and extent of its spread, the nature of the opposition, and its final failure after it had, as Sir Stanley Leathes says in the Cambridge Modern History, 'pursued its course for nearly half a century without material hindrance either from the national government or the authorities of the Church', these are fascinating themes. Perhaps the core of this interest is the absence of early official persecution, so general throughout Europe, so absent in Poland. But there are other aspects and side-lights and complications far too numerous to be explored or reported here. The

Reformation began in Poland in 1520. By 1620 it had run its course. Here are some of the main points of the story.

In 1517 Luther nailed his 95 theses on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg and the Reformation was started. It soon filtered into Poland, chiefly from four sources; Polish students at Wittenberg and Poles in East Prussia, mainly students, these two groups bringing the Lutheran form of the movement; through Polish students at the Hussite University in Prague, who brought the Bohemian Brethren form of the movement; through Calvinists; and later through the Anti-Trinitarians or Unitarians. The very number and variety of its forms was one of the chief causes of its ultimate failure after initial successes lasting some fifty years.

The Reformation was espoused by many of the leading families of Poland, the great nobles, and up to 1556 it had included branches of such great houses as these, names familiar to all who know Poland: Leszczyński, Ostroróg, Zborowski, Górka, Firley, Łaski, Jordan, Tenczyński, Chodkiewicz, Radziwiłł, Lubomirski, Działyński, Zebrzydowski, Małachowski, Konarski, and Wielopolski. A noble array indeed. Prince Mikołaj Radziwiłł was the leader of the Calvinist group. It was typical of the course of the Reformation that all four of his sons became Catholics.

Let us briefly cover the spread of Protestantism, by stating a few facts without comment. All the Diets from 1552 to 1565 elected Protestant presidents of the Chamber of Deputies (*Sejm* in Polish). By the close of the century about one parish in six and one noble family in six, chiefly the great nobles, were Protestant. Father Skarga, a famous Jesuit priest, court preacher around 1600, said that about 2,000 Roman Catholic churches became Protestant. Many of the nobles expected the king, Zygmunt August, to become a Protestant. Various scholars and

literary men left the Church. The Catholic leaders were in despair over the situation and Rome greatly alarmed.

This great extension of Protestantism leads one to ask why the movement so succeeded. The reasons are both positive and negative. Among the positive reasons stand these. There were in Poland also, of course, all the causes of the Reformation that called for it and brought it about in other lands. These one need not recapitulate. They include corruption among the clergy, simony, ecclesiastical abuses, the need of a moral purging of society and of the Church, a desire for a restatement of doctrine and for review of certain forms and ceremonies. These causes existed throughout Europe. There was operative also the mental awakening of the Renaissance and of humanism, and the accompanying desire for more freedom of thought.

In Poland there were several other important causes. Restiveness under Rome's influence on the affairs of the Polish State, the great wealth and tax-exemption of the clergy, the authority of the ecclesiastical courts, broken by the Diet in 1552, and, most important, the desire of the nobles to get themselves and the government freed from the power of the bishops who dominated both the Senate and much of common life. With the correction of some of these abuses interest in the Reformation itself waned, showing it not to have had very deep moral and doctrinal roots.

There were important negative causes for the spread of heresy. The following are clearly discernible.

1. The characteristic Polish individualism and toleration. Jan Zamoyski, the crown chancellor, once said in the presence of the King and of the Senate, 'I would give half of my life if those who have abandoned the Roman Catholic Church should voluntarily return to its pale; but



Photo R. S. Ulatowski, Poznań

### Sixteenth century Renaissance Hall, Poznań Town-Hall

I would prefer giving all my life than to suffer anybody to be constrained to do it, for I would rather die than witness such an oppression'. That was thoroughly and characteristically Polish.

2. During the height of the Reformation Zygmunt I and Zygmunt II refused to persecute Protestants. When pressed to do so they answered with such phrases as, 'I am not king of your consciences'. 'I wish to be monarch equally of the sheep and of the goats'. 'I am afraid of tearing up wheat as well as tares'. They voiced their determination to tolerate religious opinions 'whenever they did not interfere with public order and the authority of the monarch'.

3. Several times, under great clerical pressure, royal edicts and decrees were issued against the new sects,

Bohemian, Lutheran, or Calvinist, but they always failed of ratification by the Diet and were therefore not valid. The edicts once issued, Zygmunt II made no effort to enforce them.

4. The heretical nobles were amply protected by the Polish constitution, especially after the Diet of 1551 made religious liberty real and effective by taking away the power of judging heretics from the ecclesiastical courts and giving it to the civil courts.

One must add, however, that this protection did not extend to the peasants and simple city people according to the general rule of those times *cuius regio, illius religio*.

But the civil authorities would take no part in persecuting the heretics. They show up well in this controversy. Poland's refusal to persecute Protestants during this period is one of the most glorious pages of her history. In this she stands unique among the great nations of the era of the Reformation. The fruits of this are harvested today. There is in Poland less historic ground for ill-will between Protestants and Catholics than in other European countries and these two bodies of Christians live and work in harmony in Poland as perhaps nowhere else in the world. This in a country where the Protestants today number less than 3 per cent. of the population. The intolerance during the reign of Zygmunt III is justly laid at the door of that king and of the Jesuits, and are not to be held against the whole body of Catholics.

5. The Diet was predominately Protestant during the height of the Reformation. The decrees of the Council of Trent, even though accepted by the king in 1564, were not accepted by the Diet, either then or for a hundred years afterwards.

With all this in its favour, why did the Reformation die out and fail?

1. It was never accepted by the lower gentry, the city people, the peasants, nor in Mazovia.

2. It split into various sects who warred against each other and thus lost both aggressive power and power of resistance against the counter-reformation. It had no uniform doctrinal basis. It was torn by division and dissension.

Nicholas Copernicus (1473—1543)

From an oil painting, probably executed in 1574, upon the astronomical clock in Strasburg Cathedral

After Z. Batowski



3. When the nobles had broken the economic and social and political power of the clergy they lost interest in the religious aspects of the Reformation and returned to the Catholic Church.

4. When later in the century part of the Reformation became Anti-Trinitarian many of the nobles became alarmed for the safety of the Christian faith as a whole, thought things had gone too far, and returned to the Church.

5. Lutheranism was regarded as a German emanation and therefore as an enemy influence, or at least not Polish.

6. The Jesuits, brought in by Cardinal Hosius in 1561, encouraged by King Stefan Batory and strongly supported by King Zygmunt III, launched a powerful counter-reformation. This was the chief factor in the disruption of the Protestant Reformation in Poland.

7. It is the opinion of this writer, after years of residence among the Poles, that Protestant thought and forms of worship are not well adapted to the Polish type of Slav psychology, itself partly a product of a Catholic environment. This is probably one of the deeper reasons for the failure of the Reformation in Poland. Very few Poles of Polish name and blood are Protestants. Most of the Protestants of Poland, some 1,000,000 in number, are of other than Polish ancestry, and chiefly German. They are, however, a loyal, respected, and fully assimilated element of the population; that is, of course, the large majority who either recently or in the long past adopted Polish citizenship and became Poles in the same way that millions of Europeans have become Americans.

## THE UNION OF LUBLIN

[1569]

The complete voluntary union of two large free nations and areas of land is so rare a thing in history, and the Union of Lublin, as it was called, was so significant a transaction in its time and place, that it calls for separate treatment. Just what was this union and why was it effected?

As previous sections have shown, the fusion began purely as a union of dynasties in 1386. Further steps of unification were taken later, notably the joint war against the Knights of the Cross in 1410 and the treaty



of Horodło in 1413. At the end of the century, in 1492, Lithuania withdrew for a time, but returned in 1501. During the early decades of the 16th century the Lithuanian land-owners became so conscious of the value of the union to them that they eventually pressed for closer ties; but they were opposed by the great lords who saw that such a move was in the direction of more popular government and would mean a clear loss of power to them.

Zygmunt August, who was grand duke of Lithuania before he was king of Poland, worked for years to bring the union about, regarding it as something that must be accomplished before he, the last of the Jagiellons, should pass on. Finally representatives of both lands met in Lublin, and in 1569, after months of work, the result was achieved.

It was not an annexation of Lithuania by Poland but a merger, a corporate union, of an entirely voluntary nature, upon conditions carefully worked out and satisfactory to all but a few great Lithuanian lords. The landed gentry were strongly for it. It was, in the words of the treaty, a union of 'the free with the free and the equal with the equal'. Lithuania retained certain separate local administrative and judiciary powers and officials.

Why did the Lithuanians want this union? Of what problems did it bring a solution?

1. Lithuania needed Poland's help in the solution of its national economic problems.

2. It needed the civilization of the west, and preferred Poland as the avenue through which it should receive it.

3. It needed protection and help against the growing power of Moscow during the reign of Ivan the Terrible, and the danger of a Swedish advance from the north through what is today Estonia.

4. The Lithuanian gentry longed for the civil and political rights of their equals in Poland, and saw in this union a sure way of securing them.

All four of these expectations found reasonable realization and the union endured until the Partitions of 1772—93—95 when both countries ceased to exist until reborn in 1918, Lithuania diminished to its ethnic boundaries, a land of a little over a million people, Poland shorn of its earlier eastern provinces but a nation today of 33,000,000 inhabitants and a country with an area of 150,000 square miles.

#### FOUR STARS IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY FIRMAMENT

**Copernicus, 1473—1543.** Mikołaj Kopernik (in Polish) stands as the first Pole to win world-wide fame. He was born at Toruń, and educated at Cracow, the city of his merchant father. His Toruń house is still a Polish shrine, and his statue ornaments the court of the university of Cracow where he was a student. His contribution to astronomy, the theory of the revolution of the heavenly bodies around the sun, published in 1543, is universally known, but it is not generally remembered that he was also a painter, a student of canon law, a physician, and the proponent of a scheme of currency reform. The Warsaw statue of this great Pole, by the famous Dane, Thorwaldsen, is one of the most interesting in the capital.

**Mikołaj Rey, 1505—1569.** What Luther's Bible did for the German language, Rey's poetry did for Polish, until this time not yet a language of literary excellence. Dyboski describes Rey thus, 'a jolly and jovial country gentleman; fond of stories, ready with improvised song and verse at country christenings, weddings, and funerals, valuable in holding forth on disputed points at meetings and banquets of the district gentry, he transfers the genial flow of his

eloquence, in all its racy idiom, to the products of an equally easy pen, which are soon read by the whole nation'. His contribution to Polish literature, both religious and secular, was significant; among his religious works are: a translation of the Psalms, a commentary on the Revelation, and an exposition of Protestant ideology for laymen. A folio reproduction of his *Mirror*, with the original woodcuts, bound in vellum in mediaeval style, is one of this writer's most treasured books.

Jan Kochanowski, 1530—1584, in a day when there were 'more Latinists in Poland than ever there were in Rome', was the crowning and culminating figure of Poland's golden age of literature. Beginning his literary career as a Latin poet, he later fell in with the movement to make the Polish language a cultural medium and created some of the noblest of early Polish poetry. Like many Poles of his day he studied first at Cracow and then in Italy at Padua, returning to his native land after profitable foreign studies to become the 'Prince of Polish Poets'. A versatile man and touching life at many points, he wrote lyrics, religious verse, elegies, poems of nature, and verse of serious moral and patriotic tenor. In this latter tone is his drama in the Hellenic manner, *Odprawa posłów greckich* (The Dismissal of the Greek Envoys). It was written to be played as part of the celebration of Jan Zamoyski's marriage to the niece of the then king, Stefan Batory. Its stern rebuke of political and social immorality seem oddly out of keeping with the occasion, but make it a permanent classic of the Polish tongue.

Piotr Skarga, 1536—1612, Jesuit priest and foremost of all Polish preachers, likened by Dyboski to the Hebrew prophets, stands at the end of the period in which we have paused, and the beginning of the unfortunate reign of Zygmunt III whose court preacher he was. It is his

*Sermons* that are his permanent contribution to Polish thought and letters. He was perhaps the most able and certainly he was the most distinguished of the opponents of Protestantism. Not in this capacity, however, but as a preacher of social and political reform and righteousness is he now remembered by Poles. Matejko's painting of him preaching to the Court anchors him permanently in this position in Polish memory. He foresaw his country's downfall if the evils of which he spoke were not corrected. They were not, and he proved to be only too true a prophet. The tablet on the house in the Old Town at Warsaw in which he lived makes him as vivid as if he were our contemporary.

JAN ZAMOYSKI

[1541—1605]

#### GREATEST POLE OF POLAND'S GREATEST AGE

There are two ways of measuring men; one by their personal attainments, the other by their objective achievements. By the latter test the late Marshal Joseph Piłsudski stands as the greatest of all Poles with modern free Poland as his witness, but by the former, Jan Zamoyski.

One is inclined to call him 'king-maker', for he put three men in succession on the throne, Henry of Valois, Stefan Batory, and Zygmunt III Vasa, the great pity being that he never put himself there; but this designation at once demarcates his sphere of action as being the field of politics, when as a matter of fact he was distinguished in many other ways also. In his day he was one of the first men of Europe in personal culture, statesmanship, oratory, scholarship, as educator and as soldier; a wide field indeed. He was highly distinguished in more ways than any other man of his nation has ever been.

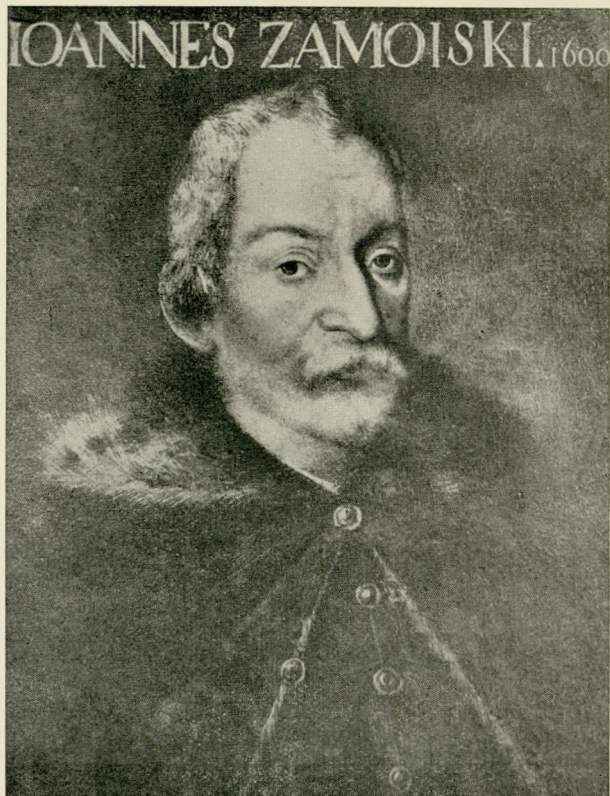
His father early sent him to the court of France to be educated, and then to Germany and to Padua, where



Photo J. Voigt, Cracow

King Stefan Batory (1576—1586)

From the portrait formerly housed in the Count Strogonov  
collection in Rome



Chancellor Jan Zamoyski (1541—1605)  
From the portrait at the Uffizi Gallery, Florence

he was eventually elected rector, chief administrative officer, of that famous old university. His *Roman Senate*, in Latin, written during his Italian residence, is a treatise of permanent value. Returning to Poland at 24 he was chosen by King Zygmunt August as his secretary. When this king died in 1572 Zamoyski was the most powerful single factor in the election of Henry of Valois, securing this result by taking power out of the hands of the magnates and the Senate and conferring it on the gentry as a whole.

When Henry deserted Poland to become king of France, Zamoyski secured the election of Stefan Batory and later became both his chancellor and the head of the army. At Batory's death Zamoyski brought about the election of Zygmunt III, for which, indeed, he receives no praise, for this king was an unhappy choice, a thing Zamoyski saw the very day of the coronation.

One of Zamoyski's most constructive acts was the founding in 1580 of the model town of Zamość, where he built his noted academy, now a government secondary school. He wrote a Latin grammar for its students and, when he took the field at the head of the army, he had the exercises of the Latin classes sent him for correction.

No man of his day did more to encourage learning, no man in public life exhibited more noble Christian character, none so used his private wealth for the welfare of the nation. His permanent memorials are his great name and fame, the city he founded, the Zamoyski Library in Warsaw, his correspondence in three volumes, and five more as yet unpublished, and the numerous books and pamphlets and articles dealing with the many phases of his life and work and character.

The rising power of Poland and to a certain extent its golden age came to an end with the passing of the second Zygmunt, the last of the Jagiellons, in 1572. After the farcical episode of Henry, Poland again rose to glory during the ten years of Batory's reign, but the sequence had been broken and decline was about to set in.

Under the Jagiellons the election of kings had actually been a function of the Senate, to which belonged the great nobles and the bishops, but at the death of Zygmunt II Jan Zamoyski led a movement which brought about a broader participation in the electoral right, putting it into the hands of every member of the extensive gentry, thousands of whom were simply upper class peasants. Zamoyski made Poland the most democratic country on the continent.

This vast horde of electors met in the fields beyond Warsaw to elect the new king. Probably 100,000 people came to Warsaw, not then the capital, for this purpose, over 40,000 of them electors. Tents were set up, and the discussion and electioneering began. Many of the great nobles came with small armies of retainers, and at times, as the electioneering waxed warm, serious clashes seemed imminent.

There were numerous candidates, each representing a distinct point of view and tendency in national politics. One group wanted a Pole. A second party was pro-Austrian and wanted to secure strength from that quarter by electing a Hapsburg, Arch-Duke Ernest, the son of Emperor Maximilian II. One party, following a lead given by the late king before he died, advocated making Ivan the Terrible of Russia king of Poland. The pro-French party wanted Henry of Valois, younger brother of King Charles IX of France. King John of Sweden was proposed, having as



his wife a Jagiellon princess; Prince Stefan Batory of Transylvania was also mentioned.

Henry was elected. The twelve Poles who went to Paris to notify him of his election and its accompanying terms, Zamoyski among the group, astonished France with their elegance of costume, linguistic proficiency, and personal culture, putting the less cultivated French courtiers to shame. The articles Henry had to sign made him indeed king, but with quite insignificant powers.

He was an utter failure as king, weak and immoral, indeed only a callow youth, somewhat unfortunate in that his mother had been Catherine de Medici. Five months after Henry reached Poland, King Charles IX of France died, and Henry fled to France to insure the inheritance of his brother's throne; he ascended it as Henry III. This first experience of electing a foreign king left nothing to commend the practice; nevertheless, of the subsequent ten kings who ascended the elective Polish throne, four were foreigners. And of all the ten, native or foreign, only one, Stefan Batory, brought good fortune to the country.

#### STEFAN BATORY, KING INDEED

[1576—1586]

After Henry's flight a second election was held and Stefan Batory, Prince of Transylvania, a Hungarian, was chosen king. He was a man of large and dignified stature, a statesman, and a soldier of note. He had been a Protestant, but for reasons of state, like Henry IV of France, embraced the Catholic faith.

Foreign affairs at once engaged his attention. The Tartars were driven back, Austrian friendship was established, rebellious Danzig was brought to order, Ivan the Terrible was defeated and repelled. The Pope, alarmed by Batory's expanding power, intervened, and Poland did not reap the full fruits of its eastern victories. In these wars

with Russia Batory and Zamoyski led the Polish forces. Batory correctly took Ivan's measure, and in his letters to him addressed him as 'sneaking wolf' and 'vile venomous cur'. The reception by King Stefan of the Russian delegation which offered bread and salt and sued for peace during the Siege of Pskov is the subject of one of Matejko's greatest paintings. It hangs in the castle at Warsaw.

One of the members of the powerful Zborowski family, having killed a man in a court quarrel, and being brought to trial and exiled, led a rebellion and was finally executed. This act of law and justice was the supreme test of Batory's power and authority. He demonstrated that a real king was on the throne.

Desiring to promote education, he favoured the Jesuits, and eventually, with them as teachers, founded the famous university of Wilno which bears his name. His favouring the Jesuits for educational purposes enabled this learned, capable and disciplined order to get complete control of the schools and then to organize and push the Catholic reaction to the Reformation. The result was a gradual reduction of religious liberty, an increasing repression of heresy, and a melting away of the following of the various Protestant sects.

It was Stefan Batory who first organized the Cossacks of the Ukraine as an official military force, using them against the Tartars; 6,000 of them were incorporated into the Polish army with a leader of their own choice. Batory realized the increasing menace of Turkey and was on the point of organizing the forces of Muscovy, Hungary and Poland into a crusade against the Turk when, at the age of only 53, he died suddenly of apoplexy. It was an unspeakable loss to Poland and to Europe. All Poles consider him to have been their greatest king in modern times. What he and his chancellor Jan Zamoyski could

have accomplished together both in internal and in foreign affairs stirs the historic imagination.

### THE LONG REIGN OF ZYGMUNT III

[1587—1632]

As the acknowledged leader of the middle and lesser nobles and gentry, Zamoyski now secured the election of Zygmunt Vasa of Sweden as king, to be known in Polish history as Zygmunt III. He was the son of King John III of Sweden and Catherine, the king's Polish, Jagiellon wife, the sister of Zygmunt II. To put him on the throne Zamoyski had first to defeat an armed invasion of the Archduke Maximilian of Austria, son of the Emperor, who was the choice of one section of Polish society. Zamoyski always opposed the Austrian and Hapsburg and German influence in Polish politics. Thus began the Vasa line of Polish elected kings, Zygmunt III and his older and younger sons, Władysław and Jan Kazimierz who succeeded him, a dynasty lasting 81 years, and most unfortunate for Poland. Though a Vasa, (Gustavus Adolphus was his cousin), Zygmunt was a Catholic, and of the most intolerant and bigoted type, ever ready to sacrifice everything for his Church.

His reign has been characterized by a modern writer as 'the epoch of last and lost chances', these last and lost chances being those of needed internal social and constitutional reform, of consolidation and expansion during the absorption of the Empire in the Thirty Years' War (1618—1648), and the acquiring of the Crown of Russia by the union then possible and desired by many of the Russian *boyars*.

Within the very hour of Zygmunt's entry into the capital and his coronation, Zamoyski saw that he had made a mistake. Zygmunt's reserve, stiffness, and haughtiness were at once evident and became the subject of



Photo J. Voigt, Cracow

### King Zygmunt III Vasa (1587—1632)

From an engraving by I. Suyderhoof of P. Soutman's portrait

immediate criticism. Other and worse qualities, bigotry and obstinacy, soon displayed themselves. The former in his disloyalty to Poland's interests as against those of the Church, and his breaking of Poland's noble tradition of toleration in his persecution of the Protestant sects, a persecution never so violent as that in other Catholic



Photo J. Voigt, Cracow

### King Władysław IV (1632—1648)

From an engraving after the portrait by Rubens

lands, yet enough to endure and to darken Poland's record until the time of the first partition, 1772. Of this persecution the Jesuits were both the instigators and the agents, working through the students in their schools, former pupils educated under their influence, and city mobs led by students and even teachers.

His obstinacy was shown in his persistent and unwise efforts to secure the Swedish throne upon the death of his father, John III, an effort involving Poland in useless and harmful wars, his persistence in leaning toward Austria and marrying two Austrian archduchesses successively in violation of his pledged word, and his foolish insistence upon being crowned Czar of Russia when the Russians wanted his son Władysław as their king.

The Russian episode is colourful. The Czarian family died out at the end of the 16th century, and then followed the picturesque adventure of 'the false Demetrius'. This was followed by a strong Russian leaning toward a union with Poland, which should be similar to the Polish-Lithuanian union, and the choice by the Russians of Zygmunt's son Władysław as ruler. But Zygmunt, wishing to make Russia Catholic, insisted that he and not his son should be Czar. However, the Russians wanted no such Jesuit sovereign, and the whole movement accordingly ended in a fiasco, and in 1613 the first Romanoff became Czar, though not until the Poles and the Russians had gone to war over what could have been arranged profitably for all parties.

Zamoyski and Zygmunt soon became estranged and in 1592 the former led what amounted to an impeachment of the king, and administered a magnificent public rebuke to his foolish sovereign. The opposition, led but held in check by Zamoyski, broke out after his death into a protracted insurrection in 1606—07, which produced no good and resulted only in several years of anarchy.

One good thing at least Zygmunt did. He kept Poland out of the Thirty Years' War and that war out of Poland. Another achievement, good or bad according to the point of view, was that he broke the Protestant Reformation

in Poland, without, however, any such frightfulness as stains the history of every other European nation.

A unique event of this reign is the formation of the Uniate or Greek Catholic Church in 1596. This body preserves the liturgy of the Orthodox Greek Church but acknowledges the supremacy of the Pope of Rome. To this compromise Orthodox-Catholic Church belong the Ukrainians of Poland, a body of over 3 million people.

All visitors to Warsaw see the impressive tall Zygmunt Column in Castle Place, with a statue of the king at the top. It is there to mark the transfer of the capital of Poland from Cracow to Warsaw by King Zygmunt in 1596.

After an unhappy and unfortunate reign of 45 years, Zygmunt III died in 1632, having set Poland definitely on the way to dissolution.

#### WARSAW BECOMES THE CAPITAL

[1596]

The Polish kings had early made Cracow the capital of Poland and this it continued to be all through the Jagiellon dynasty. After the death of Zygmunt II, last of that line, 1572, Warsaw became increasingly a centre of national gatherings. The election of Henry was held there, there the Diets met after 1569, and the Protestants held an important gathering there in 1573. The city was not in itself as old and fine as Cracow, but it was a great market owing to its central location on the Vistula and various important roads, and was equally easy of access from such centres as Danzig, Poznań, Wilno, Lwów, and Cracow. When the king, wishing both to be nearer Sweden and in a strong Catholic centre, moved his residence to Warsaw in 1596, the castle was enlarged, rich nobles built palaces there, and the already excellent marketing facilities were increased. The famous Fukier wine shop and restaurant which so interest tourists, dates from this period (1610).

As to the city as a cultural centre, it is significant that none of the literary men of the age refer to Warsaw, though Cracow and other cities receive frequent literary mention. Only slowly does Warsaw become a place holding any position in the affections of the people. Yet the beautiful coloured engraving of the city made in 1591 and appearing in Braun's *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, shows Warsaw as a very respectable city of brick houses, churches, and city walls. The wooden bridge across the Vistula was of the simplest design and construction. It terminated in the Bridge Street of today, far from any of today's bridges. Think of the Warsaw of 1600 as a somewhat prosaic city of perhaps 20,000 residents, a centre of important events but of few traditions and almost no romance.

Yet, down its streets General Żółkiewski brought the conquered Czar Basil of Russia in 1611 to present his prisoner and his two brothers to Zygmunt, his queen, and the senate, 'a strange sight, rousing compassion', writes a contemporary. And two weeks later, on a throne erected outside the Benedictine Church, Zygmunt received the homage of his feudatory, John Hohenzollern, Elector of Brandenburg and Duke of Prussia. 'Those were proud moments in the palaces of Warsaw', writes Aleksander Janowski.

#### A POLISH PRINCE IS CZAR OF RUSSIA [1610—1613]

Reference to this has already been made in the two preceding sections, but the matter is of sufficient interest and importance to be worthy of another paragraph. With the extinction of the line of Ivan the Terrible and connected partly with the fantastic events of the 'false Demetrius' incident, there was a great increase of Polish influence in Russia. Poland was then a vast and powerful nation and the Russia of that day was merely Muscovy



and by no means the Russia of the 19th century. It was not an unnatural thing that the confusion in Moscow and the ascendancy of Poland should have led the Russian landowners to seek peace and order through connection with the mighty, orderly and non-autocratic Poland. Poland then embraced the whole Ukraine, the territory over to and even beyond the Dnieper including Kiev and Poltava, and in the north, the vast province round Minsk extending to Smolensk, and all that is today Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. There was no St. Petersburg, until 1703. The capital of Muscovy was Moscow.

In July 1610 Czar Basil was dethroned by the *boyars* (great land-owners) and a group called the 'men of service', small land-owners. This party offered 15 years old Władysław, son of Zygmunt III, the crown, one of the conditions of his call to the throne being a recognition of the rights of the Diet and the landed gentry. The efforts of Zygmunt to get the throne for himself aroused the fears of the Orthodox Russians, a reaction against the Catholic Poles was fomented and organized, the Poles were expelled, and 17 year old Michael Romanoff was elected Czar. Under the Romanoffs began the expansion which later contributed to Poland's complete downfall and dismemberment at the time of Catherine the Great. One thinks of the different course events might have taken if young Władysław, tolerant, 'wisest of the Polish Vasas' had been free from the interference of his bigoted, intolerant, unwise father.

#### POLAND REACHES ITS GREATEST EXTENT [1618]

The latter years of Zygmunt III's reign were the years of Poland's widest geographic extension. As the Poland of today has less than half of its former territories it is worth while to pause a moment here at the year 1618

and see just how large Poland was. and then to note when the loss of territory began.

Moving east from the line between Germany and Poland, then much as it is now, we observe that Poland included all of East Prussia, its vassal state, and along the Baltic the present-day states of Lithuania, Latvia, and the southern part of Estonia. The eastern boundary toward Muscovy was, in the north, a line just west of Pskov; it then bent far to the east to include land beyond Smolensk, the valley of the Dnieper and its tributaries, as far as the west bank of the Doniec. South of the Dnieper, after it bends at the cataracts, the land was Tartar. The Ukraine was Polish down to the Black Sea. No other European state covered so vast a territory.

The disintegration of Poland began in 1634 when Muscovy obtained small areas. In 1657 East Prussia broke off as an independent state. In 1660 Poland lost Livonia, that is Latvia and southern Estonia, to Sweden. In 1667 Smolensk, Czernikov, Kiev, and the lands east of the Dnieper passed to Muscovy. To Turkey, by forced treaties between 1672 and 1686, were ceded much of the Ukraine and Podolia, separating Poland for ever from the Black Sea. Courland was ceded to Russia in 1736, after which there were no important changes until the first partition of 1772.

If the reasons for this shrinking of a once powerful state are sought, the deeper causes are found to lie in the Polish constitution with its lack of central authority, the anti-expansion policy of the gentry, the absence of a standing army, and the fact of a democracy with elected kings of almost no authority placed in the midst of three expanding autocracies, Russia, Prussia, and Austria.

### CHAPTER 3

## DURING THE DECLINE AND FALL SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

This is not intended to be a full and connected history of Poland. It dips here and there into the sea of events to pick up incidents and personalities of proved interest to people beyond Poland's boundaries, chiefly in America and England. Therefore, looking only for the extraordinary, we now skip a whole reign, that of the elder son of Zygmunt III, Władysław IV — of whom, however, it should be said, that he takes a respectable place among those kings of Poland who have striven to build up a Polish fleet. — and choose as the theme of a brief chapter the wars which form the matter of Henry Sienkiewicz's thrilling historical novel *With Fire and Sword*, the events of the years 1648—1656.

We have now passed the era of the Thirty Years' War, 1618—1648 which so tore the Holy Roman Empire, involved most of the Continent, and left the names of Gustavus Adolphus, Turenne, Tilly, Wallenstein, and Piccolomini as material for historians, poets, and novelists for centuries to come. During this war Poland remained neutral, though Richelieu offered tempting rewards for Poland's participation against the Empire. In England the end of Charles I was at hand. Cromwell was about to arise, Milton, a man of 40 in 1648, had not yet lost his sight. Across the sea in America, John Winthrop, first governor of Massachusetts, was in the last full year of his long, wise, and able service. He died in office early in 1649.

The topic of this major section is Poland's decline and fall. This disintegration set in during the reign of Zygmunt III and in part it was due to him. His son Władysław IV checked the process somewhat, but the nature both of Poland's constitution and of its ruling class were forces far superior even to this fairly capable king, and what had started could not be stopped. One sad circumstance now followed another until their logical end in the Partitions. The tale is relieved, indeed, from time to time by glorious events and strong or winning personalities, as we shall see; but the stream of Polish history now moves unhappily for 150 years until Poland vanishes from the map of Europe in 1795.

#### THE COSSACK AND TARTAR WARS

[1648—1656]

The causes of the frightful Cossack wars were social and religious; but the spark which ignited the flame was purely personal.

The Cossacks are not a tribe or race as many assume. They were in their origin an accumulation. The fertile but sparsely settled lands along the Dnieper north of the Crimea, left more or less vacant after the pushing back of the Tartars into that province, were called by the Poles 'The Wild Steppes'. The indigenous population were Ruthenians, later to assume the name Ukrainians. To this territory fled from the neighbouring countries, chiefly Poland, Wallachia and Muscovy, murderers, rebels, escaped serfs, peasants who had been mistreated, criminals from the lower classes, and adventurers of all sorts. This new element became the Cossacks; indeed, the word itself probably comes from a Turkish word meaning 'adventurer', or 'brigand'. To these new people religion meant little; the Ruthenians, however, were largely of the Uniate Church, or they were Orthodox.

Realizing their great value as an army of defence against the Tartars, Stefan Batory had organized and armed some thousands of Cossack light horse, and these were on Polish territory, in Polish pay, and subject to Poland. But their land as a whole was only slightly polonized.

Gradually there developed in the Ukraine a high degree of social oppression on the part of the great landlords, and eventually to this general grievance there was added fear on the part of the Ruthenians that they would be compelled to become Catholics and adopt the religion of Poland. The people bitterly said that the landlords, having deprived them of this world's goods, would now secure their exclusion from heaven also by making them give up the true faith. This widespread popular discontent was naturally seized upon and encouraged by Poland's enemies in Moscow and elsewhere. Rebellions occurred, based on this social and religious foundation; these brought repression and repression which led in turn to further rebellions.

At this point, 1648, in a bitter personal quarrel, Bohdan Chmielnicki, a minor landowner, was cruelly wronged by a crown official and was unable to secure redress from the Polish courts. In deep and just anger he went over to the discontented and rebellious Cossacks, and with a skill which leads one historian to consider him the most capable man of his day, organized an extensive and cruel war against the Poles. The whole Ukraine rose almost to a man; the Tartars, always glad to fish in troubled waters, joined in, and war after war followed, with such cruelty and destruction of Poland's eastern provinces as only whole chapters can picture. In vast areas the civilization built during several centuries was wiped out.

Defeated at last, Chmielnicki went over to Moscow, which led to a 13 year Polish Muscovite war even more

frightful than the 30 Years' War in Germany. This war, coming upon Poland when she was at war with Sweden, resulted in the treaty of 1667 so disastrous to Poland in the loss of its most eastern territory. These events are the subject of Sienkiewicz's historical romances, *Ogniem i mieczem* (With Fire and Sword) and *Potop* (The Deluge).

#### FIRST USE OF THE *LIBERUM VETO*

[1652]

In the Diet of 1652, a delegate named Siciński rose on the floor of the assembly at a certain point in the discussion of a bill and said, 'I do not permit'. This is the first definite historic use of the *liberum veto*, strangest of all parliamentary procedures, based on the 17th century idea that the will of the majority is not binding upon a minority, even of one.

What were the consequences of that act, then and ever after?

1. The bill under discussion failed of passage.
2. The Diet was automatically dissolved.
3. All bills passed to date by that Diet were null and void, for a bill became law only if the Diet ran its full course and the bill then received the signature of the king.
4. A new Diet had to be elected and assembled.

What was the origin of this most astounding procedure? Basic in the theory of Polish society and in its constitution was the idea of the absolute social equality of all members of the gentry and nobility. A logical consequence of this was an unwillingness to override the vote of any member of the Diet and the arising of the custom of requiring unanimous decision for the acceptance of any bill. With the formation of local legislative assemblies the choosing of delegates to the national assembly

became a function of the local diets, and the outcome was that a delegate often represented not his own opinion but definite local instructions. From this soil grew the *liberum veto*, the most absurd consequence of the theory of representative democracy and social equality that ever entered the customs of any country.

Seemingly fair in its origin, the results of the *liberum veto* were disastrous. Any irresponsible malcontent in parliament could stop all legislation. Any so instructed delegate could 'explode' a diet. Any delegate open to corruption could be purchased by a foreign government and his *veto* used to prevent the passage of an act inconvenient to that government.

After the Siciński incident of 1652, the *liberum veto*, though it was not written law, became an established custom. It was regarded as a prime protection against oppression, and even spoken of as 'the jewel of the constitution'. Professor Robert Lord says, 'Of the 55 diets held between 1652 and 1764, 48 were exploded, almost one-third of them by the *veto* of a single deputy. During the thirty years of the reign of August III not a single diet lived its normal time'.

The *liberum veto* was scathingly denounced by such wise Poles as Konarski, 1760, and Staszyc, 1785, but the baleful thing, pleasing to the vanity and purse of small men, lived until it was abolished by the great constitution of May 3, 1791.

## THE SWEDISH INVASION

[1655—56]

Sweden, at the height of its power during the 16th and 17th centuries, ever sought by force of arms or by diplomacy to make the Baltic Sea a Swedish lake by owning or controlling all its bordering states. The entangled Polish-Swedish Vasa dynasties of each country brought

Poland often into conflict with Sweden for dynastic reasons. During the reign of Jan Kazimierz Vasa, Zygmunt III's second son, as king of Poland, the Swedes descended in great force upon Poland under Charles X. They entered the country from Stettin and the north-west, and because of the general internal weakness and chaos existing in Poland, soon swept over half the land, taking Warsaw, Cracow, and towns farther east. This was the 'Deluge' of Sienkiewicz's novel.

Utter destruction seemed to face Poland, until the defence of the fortified monastery and shrine at Częstochowa under the leadership of Father Kordecki roused the Poles to a passion of religious patriotism and the armies of Sweden were checked. Jan Kazimierz returned from his flight abroad and ordered the organization of a new national army to resist the Swedes, and to these new forces came victory followed by the withdrawal of the foreign invaders. The death of Charles Gustavus ended the matter and the Peace of Oliva, 1660, restored order. During the war East Prussia had sided with Sweden, and now took advantage of Poland's weakened condition to secure its complete and permanent independence.

Among other results, the Swedish invasion left Warsaw in sad state. Its development as a city was retarded for half a century.

#### JAN SOBIESKI SAVES VIENNA

[1683]

In the year 1683 occurred one of those fine and noble events which are the basis of our faith in the human race, a bright beacon of an event in the midst of much that was dismal and discouraging, illuminating the whole last quarter of the 17th century in Poland with chivalric splendour. That Poland could thus have risen in military power and national unselfishness from its political and social





Photo J. Voigt. Cracow

### King Jan Sobieski (1672—1696) as a victor

From the engraving by C. de la Haye after the painting by J. E. Siemiginowski-Szymonowicz (about 1683), in the Jagiellon Library, Cracow

slough was a demonstration of the vitality and quality of the Poles as gratifying as it was glorious, though as little to have been expected in those times as it is memorable for all times to come.

The story is briefly told; it is in every history of Europe. The Turks were besieging Vienna. At the earnest request of the Pope and implored by the Emperor Leopold, the 59 years old King Jan Sobieski of Poland gathered 2,000 of the invincible heavy Polish cavalry of the period, marched the 350 miles to Vienna in 10 days, waited for the rest of his army of 18,000 to come up, and then, September 12, 1683 fell upon the Turks. Sobieski led the united army in person, some 80,000 men. He utterly crushed the Turkish army, raised the siege of Vienna by that one blow, drove the Turks far enough back to relieve Hungary from Ottoman oppression, and received the praise of all Europe as the saviour of Christianity from the Moslem.

One of the elegant tents of the Sultan taken by Sobieski at Vienna is set up in Sobieski's palace at Podhorce, now owned by Prince Sanguszko, as the unique interior decoration of one of the dining rooms. But a few such tents and similar battle trophies was all Poland had to show for this 'last noble reflex of the great crusading impulse of the Middle Ages'; except honour. 'It was a unique service', says the Encyclopaedia Britannica; 'rendered in the old chivalrous spirit of one nation to another in an age of Machiavellian diplomacy and growing national selfishness'.

The day after the siege was raised there was a great service of thanksgiving in St. Stephen's Cathedral. The text of the sermon was. 'There was a man sent from God whose name was John'.

That he may not seem remote from the western world in time and space let us note that Sobieski had in his younger days been a visitor to London, the London of Charles I. Later Queen Henrietta Maria of England was the godmother of Sobieski's eldest son James, Louis XIV of France being the godfather.

After the death of Jan Sobieski Poland elected August (Augustus), the Elector of Saxony, king, the worst ruler Poland ever had. His election was an incident in the great conflict which had arisen between the Bourbons and the Hapsburgs, now extended so as to involve all Europe, complicated in Poland by the growing Hohenzollern influence and that of the titan now appearing in the east, Peter the Great. The reign of August is a story too sad and depressing for any friend of Poland to enjoy recording, so we will turn from his period to the man himself, a figure not without interest, pausing merely to remark that the first half of the 18th century was in Poland, as elsewhere, a time of very low ebb in the tide of moral, social, and political life.

But August, called 'the Strong' because he broke an iron horseshoe with his bare hands, is a figure less dull than his day and deeds. Those who know Dresden, between which city and Warsaw he divided his time, can easily picture August in his baroque, or rather rococo, environment. He took Louis XIV of France as his model, and tried to be in the east what his contemporary Louis was in the west. He sought to make a Versailles of his court, organized tall young Polish noblemen into a bodyguard of elegantly costumed giant grenadiers, gave grand feasts, masquerades and balls, held processions led by his guard mounted on horses with silver trappings and preceded by a blare of silver trumpets and drums. His entertainments, reviews and firework displays distracted attention from much low politics. He was an elegant and luxurious waster, the centre of a splendid but dissolute court; he was ambitious and despotic, and yet a man of easy temper.

Three things remain. His patronage of the fine arts was sincere and resultful, though it was displayed in his

Saxon capital rather than his Polish. There was a striking disproportion between August's adornment of Dresden and of Warsaw. Warsaw has no *Zwinger*, no *Grünes Gewölbe*, no monuments to rival those of the Saxon city. Second, notwithstanding what has just been said, he did indeed improve the city of Warsaw, in architecture, in cleanness, and in public order, though these results were the work of his ministers, rather than of the king himself. They were well conceived and permanently useful. And finally, it was due to his interest in alchemy and his search for a method of turning clay into gold that white porcelain was discovered, from which, since 1709, comes all our Dresden china, the famous Meissen porcelain with August's emblem, two crossed swords, on the reverse of each piece. This true porcelain is the direct ancestor of all the fine continental porcelains, Vienna, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Sèvres, Limoges, and others; the English porcelains are something different.

The Saxon Palace and Gardens in Warsaw were laid out and begun by August. The figures in the gardens, once gilded, are August's both in origin and in taste. The grounds of the palace, the royal residence, in those days extended to the main street, all of Piłsudski Square, formerly Plac Saski (Saxon Square), having once been the royal court-yard. The palace was then very elegant, August planning to make it without a rival in Europe. It was not completed when he entertained Peter the Great in 1707. Marszałkowska Street was originally the private road from the palace to the estate of the Crown Marshal, Bieliński.

And now we will skip the brief reign of Stanisław Leszczyński and of August's uninspiring son, August III, and come to the reign of that weak but cultivated and interesting man, Stanisław Poniatowski.

Stanisław August Poniatowski, born in 1732, reigned as king of Poland from his election in 1764 to the dissolution of the state in 1795, and died in retirement in St. Petersburg in 1798. Thus his reign spans the period of the American Revolutionary War and the French Revolution, with the events leading up to and immediately subsequent to them, and makes him a contemporary of George III of England during the first half of the latter's long rule.

One writes of him here not so much to recall the happenings of his eventful reign, as to tell the story of a most remarkable and interesting personality, fully to describe whose complexities would require all one's adjectives and most of one's adverbs, so varied in riches and poverty, elegance and baseness, goodness and evil, are the elements of his character.

He came to the throne at the lowest ebb of Polish social, political, economic, and intellectual life, and his reign, with its tragic events and notable achievements, should be viewed in the light of his era and circumstances.

As Stanisław Poniatowski was a man neither of splendid record, distinguished ancestry, nor great wealth, one looks for the cause of his election, and finds it simply in the fact that the Empress Catherine of Russia and Frederic II of Prussia wanted a man on the Polish throne who would be completely in their hands. His choice was dictated by Catherine and secured by Russian bayonets; the former had been his mistress during his St. Petersburg years, 1755—58, when she was merely a romantic young grand duchess; the latter were sent to Poland to see that Catherine's will was executed, Poland having been brought to impotence by a hundred years of misfortune in the



Photo H. Poddębski, Warsaw

### Wilanów Palace, near Warsaw

The summer residence of King Jan Sobieski (1672—1696)

persons of its elected kings, by its selfish and individualistic nobility, and by its archaic and unworkable constitution. After his election, Stanisław, being both a relatively poor man and a spendthrift constantly in need of money, was kept in hand by Catherine by the simple process of threatening to cut off the allowance she granted him; a vast humiliation to the king indeed, but more so to his proud country brought low by misrule.

The other factor entering into Stanisław's election was the backing of his rich and powerful uncles, the Princes Czartoryski, with whose desires for reform he was in sincere sympathy but whose objectives he could do so little to achieve.



Photo H. Poddębski, Warsaw

### Łazienki Palace, Warsaw

This gem of architecture was built during the reign of King Stanisław August Poniatowski (1764—1795)

As to the events of his reign, the more important ones were: the Bar Confederation and insurrection of 1768, the first partition of 1772, the suppression of the Jesuits in 1773 and the subsequent formation of the Educational Commission, the Four Year's Diet of 1778—91 and the resulting Constitution of the Third of May 1791, the second partition of 1793, the Kościuszko Insurrection of 1794, and the third partition of 1795, the end of Poland as a state; surely a sufficient record of some good and much evil about none of which events is there space to write here, and about all of which the 14th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and books about Poland have much to say.

Here let me speak rather about the man himself and his court and some of those things in his reign which are today pleasant memories and of interest to visitors to Poland, asking that he be judged as charitably as possible, for he was in himself essentially a charming and lovable man, cultured, enlightened, progressive; but he lived in an evil day in Europe, and he was in a most difficult position, helpless between the powerful autocracies of Russia, Prussia and Austria, opposed by strong and corrupt forces within his own kingdom, and supported by forces of reform pitifully few and weak during the period of their greatest need, though happily both more numerous and effective after the setting in of the Reform Movement which followed as a reaction to the first partition and centreing somewhat in the personnel of the Educational Commission and in the constructive work of the Four Years' Diet.

The man, then. One finds him, apart from his weakness, which is after all understandable, an attractive figure. The abundant accounts of Stanisław are full of such phrases in praise of him as 'keen intellect; broad culture; charming personality; refined taste; good breeding; agreeable and well-informed about everything; graceful and engaging manners; fascinating ways; distinguished; a finished gentleman; temperate in drink and food; reforming tendencies; tenacious and persevering in the pursuit of his fundamental aims (reforms); born with a vast and ardent ambition; political sagacity; the most handsome of monarchs; sound political instinct; spirited speeches'.

But what was wrong with a man of whom so much good could truthfully be said? Why has he come down through 150 years of history with so soiled a name? A worse name than he deserves, quite likely; but how does the other side of the account read? 'Devastating and ex-



asperating weakness of will; incapacity for inspiring others or of making sacrifices; a weakling and a pensioner of his country's worst enemy, Catherine; it is probable that no cause in the world and no conceivable disgrace could ever have induced this king to sacrifice his life, his crown, or even his personal comfort; it is doubtful whether he ever had any fixed principles; instability; irresolution; wastefulness; frivolity; looseness of life; hypocrisy as regards religion; exceedingly unpopular; distrusted; infirmity of purpose', also one finds such dark words as 'coward', 'traitor'.

Yet one asks himself if some of these words do not measure men's passions rather than correctly appraise the man and the situation. It is so easy to call hard names, so hard to live heroically when there seems no possible hope.

If one seeks a key to Stanisław's grand words and then weak acts perhaps it is to be found in this sentence of an American historian. 'The experiences of the first decade of his reign had convinced him that nothing was to be accomplished in opposition to Russia; but he still hoped that much good might be effected with the consent and under the protection of the Empress'.

After reading many pages about Stanisław in no few books one reads with deep sympathy that amid all the sadness, shame, humiliation, defeat, and disgrace of his reign the king was at 59 granted 'one altogether glorious and splendid day, the last great day of radiant joy and hope that old Poland was to know', the day of the adoption of the Constitution of the Third of May, drawn up by Stanisław and put through largely by the determination, tact and skill of the now old king; for age is of the body more than of years.

And now his court. Stanisław fitted beautifully into his conception of his court as an eastern and smaller

Versailles. His love of good architecture, fine clothes, elegant manners and handsome people, his personal culture and talents, and the existence of the French example of Louis XV and Louis XVI combined to bring about a gay, light-hearted and beautiful court in which there was a welcome place for poets, painters, musicians and scientists, and, one must add, adventurers, charlatans, and gamblers. What August II had done crudely Stanisław did with taste and elegance. His Thursday dinners at the palace were gatherings of the *élite* of the world of art and letters, and with his high patronage 'literature, science and the arts were galvanized into new life', as were also the drama, opera, and journalism.

French and Italian painters were brought to Poland by the king, and others came of their own initiative to this favourable field for their activity; and naturally the king's example was imitated by his great nobles, many of whom were men of huge fortunes. The king's Warsaw potteries, producing the greatly prized Belvedere ware, were the inspiration of other porcelain factories, notably the famous Korzec, Baranówka, and Ćmielów potteries, literally every piece of whose products is now a collector's item. Others, similarly encouraged, founded iron works, cotton and paper mills, and other industries. After 30 years of stagnation the life of the court under Stanisław stirred the whole nation into new life, and also into political, social and economic reform. The court was not all balls and ballets, parks and places, *fêtes champêtres* and playing at shepherd and shepherdess in the French manner; it was also a source of serious thought and effort.

And what remains? The memory of an awakened and reforming, even if crushed nation; memories of beauty and culture; enduring literary, artistic, and architectural works; the Łazienki Palace and its charming gardens,

ponds, canals, and Greek theatre; the work of the men inspired by the Educational Commission and of those properly educated as a result of its reforms; the good lessons of the Constitution of the Third of May, — and the sad lesson of the partitions; the beginning of a middle class, the social bulwark of any nation, first possible in Poland under Stanisław; noble families for the first time entering banking and business; successful industries following those earlier efforts; Warsaw a recreated city developing during Stanisław's reign from a city of 30,000 to 100,000, (today a metropolis of 1,220,000 inhabitants). A good deal came out of that last reign of a Polish king, a good deal in which any Pole may justly rejoice.

#### THE BAR CONFEDERATION AND GENERAL PUŁASKI [1768]

There arose in Poland, in the middle of the 18th century, a party which believed that Poland's many internal ills could be cured only with the aid of Russia and the backing of the Russian Empress, Catherine the Great. The princely family Czartoryski led this Russophile faction which argued that in view of the powerful influence of Russia on Polish policy in general, it would be difficult to imagine the success of a Polish movement of national renewal which was inspired by a strong anti-Russian spirit. The Czartoryskis even went so far as to call in the Russian armies in 1764. Their call for Russian aid was responded to with alacrity, and soon Poland was overrun by Russian soldiers, and the people and government, after 1766, were practically ruled by the Russian minister, Prince Repnin.

Russian interests now began to coincide with those of Prussia, which had clear designs in regard to Poland, designs greatly favoured by Poland's internal weakness. None the less Prussia had reasons for anxiety, since Rus-



Photo H. Podgóbski, Warsaw

### The main entrance to the building of the Ministry of Education, Warsaw

sia had long considered Poland as destined to fall into her hands entire. Both these neighbours desired to keep Poland defenceless; but whereas Russia proposed to incorporate the whole of Poland into her domains, Prussia aimed at a partition. It was a circumstance favourable to Prussia that Catherine II now ascended the throne of Russia, for she was inclined to co-operate with Frederic II of Prussia. However, the decision to partition Poland was in no small measure brought about by events aimed at something quite different, and these must receive brief mention.

The patriotic Polish opposition to the growing Russian influence, men who wished their country to retain

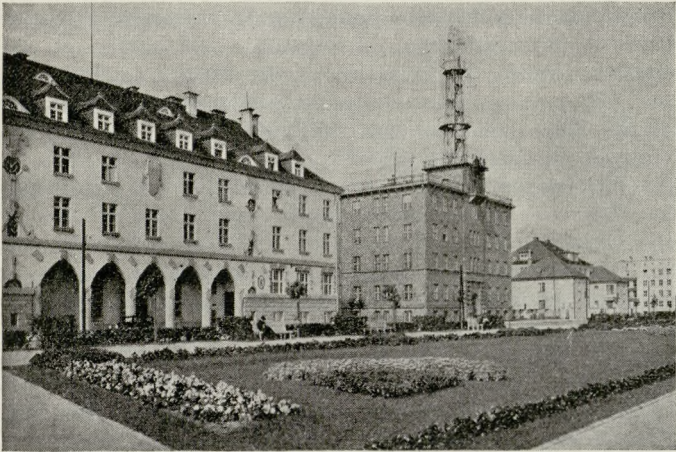


Photo H. Poddębski, Warsaw

The Żegluga Polska Shipping Co. Building, Gdynia  
The Meteorological Office can be seen in the background

its independence and Polish character, organized a poorly prepared military opposition to the Russians, called the Bar Confederation because it had its headquarters at Bar, a city then in Poland, but 70 miles east of the present-day Polish boundary. This revolution was not supported as its leaders had expected it to be and though it dragged out its course from 1768 to 1772 it never had any chance of success.

The military command of these revolutionary forces was gradually won by a young man named Kazimierz Pułaski, who, exiled by Russia after the partition of 1772, eventually joined Washington in the American Revol-

ution, became a brigadier-general and commander of American cavalry, and then, as organizer and leader of the Pułaski Legion, lost his life in the battle of Savannah in 1779, gaining immortality in American history as one of the Poles who lent their skill and their swords to the winning of American liberty.

The day of Pułaski's sacrificial death for a free America, October 11, is now a day of special celebrations in the United States, and the name of Pułaski is perpetuated in statues, streets, buildings, and even several towns and counties named in his honour. A distinguished Pole aptly expressed the sentiment of his nation when he said, during the Pułaski celebration of 1932, 'we rejoice that in the glorious edifice of the American Republic there are stones laid by Polish hands and cemented by Polish blood'.

#### THE FIRST PARTITION OF POLAND

[1772]

And now at last we come to what is by general consent the greatest crime in all European history, the dismemberment and partition of Poland, perpetrated, as a French writer of 1780 said, 'in the midst of the security of peace, without rights, without pretexts, without grievances, without a shadow of justice'. Of course he should have said 'without valid pretext', for two such clever rascals as Frederic the Great of Prussia and Catherine of Russia had no trouble in inventing excuses for their act of sheer banditry. But no one, either then or later, took their pretensions seriously. With Queen Maria Theresa of Austria it was different. It hurt her conscience.

The facts are simple enough. Taking advantage of Poland's great internal weakness due to the breakdown of public life caused by its antiquated constitution and the unwillingness of the gentry to sacrifice liberties in order to retain liberty, Prussia, Russia, and Austria, three

imperialistic and expanding autocracies led by rulers among the most capable in their history, marshalled their forces against poorly governed and republican Poland and took each a slice of Polish territory.

Poland lost over 200,000 square km. of land, 30 per cent. of its area, and about 4,000,000 people, about 35 per cent. of its population. Russia received a long wide strip on the east, Austria a huge section on the south, and Prussia seized the north-western part of Poland with the exception of Danzig. A major political operation. The partitioning powers could easily have taken the whole of Poland. It is strange, under the circumstances, that they did not. They did, later.

#### THE EDUCATIONAL COMMISSION

[1773]

When the Jesuits were suppressed by the Pope in July 1773, their extensive properties in Poland fell to the state. The suppression of the Jesuits was advantageous for the development of education, even Catholic writers agree. After effecting a certain amount of real progress in education in the late 16th century, they had secured a practical monopoly of teaching in Poland, and this led to stagnation. Dyboski says 'they restricted education almost wholly to mechanical mastery of Latin and the outworn speculations of scholastic philosophy. The result was a corruption of the Polish language by latinisms on the one hand and backwardness, narrow-mindedness and ignorance in the most important matters of science and of life on the other. Superstition became rampant; pilgrimages to miraculous shrines became the predominant form of foreign travel; and the ancient University of Cracow enters in the early 18th century into a period of extreme decadence'.

The state set Jesuit properties aside as an educational foundation, and in charge of public instruction it placed

an Educational Commission, the first Ministry of Education in Europe. Lewiński-Corwin says of it, 'the scope of the work of the Commission was immense. They organized and modernized the whole range of schools, beginning with the village parochial school and extending to the universities. Despite all the difficulties the commission accomplished a great work, raised the standard of the education of the people, and gave stimulus to the regeneration of science, literature, and civic righteousness'.

In a measure the commission was both cause and effect of a tide of moral and civic reform which possessed the best men of the land after the catastrophe of the first partition, a reform which found issue in the Constitution of the Third of May 1791, but which, while it demonstrated the vitality of the nation, came, sadly, too late to save the state. But that resurging of righteousness from purely internal forces is both a gratification and an assurance. Never again did the tides of public and private morality run so low as during the days of the Saxon kings and the time of the first partition.

#### THE CONSTITUTION OF THE THIRD OF MAY [1791]

The reform movement, bitterly opposed by those who profitted by weakness and corruption, issued in the Constitution of the 3rd of May 1791, a day ever since celebrated by the Poles as a national holiday. This constitution annulled the *liberum veto*, assured religious liberty, gave extensive rights to the towns and their burghers, gave the peasants a certain limited protection, established the custom of decision by majority vote, gave the king needed executive powers, made the throne hereditary, instituted numerous other reforms, and provided for a consideration of constitutional revision every 25 years. Laws



affecting needed corrections of abuse were passed, and a brighter day seemed just ahead.

The avenue of the 3rd of May, the broad road leading out to the Poniatowski Bridge in Warsaw, is so named in honour of this constitution.

## THE SECOND AND THIRD PARTITIONS [1793 AND 1795]

But the stable was locked too late; the horse had been stolen. The constitution should have been re-written two centuries earlier. The vulture empires which were feeding on Poland's dying body, seeing these signs of reviving life, hastened to complete the work they had begun, and in two more bites, 1793 and 1795, gobbled up the rest of the land before the reforms instituted by the new constitution could bear fruit. With only a small army and no allies Poland was helpless before its foes, and succumbed.

The provinces around Wilno, Warsaw, and present-day Łódź, were taken by Russia, those of Cracow and Lwów by Austria, and the Toruń, Poznań, and Danzig areas by Prussia. For Danzig was in its origin and from 1466 until 1793 a city belonging to Poland.

It is an astounding thing, this partitioning of Poland, the complete dividing of its territory among its three neighbours, but it happened. The best English speaking authority on these events is Dr. Robert Lord, formerly of Harvard University, whose book, 'The Second Partition of Poland', while bearing the title of but the second, deals fully with all three partitions. The article in the Encyclopaedia Britannica contains inexplicable statistical errors, but the thread of the narrative well represents the events, and almost every book dealing with Poland tells this strange story. The rectifying of this frightful injustice, in accordance with one of Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points, is one of the not too many virtues of the Versailles Treaty.

It is hardly necessary to explain to Americans who Tadeusz Kościuszko was; to British readers he is not so well known. Between the partitions of 1793 and 1795 the Poles were goaded by Russian excesses and repression into making a violent effort to throw off the yoke before it should become too firmly fastened upon them. This popular uprising, notable for the large participation in it of the peasants armed only with scythes, was led by Tadeusz Kościuszko, the most distinguished, next to Lafayette, of all foreign soldiers who came to the aid of America during the Revolutionary War of 1775—1783.

Kościuszko, a Pole of humble origin, had won distinction as a cadet officer in the military school at Warsaw and been given the privilege of higher military studies abroad, notably in Germany, Italy and France, specializing in fortifications. When he went to America in 1776 at the age of 30 with the rank of captain of artillery, his services were accepted by Washington and he laid out the fortifications which had much to do with the American victory at Saratoga. Washington raised him to a colonelcy and took him on to his staff. He served throughout the war, was made a brigadier-general, and later granted American citizenship and a large tract of land by Congress.

When he returned to Poland to aid his own distressed country, Kościuszko ordered the land to be sold and the proceeds to be used to purchase the freedom of negro slaves. That piece of land is today part of Columbus, Ohio.

Kościuszko fought against the Russians in a brief war in Poland in 1792, and in 1794 took charge of affairs and led the revolution of that year, very successful at first, but later utterly overwhelmed by the Russian armies, and ending in the awful massacre of thousands of Poles by the Muscovite soldiers in November 1794 in the Praga



After J. Mysiński

Tadeusz Kościuszko (1746—1817)

From the portrait by Joseph Grassi in 1792; the property of  
Prince Adam Czartoryski, Gołuchów

suburb of Warsaw. After the failure of this effort and the completion of the third partition, Kościuszko again visited America and lived in Philadelphia two years. A colossal statue at Washington, just opposite the White House, commemorates his services to the United States, and his name is borne by a town in Mississippi, various high schools, in Detroit, for instance, and by the Kościuszko Foundation, which brings Polish students to America and sends American students to Poland for advanced studies. There is also a mountain bearing his name in Australia. He is known among military men as the one who laid out the fortifications of West Point. In Poland, aside from his great and permanent reputation, his chief memorial is the Kościuszko Mound, the high artificial conical hill just outside Cracow from which one gets a wide view of the city and the surrounding country. His body lies in the cathedral at Cracow with Poland's greatest kings and heroes.

## CHAPTER 4

# DURING THE PERIOD OF THE PARTITIONS

1795—1918

### PRINCE JÓZEF PONIATOWSKI AND NAPOLEON

The more than life size statue in the Roman style of a man on horseback attracts the attention of all visitors to Warsaw. It stands between the two wings of the Saxon Palace, in front of the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, facing Piłsudski Square. This statue represents Prince Józef Poniatowski, Polish general and Marshal of France under Napoleon. The statue is by Thorwaldsen, who sculptured a number of statues in Poland.

Prince Józef Poniatowski was a nephew of King Stanisław Poniatowski. He became a soldier at 16, rose in rank, and in the uprising against Russia in 1792 was placed in command of the Polish forces in the field. He again fought for Poland against Russia in 1794 under Kościuszko. When Napoleon promised to restore the Kingdom of Poland, Prince Joseph joined the French army. When Napoleon erected the short-lived Grand Duchy of Warsaw Poniatowski was made Minister of War, and later accompanied Napoleon to Moscow in 1812 in command of a corps of Polish soldiers. At the battle of Leipzig in 1813 he was made a Marshal of France for his distinguished services on the first day of the battle, but lost his life a few days later while in command of the rear-guard covering Napoleon's retreat. His body lies in the crypt of Cracow Cathedral with Sobieski and Kościuszko,

to which group of Poland's great dead has now been added the body of Marshal Piłsudski.

To Poles, Poniatowski represents romance, devoted patriotism, brilliant military leadership, and distinction won on the wide field of all Europe. He seems to be in a special way the young man's man.

The heroic story of Prince Józef Poniatowski is connected with the erection of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw by Napoleon in 1807, out of a portion of the area that had been annexed by Prussia. The position of Grand Duke was occupied by Frederic of Saxony, whose person was intended to be a link with the old Polish tradition. The Duchy unfortunately did not include Pomerania, although armies of Poles had fought against the Prussians over the whole of the province. The new state shared the fortunes of Napoleon, and was abolished by the Congress of Vienna, which united it to Russia under the unreal name of the Congress Kingdom of Poland. The throne of Poland was to be occupied by the Czar of Russia for the time being. Not quite the whole of the former Grand Duchy was, however, incorporated in the kingdom. Poznań returned to Prussia under the name of the Grand Duchy of Poznań, and Cracow and its environs were made into a Free City, which lasted longer than the Poznanian settlement, maintaining itself until 1846.

### THE UPRISING OF 1830

Twice the Poles in that part of Poland seized by Russia rose against their Russian oppressors, in November, 1830 and in January, 1863.

The November Uprising, as that of 1830 is called, began with the cadet officers in the Officers' Training School in Warsaw and spread throughout the nation. It was joined by Polish regiments in the army, some 30,000



Photo H. Podębski, Warsaw

### Equestrian statue of Prince Józef Poniatowski, Marshal of Poland and of France

The statue is by the famous sculptor Thorwaldsen and was completed in 1830. The outbreak of the Insurrectionary War of 1830/31 delayed its erection and it was seized by the Russian Marshal Pashkyevitch who kept it on his country-estate at Homel until it was returned to Poland by the Treaty of Riga, following Russia's defeat in 1920 by the Polish Army. The statue now stands in the Piłsudski Square, Warsaw

very well drilled and equipped men, and this number was recruited up to 80,000. Against these Russia could at first marshal only 114,000 men. But the uprising was poorly led and badly managed and by October 1831 it had failed and been suppressed.

Then began the cruel treatment of the Poles of which the word Siberia has become the symbol. The Universities

of Warsaw and of Wilno were closed; a systematic attempt to destroy both the nationality and even the language of the Poles was begun; the estates of the wealthy were seized and the owners exiled; young and old who showed signs of rebellion were sent to a living death in the mines of frozen Siberia. It was then that western lands began to be filled with Polish exiles.

The brutality of the Russian reaction to the patriotic uprising of the Poles shocked the civilized world for the next 25 years. The story of the rebellion and its suppression is briefly but graphically related by Lewiński-Corwin in his *Political History of Poland*, of which one may say here that its 600 pages contain in general the most detailed and complete narrative of the events of Polish history available in English, while Dyboski's brilliant 275 page *Outlines of Polish History*, devoting but 6 brief pages to this uprising, gives in this section, as throughout the book, the deeper interpretation of the causes, meaning, and sequel of the insurrection.

The insurrection which ended thus tragically for Poland was of considerable importance in the history of Europe. But for it, the contemporary struggle for independence in Belgium would have ended in disaster. Russia was already prepared to march into Belgium, and the Polish regiments were to form the vanguard of her army. The insurrection raised a living wall between Russia and her designs.

Of the Polish refugees mentioned above, many found shelter in Belgium; especially insurgents, who, with General Skrzynecki, their one-time commander-in-chief, enlisted for active service with the Belgian army, and fought loyally in its ranks, in much the same way as Pułaski and Kościuszko did in the ranks of the American Revolution.



## THE MOVEMENTS FOR INDEPENDENCE [1846 AND 1848]

It would, however, be a mistake to suppose that the Polish insurrections were confined to the area annexed by Russia. The movement for independence made itself felt alike in the Austrian and the Prussian districts. The Austrian government hindered the insurgents by stirring up the peasants against the gentry in 1846, the year of the tragic butchery in Galicia, provoked by the imperial government. None the less, two years later, the events of 1848 roused echoes in the province annexed by the Austrians and called by them Galicia, and the movement here established contact with the independence movement in Hungary; many Poles took an active part in this latter, and a veteran of 1830, the Polish general Bem, was one of the chief organizers and commanders of the Hungarian insurgents. However, the Hungarian and the Galician movements were alike put down, with Russian aid. There were none to hold up the Russian army on its march into Hungary, as the Poles had held up the army destined for Belgium in 1830.

The revolutionary movement embraced the Grand Duchy of Poznań also in 1848. This was the first Poznanian insurrection, the second having broken out in 1918 with the arrival of Paderewski at Poznań. Historians dealing with the events of 1848 are inclined to lay more and more emphasis on the importance of the Poznanian outbreak in its effects on the course of events throughout Europe at that time.

## THE UPRISING OF 1863

When, in 1863, it was proposed to force the more restless of the Polish youth into the Russian army and send them to distant posts, the young men of Warsaw launched a poorly prepared, indeed a merely extemporized,



Photo H. Poddębski, Warsaw

General view of Łódź, the chief textile centre of Poland

insurrection. It spread, but at no time did it give much promise of a successful issue. Dragging on for many months, it grew from an insurrection into a war, but it was eventually crushed, its suppression being followed by a repetition of wholesale executions, deportations, expropriations of property, and intense destruction of everything Polish by processes too inhuman and brutal for words.

Here again the events of the insurrection are somewhat fully and very graphically but also briefly narrated by Lewiński-Corwin. In his summary he says that 650 battles and skirmishes were fought and 25,000 Poles killed, and quotes official Russian statistics to the effect that 396 persons were executed and 18,672 exiled to Siberia. The numbers are too suspiciously accurate. Slo-



Photo H. Poddębski, Warsaw

### Petroleum wells in Borysław, south Poland

combe estimates the number of exiles at 150,000 men, women and children. Other thousands were sent to the Urals and other sections of Russia proper. In all some 70,000 were imprisoned; 1,660 Polish estates were confiscated. All Catholic Church property was taken over by Russia, and all school instruction was henceforth in Russian only. Libraries and museums were pillaged and their treasures taken to Russia. The details of the russification policy adopted are horrifying, the methods used loathsome. For a penetrating interpretation of the insurrection see Dyboski's history referred to on page 90. The writer has himself heard the story from some who experienced it.

Yet it had its lighter side also. For instance, the ridiculous errors made by the censorship, of which Madame Modjeska, (Modrzejewska is the Polish form of her name), the great actress, tells in her *Memories and Impressions*. In a certain play a priest had the lines, 'I love my country and my people and I shall never leave them'. But 'my country' and 'my people' were expressions forbidden to the Poles, and into the corrected manuscript the stupid censor wrote, as the priest's lines, 'I love my wife and my children and I shall never leave them'. 'Slave' also was a forbidden word, hence an actor whose lines read 'He is a slave to his possessions', found 'slave' scratched out and the permitted word 'negro' substituted.

Visitors to Warsaw wonder at the fine opera-house, theatres, and concert halls of pre-war erection. Such institutions were encouraged by the Russians as a means of diverting the minds of the Poles from discontent and revolution.

The city of Łódź, a great manufacturing centre, raised money for a water and sewer system. St. Petersburg seized the funds, saying that if Łódź secured a modern sewer system it would be the first city in Russia to be so equipped, and the Poles could not have that to which the Russians themselves had not yet attained.

The paw of the Russian bear came down heavily upon all educational work. In 1900 there were fewer schools in Russian Poland than there had been in 1400. When this territory regained its liberty in 1918 as part of restored Poland, 70 per cent. of the population were found to be utterly illiterate. Yet in spite of all this repression, the process of denationalizing the Poles was a complete and utter failure. The Poles remained Poles.

In the midst of the fresh memory of these events, in 1867, and soon to be a sufferer from their cruel sequel,

was born Joseph Piłsudski, who was all his life to struggle for, and then work to consolidate, Polish liberty.

## THE PRESERVATION OF THE POLISH SPIRIT

During the 19th century, and with increasing intensity toward its end, the Governments of Russia and Germany used every means, fair and foul, to crush the Polish spirit, obliterate all sense of Polish nationality, and even to eradicate the language. A description of this process is not within the aim of this brochure, which limits itself quite closely to events and personalities, but the efforts of the Poles to resist this complete elimination of their nation and history and tongue from both life and history brought several great personalities to the front, who made important contributions to the preservation of the Polish spirit, and a few paragraphs devoted to these men will not be out of place.

First, however, one must mention a most potent force in this conservation of the Polish tongue and tradition, the Catholic Church. After the partitions it was the chief living thing that bound the three severed sections together. The Catholic faith itself brought spiritual support and comfort to this people naturally religious; its prayers helped to preserve the spoken language, its literature the written word, its priests the love of the Poland of the past that might again arise. No brief paragraph can adequately represent this truth. And next to the Catholic Church one must at once mention the Polish mother, the real carrier of the best of the old Poland over into the life of the new.

Music played its due part in this retention of old Polish values, but by far the greater roles were played by poetry, by painting, and by narrative prose, and in

that order. The names most conspicuous in these three fields are Mickiewicz, Matejko, and Sienkiewicz.

ADAM MICKIEWICZ, POET

[1798--1855]

Mickiewicz, (pronounced Mits-keeay'-vich) was clearly the chief contributor to the maintenance of the nation's morale during the years of subjection, and the chief interpreter to the Poles of the meaning of their sufferings. His poetry was the food of the nation. To feel the Poland of the 19th century and something of how Poles loved it, read a translation of Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz*, his great epic idyll, a narrative masterpiece which even in a somewhat cold translation grips the heart; read his *Konrad Wallenrod* for historical background; but especially read the translations of long extracts from his work giving one the whole atmosphere of the captivity in Monica Gardner's *Poland, a Study in National Idealism*, or her *Adam Mickiewicz*.

Mickiewicz and two younger spiritual colleagues, Słowacki and Krasiński, are the great poets of the oppression, but the first of these is vaster than Poland and more enduring than his century; he is one of the foremost of all Slav poets, a creative spirit of international dimensions, a notable figure in European literature.

One seeks for a parallel figure in some other land. He was deeper and grander than Goethe; though his sphere is very different, he is somewhat to Poles what Washington is to Americans. He was a poet, a prophet, and a patriot of magnificent proportions. His statue is in every Polish city, his picture in every Polish school, his memory in every Polish heart.

This trinity of poets, to whom might be added the poet-painter Stanisław Wyspiański, though he lived and worked half a century later, at the beginning of the twentieth century, undoubtedly mark a high point in the



After J. Mycielski

Adam Mickiewicz (1798—1855)

From the potrait by Walenty Wańkowicz in 1828, now housed  
in the Polish Library, Paris



After J. Mycielski

Fryderyk Chopin (1810—1849)

From the portrait by Eugene Delacroix, housed in the Louvre,  
Paris



intellectual life of Poland. Their literary creations are closely connected with the sufferings of the nation, and express the visionary speculations called 'Polish Messianism', in which Poland is represented as the crucified Christ among the nations, suffering for and expiating the sins of the many. This conception, strange now and intelligible only against its background of terrible suffering and oppression, was a source of encouragement to many, but a reaction against it set in after the disastrous insurrection of 1863 and the growing acceptance of the positivist philosophy of Comte.

### JAN MATEJKO, PAINTER

[1838—1893]

Not all will read poetry, but most will look at pictures. This man, (whose name is pronounced Ma-tay'-ko), Poland's greatest painter, devoted his life and talent to preserving for Poles the memory of the most splendid moments in their past, and to that end painted huge historical canvases recording in pictures superb in composition, drawing, and colour and highly accurate in costume and detail, the glories of Polish history from the earliest times. There are scores of these canvasses, for Matejko was an industrious worker. He lived in Cracow, for only in Austrian Poland were such expressions of nationalism permitted, the Austrian policy with regard to Poles having been fairly liberal since the empire's defeat by Prussia in 1867.

Few of Matejko's paintings have been sold abroad; they are museum pieces and national treasures. The task of reproducing them and telling their story in an English volume remains for execution by some Maecenas of art or a patriotic Pole wishing to make his country's glories known abroad. There are several handsomely illustrated volumes in Polish reproducing numbers of Matejko's paintings, of which the writer prefers that prepared by

Stanisław Witkiewicz in 1912, with 300 illustrations. Its pictures are riches to any lover of Polish culture and almost indispensable to a deeper insight into Polish history.

A few words should also be said of another Polish historical painter. Whereas Matejko drew his inspiration from the days of Polish greatness, the battle of Grunwald against the Teutonic Knights, or the defeat of the Turks before Vienna by Jan Sobieski, Artur Grottger, noted for his drawing, summarized in his various series of works the story of Polish sufferings in 1863. These drawings are very moving to all those who know something of the events of the struggle. The Pole of today is still responsive to their appeal. J. B. Antoniewicz has written an excellent book on this artist, richly illustrated.

#### HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ, NOVELIST

[1846—1916]

The third of this trio of preservers of the Polish spirit is Henry Sienkiewicz, (accent on the second syllable), known wherever books are read as the author of *Quo Vadis*, but to Poles for his novels based on Polish history, especially the trilogy dealing with the Polish wars of the 17th century, *Ogniem i mieczem* (With Fire and Sword), *Potop* (The Deluge), and *Pan Wołodyjowski* (Pan Michael), all well known to Americans through the translations made long ago by Jeremiah Curtis. Their swift movement, sparkling conversation, and such living figures as Pan Jan, Kmicic, Bohun, and the irresistible Zagłoba, have caused them to be read with intense interest by many who have no special relation to Poland.

But to Poles, these and such other books as *Krzyżacy* (The Knights of the Cross) were not novels but food for the spirit, lessons from the past, pages from their history in which Poland passed through deep waters and reached a safe shore. Poles are proud of Sienkiewicz as one of

the world's foremost novelists, but they read him before the war for other reasons than his matchless story-telling; they read him to help them retain their grip on life.

Contemporary with Sienkiewicz was another noted novelist, Bolesław Prus. He represented Polish manners and customs, but in addition to this work he produced one of the best historical novels of ancient Egypt, published in Boston, likewise in Jeremiah Curtis' translation, in 1902. It is called *The Pharaoh and the Priest*.

#### INTERPRETERS OF POLISH SPIRIT THROUGH MUSIC

During these years of the Russian oppression three Polish musicians of international significance were given to the nation, Chopin, Moniuszko and Paderewski, and these have done no small service in interpreting the Polish spirit to a wider world; the first two were composers, the latter, 75 years old the day this is written, is today the world's first pianist, and a man whose spirit is as great as his talent.

#### FRYDERYK CHOPIN

[1810—1849]

One can write no better characterization of the man than that of Roman Dyboski, who says of him: 'Speaking to all nations in the great world-language of music, Chopin breathed into his compositions not only all an exile's idealizing worship of Poland's historical greatness, not only all the temperament of the nation, chivalrous and poetic and fiery and dreamy, but also a wealth of melody inspired by the dance tunes and songs of Poland's country folk. It is this connection of so many of Chopin's masterpieces with Polish folk-music which gives his work the hall-mark of something profoundly and primevally Polish'.

Chopin was the embodiment of Poland in music, and fortunately it was through such a genius that Polish

music first won a world-wide hearing. What he wrote and thus presented to the nation was authentically Polish, be it dance gaiety, 'heroic rage, warlike chivalry, sheer delight in life, poetic sentiment, or profound melancholy', and he was the first to make Slavonic music known to and loved by the west. On this point Miss Tennant says: 'In becoming acquainted with his music many people realize for the first time quite definitely that there is a Slavonic mentality more apart from the Teutonic or Latin than they are from each other'.

Though the man is dead now nearly 100 years the memory of him in Poland is a living thing. His compositions are as timely as today's rising sun and almost as welcome; the most beautiful monument in all Poland is that of Chopin in the capital; as the writer inscribes these lines he looks out upon Chopin Street, one of the most pleasant in Warsaw; Chopin concerts draw large audiences; and his birthplace near Warsaw is now preserved as a museum.

It is said of Chopin that he always carried a portion of Polish soil with him and slept with it under his pillow.

#### STANISŁAW MONIUSZKO

[1820—1872]

Less well known than Chopin, Moniuszko is still a man of a good deal of importance, with 15 Polish operas to his credit, one of which, *Halka*, is the national opera and that to a degree to which few countries have such a composition. It is played in Warsaw and other cities of Poland dozens of times a year and the same people go to hear it again and again. The opera season in Warsaw opened in 1935 with the thousandth performance of *Halka*. It portrays the picturesque life of the 18th century countryside, with manor-house and gentry, mountains and peas-

ants, and three splendid Polish dances, the stately Polonaise of the aristocracy, the whirling Mazurka of the people, and the *oberek* of the mountaineers. No visitor to Poland feels his visit is complete unless he has seen *Halka*, so Polish in idea, costume, customs, dances and music.

Two pictures adorn the wall over the stage of the Philharmonic in Warsaw, one of Chopin on the right, and Moniuszko on the left, representing the general opinion of Poles that next to Chopin, Moniuszko is their greatest and most representative composer. *Halka* is now being played abroad, lending new colour to opera wherever it is produced.

IGNACY JAN PADEREWSKI

[b. 1860]

Paderewski's memorable work in America during the war, in the interest of Polish freedom, tended to obscure for a while his unequalled talent as a pianist; it did much, however, to reveal the man inside the artist, a man of true greatness independently of his musical gifts, a patriot and a Christian gentleman who dignified and honoured the noble cause he represented with such eloquence and charm.

Paderewski is less a composer than a pianist and the supreme interpreter of Chopin. He is so widely known and so much our contemporary that to write about him at length is superfluous.

These three, then, Chopin, Moniuszko and Paderewski are Poland's monumental figures in the world of music.

## THE SPIRIT OF POLISH YOUTH

The Austrian régime in south Poland was bureaucratic and corrupt but in general not violent; the Russian rule in eastern Poland was coarse and brutal; but the German efforts to denationalize the Poles in the most ancient of

Polish territories, western Poland, the section seized by Prussia, to dispossess the Poles of the land and to deprive them of their language and nationality, were cold and calculated in their heartlessness. A strong policy of denationalization and dispossession was initiated by Bismarck and later intensified, in 1907, by von Bülow.

This Russian and Prussian repression of the Poles led to two most interesting events, illustrating something of the uncrushable spirit of Polish youth.

In the part of Poland occupied by Prussia the children were eventually forbidden to learn the catechism and to say their prayers in Polish. This led to a revolt on the part of the children in the town of Września, who, upon refusing to pray in German, were brutally beaten by the teacher. The parents, protesting, were thrown into prison, but the strike of the pupils in the schools against praying in a foreign tongue spread until it included 100,000 children.

Much more formidable and highly organized was the school strike of 1905—06 in that part of Poland belonging to Russia. The schools in this section of the country were used even more than in the Prussian section as a means of denationalizing the Poles. The older children as early as 1886 decided that they must throw off this attempt at russification and resist the yoke of the Russian school. They saw that their parents tended to become indifferent to the process and that the ignorant masses were becoming more and more assimilated to Russia. Under-cover organizations of pupils led to sporadic outbursts of protest against the Russian schools and their corrupting methods, but these scattered uprisings were easily suppressed.

When, however, the great labour strikes of 1904 came on, the older school boys and girls saw their opportunity, and in December 1904 joined the workmen in these strikes

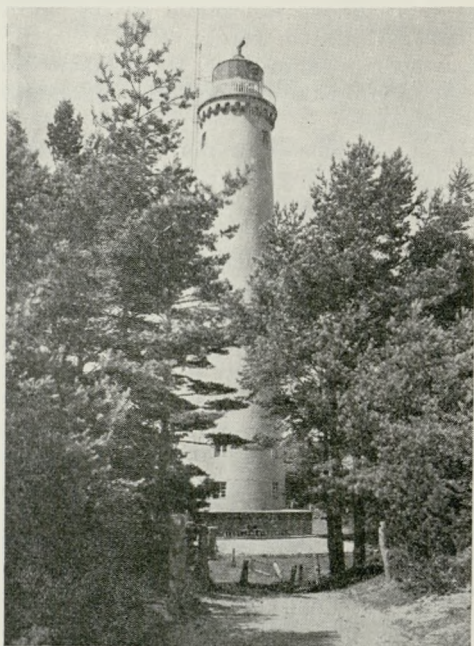
and took their stand with them. The striking pupils who closed the first school went at once to other schools and dismissed them, and the delegations then went from city to city spreading the movement and organizing effective committees of management of the strike. In January and February 1905 the strike took on huge proportions, culminating in great public demonstrations in March, and issuing in a disciplined movement having definitely formulated demands, which were:

1. Polish schools administered by resident Poles, with both the administration and the instruction in the Polish language.
2. Control of the schools in the hands of the Poles.
3. The abolition of police control and inspection of schools and of the corrupting system of police spies in the schools.
4. The abolition of all national, religious, or class restrictions as regards teachers and pupils.
5. The granting of pupils the right to organize and to have a voice in the management of their own affairs.

After March the schools of the Russian part of Poland were practically empty for the rest of the school year. With the opening of the autumn term the teachers joined the movement and until the end of the term in 1906 much of the instruction in common schools was conducted in Polish. There were riots, arrests and deaths; leaders, both teachers and pupils, were sent to Siberia, but for a while the pupils secured their ends. Then the mighty Russian Empire gradually secured control of the situation. However, private schools in the Polish language were allowed, the idea of education for the masses was spread, leaders were developed and tested in preparation for future efforts to secure liberty, and the waning spirit of the Poles restored and strengthened against oppression. After

finishing their Polish schools, students boycotted the Russian institutions of higher learning in Warsaw and went either to Russia proper or abroad for their higher education.

Never since the children's crusade of the 13th century has there been any such movement of young people for idealistic ends.



From the Baltic Institute's collection

The Lighthouse on the Hel Peninsula  
Built during the reign of King Władysław IV



## CHAPTER 5

# THE WORLD WAR AND THE GREAT DELIVERANCE 1914—1920

When the World War fell upon Europe, some 2,000,000 men of the partitioned Polish nation found themselves in the conscript armies of Germany, Russia and Austria and compelled to fight, brother against brother. It was a tragic situation.

The Russians at once bid for the allegiance of all Poles by assuring them that most surely under the Russian banner lay the possibility of a free and united Poland as an outcome of the war. There was not much ground for faith in these promises but many dared to hope that through co-operation with Russia lay at least a fair chance of larger liberties and even an eventual restoration of some sort of national status. Others felt that the destruction of the Russian Empire must be the first step toward Polish liberty. Some advocated allegiance with Austria as 'a sword against Russia and a shield against Germany'. Only the boldest and most prophetic provisioned any such restored Polish state as actually came to pass, chief of these being Józef Piłsudski, who never ceased to work for a completely free, independent and united Poland.

Their geographical location made the ancient Polish lands once again a great battlefield; about 85 per cent. of the Poland of today became the scene of battle and the victim of the destruction wrought by huge contending

armies. Cities, towns and villages were bombarded; rural areas devastated; roads, bridges, railroad tracks, stations, water towers, shops, telegraph lines, all were destroyed during the various advances and retreats, bombardments and defences. Several million people were driven eastward into Russia proper before the retreating Russian army. Machinery and industrial supplies were confiscated by the advancing Germans and sent to Germany; all brass and bronze was seized by them to be made up into war supplies.

A Scotch author, A. E. Tennant, who came to Poland to study the situation wrote: 'The disasters of Poland were greater than those of Belgium in proportion as the country was larger and more completely ravaged. Nay, more: Belgium, or the greater part of it, was occupied, lived in and kept habitable by the Germans, however galling or severe their yoke might be. Poland was turned into a vast battlefield and many times fought over'.

The Russian revolution abolished the Czarate, Poland's deadly enemy ever since the beginning of the eighteenth century. Somewhat more than a year later the power of Germany was broken on the fields of France. Then followed the Treaty of Versailles, delimiting the frontiers of Poland on the west and restoring to her a portion of the territories occupied by Prussia at the time of the partitions. This was rendered easier by the fact that an insurrection against Germany had broken out at Poznań in December 1918. Insurrection likewise broke out three times in Upper Silesia, a territory which had been cut off from Poland for six hundred years, and a small part of which was returned by the plebiscite of 1921. The eastern frontiers had in the same way to be won with the sword, and after that followed the task of consolidating the reborn state, having as its area only about 65 per cent. of the Poland of 1772, no resources, and appalling difficulties with which to struggle.

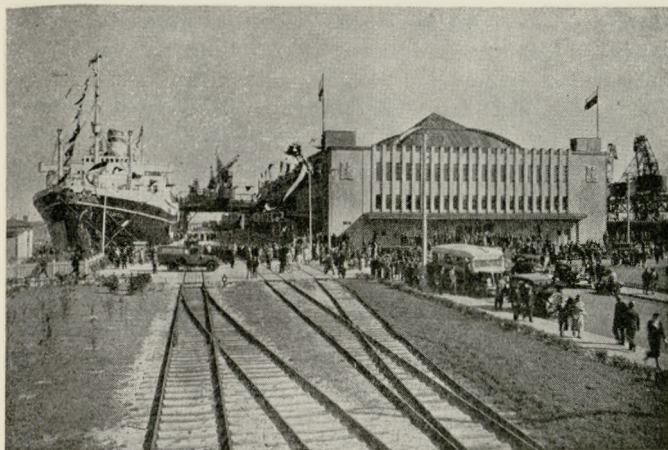


Photo H. Poddeński, Warsaw

### The Maritime Railway Station, Gdynia

The fast transatlantic m. s. Piłsudski (15,000 tons) can be seen at the pier

A great contingent of Poles from America came to Poland in the spring of 1919 as soldiers in the Polish Army, created from Poles in France toward the end of the War and commanded by General Józef Haller.

But there was as yet to be no rest for this troubled land. An attempt to create an Ukrainian state between Poland and Russia brought on in 1920 the Bolshevik war and the terrible Bolshevik invasion of Poland, stopped only at the very suburbs of Warsaw by the Poles under Marshal Piłsudski and thanks to his military genius. Then, when in October 1920 the guns ceased booming and in March 1921 peace was restored, the returning hundreds

of thousands of refugees who had been driven over into Russia during the retreat of 1915, brought typhus into Poland with them, and Poland, which had held back the Bolsheviks, had now to form another kind of sanitary cordon to save itself and Europe generally from an invasion of that deadly disease. Typhus raged from 1919 until the summer of 1921, then hung on till 1923, and took a toll of sixty thousand lives.

Then at last wars and epidemics were over, and the nation settled down to the tasks of reconstruction, prosaic in a way, but also heroic and thrilling. But the story of post-war Poland is not part of the plan of this pamphlet. A detailed account of the events of these more recent years will be found in *The Poland of Piłsudski* by the Scotch journalist Robert Machray, 473 pages of objective, accurate, and interesting writing, while Professor Roman Dyboski's *Poland*, issued in 1933 as one of the Modern World Series, is a truly encyclopaedic account of Poland as it exists today.<sup>1</sup>

### MARSHAL JÓZEF PIŁSUDSKI CREATOR OF MODERN POLAND

It is most appropriate that this description of Polish events and personalities should close with a few paragraphs about the man who is the chief Polish personality of modern times and the creator of many important Polish events.

The assigning to Marshal Piłsudski his proper place in history cannot be the work of the men of the generation which knew him and of those who worked under

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<sup>1</sup> Many aspects of reborn Poland are dealt with by the author in *Elements of Polish Culture as seen by a Resident Foreigner* (The Baltic Pocket Library Series), published by the Baltic Institute, 2nd edition Toruń 1935. 76 pages, 20 illustrations.

the inspiration of his personality. That task will carry a later date. But it is easy to state the facts of his life and it is an inner satisfaction to pay one's tribute to this devoted patriot and wise, constructive leader.

Józef (Joseph) Piłsudski, of ancient noble but no longer wealthy stock, was born in Lithuania in 1867. The family estates had largely been forfeited for participation in Polish patriotic uprisings and further reduced by fire. When, as a boy, he entered a Russian school, his spirit revolted against the current Russian abuse of Poland and he thus early got his set toward revolution. In the university he joined a student revolutionary society, which led to his arrest two years later and exile to Siberia. Very ill and supposedly in dying condition he was released in 1892, but his years in Siberia had equipped him with all the points of view, philosophy, and technique of an active revolutionary and he devoted all his years until Poland achieved her freedom to work toward that end.

Piłsudski organized, wrote, inspired men and women to work all their time and with all their energies for the freedom of their country, braved innumerable perils, and became the recognized leader of those most active in their patriotic efforts. He studied military science and organized a large secret military organization. When the war broke out he entered these men on the Austrian side as an arm against the arch-enemy, Russia. Seeing that nothing would come of this co-operation with Austria he demobilized his forces, and for so doing and for his rebellious spirit and dangerous resistance to German plans he was imprisoned in the German prison at Magdeburg. Released November 8, 1918, as a result of the interior breakdown of Germany, he hastened to Poland where he became the popular leader in consolidating Poland's new freedom.

In a few years parliamentary power passed into the hands of parties opposed to the Marshal and he retired from public life, to return three years later to head the May revolution of 1926 which set aside forces inimical to the state and left Piłsudski the leader of Poland.

As to his qualities, they were those of heroic courage, willingness to toil unremittingly, sacrificial devotion to his land and people, complete absence of self-interest, distaste for public appearances and acclaim, modesty and simplicity in dress and manner, and a correctness of intuition amounting to nothing less than genius. He called out deathless devotion from his followers and held the hearts of multitudes in the hollow of his hand, or, one might better say, in the depths of his own heart. When he died in the spring of 1935 the grief of the nation was painful to witness. His tradition will grow with the years, and he will be loved and honoured unendingly.

The foreign press, fond of labels and of putting men into categories, sometimes referred to the Marshal as 'Dictator'. It is too hard and harsh a word. If it means what they have in Russia and Italy or even in Germany, to use the term in the case of Marshal Piłsudski is inaccurate and unjust. In politics the Marshal usually got his way, but whole areas of life in Poland were untouched by governmental authority, and a degree of peace, ease, and freedom existed quite impossible had there been a dictator.

And now he is gone. But his work was well and solidly done. What he created will last, what he built will stand. What he worked for, exists; free, independent, united Poland, restored to the family of nations as a member which will do its full share in preserving peace and carrying forward the light of European civilization.



From the Polish Telegraphic Agency's collection

Marshal Józef Piłsudski (1867—1935)



Photo H. Poddębski, Warsaw

M. S. Piłsudski, the flagship of the Gdynia-America Line



## CONCLUSION

Before bringing these somewhat disconnected accounts of events and personalities to a conclusion, it seems well to write one more chapter stringing the beads as it were on to a thread and offering a few reflections upon the course of events in Polish history as a whole.

We have seen that Poland entered into the records of written history with the making of a great decision. Thanks to the wisdom of her then rulers, she decided not to struggle against the advancing Christian faith, but to become herself a part of the expanding world of the Church. But even more vital was the further decision that Poland should accept Christianity from the western and Latin world, and not from the eastern and Byzantine. Truly both Poland and the West have benefited from this course of events.

Later a period of disunion followed, but reunification came about, and that happily as early as the 14th century, not as a result of bloody war and conflict, but through the coming together of similar elements under the aegis of a member of the original dynasty of the Piasts. The union proved so real and deep and vital as to survive the Reformation of the 16th century, the catastrophic invasions of the 17th, the partitions of the 18th and the efforts at denationalization of the 19th, and find its happy objective realization in the rebirth of Poland as a state after the War of 1914—18. This essential unity enabled the Poles, though not a war-loving people, three times within little more than a century to hurl back the militant Teutonic Knights, to draw Lithuania of its own desire

into the Polish state, to retain the Polish Ukraine for centuries against the assaults of Muscovy, the Tartars and the Turks, and so to stand throughout the Middle Ages as Europe's bulwark against the invasions of eastern hordes; and finally to repeat or fulfil this historic mission in 1920 by turning back the invasion of the Bolsheviks, and thus assuredly saving not only Poland but also Germany and Czechoslovakia, and who knows how much else of Europe, from communism.

No small element in this unity was Poland's essential democracy, the theory of equality among all the gentry, a class embracing a proportion of the population probably paralleled in no other country, whereby the most simple 'landowner', even though actually possessed of no land, with his sword hung from a rope about his waist, was considered equal, in the national election and in local and national parliaments and in his own estimation, to the magnate in silver armour with a vast retinue of followers.

Another permanent component in the history of Poland is its prevailing tolerance, so well illustrated in the earlier story of the Reformation, and finding expression in many phases of life.

Unity of religion is another thread running through the years and making for the survival of Poles as Poles — and indeed for the survival of Europe as Europe; for this unity in the Catholic faith and a consequent sense of unity with other parts of Europe played an important part in Poland's heroic resistance to the Tartars in 1241 and subsequently, and her wars against the Turks, culminating in her rush to the relief of Vienna in 1683, the last burst of glory before the darkness under the Saxon kings August II and III and the charming but futile Stanisław.

A constant struggle for independence is another bright thread running through Polish history, a passionate love for freedom. And when the Pole no longer had a state of his own for whose freedom he could struggle, he gave his sword and loyalty to other lands to aid them in the cause of liberty, so spiritually his own.

Poland's freedom, then, attained and held through its own struggles in 1919 and 1920, was not simply a chance of circumstance brought about by the collapse in 1918 of the three oppressing empires; it has far deeper meaning and significance than that. It expresses something of inner worth, has deep moral justification and causes, and is both fruit and reward of qualities of character and spirit which attract the approbation and admiration of mankind.

Our story ends with the life and service of Marshal Józef Piłsudski, creator of modern Poland, builder of the nation, the man who more than any other stopped the Bolshevik invasion and thus set bounds and limits to communism in Europe, the man whose unselfish devotion and constructive service and moral force have done more for Poland and for Europe than has yet been fully realized by the Western world.

One aspect of Polish history of great importance, not adequately represented in these brief chapters but needed to complete the picture, is Poland's orientation toward the sea, its 600 years of varying struggles to hold and develop the water-way flowing through its historic lands, connecting it with the outside world. For this it has fought wars, developed policy, regulated and utilized the Vistula, built railways, and in these last years constructed its great modern seaport, Gdynia, its 'window on the sea', its open door to the ocean and to other lands, its guarantor of economic independence, its city of welcome

to the visitor arriving by water. Because of Poland's peculiar geographic and political situation, to be shut off from the sea would be like being deprived of air; for the possession of even these few miles of her own sea coast and her own sheltered port on the Baltic is her assurance of life and growth and liberty.



Photo by J. Voigt, Cracow

### The White Eagle of Poland

The Great Seal of State of King Kazimierz the Great (about 1355)

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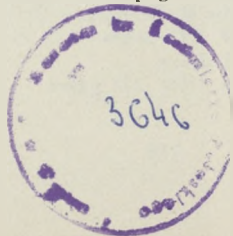
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