

POLAND

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At this very moment, perhaps, Poland is dying; all that is left for us to do is to scatter over its mutilated remains tears as sterile as were our wishes. The tears were truly very much sterile: no cause more just, more respected even by those who hate freedom, received from heaven and from men less assistance. Alone, those fallen Polish men fought for everyone. From the battlefield, where Europe watched them die, they brought their complaints to God, Who, for all that, did not bless their magnanimous efforts. Yet, if one is to believe observation; if the names country, justice, freedom, are not irreverent, words that mislead the heart; if history spoke rightly when it told of the love of the human race for those nations who defended their family homes with courage, Poland deserved a better fate. The bishops believed this when they signed the manifesto they had addressed to the nations. The religious also believed it when, around Warsaw, their hands excavated trenches which would very quickly be turned into grave sites, as if death needed to account for their efforts and that victory could not have made them as consecrated as funeral services. Its priests believed it, when, in entangling the cross with the banners of the country, they led the campaigns undertaken after the final combats attempted, following so many others, to lessen once the misfortune, and finally, to test whether Providence would not sympathize with such a prolonged fidelity. *Dis aliter visum!*¹

Let us not attempt to fathom the impenetrable secrets of divine justice. There are nations perhaps destined to perish for the safeguarding of others; during its bloody days, Warsaw was the altar on which was purified the cause of European freedom, for so long soiled out of hatred for Christ. God would have refused His help for the Poles because He wanted to make martyrs of them. It is, in fact, a law of humanity that nothing great is established save on the altar of sacrifice, in the blood of the just. The victory of Christianity began by the holocaust; Christians should never forget this when, on the events of the

world, they wish to pass a judgment more righteous than that of the multitude. No, religion will not accuse Poland, because it was unfortunate; it will not repeat on Poland's tomb what false friends told a prophet, abandoned by heaven: *Is the innocent man finally dying?* Religion will be all the more faithful to Poland because that generous nation was so strongly affected, more forsaken; and since it hallowed its wishes with blessings, it will hallow its hopes by tears more powerful perhaps than had been its wishes.

What more could religion have done? Kings did not listen to its voice, and the people only half-heard it. Religion spoke to the degree that it could; it encouraged Poland with whatever life it had left; it rose up in Belgium and in France to pray and to applaud. The injuries of France were not able to crush in its bosom the enthusiasm of that love. While in a thousand places religion's images were being shattered in the name of freedom, it did not mistake this false and sacrilegious freedom with the one whose name Poland placed on its banners, beside an even more holy name. Even its enemies granted this respect, and history will confirm it.

But what did the nations do for Poland? What did civilization do to save it from barbarity? The so-called great powers sent their emissaries to London; the latter assembled on that island, famous for having been in Europe the first liberal country. There, they heard the complaints of two hundred million men against a society poorly organized, reviewed in their memory the military injustice of forty years, troubles unceasingly brought up from their ashes — freedom, religion, power equally compromised everywhere — they were affected by that underhanded and universal rumor that warns the wise man to cover his head and prepare himself for frightening evils. There, for four long months, they pummeled in ingenious protocols the sole country that gave Europe examples of order, of religion, of freedom, of all that it had lost. They invoked against Belgium the treaties of 1815, that is to say, strength; and this other country, also a victim of 1815, that, at least, had received liberal promises, vows of an emperor sworn to on altars, this Poland — they did not even invoke for her the law of its trouble, the law of 1815. They did not dare remind the Czar that Poland's conquest had rights as consecrated as his own, that national representation had been violated, that the ancient faith was insidiously overcome by the imperial schism, that justice perished there under the lash, that in the public place, men of prominent families were seen sweeping away dirt and mud, by order of the viceroy, and that Europe was tired of these solemn breaches to the fidelity of the holy alliance. They said

nothing, nothing: the tombs of Westminster were less silent, and the souls of many men who had wished to sleep in the shadow of freedom will forever accuse England of having betrayed their sleep. Alas! No one was able to hear those various groans: everything that belongs to the other life no longer speaks to this one, and God Himself lies in a deeper grave than that of the great men of Westminster.

France was among those powers that said nothing in favor of the Poles, the nation that had given a signal to the latter, had promised it assistance. But could we have done what we did without freedom everywhere counting on our help? Poland was bound to have counted on our help more than others, when reviewing its memories, when thinking that it was throwing itself between us and Russia as a vanguard, like the Thermopylae of France and of the XIXth century. We did see in its self-sacrifice the certitude of living in peace for only six months more. We estimated that, whatever happened, its four million men would provide us with a quiet winter; but uncertain about the ulterior designs of its enemies, we embraced to the utmost the hypocrisy of their victories *by not even sending the Poles a messenger*² to thank them for dying for us. We had sent more than one to Bruxelles in revolt. It is true that they were looking there for a crown, only to sacrifice it to fear later: it was the same self-sacrifice, the same gratitude.

In the end, Poland fell. Twenty Frenchmen arrived just in time to offer it their life. We will be able to offer it some money to raise on the battlefield a monument bearing our name. The autocrat will not dare to refuse it.

As for the consequences of the events, they were boundless. Barbarity overturned the rampart that the West had erected against it, and in the smoldering Warsaw, it vowed itself to accomplish the *mission* that God had given to it, that mission so often genuine in history. Barbarity has its own enthusiasm, just as civilization does; servitude has its triumphs, just as freedom. We have done much to inspire the victorious hordes with the profound disdain in which their ancestors held the Later Roman Empire.³ At this very hour, the hordes calculate the distance that separates the Rhine from the Vistula. Moreover, we do have to admit, the friends we have from one side to the other will not impede their march very long. If freedom had honored itself in France, there would have been between them and us a distance they would not cross, a distance that the Persians, masters of Athens, did not cross; a distance that separates a people truly free from a flock of Tartars, driven by

the lash in the war against God — because the freedom of the world is God Himself. Nonetheless, we did everything to remove our trust in that freedom; on a whim, we destroyed our enthusiasm. France will have to experience the enemy on its soil to find its children again and to become powerful anew.

France will indeed come to that; we will never believe that its cause is lost, nor especially that of freedom, since freedom cannot perish save with religion. Our faith is in this, our faith that will follow us to the last breath. Yes, freedom is entrusted with the safe-keeping of religion, and only religion was of service to it, religion alone honored it for the past six months in Belgium and in Poland. The spacious tomb of Poland that will be a monument to powerlessness for others, will be, for Catholics a painful but unsoiled reminder. They will be able to say to the Poles that they were not the ones to abandon them; Catholics who had lost their cause in the opinion of Europe; Catholics who had the power to save the Poles by thrusting before their enemies the mediation of a great nation, its weapons, its trust in justice, and especially in a freedom that was respected. Catholics will, when the day of mercy dawns from the mysteries of the future, relate to the descendants of the vanquished what they did and will sing this saying to them: *Poland is not lost since we are still alive!*

Catholics! Your hour has come. You will show yourselves resolute in your two-fold love for the faith of your ancestors and for freedom: Belgium and Poland have just presented you with the newborns of the nineteenth century. When the clouds of barbarity will reject civilization from the tomb you drew it out of a thousand years ago, have no fear of so little, trust in your immortality. Know that great suffering is needed to bring about great results. Perhaps Europe will be *crushed* anew, but this will be for it to become involved, as a certain genius wrote from under the very sky where barbarity was advancing toward us. Those very people who are on the way will drink inadvertently the wine of freedom, and will carry under their sun, half extinguished, the memory of our fertile fields, a memory that, sooner or later, will be fruitful. Let hope not die in our hearts, even if it dies everywhere else. May faith, charity, God, the future, everything that comforted your ancestors in more terrible situations, comfort you in turn so that you may transmit to other ages, the full and untainted cup that was preserved in the midst of the perpetual setbacks of this world.

Catholics! Poland has been conquered. Let us kneel before the casket of that betrayed people; it was both great and unfortunate.

ENDNOTE [Trans.]

1. With all due respect to those who are otherwise disposed.
2. The expression of Count Malachowski, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland.
3. The second period of the Roman Empire, 235-395.

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