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# THE SPIRIT OF POLAND

BY MONICA M. GARDNER



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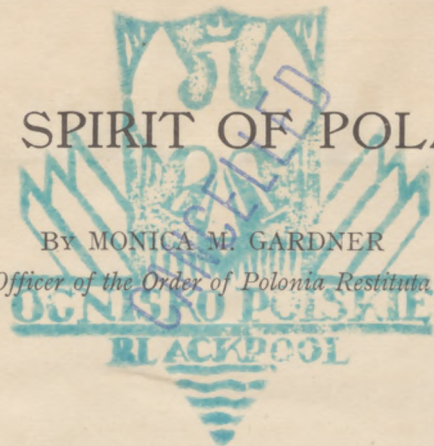
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By MONICA M. GARDNER  
*Officer of the Order of Polonia Restituta*



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## THE SPIRIT OF POLAND

THE great Polish poet-mystic, Zygmunt Krasinski, in his *Psalm of Faith*, written in 1845 during a period of great national oppression, puts forth the theory that every nation has received from on high a calling peculiar to itself. If this idea is not always easy to work out in the history of certain nations, it emerges with extraordinary clarity and continuity in the history of Poland.

### *A Link Between East and West*

The position of Poland is, and has been through the centuries of her history, a peculiar and, indeed, unique one. She is the eastern outpost of Europe and of western civilization. She is the barrier, and at the same time the link, between East and West. Possessing no natural boundaries except those of the Carpathians in the south-west, she lies in an open plain running into Germany on one side and Russia on the other: a position of extreme strategical danger, with one of the longest frontiers in Europe to defend and a mere strip of sea coast. That geographical position, the Poles themselves say, is the tragedy of Poland. It caused her partition in the eighteenth century. It caused the catastrophe of the fresh partition in September, 1939. A Slavonic nation, her religion, her culture, her alphabet, are derived from Rome. Since her conversion to Christianity in the tenth century she has always belonged to the Catholic Church. Although the Reformation made great headway in the country in the sixteenth century, chiefly among the educated classes, the coming of the Jesuits checked its influence, and at the present moment there is only an inconsiderable percentage of Protestants in the Polish

population. But how close Poland is to the East we can realise if only from the fact that she has subjects belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church and a handful of Armenians and Mohammedans. The city of Lwów, in Eastern Galicia, with its three Catholic bishoprics, Latin, Uniat, and Armenian, is an illustration of Poland's relationship with the East.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Poland was the greatest nation of eastern Europe. At the height of her power her dominion stretched from the Baltic far down into south-eastern Europe, where she was only separated from the Crimea and the Black Sea by the Wild Fields, the name given to the no-man's-land that was the perpetual scene of Tartar forays. On the east, her territories ran beyond the boundaries of the modern Russian empire, including the city of Kiev. On the north she held at one time part of the Baltic provinces. She was the trade route between East and West. Merchants of every nation shouldered each other in her streets and markets. Foreigners studied in the University of Cracow, the second oldest university in central Europe. To Cracow University—the Jagiello University as it is still called in memory of Queen Jadwiga's husband, who carried on the young queen's dying bequest to the university she had in great part founded—the world owes our modern system of astronomy, which bears the name of its discoverer, Nicholas Kopernik, latinised into Copernicus. Poland's Gothic and Renaissance churches are among the beautiful monuments of the world. For centuries Polish cavalry ranked with the finest in Europe.

#### *Queen Jadwiga*

The greatness of Poland had its foundation in the most romantic page of Polish history: the girl queen Jadwiga of Anjou's self-sacrifice for the sake of her country and

of the Catholic Faith. It was only after a bitter struggle against the dictates of her heart, which was given to a young lover, that she consented to renounce her own happiness and accept the marriage urged upon her by the Polish magnates to Jagiello, the Grand Duke of Lithuania. This marriage would bring Lithuania, which was then in great part a pagan nation, into the fold of the Catholic Church, and by its union with Poland would make that country the most powerful State in eastern Europe. The legend has it that before Jadwiga could bring herself to yield to the wish of her people, while in agony of soul she wept and prayed at the foot of her crucifix, which is still venerated in the Vavel cathedral at Cracow, she heard Our Saviour's voice speaking from the cross, bidding her submit. During her short reign—she died at the age of twenty-six—she lived as a saint upon the throne, devoting her whole life to the welfare of her subjects. Her name, surrounded by the aureole of sanctity, is venerated by her nation as that of the greatest woman and one of the greatest sovereigns of Poland's history.

#### *After the Partition*

It was this once powerful country which, weakened by an unworkable constitution and by internal dissensions, continually threatened by her three powerful neighbours, was dismembered in the eighteenth century by Russia, Austria, and Prussia, and for a century and a half ceased to exist. But there is so deep-seated a tenacity of life in the character of the Polish nation that it has proved impossible to destroy her. Through that century and a half, from 1772, the date of the first partition, to 1918, when the former Republic of Poland took her place once more in the commonwealth of Europe as an independent

State, the Polish nation, torn in three, her sons scattered all over the world, exposed to the danger of denationalization on every side, never ceased to struggle for her resurrection. The year after the second partition in 1793, when but a shred of Poland still remained, Thaddeus Kosciuszko, at the head of such remnants of the Polish army as he could muster, and arming the peasants with their pikes and scythes, fought the Russians and Prussians in a desperate conflict that ended in his capture, followed by the fall of Warsaw and the third partition of Poland. But even after that partition, when Poland was deleted from the map of Europe, the Poles refused to give up their nation for lost. Hundreds of them joined the armies of Napoleon Bonaparte, fighting under their own flags and their own generals, because they believed Napoleon's promise that he would lead them to Poland and restore their country. After the so-called autonomous Kingdom of Poland, consisting of Warsaw and a small part of central Poland, had been established by the Congress of Vienna in 1815 under the suzerainty of the Russian Tsar, and fifteen years had proved the hopelessness of Poland's preserving any of her rights in such conditions, the rising of 1830 broke out. The small army of its own that the Kingdom possessed, the officers of which had been trained in the Napoleonic legions, swelled by patriotic volunteers, held out against the overwhelming forces of the Russian empire in the hope of help from Europe, which had guaranteed the rights of the kingdom at the Congress of Vienna, for ten months. Warsaw fell, and the rising was defeated. While the country was ground down by the terrible vengeance of the Tsar, Nicholas I, the national life was carried on by the exiles—the Great Emigration, as it is called in Polish history—in Paris, comprising the greatest poets and soldiers of the nation, and all classes of men and women, for the most part living in dire poverty and misery, but

all alike yearning for the moment of their country's deliverance. For the next twenty years, while the nation was the victim of great oppression by Austria, Prussia, and Russia, repeated attempts were made to organise a new insurrection, ending always on the scaffold and in Siberia : attempts so secret and abortive as to be scarcely heard of beyond the confines of Poland, but whose leaders live in the pages of Polish history.

*The Persecution of the Nation*

Then in 1863 the youth of Poland rose in a last despairing struggle to win freedom for their nation. It was a guerrilla war in the nature of a forlorn hope, but it lasted more than a year and a half, and came near to bringing about a European conflict. Only after the last leaders of the secret national government, the noble-minded patriot, Romuald Traugutt, with his four coadjutors, had died at the hand of the hangman in a public execution outside the Warsaw Citadel, and one last group of seven insurgents fighting on in the marshes of Podlasia had been captured and executed, was the rising stamped out. The relentless persecution of Poland that was its result aimed at the annihilation of everything that was Polish. If in some respects it was mitigated as time went on, many of its features continued until Poland's liberation from Russian rule after the Great War. In so-called Prussian Poland, the iron hand of Prussia, far from mitigating its severity, weighed with ever-increasing force upon its Polish subjects. Through that long half-century between the Rising of 1863 and the outbreak of the Great War, Poland gradually became a nation forgotten by the world. Only at rare intervals did some hint of the sufferings of a people for their nationality and for the Catholic faith reach the ears of western Europe. Yet all that

time Poland, disarmed and helpless, at the mercy of the unceasing efforts of Germany and Russia to destroy her—the oppression of the Poles under Austria, at one period very severe, had ceased before 1863, and in 1866 Galicia gained autonomy—maintained her nationality by the silent, unremitting struggle of daily life under the abnormal conditions of slavery. Devotion to their country, which is so implanted in the Polish soul as to be almost a religion, never died, but was regarded as the most sacred obligation of every Pole who possessed any self-respect. Forbidden to learn their faith, their language, and the history of their country in the schools, Polish children were taught these things, the inalienable inheritance of their nation, by their mothers in their homes—in Prussian Poland in the privacy of their mother's bedroom, as the one spot in the house free from the intrusion of the police. It is to the women of Poland that the nation in great part owes her preservation. Devoted men and women gathered the children and the peasants in barns or lonely places, braving fines and imprisonment or Siberia when caught in the act. Schoolboys, under the pain of severe penalties if discovered, which in German Poland often meant expulsion from school, involving the ruin of their career, met secretly to read their forbidden poets. By every possible method social and pacific work was carried on to preserve and build up the future nation in which every Pole confidently believed.

### *Resurrection*

What was the result? At the close of the Great War there were existing thirty-five million Poles, with an intense and invincible national consciousness. To maintain that it was not the Congress of Versailles but the Poles themselves who restored Poland is no mere fanciful or

sentimental statement, but the plain fact. Had the Poles yielded through the hundred and fifty years of their captivity to the overwhelming odds against them, and allowed themselves to be assimilated into the conquering races which were using every means to effect this by brute force, there would have been no Polish claims to independence when the map of Europe was recast. "A great nation can fall," said Staszic, one of Poland's most eminent eighteenth and early nineteenth-century political and social reformers: "only an ignoble nation can perish." We may add that the Prussian fable, which has been a firmly established fact in our history books, that when Kosciuszko fell wounded on the battlefield of Maciejowice he uttered the words, "*Finis Poloniae!*" is so radically untrue to Polish psychology that the invention is an absurdity.

### *The Restored Republic of Poland*

In 1918, then, the Poles came into their own once more: but we must remember that the Republic of Poland which then took its place among the independent nations of Europe was no new creation, but a recreated State, although not to the full extent of her historical boundaries. The most unfortunate withholding from Poland of what was hers by both logical and historical right was her loss of Danzig. Danzig had belonged to Poland for three hundred years. Her only seaport, whose trade and commerce had flourished under her rule, the outlet of her major river, the Vistula, it was filched from her by Prussia at the second partition, to lose its prosperity in favour of Hamburg. Europe is now reaping the results of this proceeding.

The assertion that the Poles are a race incapable of self-government is another legend which has died as hard

as that of Kosciuszko's saying. The restored Republic of Poland had a task before her more onerous than that of any other of the post-war European States. Her soil had been devastated by the armies of Austria, Russia, and Prussia in the Great War, the plant of her factories carried off by Germany. She received no reparations. It was necessary to build up her whole existence from the foundations. Her law, her finance, every side of her economic life, which had been in the hands of the three partitioning powers had to be unified, her constitution evolved, her army and navy formed. One instance of the complications with which restored Poland was faced may be illustrated by the fact that she was dealing with five different codes of law, and that in the north-east of Poland, Russian law was still obtaining twenty years after the Congress of Versailles. Against difficulties that might have seemed overwhelming, with various vicissitudes and setbacks, confronted by a war with Soviet Russia only two years after her resurrection, by the European financial crisis and internal political troubles, the nation kept her footing, and under the strong hand of a patriot and a ruler of genius, Marshal Pilsudski, became the consolidated people who have won the admiration of the world, standing shoulder-to-shoulder in an unalterable determination never to barter or part with their national inheritance, with behind that resolve an army whose valour and fighting qualities no one has denied.

#### *What the new Poland did*

We can only mention here a few of the activities of new Poland. Deprived of her traditional port of Danzig, Poland created out of a fishing village the new port of Gdynia, a subject of justifiable pride to the Polish nation.

The work of educating the peasants, who were deliberately kept in ignorance by the Russian government during Poland's bondage, carried on nevertheless, as we have seen, by the efforts of individual Poles with the greatest difficulty, even with personal danger, was vigorously taken in hand by the Polish State with such good fruit that a large proportion of the University students in these last years have belonged to peasant families. The ravages of tuberculosis, caused by the privations of the Great War that devastated the rising generation of restored Poland, were checked by up-to-date hygienic institutions, and the nation can now show a healthy and vigorous youth. Poland has built sanatoriums which are second to none in Europe. Holiday camps, physical exercises, and all the modern measures for the well-being of the childhood and growth of a nation, formed part of the curriculum of the Polish State. Libraries and public halls were before the German invasion becoming a feature of the Polish village. Towns, purposely neglected under Russian administration, were set in order and beautified. Polish names figure with distinction in the international sports which are a feature of to-day. In scientific research and medical discovery Polish scientists hold an honourable place with the foremost of European scholars.

#### *The Defender of Eastern Christendom*

From the thirteenth century to the end of the seventeenth, Poland stood as the bulwark of the Christian world against the invading flood of Moslem, represented first by the Tartars, then by both Tartars and Turks. This tradition entered into her blood, as the study of her family and historical records proves. Her eastern borderlands, a name that echoes with heroic associations to the Polish ear, were the scene of perpetual Tartar inroads. Coming

in by the "Tartar trails," as the Poles called the tracks by which the invaders penetrated through the steppes, they laid the country waste, carrying off Christian captives to be sold as slaves in the markets, and kidnapping children who, lost for ever to their country and their faith, were enrolled when they reached military age in the fanatic Janissary troops. The Polish settlers in those south-eastern lands fulfilled the purpose of a frontier guard. They kept a perpetual watch towards the horizon, always ready at the alarm to mount the saddle. The countless numbers of those who fell in this border warfare were naturally regarded as soldiers of the Cross. We may better realise Poland's immemorial defence of eastern Christendom when we reflect that so late in modern history as the period when our Stuart kings and Louis XIV were on the throne, at the other end of Europe a Christian nation was keeping back Tartar invasion, and Polish girls were being carried into Moslem slavery. Poland's office of defender of Christendom against the Crescent closed with the deliverance, in 1683, of Vienna by the King of Poland, Jan Sobieski, from the last and greatest Moslem invasion of Europe. It is significant that Sobieski was acting here not only in accordance with the national but likewise with his family tradition, for he was the last male survivor of a family, the men of which had for generations fallen in battle against Islam.

#### *Polish Messianism*

But even after the destruction of Poland when she was no longer politically existent, that she still had a mission to carry out was a tenet of faith in the eyes of her patriot poets, the moral leaders of the nation during her bondage, who attributed to her death and to her future resurrection, which they anticipated with certainty,

a Messianic rôle. The ramifications of this doctrine we need not enter into here, but its main tenet was that, by the analogy of Christ's death for mankind and His resurrection from the dead, so Poland, by her death, was the victim of expiation for the regeneration of the political universe, and her resurrection was to be the sign of the advent of that better world. If Polish Messianism convinced few outside the nation and not all within it, the point to be emphasised is that the idea of a special calling assigned to Poland, and one involving benefit to the human commonwealth, still endured, and with great insistence, in the psychology of fallen Poland. Tradition, that element of great significance in the moral structure of an individual and a nation, is deep-rooted in the Polish character. It is a remarkable phenomenon that, not two years after her re-appearance among the States of Europe, Poland was called upon to resume her traditional task of hurling back an invasion that threatened to submerge Christian civilization.

#### *Between two Anti-Christian Forces*

Since her restoration, Poland has stood between the two forces of Germany and Russia, both representing two superficially opposite but fundamentally similar ideas, both equally dangerous to Christianity and equally hostile to its principles, and both of them in complete discord with the ideals and character of Poland. With the Russian people, as distinct from their government, Poland is not without points of contact and a certain racial sympathy. "For our liberty and yours!" was the message to the Russian Liberals inscribed upon their flags by the Polish insurgents of 1830, a truth to which Poland's latest war has given a more universal application. Between the Pole and German there is a clash of character, a racial antagonism



persisting through their history, which, hitherto most acutely felt in those districts of Poland which during her captivity experienced the drastic brutality of Prussian methods, has been intensified tenfold in all Poland by the terrible experience of the Nazi invasion. Here again it seems as though Poland were to maintain under a different aspect her time-honoured mission as the outpost of Christendom. She has consistently discouraged the dissemination of Bolshevik propaganda in her country. The tenets of Bolshevism have no chance of success with the Polish peasant. That tenacious and deeply religious personage has only this answer to give the propagator of Bolshevism: "But you have no God!" and at once turns an indifferent ear to his persuasions. On the other side, Nazism has no appeal to a people who have never accepted mental slavery, who have none of the herd instinct of the German, but a strong individualism, so strong as to have often been to the national disadvantage, and to whom the minutiae of German organization are wholly alien. When we say that Poland seems destined to resume her post of defender of Christian faith and civilization, may it not be that her firm stand against the triumphant march of Nazi aggression, threatening both the destruction of European freedom and untold calamity to Christ's Church—the stand for which she has paid by the sacrifice of all that is dear to her except honour, of life itself—will yet prove to be the salvation of the world?

#### *Unconquerable Hope*

To dogmatize on the character of a nation is not an easy task, and on the part of a foreigner is apt to be temerarious, but those two characteristics of the Polish people of which we have already spoken are obvious: their patriotism and their extraordinary vitality. It is

in strict accordance with the Polish nature that the richest epoch of Poland's literature, which gave the nation her greatest poets, rose in all its splendour during the terrible national oppression following the rising of 1830, and that the noblest poetry the Polish nation has ever produced is given over to the impassioned accents of patriotism. At the same time it should be noticed that, whatever the depths of its tragedy, this poetry illustrates not only the patriotism of the Polish people, at once inspiring and inspired by their poets, but equally their unconquerable hope in the future of their nation. If pessimism is at times to be found in the works of the Polish romantic poets, this is the exception. The Pole is not a pessimist. A certain buoyancy is part of his character. The prominent characteristic of the poets of Poland's fall is the certainty of the resurrection of a nation they regard with a passionate veneration which gives the name of "Holy Poland" to an adored country. This literature played so large a part in maintaining the Polish spirit, especially among Poland's youth against whom the denationalizing efforts of the conqueror were mainly and ruthlessly directed, that it was forbidden to be read in the country itself. It was for the most part written and printed abroad, smuggled into Poland, and there read in secret, imprisonment or Siberia being the penalty of discovery.

#### *The Patriotism of the Pole*

It can be stated without exaggeration that every Pole is a patriot. The Pole who has no love—or, to speak more accurately, no passionate, personal love—for his or her country is so rarely to be met with as to be almost an anomaly. That love presupposes the obligation of work for the country, which is an ingrained instinct with the Pole. During the twenty years of Poland's regained

existence, the Poles put their shoulders to the wheel and set themselves to the task of making Poland a great and prosperous country. It may not be generally understood what personal hardship and self-sacrifice this task, to be carried out with the success that was being achieved, demanded of Polish men and women, and how readily they were responding. For a fact that strikes the eye in the quality of Polish patriotism is the readiness of the Pole to prove it by self-sacrifice. Without enlarging on the proofs, prominent in the long story of persecuted Poland when her sons and daughters gave up all, facing death, penal servitude, exile, fines, and prison, for the sake of their country, we may point out that this tradition is inborn in the Polish character, and that the youth of Poland inherit it and act instinctively in accord with it. Only twenty years ago Europe witnessed the spectacle of the young Poles of Lwów, boys and girls in age, defending and dying for their country; an episode that would have attracted more attention in a less distracted world. If it was the Pole's innate love of his personal independence and individuality that contributed to Poland's internal anarchy before her fall in the eighteenth century, and which was the bane of her national struggles after it, the nation has learnt her lesson in a hard school: and one of the most convincing proofs of the nature of Poland's patriotism immediately before the Nazi advance was the sight of all the opposite political parties in the land, between which rivalry was wont to run so high as to take the form of personal rancour, sinking every difference to stand as one man against the danger to their country. The defence of Warsaw against the whole weight of the mechanised forces of one of the greatest armies in the world, when the city was reduced to a smoking shambles, and men, women, and children fell dead in mutilated heaps in the streets rather than yield an inch of them to

the invader, is one of the latest proofs of what the Poles are willing to undergo in defence of their country and their freedom; and assuredly, given the Polish character, it will not be the last.

The patriotism of a penalised nationality necessarily changed its nature after the restoration of Poland, especially among her youth. The generation that could narrate its recollections of penal days was fast dying out. Those past their first youth may have recalled an incident or two of the kind which imprints itself upon a childish memory, but the rising generation only knew freedom, and dismissed as past history, as the "tales of a grandfather"—often literally the tales of their grandparents to which they did not greatly care to listen—the old times of slavery. They remained as devoted to their country, but naturally in a different manner. The past did not concern them. The present and the future were theirs. They were the proud citizens of a free country, eager with the unconquerable vivacity of the Pole to play their part in it. That the young Pole must now accept once more his long inheritance of suffering and prove his patriotism under conditions which had seemingly receded for ever into a terrible past is not the least tragedy of the latest partition of Poland.

*Juventus Christiana*

The religious revival in Poland of late years, the admirable moral work of the University student societies—*Juventus Christiana*—inaugurated by the late Father Szwejnica, the guidance given to the Polish youth by Roman Dmowski, the well-known politician who played a great part in obtaining the recognition of Poland's rights at the Congress of Versailles, have produced a body of young citizens whose spirit is excellent and on whom the Polish nation

has every reason to build her hopes. A word may be said here of the work of *Juventus Christiana*. It was originally founded by Father Szwejnić at Minsk in 1920, as a safeguard to the young Poles in that district against the menace of Bolshevism. Its aims are a deeper understanding of Christ's teaching, the incorporation of that teaching in individual, social, and national life, and the formation of character in the spirit of Christ. Therefore the Association is based on the study of the Gospels, and every meeting began<sup>1</sup> with an informal discussion on the Gospels, followed by discussions on religious and social problems. General communions and retreats formed part of the Association's activities. So crowded were these retreats that the large church of the Warsaw branch, St Anne's, could not hold all the boys and girls attending them, and the exercises had to be duplicated. Holiday camps were an institution, founded not so much for recreation, though this was not neglected, as an opportunity under conditions restful to body, mind, and soul, for quiet study and discussion. The great pilgrimage made by the *Juventus* in 1936 to Czenstochowa, the shrine of Our Lady of Poland, the sanctuary of Polish religious faith and patriotism, was a striking manifestation of the spirit of young Poland. The students mustered in their hundreds at the shrine, and repeated the following vow, probably little dreaming how soon they were to be called upon to prove it in their nation's martyrdom:

"Great Mother of God, most holy Virgin! We, the Student Youth, gathered together from the whole of Poland, Catholic inheritors of the age-long religion of our forefathers, prostrate at thy most holy feet, choose thee, Mother of God, Queen of Poland, for the Mother and Patroness of the Polish Student Youth, and we commend to thy most powerful protection all the universities and

<sup>1</sup>The conquest of Poland compels me to use the past tense.

the whole of Poland. We promise and vow before Christ the King and thee, our Queen, Patroness of the Polish Student Youth, that we will always and everywhere stand firm in the faith of the Holy Catholic Church in filial submission to the Apostolic See. We promise and vow that we will defend our Faith, and rule in accordance with it our personal, family, social, national, and public lives."

#### *History Proves Poland's Vitality*

We have spoken of the vitality of the Polish nation. This contributes to give her the quality that stands out in the whole course of her strange, dramatic history—that of her indestructibility. *Poland has not perished* are the first words of the song of the Polish legions in Napoleon's armies, sung when to all appearances Poland had indeed perished. That this proved to be no empty flourish may be exemplified by the fact that this song became the national anthem of the reborn Republic of Poland. Those who have watched the Polish troops marching to its strains on their return from manœuvres into the Warsaw citadel may have been tempted, as they listened, to meditate upon that eternal truth of Poland's history. There have been moments, even before the disappearance of Poland in the eighteenth century, when it seemed as though nothing could save her. The famous instance of the Swedish conquest of Poland a hundred years before the partitions may be cited. The Swedish army, then one of the finest in Europe, had overrun and subjugated the greater part of the country. The King of Sweden, Charles Gustavus, made himself sovereign of Poland; the Polish king, John Casimir, was in flight; Warsaw resembled a Swedish rather than a Polish city. A simple monk, Prior Kordecki, with his brother monks and a handful

of soldiers, drove the Swedish besiegers from the walls of the small sanctuary town of Czenstochowa, with the result that the nation rose in fury against the invader, and Poland was delivered. It was to commemorate this victory that the Poles, placing their country under the special protection of Our Blessed Lady, solemnly proclaimed her Queen of Poland. They still address her by this name, and it remains as one of the invocations in the Polish Litany of Loreto. Again, the process of dismemberment of Poland had already begun when, after the first partition, the shrunken Polish State flung off the shackles that were destroying her political and national life, and in 1791 passed the earliest liberal Constitution to be promulgated in Europe. Abolishing the weaknesses and abuses of her former mode of government, the new Constitution would have saved her had it not been for the interference of Russia and Prussia. The day on which it was passed, 3rd May, is now the national feast-day of Poland. Poland was likewise in her death throes when she drew up a Commission of Education in which several of the features of present-day education are forestalled, including an equivalent of the Officers' Training Corps and a foreshadowing of the Boy Scout movement. Even after Poland had been torn asunder, no effort of the three powerful empires which had divided her between them could succeed in destroying Polish nationality. It is especially noteworthy in the light of recent events that Prussianization, even when backed by a Bismarck or a Bülow, is incapable of Germanizing the Pole. The German element cannot subjugate or eliminate the Polish element. Something in the Polish character remains obdurate against the German: the Pole comes uppermost, not the German. The Prussian government was so well aware of this fact that, while western Poland was still under its domination, marriages of German officials with Poles

were forbidden by law, for the reason that in such marriages the Polish nationality ousted the German, and the children of such unions grew up, not Germans, but Poles. The weight of the German empire, the calculated brutality of Prussian methods, had the precisely contrary effect to their intention. Each anti-Polish measure of the Prussian government was parried by the more nimble wits of the Poles, who were admirably organised in a solid front. To take another fact fresh in our memories. Only two years after Poland had recovered her independence, when her army was still in its infancy and she was struggling with the task of setting her house in order, the Red armies were within a few miles of Warsaw, and Poland again seemed doomed to destruction. Yet she drove the Russians back, and by that victory, called by the Poles the Miracle of the Vistula, by Lord d'Abernon the eighteenth decisive battle of the world, not only Poland, but Europe, was saved from the scourge of Bolshevism. If war comes, the Poles were saying on the eve of the Nazi invasion, it will not be Poland that perishes.

*Poland Cannot Die*

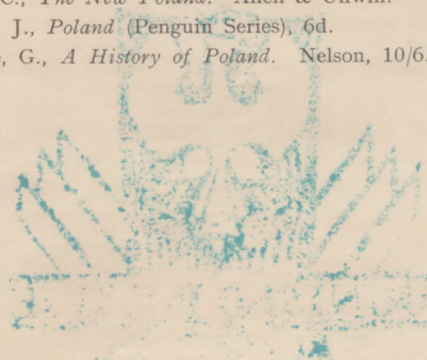
That word is still true. The testimony of history is behind it, notwithstanding that the most tragic chapter even of Poland's tragic history is now being enacted in our midst. The right to her own life, for which Poland had struggled unremittently for a hundred and fifty years of almost unparalleled persecution, has been torn from her after only twenty years of recovered existence in consequence of her determination to defend that sacred possession against an aggression that intended to subjugate the world. The Polish nation lies at the mercy of the two great anti-Christian powers in Europe, neither of which will spare any effort to reduce a high-spirited and profoundly

Catholic people to the condition of slaves under the heel of a godless persecution. Yet it will not be Poland that perishes. These words, spoken before the catastrophe, are equally true after it. Not only has Poland proved that she cannot die, but the whole story of Poland, still existing after the three partitions, still carrying on a strong national life although it was crushed and prohibited, rising again because she had refused to die, represents a moral principle most necessary to take to heart in the present condition of this world. Her history proves—and no one who understands the psychology of the Pole doubts that the present and future Poland will not cease to prove—that she stands for an eternal truth: namely, that the soul of a nation cannot be destroyed, that there exists a spiritual strength which is more powerful than brute force, and which must soon or late, even at the cost of suffering, defeat, apparent death, be victorious in the end.



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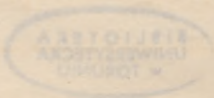
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